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THE WORLD'S

Political, Intellectual

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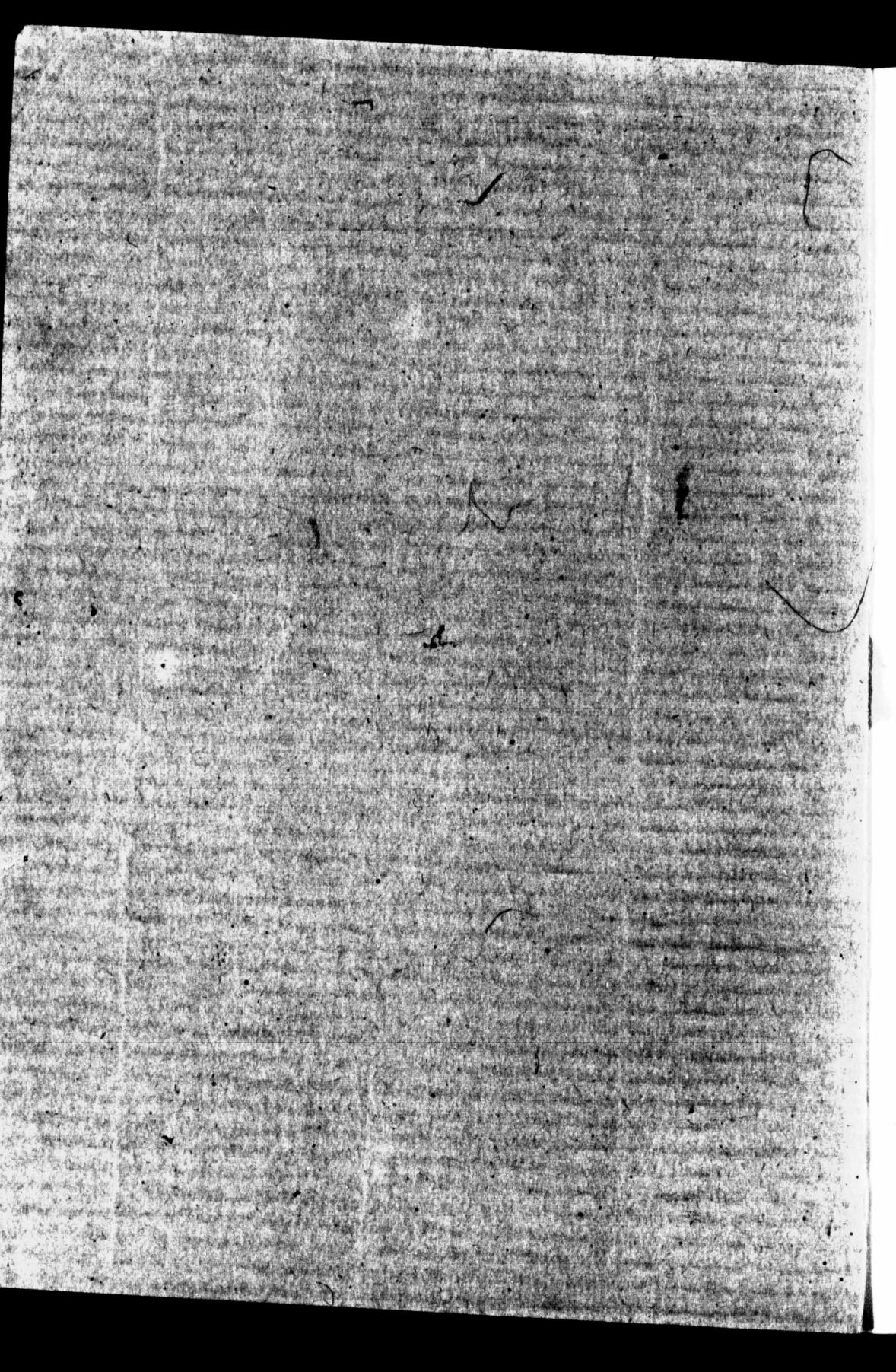
Religious Struggle

FOR 400 YEARS.

