

EVANGELICAL RELIGION GAINING GROUND
IN THIS COUNTRY.

A SERMON

PREACHED ON

THANKSGIVING-DAY, 1858,

IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

BEFORE THE

Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian Congregations

OF

SARATOGA SPRINGS.

BY JOHN WOODBRIDGE,

Pastor of the Presbyterian Church.

SARATOGA SPRINGS:

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SARATOGA SPRINGS, Nov. 19, 1858.

REV. JOHN WOODEBRIDGE,

Rev'd and Dear Sir:

Impressed, in common, as we believe, with all your hearers, with the importance and soundness of the positions assumed in your interesting discourse, to which we were privileged yesterday to listen; and admiring not less the spirit in which it was conceived, than the manner in which it was expressed, we respectfully solicit a copy for publication.

We are,

Very respectfully and sincerely yours,

JOHN WILLARD,

P. DURKEE,

O. L. BARBOUR,

E. B. STEVENS,

JAS. B. MCKEAN,

E. N. BROWN,

R. H. BENEDICT,

JAMES A. HOYT,

S. E. BUSHNELL,

M. CHILD,

W. L. STONE,

L. E. WHITING,

REUBEN H. WALWORTH,

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N. E. YOUNG,

GEO. H. FISH,

JOHN NEWLAND,

BENJ. BACON,

H. H. MUNSELL,

A. S. FONDA,

ROBERT PATTERSON,

A. POND,

A. A. PATTERSON,

ALEX'R PROUDFIT.

S E R M O N.

SAY NOT THOU, WHAT IS THE CAUSE THAT THE FORMER DAYS WERE BETTER THAN THESE? FOR THOU DOST NOT INQUIRE WISELY CONCERNING THIS. Ecclesiastes vii. 10.

AS a Christian assembly, composed of the members of the different tribes of the one Israel of God, we have met for the public services appertaining to this welcome festival. In no manner, perhaps, could a more general, deep and profitable gratitude be awakened in our hearts, than by the proof that the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all the good which waits thereon, is steadily advancing, throughout the length and breadth of our common country. Many would promptly contest such a proposition. They have seen too many birds of ill-omen in the sky, and too many signs of coming evil on the earth, to suppose that the blessing which includes or compensates for the want of every other, is to be so widely dispensed to our favored people. But let the

planets be found in the house of death, or life, we believe that the star of the morning is above us, and is destined to lose itself in the light of a blessed future for this nation and its church.

We speak, of course, of no particular denomination, but of that Kingdom of God, which is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. We pity the narrow soul of the man who professes to follow Christ, and yet retains so much of the bigotry which infidelity should be privileged to horde among her other jewels, that he can see in any of the churches of the Redeemer only a self-seeking sect. We rejoice in the belief, that above the ensign of every regiment in the host of God, flashes the banner that was stained for all with sacred blood. We doubt not that every church of Jesus values, chiefly, those precious treasures of salvation which are the heritage bequeathed in His New Testament to all who walk by faith. We trust that denominational distinctions are mostly maintained because they are deemed promotive of the one end we all seek—the glory of the Saviour of sinners. Phalanx to phalanx, and shoulder to shoulder, we hope the embattled armies of the Living God are now advancing to the victory—that Christ should be all and in all. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

If there are indications and evidences to justify the conclusion that evangelical christianity is destined to win and fill this land, never was the language of the text more applicable to nation or church. God's providence

says to us, Say not thou what is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this. Let the words serve to warn the enemies of the cross of Christ, of the futility of their hatred; to lead the thoughtless to ask after the nature and claims of this all-conquering Gospel; to rebuke the fearful and to admonish the distrustful; to encourage all who labor and pray that the Kingdom of God may come; and to impart to our annual day of THANKSGIVING a tone befitting so grand a theme.

II.

Before we enter upon the leading subject of our discourse, it will not be inappropriate to the occasion, and will tend to magnify our topic as one to incite to praise for good already received, as well as for that in prospect, if we glance, cursorily, at the field which we conceive the Lord has chosen, here and now, for His name and for the glory of His kingdom.

