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WEDNESDAY, JULY 18, 1885.

RELIGIOUS PROSPERITY.

Much has been said and written within a few years about the decline of religion. One who had his eye simply on these accounts might suppose that by this time our churches were forsaken of the people and given up to the moles and bats, the Sabbath and Bible obsolete, and religion unknown on earth. But so it is not yet. We will not assert that there has been no decline in religion. On the other hand, there is abundant evidence in numerous instances of departure from the Lord and his ordinances, sufficient to awaken deep apprehension. And as there is no necessity for declension in religion, any more than there is for sin, and as all religious declension is sinful, it becomes Zion's watchmen to sound the alarm when such declensions appear, or are justly apprehended.

But mistakes are sometimes made on this subject. Some regard a prevalence of certain doctrines as synonymous with religious prosperity. But these doctrines may not be the most essential; or circumstances may make others more prominent. And such a change does not prove a declension in religion. With others certain frames of feeling or excitement are synonymous with a good state of religion. But our sensibilities, by a law of our nature, vary. Hence a change in those does not prove a deterioration in religion. Others are attached to particular forms and ways. To their minds they may be consecrated by experience and association. But as generation succeeds generation, customs and forms change in everything, religion included. Those therefore do not always speak wisely who affirm that the former times were better than these.

We are not here discussing the question whether the world is better morally now than it was twenty, a hundred, or two thousand years ago. The point is that what is often called religious declension is not always such. There are doubtless, some changes in religion that are unfavorable, but it is not wise to consider every change a change for the worse.

Almost every age and generation has its characteristics, its peculiarities with reference to religion. One is an age of intellect, another of feeling, one of controversy, another of research, one of a more conservative, another of a more radical. The present age is one of enterprise, investigation, progress, reform. Moral questions of great moment, but long neglected, are brought into great prominence. The subjects of temperance, in its various applications, human rights, reciprocal duties, practical benevolence, engage a very large share of the popular attention. And they take a deep hold upon the ministry and the church.

Now it is a very strange remark, that these subjects ought not to interfere with religion, or take the place of religion—that a minister should preach the Gospel, and leave temperance, freedom, &c., to others. Such subjects constitute the Gospel. What is religion but love? Love to God and love to man. What is religion but doing our various duties?

The subjects above named have in a degree been neglected by some preceding ages. But circumstances have brought them into the foreground. Religion must have to do with them when they brought into notice. What would be thought of me, if when on my way to church, I should pass a man drowning, and refuse to give him succor, because it would make me late to meeting? Why, that I was a hypocrite, and justly. So if the church stands aloof from the calls of humanity, because she will thereby be diverted from the work of the Gospel, she most pointedly condemns herself as apostate from him who went about doing good.

Not that some may have not gone too far. There is, and always has been, a tendency to extremes. Some can do nothing for any cause without making it a hobby, and devoting themselves to it exclusively. Such have not well balanced minds, or at least lose their balance. Every thing should receive appropriate attention at the appropriate time.

That more attention is now given to benevolent and reformatory subjects by the church, than in some other periods of her history, is no just ground of alarm; that the aspects of religion are somewhat modified by this change should cause no alarm. Should evidence appear that the church is falling into iniquity, departing from principle, losing her spirituality, becoming forsaken of God, then there would be ground for alarm. And with the benightedness around us, and the tendencies to evil remaining within us, we cannot be too vigilant, that we follow the leadings of Providence, directed by an enlightened conscience, and the Holy Spirit.

The fundamentals of religion are the same in every age. The essentials of religious prosperity are ever the same. But non-essentials and circumstantialities differ. Hence there is need of the exercise of large charity, lest we needlessly fret ourselves, and disturb others. Rejoice in all the progress made, in all the good done, if it is not in the precise way we have marked out, or have been accustomed to. Before you complain much of your neighbors, or the church, or the times, see that your own heart is largely perfumed with charity.—J. J. S.

CONGREGATIONAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF MAINE.