BY REV. J. E. HOPPER, D. D.

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Baptist Book and Tract
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Political, Intellectual and Religious Struggle
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BACK of the changes and conflicts of this world there is the hand of God, directing and controlling so that in the end the era of universal peace and perfection shall dawn. We can see God in the history of ancient Israel calling, guiding, and guarding them in the working out of his plans. God still has His hand on the helm of affairs, and the pages of modern history are luminous with His presence. Out of evil He educes good, and all things work together to further the interests of that kingdom whose birth caused angels to sing "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will to men." The last four hundred years of the world's history bear everywhere the footmarks of God. Its centuries are big with the unfolding of the Divine purpose, and the lessons of His providence are so plain that he that runneth may read.

I. The time of the discovery of America was an eventual age. It may justly be named a birth era. The bodies, minds and souls of men were beginning to feel the throes of a regeneration.

1. *Politically.* Rome had world-wide empire at the birth of Christ. The Emperors were Pagan, and remained such till Constantine, who in A. D. 323, espoused Christianity, and made it the religion of the Empire. In 395 a division was made by Theodosius

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into Eastern and Western Empires, the former of which came to an end when Mahomet II. took Constantinople in 1453, and Rome, the chief city of the latter, was taken by the Goths in 410, and became subject to repeated invasions and humiliations by the northern tribes.

Just before the discovery of America, the old feudalism of the western nations gave place to strong monarchies. In England, the wars of the Roses, end by Henry VII. marrying Elizabeth of York, thus uniting these hostile factions 1485. In France, Charles VIII. in 1483, humbled the aristocracy, weakened feudalism, and enlarged the royal power. In Spain, Ferdinand of Aragon, married Isabella of Castile, 1469, and thus united these strong provinces. In Russia, Ivan the Great had recovered from the Tartar invasion, consolidated the empire, and became absolute Czar, 1472. In Germany, Maximilian I. had by marriage of Mary the heiress of the Low Countries, and Burgundy strengthened himself and enlarged the empire. He raised a standing army, but the several states enjoyed a large measure of self government up to the Reformation. The drift of things in Europe at the close of the fifteenth century was toward centralization and coercion, and scarcely anything gave a prophecy of liberty unless it was the old proverb, "It is darkest before dawn."

Henry the VII. of England, was an autocrat, who established the star chamber and ruled with its help. He crushed the nobles and exercised almost absolute regal power. The rights of Magna Charta were being trampled under foot, and not until a descendant of this Henry, King Charles I. was executed on the scaffold, by the parliament of the people did English kings learn to listen respectfully to the voice of the nation: In France as well as in England, monarchical oppression ended in revolution, and in the case of the latter its colonies in the new world duplicated the transaction. By a law of evolution, chaos is made to give birth to order in things material, and the same law holds sway in nations in reference to their political life. Liberties are often achieved at a great price.

2. *Intellectually.* With the decline of Christianity came intellectual lethargy, the dark ages. The priests even could not tell the meaning of the Latin prayers they repeated, and the nobles could neither read nor write. With ignorance came superstition. The age was sensuous. The Crusades ended in a love for holy places, relics, images, rosaries, and saint worship. In 1453, when Constantinople was taken by the Moslems, and the Greek church fell under Ottoman domination, its dispersed members took its literature to Italy, Germany, and the west of Europe, and a marvellous impetus was given thereby to the Revival of Learning, which now began to make itself felt. The university

of Glasgow was founded 1453, Basle 1460, Venice 1470, Tübingen 1477, Copenhagen 1479, Aberdeen 1500, Wittenberg 1502. The study of Greek and Latin literature was encouraged. The human mind was emancipated and enlightened by renowned scholars and teachers such as Agricola, Reuchlin, and Erasmus, who revived classical study, freed learning from scholastic fetters, and helped to draw back the veil that had long hidden primitive Christianity and the sacred Scriptures.