Conceive yourself gifted by a power above us, with a vision to embrace in its ample scope all the scenes which this morning beautify the broad continent. This western world is in your sight. We do not include the forbidding ice-fields of the polar zone; nor the dependencies of a foreign throne that bound us on the north; nor the demoralized dominions overrun by the semi-barbaric mongrel races of Central America. We speak of our national home, which is known, however, all over the world by the name of America and its people as Americans,

either because it is so preponderant in all the elements of proper greatness, that the rest of the continent is hardly heavier than the dust of the balance ; or because the anticipation has become universal and instinctive, that one day our great confederacy must stretch from ocean to ocean and from pole to pole. We view our country as now it appears on the map of the western hemisphere. Let us look down not on the picture but the scene itself, which far exceeds all that ever was traced on the canvas, over which art has wrought its spell and into which has been breathed the breath of that mystic life.

As if to be enriched by the commerce and readily to receive the tribute of all lands, this vast domain lies embosomed between seas, which float the ships, and on whose shores dwell the prominent nations of the world. Like a silver fringe along the northern frontier run the flashing rivers, save where the lakes expand to vary the outline ; while on the south glitter the bright waters of the Gulf, and the horizon melts away into the haze of the tropics. Within these limits, in a variety profuse and magnificent, are seen mountain ranges, fruitful valleys, deep rivers, the streams that run among the hills, and the interminable prairies which invite the plowshare to open their treasures of fertility. There, too, spreading over tracts that in the old world might be a proud empire, are the majestic forests, some of them radiant in the beauties of evergreen, some in mild climes that sustain perpetual verdure, some in changing autumn hues, and some leafless, waiting the spring-time. There

are harvest fields by myriads that have just given up their prolific increase at the ingathering, or where perchance still stand the huge stacks of yellow maize. There, also, are the boundless savannas still whitened by the ungathered cotton that anon shall be clothing for the world. And there, too, are the golden fields of our young and comely sister who, from her home on the Pacific, looks westward through her Golden Gate toward the land of the morning.

Over this august arena genius and science, guiding the cunning hands of art and industry, have achieved their brilliant trophies—befitting accessories to nature's grand display. While we speak, huge steamers by hundreds ply along those rivers, in the east and the west, in the north and the south, with all their triumphs of motion and of burden ; a thousand locomotives, whose shrill cries resound through the valleys, enliven the prospect, as they speed hither and thither, springing like living things beneath the touch of their drivers' hands ; and the electric wires are concentrating all these vast and diversified scenes into one focus of life and business and manifold association, even as now, in fancy, we have seemed to survey all that pageant in a field the eye could cover.

There we may behold those scores of cities, adorned with stately public edifices, the palaces of the rich, and the marts of traffic ; and whose streets are crowded with living throngs, intent on many schemes, but all hastening to the gate where ends every earthly route. Numberless

ships line the ten thousand wharves. There the steamships slumber at their berths, as if returned from beyond seas wearied with their long march over mountain-waves, they now refresh themselves for their new expeditions; and forests of masts wait to spread their wings to any wind on any sea. Scattered in all parts of the wide field are the thousand lesser towns, each with its own special advantage and privilege in the distribution of Providence. Manifold are the pursuits in this realm of labor and toil. In its hum of business mingle the sound of hammers, the play of shuttles and the whirring of wheels—the echoes which nature gives back as if she answered consciously and cheerily in converse and fellowship with mechanic skill. And further, we may not overlook our own favored locality, well distinguished to be the first summer resort of the land, with springs of water that possess gifts of healing for the sick, and of refreshment for the wayworn.

But let us inspect more closely the fair scene before us. Spread over city and town and valley and hill are millions of homes, amid which our population find their purest joys and their happiest hours. What blissful experiences of affection among these parents and children! In how many habitations to-day, as loved ones meet, will laughter and tears struggle together for mastery as to which shall be allowed to express the exstasy of thanksgiving! The social relations are among the highest gifts of God. They do not exist merely to give zest to the hours of cheer or festivity spent in the circle of congenial society. They ought to incite us to all kindly sympathies,

to educate us to duty, as we belong to the one great human family. Let friendships and the warmer attachments of the heart have their chosen seasons.