This large body convened in Portland June 26, and continued in session three days. A variety of subjects came before the Conference, and though the period allotted to some of them was very short, the interest was thereby sustained. There was much to admire in the systematic and expeditious manner of conducting the exercises; at the same time there was some what to censure in the fastidiousness and conservatism which were apparent. Home Evangelization, Benevolence, Missions, Education, Colonization, had their assignments while Temperance and Anti-Slavery did not come into the general published programme. But here in Maine, where the very air we breathe is filled with temperance, and where so many of the clergy are the staunch advocates of the Maine Law, it must have a place in such a meeting as this. A strong resolution was introduced by the Rev. Mr. Thurston, ably discussed by him, and by the Rev. Mr. Fessenden, and unanimously adopted by the conference; though I am informed that some of the ministry regretted it. Not satisfied with this, the friends of Temperance held a meeting on Thursday evening and had a spirited discussion on the subject. The Hon. Neal Dow, notwithstanding the "Inquest" is still in session which would, if possible, fasten upon him the guilt of being, was invited to preside. After an appropriate prayer, by Dr. Tappan, Mr. Dow made some very handsome and effective remarks on the propriety of concluding a religious conference with a Temperance meeting, as "every good man ought, and every good man will be engaged in Temperance." There were many able speeches made, breathing the spirit of the Maine Law.

Before meeting closed a clergyman stated that he had in his hand \$20 to make Hon. Neal Dow a life member of the Seaman's Friends Society. So by \$20 more another was made a life member of the American Tract Society, and with \$30 more, also, of the American Bible Society. These things go a good way to show how Mr. Dow is regarded in his own city. The influence of this meeting will tell on the right side.

I was surprised that, at this late day, after many Congregational ministers have spoken out boldly on anti-slavery, and when there were so many true friends of this cause present, no time should be given by Conference for its discussion or advocacy. We should not infer from this however that there were no lovers of freedom there—by no means. The Moderator of Conference made an allusion to it on the last evening, when showed what his position was. I presume he was not alone. But it does seem to me that the church and the ministry of Maine of every name ought to define their position on this great question. This subject was referred to by corresponding delegates, to the evident gratification of the audience. I was particularly interested in the remarks of Prof. Smith of N. Y.—delegate from the New School Presbyterians. He stated that their last meeting was at St. Louis, in a slave State, where they anticipated opposition, and yet the subject was freely discussed and strong resolutions passed against slavery. What a rebuke! Will the Maine General Conference still consent to keep silence? I did not expect it at this session. I supposed that the periphery of the Nebraska bill and the Kansas villainy, had at last aroused the North to determined action—that their eyes were open, and that especially here in Maine no respectable body of Christians could be assembled in Conference without speaking out decidedly on this matter. The time has come when the church cannot be indifferent and inactive with impunity—when judgment must begin at the house of God. We should expect national clamor to be meted out for our sins, and to fall with crushing weight on a dilatory church. God forbid that we should connive at our own ignominy and overthrow.—J. J. S.

BLAKIE'S 'PHILOSOPHY OF SECTARIANISM.' The title of this book is a manifest misnomer. 'Blakie's Defence of Presbyterianism' would have been less disingenuous and more accurate. As it is, the title prepares one for what he does not find in the subsequent pages, and causes a disagreeable surprise at what he does find. The spirit in which the book was conceived, is that of the partisan controversialist, instead of that of the philosopher. Mr. Blakie, the writer, is never dissociated from Mr. Blakie, the Presbyterian. There would be quite as much of the Philosophy of Parties in an out and out, unapologetic, root and branch advocacy of the mooray, Whiggery, or Know Nothingism, couched in the strongest terms, and conceived in the most decided spirit of partisanship, as there is of the Philosophy of Sectarianism in this book—which, obviously, is just no Philosophy at all. If Mr. Blakie had taken the trouble to look into his dictionary for a definition of the word, he might have saved his volume the disadvantage of bearing a manifest mistake on its very face—leading to the conclusion that he who so mistakes the nature of his discussion, is not the most likely to be accurate or just in carrying it on.

This conclusion is justified by the many instances in the book, in which the most absolute decisions are pronounced, where something else than facts, reason, or a refined taste, must have prompted them. For instance. Revival efforts are sneered at as "a system of appliances widely different from the law of Christ's house"; Evangelists are disposed of by quoting a flying report of large sums of money received by Mr. Knapp, with the addition of the Scotch proverb, "It's nae for naught the glorie whistles." "Methodist hymns—and they are only regarded as a type of all ordinary hymnology—are declared, to border, 'upon the jocose, the amorous, the martial, and the bacchanalian,' and are held up to ridicule; while the 'Scotch Paraphrases' are pronounced 'beautiful poetry,' and seem to be regarded as of divine authority—"the songs of Jehovah"—while, as he says, meaning such hymns as are in common use by all denominations in this country, "the best of human hymns, by which men suppliment them in divine worship, are of doubtful value, and sectarian (7), if not unwarranted." It is insinuated that Methodists believe that 'the heathen may be saved without the Gospel, and that their missions are prompted by love of "denominational fame" and the "impute pride of the human heart" (p. 189): Mission "Boards" are scouted as oligarchies; the marriage of a deceased wife's sister is regarded with blatant horror, as "incest" and "the pleasures of sin" great distress is felt because the "New England Primer" has given place in Sabbath schools to "general questions, drawn from Scripture" (the italics are ours); Sabbath schools, thus—in the author's estimation—degenerated, are finally scouted as an arena for "irresponsible persons," particularly of the "varied sects of Baptists," and "thrust in their sickles and proselyte," and are compared to "a general soup table down town." Quakers, because they "affirm" instead of taking the ordinary civil oath, are declared to be therefore incapable of lying—that "the least deviation from the truth, in their case, is not simply a lie, but perjury"—"A Friend can never lie—and so on, to almost any length. But quite enough, certainly, has been stated to illustrate how much of a Philosopher, and of what kind, our author is.