The study of Astronomy during the last half of the fifteenth century had been receiving special attention. The old system of Ptolemy that made the earth the centre of the solar system was exploded by Nicolas de Cusa, in 1430, who taught that the earth revolves around the sun, thus preparing the way for Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Newton, who made it possible for the mariner to survey the heavens and ascertain his whereabouts on every sea. The exploration of the heavens was followed by the exploration of the earth as its legitimate sequence. The astronomer made way for the navigator.

The invention of the art of printing in 1440 was another of the precursors of the discovery of this continent. It multiplied the literature of the old Pagan world, and revived much of its evil and iniquity. The wretched morality which much of the classics inculcated or winked at was contaminating.

As a matter of fact, iniquity went hand in hand with knowledge. Many of the patrons of learning in this age were notoriously corrupt in morals, and this is pre-eminently true of the Popes. Pope Alexander VI. was poisoned by mistake in 1503, by a cup he and his son had mixed for the cardinals. He was simply a monster, and in the interests of his illegitimate children, he "trampled with contempt upon every obstacle which the demands of justice, the dictates of reason, and the remonstrances of religion threw in his way." Mosheim says, "the monastic societies had become so many herds of lazy, illiterate, profligate, and licentious Epicureans." "The licentious examples of the pontiffs were zealously imitated in the lives and manners of the subordinate rulers and ministers of the Church. The greatest part of the bishops and canons passed their days in dissolute mirth and luxury, and squandered away, in the gratification of their lusts and passions, the wealth that had been set apart for religious and charitable purposes." And yet for all this Rome, by the patronage of these men, became the centre of learning and the fine arts, strange as it may appear. The printing press made it easy to let the world know the great religious agitation beginning in Central Europe. In 1517, no less than 130 cities had presses in operation. In the year 1523, Luther published 183 works, other reformers 123, and Rome replied with 20. The

Scriptures were now being translated, printed and multiplied. In fact, the first book printed with metal types was the Bible, at Mentz, 1450. Now as ever it proved to be true: "The entrance of Thy Word giveth light."

3. *Religiously.* With the passing away of the Dark Ages, there arose those morning stars of the Reformation, Wickliffe, Huss, Savonarola. Wickliffe in England, had opposed the assumptions of the Pope, and branded him as anti-christ. He translated the Bible in 1384, which paved the way for English Protestantism. Rome felt the force of the blow, and after his death caused his body to be dug up and burned. John Huss, burned in 1415, and his associates in Bohemia, were disciples of Wickliffe. Their works were mostly extracts from their English Master, and as Luther owed much to their influence we trace the effects of Wickliffe's teaching in the great apostle of German reform. Savonarola, who with the fervor and power of an Elijah, thundered the truth in Florence so as to be heard in Rome, paid the penalty of being loyal to conscience and to Christ, by a martyr's death in 1498.

The testimony of these early witnesses for truth, though hushed by the flames of persecution, could not be destroyed. The Lollards of England preserved the gospel freedom they had learned to prize till a brighter day dawned. The Hussite sects of Utra-

quists, Taborites, and Moravians, stood for a purer faith, denouncing purgatory, confession, cloisters, relics, etc., and claiming that faith only justifies, and that bread and wine are but signs. The Anabaptists also were numerous before 1492, in Switzerland and Germany. This name by many historians has been made to include all kinds of fanatics, and sadly have they misrepresented a people contending for purity and truth. Recently however, fuller investigation and judicial fairness have led such investigators as Fusslin, Schaff, and others to do tardy justice to men who were in the forefront of religious reform. The former says: "There was a great difference between Anabaptists and Anabaptists. There were those among them who held strange doctrines, but this cannot be said of the whole sect. If we should attribute to every sect whatever senseless doctrines two or three fanciful fellows have taught, there is not one in the world to which we could not ascribe the most abominable errors." Dr. Schaff, more recently and even more emphatically rebukes past censure, and adds his tribute of commendation for the principles of the Anabaptists. These early Protestants suffered in every land from oppression and death, both by Reformers and Catholics, because they contended for a church composed of believers only, independent of the state, and answerable only to the authority of Christ and His word.