“ All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of love,
And feed his sacred flame.”

And here, borrowing and lending tender grace in all the scene, old age leans on its reverent staff as if ever bowing to God, to whose presence it hastes: while childhood reflects in smiles the brightness of the ruddy morning of life.

Here, also, are administered the laws, which are among the noblest progeny of a teeming civilization. Justice has her temple in every precinct, where judges bear her sword and hold her even scales, while her advocates expend their learning and their eloquence in the maintenance of right. Printing presses, on every side, give form and multiplicity to the creations of intellect and genius. Through the long night their work is perfected, so that at early dawn they may scatter, like the sun his beams, wisdom and truth. In all portions of that bright territory rise the noble walls of institutions of learning—colleges, academies and common schools, in which between four millions and five millions of pupils are daily seeking knowledge at the lips of one of the worthiest classes that ever adorned society—the instructors of youth. The asylums, too, which charity has erected to be the retreat

of the unfortunate, meet our notice. There, blindness learns to see, and the tongue of the dumb finds a substitute in flexile fingers, touchingly eloquent; and disease and accident obtain relief in hospitals, in which the most eminent members of the eminent profession of medicine are prompt to render their kindly service.

But the noblest of all the features adorning our country, are the more than thirty-eight thousand houses of worship which greet the eye wherever it looks. Beneath the spreading roofs of these churches, more than fifteen millions of our people may sit together to worship our fathers' God. Let it be a sabbath morning. Imagination will vainly seek a grander vision than is realized, week by week, when the darkness is chased westward by the rising sun, and the holy light of the day of the Son of Man bursts into all these holy temples, and the worshippers roll heavenward their psalms of lofty praise.

Amid the abysses of space which overhang this continent the storms may here and there be raging, and only between them the blue sky and the sunlight cheer the world beneath; but above every city and state, higher than the clouds, is the brightness of the unobscured sun. The day-spring will not forget its place. May we not accept the steadfastness of nature, as an emblem of the light and blessedness in which this land shall still rejoice? By the churches of the Redeemer is all our good to grow into the better and the best, and to become the abiding heritage of the time to come. These churches are increasing in numbers, and are extending in influence and

power. Let Jesus reign over us, and we have no fear for the future. Under His sceptre every evil will disappear, and all good will be perpetuated and increased.

III.

That many occasions for fear and lamentation exist in our favored land, cannot be denied. To deny the fact, would be simply to say that this nation had ceased to belong to the family of mankind on earth. The human race is depraved. The American people is certainly no exception. To estimate our tendencies, to prognosticate evil or expect good, irrespective of this inborn moral condition, is as if one should estimate the operation of natural forces, but leave out the power of gravity. When plague-spots appear on the face of society, no surprise need be felt by those who believe the testimony of the Bible. To despair of the progress of the Gospel because urgent evils demand remedy, is to lose sight of the very nature of the mission of the Lord, who came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. We might easily occupy this hour, or the hours till eventide, in the recital of evidences of the wide-spread wickedness of this land. But if this wickedness, whether existing among us as a community, or a commonwealth, or a nation, whether found among the social, or business, or political relations of men, is alleged to show that the Gospel cannot be perfecting its divine work, answers, abundant and conclusive, are not wanting.

Every civil society has appeared to those best convers-

ant, with it, on the verge of destruction, and has contained elements to have wrought dissolution to the very foundations. The records of manners, whether in fact or fiction, if they have been true to nature, have presented this state of the case. The man who was best read of all uninspired men in the history of the human heart, often makes his characters refer to the degeneracy of the times in which they lived. Every state is degenerate and corrupt to those who know it well, because the conditions of an unsanctified nature develop themselves in all man's relations. Did we know what transpires in this very town, month by month, in practices of cruelty and vice and crime, we should feel as if the earth would open to swallow us up. A close observer of mankind once remarked to me, that he had never known a village but had, in the estimation of its inhabitants, the worst boys any where to be found. Thus we are familiar with our own age, and may be ready to think we have fallen on evil days.