The philosophic tone of our author is readily seen in the following quotations from the Preface. "To one who had never seen any thing beyond the precincts of his native province, and the deliberations of a single synod who held the Westminster confession of faith (excepting as it related to magistracy) as the true exponent of the word of God, the assertions of some revered doctors of divinity, that they held the doctrines of the said confession of faith only and prompted him to inquire, 'What type of Presbyterianism is this? Is it the genuine while so different from that which is brought from Scotland and Ireland, those lands of Presbyterian doctrine and martyrdom? Whence also these fine poetical effusions? Are they better than the palms or (Scotch) paraphrases which in public worship they supplant?'—"In 1834 he visited the 'then west' At Buffalo he preached during two Sabbath to a large congregation called Presbyterian. 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Bro. Burr—God has revived his work in this place (Geneva, Mich.) in the conversion of souls and reclaiming of backsliders. We have formed a small church of nine members, and there are still others who will soon join us. The church is to be called the first Free-will Baptist church of Geneva. There seems to be a feeling of solemnity resting on the minds of the people.

O. H. BURMAN.

For the Morning Star.

Bro. Burr—We have just parted with Brother and Sister Harris and family, who have sailed to New York, on their way to Vermont, which leaves the church on Cape Island destitute of a pastor and preaching. Will not some brother sympathize with us, and come and visit us as soon as possible?

JAMES C. SMITH.

For the Morning Star.

KENNESAW YEARLY MEETING

—Assembled at Vienna, Me., June 27th and 28th, 1855. The conference was permanently organized by the appointing of officers as follows:

Bro. C. G. Morrill, Moderator.
Rev. George W. Bean, Assist. Mod.
Dea. N. Graves, Assist. Clerk.
Rev. Messrs. M. C. Stanley, J. S. Burgess, and Roger E. Allen, Committee on overtures and resolutions.

Noted, that all our mess. from other bodies be invited to a seat in the conference.

Rev. G. Perkins, comm. from the Maine Western Y. M., and Rev. J. Mariner, from Penobscot Y. M., made acceptable reports from those bodies.

Appointed comm. mess. as follows:

To Penobscot Y. M., Rev. E. G. Page—Substitute, Rev. N. Brooks.

To Maine Western Y. M., Rev. J. P. Longy—Substitute, A. H. Morrill.

To New Hampshire Y. M., Rev. J. S. Burgess—Substitute, Rev. O. H. Burr.

To C. Baptist State Convention, M. C. Stanley—Substitute, A. H. Morrill.

—Substitute, Rev. O. H. Burr.

Noted, that the question of the union of the three Y. M.'s in this State Y. M. be referred to the Q. M.'s.

EX. COMM. OF MINISTERS' RELIEF SOCIETY.

Anson Q. M., H. Purinton, Brice Edwards, and James Whittier.

Bowdoin Q. M., Cyrus Campbell, J. Haskell, and Daniel Palmer.

Edgcomb Q. M., E. G. Page, J. Fuller, N. Brooks, and H. Preble.

Farmington Q. M., A. H. Morrill, J. Edgcomb, and H. Preble.

Waterbury Q. M., Geo. W. Bean, Rev. L. Rickard, and S. Bowdoin.

It should be remembered that the Y. M. one year since voted "That the Q. M.'s make the Ministers' Relief Society Q. Meeting business."

By request from the church at Lewiston, the next Y. M. will be held at that place.

TRAVELER'S REPORT.

Kennesaw Y. M. in account with F. Leford, Treasurer.

Dr.—To amount on hand and paid in up to June 27th, 1855, \$15.00.