At the close of the fifteenth century, the Romish Church had descended to the lowest depths of corruption, and was popularly known as the Modern Babylon. She resorted to all kinds of means to raise money. Gold was her god. Unblushingly she practiced Simony and Nepotism. Alexander VI. bought the Papal crown and sold positions of honor and emolument in the Church. Indulgences were sold like ordinary street wares, and millions of money were secured to build St. Peter's, and maintain the luxury and vice of the Papal see. The inquisition was established, and some 50,000 were put to death in the Netherlands and Germany in Charles V.'s reign; while 105,000 were punished in Spain and 8,800 put to death by Torquemada's inquisition. In short, the situation had become so desperate that nothing was left the faithful but to separate. The reform that was to save Europe was to come not through the papacy but in spite of it. The appeal now could only be from the Pope to Christ, and from tradition to Scripture. The older heretical sects now became powerful reforming forces. The appeal to conscience found them ready, and the response was felt in every land. There now arose a class of men who, specially enlightened, grasped fundamental gospel truths and shone as stars of the first magnitude in their several spheres. Luther in Germany, Zuingle in Switzerland, Knox in Scotland, Cranmer in England.

These men with a band of almost as eminent associates now led the way to a permanent religious reform. While the sale of indulgence was the starting point and occasion, it was not the cause of the Reformation. That great movement rooted itself in two great truths—the one that salvation is the result of justification by faith alone as opposed to justification by works, and the other that the Scriptures alone are the only sufficient rule of faith and practice as opposed to tradition and the teachings of the Church.

We have already stated that the discovery of a true astronomy promoted the science of navigation. Copernicus made way for Columbus. The latter was born in 1435, and early conceived the idea of reaching the East Indies by sailing west. Vasco de Gama discovered the passage around the Cape of Good Hope to India in 1497. The Cabots in the same year discovered Labrador and Canada. Columbus, after many fruitless attempts to enlist different rulers in his project, was taken into the confidence and patronage of Queen Isabella, who furnished him with the necessary ships and outfit for the undertaking. He was a singular compound of religion, dreams, deceit, and avarice. He celebrated mass on setting out from Palos, and sang a Gloria in Excelsis when he sighted land, but to him must be awarded the title, "the first slave-driver of the new world." On his way across the ocean his course was turned south-

wards by the flight of a flock of birds, for which we need to be devoutly thankful, for representing the nation he did, as the Pope gave to Spain the dominion of the new world, it meant the escape of North America from the control of influences which have blighted the Southern Continent. The discoveries of the English under the Cabots gave the British a claim in the north which for years, however, was contested by the French. The latter, however, have never proved to be as successful colonizers as the English, and practically the whole Northern Continent fell to Great Britain. In the South, Spain and Portugal held sway. An immense immigration flowing from the old to the new world, urged largely the religious oppression of the fatherlands. These immigrants had suffered too from political oppression, and now in their new home they indulged in thoughts and acts looking toward political and religious revolution. While the intolerant religious spirit in many died hard, yet it died; and while the divine right of kings was supported by many for a time, it too yielded up the ghost, and a revolution resulting in a democratic republic, and a reform that snapped the bands of Church and State proclaimed itself supreme from Plymouth Rock to the Golden Gate.

II.—The results of the many influences and forces beginning and at work four hundred years ago have, under the guidance of Divine Providence, been many-

sided and far-reaching. To-day an order of things obtains vastly different in all respects to what the closing years of the fifteenth century witnessed.

1. *Politically.* Nations have risen and fallen. Then Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Turkey were pre-eminent, now they are subordinate. Spain threatened to annihilate England with her great Armada. Then she boasted of thirty-four millions of subjects; now she has only sixteen. Then Great Britain had only four millions population; now she has thirty, besides three hundred millions of colonial subjects. Spain to-day is impoverished, while the wealth of England has centupled.