But the world moves. Grant that the pool of politics is defiled, and that base men are too often found in high places. What would now be thought of a condition of society in which the prime minister of a Christian empire should offer bribes for votes as openly as he would purchase any article of trade? We read that not less than half a million of dollars have been paid on a single morning, in a past generation, as the reward for such prostitution. The maxim of Walpole was, that the man who felt himself insulted by a bribe was only indignant because he

had been valued at so low a figure: he was provoking a higher bid. What shall we think of times when the jest was current of a bill in Parliament to strike out the NOT from the decalogue and insert it in the creed?

Another consideration deserves attention, when existing evil is urged as evidence that the religion of Jesus is ineffectual, or unlikely to win a complete triumph in our borders. Every generation begins life, morally, precisely where its predecessor did. External circumstances may be ameliorated from age to age; influences for good may be multiplied; civil and social evils may be abated; but the nature transmitted from the original apostasy reappears in all the children of the first Adam. Could the entire generation now on the stage be won to the obedience of faith, the world would be peopled, in thirty years, with a race universally hostile, in the course of nature, to the reign of Christ.

Here is the conclusive answer to the objection often made to the doctrine of the cross, that, after 1800 years, the world is still under sin and its direful consequences. We make the sad admission, and deem the fact proof of a cardinal doctrine of God's word, articulated indissolubly with the sum of its teachings—the fallen nature of the race. Consider that far more than all the present inhabitants on the globe have, no doubt, during these eighteen centuries been enriched with the priceless gift of salvation. They have been rendered blessed and useful in this life and have passed into glory. To complain of the gospel that it does not extirpate the evil nature of mankind, is to

complain of the harvests because they do not prevent hunger.

Without extending further these thoughts, the fact that wickedness is still so rife and that such immense results remain to be accomplished, may altogether be set aside as an objection against the progress of the kingdom of Heaven. The polluted hearts and evil courses of men, however developed, may find purification in the Gospel. The good tree will bring forth good fruit, and the corrupt tree evil fruit.

IV.

The evidence that evangelical religion is extending in the United States, more rapidly than infidelity with all its specious theories, or than all the forms of nominal Christianity, whether traditional or speculative, is from too many sources to be fully produced in a single sermon.

The general condition of society among us, is such as has never existed apart from the influences of the Gospel, as the power of God unto salvation. Our government, in which stability is so happily conjoined with progress, and order with the highest degree of personal liberty consistent with the general good, could not continue except as the powers of the world to come were widely felt. Education, which is here acknowledged to be the rightful privilege of the masses, is in this sense the offspring of the truth in Jesus. And the tender charities which have taken form in all our kindly institutions, which are increasing constantly in number and efficiency,

have ever clustered around the Church, as if born from beneath her heart and nourished by her life. The extent to which all human interests, as now regarded, are indebted to the faith once delivered to the saints, cannot be overestimated. We can only allude to this train of argument and pass to considerations that are less controvertible.

Vital evangelical Christianity has concomitants which attest her presence as the shadow betokens the substance. Her testimonies as moulding human opinion; her ordinances as demanding the observance of all, her influence as bearing on the salvation of men, never were so effectually doing their high office as now. Never before did the Church of Christ separate so many from the world and commit them so fully to the cause of God. A few particulars will illustrate these facts.

Never, we think, was the sentiment so lofty or common that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and life, that we cannot be saved except these abide with us in the ship. There probably never was a time when so many of the best minds were intent on the elucidation of that Word. In this and other lands the kings of intellect are bringing the riches of the Gentiles, and Sheba and Seba are there with a gift, to hang their wreath on the shrine of the lively Oracles.