Cr.—By paid out up to June 27th, 1855, \$15.00.

Balance in treasury, \$15.00.

The balance in Treasurer's hands, \$15.00.

June 27th, 1855, \$15.00.

The following resolutions were adopted:

TEMPERANCE.

Resolved, That we reiterate our oft repeated sentiments on the great moral question of the day.

Resolved, That we have an indication of progress the new intensified Maine law, and believe it adapted to accomplish the triumph of the temperance reform.

Resolved, That we rejoice in the recent triumph of the illustrious author of the Maine law over the combined powers of rum and masonry in the city of Portland.

Resolved, That being sincere in our professions of attachment to the Maine law, we see no cause for a change of our position in regard to that law. We still believe that "there is a limit beyond which private and associated effort, by means of pledges, moral suasion, and other modes of action cannot go"—that the temperance reform cannot be carried on while the interests are held out on either side.

Resolved, That we are in favor of the extension of the Maine law to the entire State, and that we will use every effort to secure its passage.

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ificent supply of ministers; Sunday schools sustained in all the churches. Temperance and Anti-slavery held hearty support.

Grand Rapids Q. M.—Delegates present, E. Cummings. General state of religion at present rather cheering; several revivals during the winter; God has manifested his favor, and a commendable revival is manifest in them.

Calhoun Q. M.—Letter, but no delegate. "Q. M. contains only three churches; no regular preaching; but one ordained minister and he unable to preach in danger of losing visibility for the want of natural gifts."

Rainier River Q. M.—No report.

Corresponding messengers, St. Joseph's Valley Yearly Meeting, Rev. E. Cook presented a letter and himself and Rev. S. Ketchum, and were received as corresponding messengers.

"Y. M. is small and weak, but determined to live and maintain gospel order and worship."

Upper Canada Y. M.—Corresponding messenger, Rev. Stephen Griffin. Letter presented and delegate received and invited to a seat.

Michigan Annual Conference M. E. C. in accordance with a resolution of the M. E. C. Conference that the Annual Conference of the different Christian denominations should meet, the Methodist Episcopal minister stationed at the nearest to such place of meeting should attend as a corresponding messenger, Rev. W. C. Coffey, assistant pastor of the Church of the Epiphany, of the denomination and was invited to a seat in the Conference.

It was also voted that other visiting brethren be invited to take part in the deliberations of the body. The Conference thus gladly received Rev. Jonathan Woodman of N. Y., Rev. G. P. Ramsey of Mass., Rev. F. W. Stright and A. Hopkins of New York, Rev. James McKay and E. A. Turney of Ohio, Rev. H. H. Marsh of Iowa, Rev. Mr. Whitney, pastor of the Pres. church, Paw Paw, besides some from our own denomination in the state were present.

The following resolutions, after an animated discussion, were adopted.

On Temperance, Resolved, That we will hold with the temperance cause, and will use every effort to secure the passage of the Maine Law at the next session of the Legislature of this state, and pledge our individual and united influence for its efficient and universal execution.

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past year an accession has been made to this feeble Q. M. of 6 churches—117 added by baptism; 27 by letter, 2 dismissed, 1 died. Present number of communicants, 270.

Millinery. Elder E. P. Auger is the only minister in the Q. M. Have passed through several trials; God has manifested his favor, and a commendable revival is manifest in them.

Five have been added by baptism, 16 by letter, and 17 dismissed. Present number of communicants, 116.

Marquette. Are thankful that in that north country, where but a few years since nothing but savage yells were heard and wild beasts roamed, there are now plain marks of civilization, and an intelligent Christian community is located. A steadfast and fixed purpose to serve God generally prevails in this Q. M. Added by baptism, 2, by letter 14, dismissed 2, 1 died. Present number of communicants, 299.

Rock & Dane. Are somewhat encouraged. Several churches have enjoyed good revivals. Added by baptism 53, by letter 57. Dismissed 10, 1 died. Present number of communicants, 410.

Sauz County. Report prospects are brightening; public opinion is turning in our favor. Added by baptism 7, by letter 10; dismissed 9; 2 died. Present number, 75.

The Conference was one of uncommon interest. A number of important openings presented for permanent F. Baptist interests; if we only had the men, means could be easily obtained. The only inquiry in the minds of members of Conference was, What can we do to best meet the demand and advance the Redeemer's kingdom? This inquiry led to the following resolutions: That we will use every effort to secure the passage of the Maine Law at the next session of the Legislature of this state, and pledge our individual and united influence for its efficient and universal execution.

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