The chief maritime nation of the world four hundred years ago was Portugal, and Lisbon, her capital, was the centre of the world's trade. Now these honors have moved north to "the fast anchored isle," and to London, her capital, with its five millions of souls.

Italy for centuries had been politically and ecclesiastically supreme. Then her pope was a power to be reckoned with in matters political as well as religious; now he mourns the loss of a small patrimony and keeps to his palace in the domains of the King of Italy, who himself is on the verge of bankruptcy.

The Turks, who had established themselves in Europe, with Constantinople as capital, were a terror to every western nation. As a blight and mildew

they fastened upon Eastern Europe; but their decadence politically and otherwise has been steady till their weakness and worthlessness is generally acknowledged, and their ruler is termed "the sick man of Europe."

2. The forces beginning to awake in the intellectual world at the discovery of America, have steadily gone forward gathering volume and power. Learning no longer is confined to the castle and the cloister, but has become the birthright of the masses. To-day is the age of the public school and the printing press. At the beginning of the sixteenth century one hundred and thirty cities boasted of the possession of printing presses; now every village in the civilized world enjoys the luxury. Now truer systems of science and philosophy have developed wonderful discoveries in the useful arts, and completely changed the conditions of life, so that the modern peasant possesses more of the elements of intellectual well-being than the mediæval prince.

3. The results, however, in the realm of things pertaining to God and conscience have witnessed the most wonderful change of all. Religiously the world looked dark in 1492. The dawn of better days came in with the Reformation, and spread rapidly over Western Europe, presaging grander triumphs for Christianity than the world had ever seen. All went well till a reaction set in at the close of the

eighteenth century, when the faith of the true followers of Christ was sorely taxed. In England there were deism and indifference ; in France atheism and infidelity ; in Germany, rationalism and pantheism ; while Southern Europe lay in a religious stupor from which it is slow to awake.

In these troublous times, so full of peril to vital godliness, the spirit of revival broke out in England in certain sections, through Moravian and Baptist influence. But the chief motive forces under God in this great tidal wave of gospel blessing, were the Wesleys and Whitefield. They went forth as modern John Baptists, burning and shining lights. They set all England aflame with the gospel, and emancipated multitudes from the thralldom of unbelief. In America, Jonathan Edwards and Whitefield did a similar work, and the need was just as imperative. The morality of the sons of the Pilgrims and Puritans, had sadly degenerated. Slavery had become entrenched in every state in the union. Profanity and uncleanness abounded. New England rum began to be manufactured in 1730, and its use became universal, not excepting funeral occasions. Barrels of wine, cider and rum were consumed at the funerals of clergymen even, and this went on till the general court interfered and prohibited the practice. Untruthfulness was so common that Jefferson said, "Nothing can be believed that is seen in a newspaper," and Washington says he was assailed as if he had

been "a Nero or a pickpocket." No Bibles were allowed to be printed during the colonial history in the colonies by the mother country. During the war of the revolution rum was plenty and bibles scarce. The first American edition of the Bible was published by Robert Aiken, in Philadelphia, in 1781. The work of revival beginning and coincident with the labors of Wesley and his associates, and the same work in America by men of different denominations, has gone forward for a hundred years, till now Evangelical Christianity is the prevailing type of religion both in England and America.

The missionary spirit broke out at the close of the last century. Concern for the salvation of the lost at home led to consideration of the sad state of the heathen world.

The first to organize a society and send out missionaries to the heathen were the English Baptists, 1792. The London Society was organized in 1795, the Church Missionary Society in 1801, the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1802, the Wesleyan in 1817, the American Board in 1810, the American Missionary Union, 1814.