The very type of the prevailing infidelity of the day manifests the modifying power of the teaching of Jesus, even on those who reject His divinity. Little is now heard or read of that coarse infidelity which, in an age gone by, flourished so rankly and offensively. Seldom

now are these filthy attacks made on the Bible, unless in the base revels of some Tom Paine celebration, where the character of that besotted, pitiable man, accords with the drunken orgies that are selected to honor it, and the vulgarity and profanity of those who consent to unearth a body that was all too ripe for burial before its dissolution. Infidelity, to gain a hearing, is forced to be sober, is often apparently earnest, and even devout. Its language seldom shocks the listener with irreverence for the scriptures or other sacred things. Indeed, it often professes to be in deep distress, because unable to yield submission to the charming delusions of that oldest and most remarkable book in the world. The old weapons, whose play once gladdened multitudes with the vain expectation that the days of the reign of the eternal Lawgiver were ended, those weapons are thrown away. Infidelity has met with no change of heart. Pride, wrath, malice, all are there; but the whine and cant that cover the bitterness and hatred, exceed any that ever were imputed to Puritan conventicle.

The literature of the day testifies to the progress of evangelical sentiments. We do not allude to the fact that so many of the first writers of the age in the field of thought, of science and of elegant letters, are professedly followers of Christ, but to the fact that our general literature is now so largely tinged with hues taken out of God's holy repository of truth, beauty and goodness. Strictly religious books were never multiplied as now. Most of the issues of the press are of a hopeful tendency.

Yellow-covered trash is not meant: that scum of the caldron lacks substance to take a hue. We speak of the products of a far higher order of minds. The last work of Dickens is said to have lost both interest and sale, before completion: the Bleak House was rather too bleak for general occupancy, and Little Dorrit was quite deserted by the numbers who began life in company. And this, while the sermons of Spurgeon are flying abroad on the wings of the wind. A great change has also taken place in the religious leanings of the higher class of monthly and quarterly Magazines and Reviews, both in this country and Great Britain. There are exceptions, unimportant, however, in general influence, if not in the self-conceit and self-laudation of the writers who figure in their articles. On the pages of that renowned Review, where, a generation since, appeared those celebrated diatribes against Missions and Methodism, whose wit was exceeded only by their impiety, we have lately read the most cutting sarcasms upon a presumptuous novelist who ventured to attack some truth of God's word; and while we pity the victim of the lashing, we are unable to restrain our laughter at the dance of the puppet under the thong administered with the old vigor, but in so different a cause.

Let us listen to the testimony of another class of witnesses. Many of the prominent public men of the nation boldly confess Christ before the world: they are men of faith and prayer. The remark holds good both of judges and legislators. There has hardly been an exception

among our very distinguished statesmen who have lately passed away: they have died in possession of humble Christian hope. On the tomb of Webster is written his dying prayer to Christ as the Hearer of prayer, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief. In company and in sacramental fellowship with his colored servant, Clay received on his death-bed the elements of the holy communion. Calhoun died, it is believed, in the faith of his fathers of the stern old Scotch-Irish stock. Within a year Benton, who though he attained not to the first three, died full of honors, told his pastor that his only hope of salvation was in the righteousness of Jesus Christ—mercy to a sinner. The religious character maintained by the Executive of this State is well known. It was matter of public fame, that, during the summer past, the President of the United States was found a regular attendant on the daily prayer meetings held at Bedford Springs, where he sojourned. The addresses made in our National Congress on the death of members are not seldom specific in their allusions to eternal and divine things, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Mr. Giddings, the oldest member of the House, himself a religious man, paid to the present Congress the tribute, that he had never known that body when it had so high a moral character. Their political opinions belong to the tribunal of popular judgment, where, as a minister of God, I gladly leave them. But in all these signs of moral progress we rejoice, yea and will rejoice.

As testimony of the same general tendency we must notice the distinct acknowledgment of God and his word,

in many of our great conventions for political or other purposes; and the recognition of the Divine agency in the success which has attended projects of national interest.

Our limits permit allusion to a single illustration. Even the partial success of the Atlantic Cable aroused the country to enthusiasm. The idea of instantaneous communication between the old world and the new might well excite all minds, and enkindle in the coldest breast, burning thoughts and emotions. Were this all, we could bless God that it has been written from continent to continent, and that God's message has been borne, by his own lightning, underneath the sea, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men. We give Him thanks that when Mother and Daughter found themselves heart to heart again after their long separation, the words they had to speak to one another were out of God's eternal Bible. We are grateful for those recognitions of Providence, in each case we trust heartfelt, by Queen and President.

But let us look more immediately at the Church herself, as embracing only those who may be regarded as having professed, according to the scriptures, the religion of Christ. How are her special duties done? How are her inalienable ordinances honored? Is the flock within her fold relatively growing? The evidence we bring forward may be brief, but we hope it is neither incompetent nor doubtful to sustain our position.

The sabbath was probably never so well observed, in the country at large, as recently. In many quiet Chris-

tian towns, owing to the influx of foreigners, the case is no doubt otherwise. But, on the whole, the improvement is beyond question. Our old inhabitants tell us that they remember the time when, in this place, the first day of the week was almost like any other day. It is now far otherwise. Not that we have no room for further progress. We hope for still better things, as we have reason to believe that from year to year the profanation of the Lord's day decreases. Furthermore, many of the public avenues of travel are now closed on that day. To this result moral influences have not been without weight; pecuniary considerations have been conclusive. The laws in the case are no more stringent than formerly; but there is a power behind the throne which has not been idle. Public sentiment now veers toward the conviction that we need a sabbath, given to the purposes which the word of God has designated. The rest and recreation for an immortal man on a holy day, are not in the sports of childhood, or the poor amusements which are vainly called pleasures. A rural sabbath dawn, whose unearthly quiet is unbroken, save by

"The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,

The swallow twittering from the straw built shed,"

when the devout soul seems so naturally to rise in pious contemplation: this is to us an index of the peace, the rest and the serene enjoyment which befit the day.

View, also, the growth of the missionary enterprises of the Church as illustrative of her progress. A single generation has witnessed a new light coming upon Zion, and

the glory of the Lord God risen upon her. The brightness of that rising is now over all lands. The Lord hath visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people to His name. As out of the ocean-waves are drawn the exhalations that descend in rains on distant continents, so out of the Church is gathered its wealth of affection, of substance and of prayer, to enrich the waste places of the earth. A very significant fact in this connection is, that the Churches of Christ seem to be steadily coming to a fuller appreciation of their true mission in the world, to carry the simple gospel to all mankind, and to pursue that object in the simplest methods, looking for and hoping for success only in the presence and power of the Divine Redeemer.

As directly connected with the progress of Zion, we cannot pass by, as a sign full of promise, the increased care and solicitude which are shown in behalf of the children and youth. Parents training their children in the way they should go, bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, are doing a work for the Church of the future. The vision which made the heart of the Psalmist rejoice, (Ps. 144,) was that of sons grown up in youth—in early manhood to a noble maturity of wisdom and piety; and daughters—as corner stones polished after the similitude of a palace—accomplished for a holy service amid the foundations of society, which they alone are able to strengthen and adorn. Sabbath by sabbath, also, are millions of the youth of our land gathered for special instruction under the banner of the

love of Jesus. The seed sown in all these hearts is the incorruptible seed, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. What fruit may we not hope for, by the grace of God? Who shall limit the richness or abundance of the ingathering?