These early attempts at Missions were underestimated and ridiculed. Sydney Smith sneered at the pious shoemaker of Paulerspury, William Carey. The Scottish General Assembly pronounced the idea "fanatical and absurd, dangerous and visionary." Senator Crowningshield of Massachusetts, objected to

granting a charter to the American Board, on the ground that it would "export religion, and they had none to export." These puny witticisms, rebukes and opposition have been swept away, and Foreign Missions now command the respect, sympathy and benevolence of the wisest and best. England honors Carey more to-day than Macedon did Alexander, honors Livingstone more than Athens did Pericles, and America honors Judson more than Rome did Cicero. If you ask to see the results of Modern Missions look around from "Greenland's Icy Mountains," to "India's Coral Strand." From pole to pole their monument is seen, and all round the circle of the earth their benign influence is experienced.

The growth of Christianity has been wonderful. The best statisticians agree on the following figures: in the first century there were half a million Christians, in the fifth fifteen millions, in the tenth fifty millions, in the fifteenth one hundred millions, in the eighteenth two hundred millions, in 1880 four hundred and ten millions. These figures need no comment to add to their impressiveness and power in setting forth the triumphs of the cross.

A hundred years ago, Hume, Gibbon, Payne, Voltaire and others were sounding the death knell of the gospel, and writing the epitaph of the Nazarene and the Bible. They were a power and had a wondrous audience. No less than 5,768,900 volumes of

their infidel works were circulated in a few years. Now very few read them, and their names are forgotten save to be execrated for the baneful pestilence they scattered. But Bible Societies have survived and multiplied, and circulate every year millions of copies of the Word of God. A hundred years ago, there was one foreign missionary, sustained by a mere pittance; now there are 3000, expending more than \$12,000,000 annually, in preaching, teaching and carrying forward the work, by Protestants alone.

If it be said that much of the gain of Christianity has been Romanist, we reply, that in 1500, Europe had one hundred millions of Christians, almost all Romanist and Greek Church. In 1700, Rome had ninety millions, the Greek Church thirty-three millions and Protestants thirty-two millions. In 1876, Rome had a population under her government of 180,787,905, the Greek Church 96,101,894 and the Protestants 408,569,612. In 176 years Rome had doubled, the Greek Church trebled, but Protestantism had increased over twelve-fold. How different the Pope's position then and now! Then he could give away a whole hemisphere by the stroke of his pen; now he, by his own confession, mourns as a captive on the banks of the Tiber. Then the nations over whom he held the strongest control were foremost for culture, commerce and military prowess; now all this is changed. Protestantism has a monopoly of all

forceful and enlightening influences; wherever her reign extends, the emancipated mind and conscience uplifts its possessor. Romanism, as a system of intellectual and moral slavery, degrades.

It has been said that Rome is gaining in America the ground she has lost in Europe. How is it? It must be conceded that she has been greatly helped in the new world, by a continuous stream of immigration mostly of her faith; but even with this advantage, facts do not warrant the assertion. Dr. Dorchester of the Department of the Interior, in the United States, and author of a book on Religious Progress, says, in 1870 Rome had in the United States 4,600,000, in 1880 she had 6,467,330. He estimates that the Roman Catholic immigrants from all countries and their offspring during the past thirty years, must have amounted to seven millions. A very large proportion of these, amounting to millions, must have been lost to the Romish Church, and it is so confessed by leading Catholic writers. Another significant fact is that Methodists and Baptists, who get little by immigration, to-day outnumber the Roman Catholics in the United States. The success of Rome in America is not alarmingly conspicuous.

In the whole world there are 187,000,000 Protestants. The four great denominations, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists, have each from twenty to twenty-five millions, the

Lutherans about thirty-five millions, Congregationalists about six millions and the balance in miscellaneous sects. The growth of Baptists on this continent has been phenomenal. Their first church was planted in 1644. They had increased in 1790 to 65,000, in 1840 to 600,000, in 1892 to 3,509,800 church members in regular Baptist churches only. They have \$110,000,000 invested in church property and over \$34,000,000 in Educational Institutions. The other Protestant denominations can make most excellent exhibits of progress, but especially is this true of the Methodists.