The most important fact remains. Never did such numbers of the choicest young men of the land have in view the work of the ministry of Christ as now. Let me speak of the Presbyterian Church, as I am familiar with its condition, and believe it is not excepted from its sister denominations in the prosperity to which I refer. There is, I believe, no theological seminary in the bounds of this Church, but has this year a larger number of students than ever before in its history. What a witness is this fact to the present life and future purposes of God's people. Says a professor in one of these institutions, in speaking of the students who resort to them, "Many years and many toils have brought them to these class-rooms; many prayers, many tears, many heart-struggles have attested the depth of their conviction that they ought to be there; and many gentle, loving and faithful spirits, far away, are solemnly mindful of them as they go in and out, in their preparation for the self-denying but august calling which the Lord hath chosen them for. The widow's son, and the stay of the poor man's house, and the hope of the rich and the great, and the light and joy of the highest in the land, all are there. I have seen them mingled on those humble forms, and the only rivalry is, or should be, who is most willing, who

most fit, to labor and to suffer for Christ's sake." These are the young men who are going forth in increasing numbers, with their intellect and heart and culture, to give themselves to the spread of the gospel of Jesus. Many of them have abandoned brilliant worldly expectations. They have renounced all things for Christ. This service is with each a labor of love. His prayer is to live and die a minister of the Lord, who bought him. His language to those who would turn him from his work is that of the apostle, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart, for I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus. Give us a ministry who count all things but loss for Christ, who will never turn aside for threat or allurement from the one object—the salvation of the souls of men—and the redemption of the world shall draw nigh.

The conclusion respecting the relative condition and prospects of evangelical Christianity must be admitted with one voice, we think, even in view of the premises already distributed. The facts alleged could not exist without the growth of a pure spiritual religion. Data exist, however, which place the entire case in such a light as to forestall all need of argument or inference, or demonstration. Statistics are abundant to exhibit this fact, as all other facts, in the range of the blunt severity of figures, are exhibited. We select a few particulars that will show the extent and rapidity of this progress. From 1832 to 1854 the population of the country increased eighty-eight per centum. In the same period the number of evangelical

ministers increased one hundred and seventy-five per centum : showing an astonishing gain, proportionally, on the population, and that, in the face of an immense foreign immigration, which counts almost exclusively on one side only of these estimates. Competent statisticians tell us that in 1832, on an average, there was a Christian minister to every 1437 inhabitants throughout the country. In 1843 there was one to every 1093; while in 1854 every 988 persons could claim the labors of an ambassador of Christ. The actual returns of membership in the various churches show that the communicants have increased ninefold from the year 1800, while the population has advanced four and a half fold in the same time. Thus the churches have multiplied their members at double the rate of the growth of population, prodigious and unprecedented as that has been. What provision these people of God are making for those who are still beyond their pale, appears from the further fact brought out by the national census of 1850; that there are now church accommodations in the entire country for every four hundred and twenty persons able to attend upon public worship. Of these church edifices eighty per centum have been built by evangelical denominations. To multiply these statistics is needless, and might seem mere affectation. We leave them to rehearse their simple story to every ear and heart on this glad day.

There are still other signs of the advancement of the work of God in this land—which by no means may be forgotten—which may indeed serve as the climax to all

that has been said. The most High has seemed to testify to us during the year past that he loveth the gates of Zion, and will make it the joy of the earth. The loudest acclamations of praise are due for the additions made by His grace to the number of His people in this general revival. Thousands of churches, tens of thousands of families and hundreds of thousands of hearts are blessing the Lord for these saving benefits. Hardly has such an occasion for thanksgiving arisen since the days of Pentecost. We have seemed to see a visible seal attesting that this is Immanuel's land. Probably not less than one third of a million of persons have been born of God, during the past year, within our borders. Each individual of this vast army has now changed sides in the conflict of ages; his heart, his hands, his means are the Lord's. He is now in covenant against sin, and vows sealed with water and with blood bind him to follow Christ in the regeneration. The law of righteousness and love is the rule of his duty.

The method in which these results have been effected is also full of promise and hope. The invisible elements of Divine power and love have been at work in our behalf; while the peculiar honor God has put on prayer has distinguished this dispensation of His grace. Combine these forces as on the side of God and on the side of man, and who shall dare to limit the Holy One of Israel. Here is the secret of the marvelous stillness and success of this work. Where have not its superhuman transformations been wrought? Convictions have arrested the thoughtless at the midnight hour, when, like the king of old, they could

not sleep. Some have been stopped in the streets by the voice of the Son of God. Others have, for the first time, found themselves face to face with Jesus, and alone with Him, among the numbers who filled some public conveyance. Some have found peace in believing, in the place of social prayer ; others, by the ministry of the word. In hospitals, in prisons, in places likeliest and most unlikely for religious thought, God has revealed Himself as gracious, and has made His power known. The child of prayer that had cast off fear has remembered parental faithfulness and gone back weeping to his father's house ; and the stranger to divine things has felt new impulses, to him all inexplicable, toward the assembly of the good, and the Saviour therein worshipped. The madness of unbelief cannot deny that the agency which has done all this, can make this nation to be wholly the Lord's. And as we remember that all the power and the honor belong to our glorious Lord God, even Jesus Christ, who will not say, Let His name be praised, for He doth build up Jerusalem. He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Ye angels : ye stars of light : kings of the earth, and all people : princes and all judges of the earth : both young men and maidens ; old men and children, let them praise the name of the Lord. He hath exalted the horn of his people, the praise of all His saints ; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto Him. And in time to come, when we shall return no more to these earthly scenes, but the generations that

follow after, shall fill this land with untold millions, may the nation keep this jubilee and praise the Lord.

V

With two practical remarks, which, may the spirit of God enforce, we conclude. The former is addressed to those in whose keeping have been lodged the interests of the advancing Kingdom of Jesus. You are shaping results that belong to remote times and immense multitudes, in successive generations. You lay the basis for the structure of the ages to come. Do thoroughly the work for Christ in the time now passing. These foundations, we trust, are to remain till the headstone is brought forth with shouting. Build only on the foundation of apostles and prophets—Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. The piety now needed is no drowsy cheerless system of metaphysics ; no pompous formalism, full of pretension and foppery. It must be piety nurtured by the truth of God, which is unchangeable ; glowing in a devotion that is living and loving ; and full of all charity and good works. This is the religion which ought to, and will, conquer the world. Go, then, with your glad tidings of good, temporal and eternal, to the abodes of poverty—to the couches of sickness—to the comfortless habitations where pine the outcast and the vicious—and win them by your love and the greater love of Him who was rich, but for our sakes became poor. It is told of Cromwell, that he found some silver images of the apostles in a certain Cathedral—"Ah, said he, you have no business here ;

your commission was to go into all the world and preach the Gospel ; I will coin you into money and send you on your travels." To do good and to communicate, let us not forget. Let us not seek the peace which springs from our own hopes in Christ Jesus, and forget the large claims which the world, the Church and the Saviour have on us. Let us arouse to the inspiration of the lofty expectations which now summon us. Let us follow the advancing pillar of fire that now calls the army onward. Let us awake, knowing the time. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another final word, we may not neglect to speak to a different class of hearers. The unapproachable magnitude of the interests at stake warrants the minister of Christ, in season and out of season, to commend the great salvation. The solemn associations which invest this day, the truths which have been before our minds, in their far reaching relations, and the priceless worth of the soul, urge those out of Christ, without delay, to embrace a hope in Him, by which alone they manifest any proper apprehension of the value of God's unspeakable gift, or indeed any proper gratitude for any other favor. On the return of this anniversary some of you remember the scenes of other days, perhaps in homes now broken up, but forever hallowed to you by parental piety. Have not these memories a tongue to speak to you in the name of those gone into eternity, of your guilt and danger while still impenitent ? You sit to-day in the house of God with those who, during the year past, have first tasted the

bread of life. They are even now blessing His holy name for that benefit, as they learn how all earthly joys and hopes are thereby enhanced. That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, were a proper service for this day, and one to which I beseech you by the mercies of God. Our tongues cannot utter the great goodness of God ; let our memories record it ; our hearts cherish it ; and our lives testify to it. Then shall we be prepared for that day of Thanksgiving, when the whole family of Christ shall come home to the Father's heavenly house, to join together in its praises and high festivals forever ; and no voice shall be silent while they cry salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.