Our brief survey of the world in the periods selected politically, intellectually and religiously—shows us that the nations are learning to recognize :

1. *The civil rights of men.* The day is forever past when man shall be considered something to exist for the good of the State. Man now makes the State, and it obtains simply as something to promote his welfare. His rights are God-given, and pre-eminent, his dominion was conferred by his Creator, and bears the divine impress. Caesar in his realm has rights. Honor is due the king ; but the subject has rights, and woe betide him to-day who determines to ignore or abridge those rights. The age has grown friendly to man as a man, and an unwritten Magna Charta conserves his inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

2. *The necessity for Universal Education.* The day has gone by never to return, when the school-master shall find his sphere among a favored few. He has walked out of the cloister and the convent and is now abroad in the land. The human intellect is being enfranchised, and demands enlightenment. Steadily the public school is pushing its way, and forming that broad base which alone can make stable all attempts at higher education. If teaching as well as knowledge comes from above, it must widen its scope as it proceeds, and meet its highest and grandest achievements among the masses. The lesson is unmistakable that the college has preceded the school, but in the end is dependent upon it for its growth and efficiency. The world to-day has learned to put the emphasis of effort into the Common School, and as daylight follows dawn, the evolution is Academy, College, University. No land can be held in servitude where education abounds, and nations to-day are hastening to work out the problem of the free common school as basal to all stable development.

3. *The truth of the principle, there should be a Free Church in a Free State.* The union of these two as a theory and a practice, has received such stalwart blows as to make its old time advocates waver in their fidelity. The protests of German and Swiss Anabaptists, and British Nonconformists have been potential, but in America, Roger Williams in

his pattern State, Rhode Island, caused the principle to take root and bear fruit. "No union between Church and State!" sounded out from this old colony. Baptists in all the States ranged themselves solidly, solemnly and determinedly, to secure its adoption by the general government. Virginia fell into line. Petition after petition went up to the Continental Congress in its favor. Isaac Backus was almost everywhere stirring up the people and appealing to Congress, till in the end the result was achieved, and the first amendment to the American Constitution was secured, by which forever it is affirmed that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or the freedom of the press." The agitation of this question passed over to Canada, and was endorsed here. Great Britain, for years, has been agitated by the demand for no union between Church and State. France and Germany have discussed the matter; and the tide is setting in everywhere in favor of the principle.

4. *The doctrine of soul liberty, the enthronement of conscience, the right of the individual in religion to decide and act for himself.* This blessing has been enjoyed so long as to make some people think it always obtained, but ecclesiastical history dispels such an illusion. Rome never conceded the right, and Protestantism in its earlier years denied it, although

it is the logical outcome of its fundamental propositions. The old Anabaptists suffered severe persecutions in its behalf, but kept up the testimony, until now the doctrine of soul liberty has invaded all Protestant faiths, and made itself more or less felt everywhere. Man as man is recognized as having a God-given right to think and act for himself so long as he infringes not on others' rights, and to God alone he begins to feel he is responsible for the character of his worship. These principles have a universal acceptance on this continent. They are entrenched in Britain, and their birth-throes are being witnessed the world over. Men everywhere owe a great debt to Baptists for their long and emphatic assertion of these truths. The realm of the State is distinct. It deals with men as men. The realm of the Church deals with men as worshippers. The former has no right to interfere in the latter. Caesar has a realm, and enforces his orders with penalties, here. God has a realm, and will enforce His own requirements. This Baptist idea has become the American idea; it is becoming the world's idea; and the grandest triumphs for Christianity are to be witnessed in its reception universally.

In fine, back of man we find God in Christ, the world's one Lord and Master, and Head over all things to the Church. Back of all aggregations of men, whether in churches, schools or nations, there is the

providence of GOD controlling all and leading all to that sublime height where in all things Jesus shall have the pre-eminence.

“Henceforth my heart shall sigh no more
For olden time and holier shore—
Through clouds of doubt and creeds of fear,
A light is breaking calm and clear.
The song of Love, now low and far,
Ere long shall swell from star to star!”