

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE VIII.

THE ADVANCEMENT OF SOCIETY IN KNOWLEDGE AND
VIRTUE.

By Prof. B. B. Edwards.

THE Christian philanthropist, when he casts his eye on the history of the world, or on its present condition, is apt to be despondent. If he be not conscious of this feeling on a cursory view, he may awake to the sad reality on a further examination. In proportion, indeed, as he is a true man, cordially devoted to the best interests of his fellow creatures, he will be sustained by the goodness of his cause. The arm of the faithful soldier is nerved mainly by the justice of his cause. In the darkest hours, he is cheered by the consciousness that he is contending for the true interests of his country. Still, the moral strength of an army consists very much in the degree in which they expect success. Sometimes victory is taken for granted. All the previous arrangements are made with a distinct understanding that there will be a favorable result. To each division of the host is assigned the duty of following up the victory and of reaping all its possible fruits. In such cases a defeat is nearly impossible. A triumph is generally certain where it is confidently expected. So in the spiritual warfare. The Christian philanthropist, who commences his work with the cheerful anticipation of success, will commonly win his object. A hopeful frame of spirit is one of God's best gifts to man. A morbid anticipation of defeat, or of small success, is followed almost always by the expected result.

But in proportion as one is fitted to his particular work by an enlightened education, by enlarged views of the dispensation of grace which is committed to him, by a fraternal interest for his brethren elsewhere, by compassion for a world which must perish without the light of revelation, he will derive encouragement from the general spread of Christianity, or become faint-hearted from the prevalence of sin and error. His success as an individual will be very much in proportion to his expectation of the universal triumph of the Redeemer. If animated by the great hopes which should fill his bosom, he will perform his work with an energy and authority which is possible in no other circumstances. If he looks with a despairing or indifferent eye on the mass of mankind, he will be apt to do so on the

members of his own little circle. If he has made up his mind to surrender the race to irreversible destruction, he will be likely to show little energy in his own sphere of duty. In other words, one of the principal elements of success in individual effort anywhere, is the expectation that there will be progress everywhere. The personal aim, the individual, local hope, are linked invincibly with the great final result.

What are the grounds for hope that the cause in which the true philanthropist is engaged will ultimately triumph?

1. Our confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit. All obstacles before Him are as the chaff of the threshing floor. Opposing governments hoary with despotism, or rank with socialism, will sink in his presence like lead in the mighty waters. He understands the thousand avenues to the human soul, and can fit his instruments to his purpose with unerring precision.

2. The predictions of the Scriptures. Unless we mistake their interpretation, they announce the Saviour's universal reign. Their abrupt transitions, their gorgeous and daring imagery only make the desired consummation the more sure. Couched beneath these metaphors, there is a breadth and affluence of meaning, which no partial gospel triumph can exhaust. The sublime imagination of the Hebrew prophet was not divinely illumined to pierce the tract of ages in order to foreshow a confined and momentary triumph. Even should the ancient prediction have this limited and local application, we have a firm resting-place in the declaration that the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in and so all Israel be saved, uttered, be it remembered, *after* the day of Pentecost, after the gospel had been preached, through mighty signs and wonders, from Jerusalem, round about unto Illyricum. The vision is for an appointed time, though it tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not tarry.

3. The fitness of the remedy to the disease,—the perfect adaptation of the gospel to the woes and depravity of man. It addresses itself in a manner possible only to its Divine author, to all the susceptibilities and powers, the hopes, fears and aspirations, to all the feelings of doubt and despair which lodge in man's bosom. It is not an arbitrary arrangement. The preaching of the gospel is foolishness only in the view of perverted reason and of a corrupted taste. It includes the elements of the highest wisdom, the most admirable fitness of means to the end.

4. The success which has already attended the dispensation of the gospel. Its sway over mankind is yet, indeed, very imperfect and limited. The mass of men, even in Christian lands, still reject its authority and live without its hopes. But it has accomplished enough

to show what it can do. It has been tested in all departments of society. It has had its triumphs in every region of intellectual power—of polished or of hardened depravity. If it reaches Pascal and Newton, then there is no genius or science which it may not purify and exalt. If it can create a nation of Christians out of Sandwich Islanders or South Africans, it has power to redeem every tribe that needs its light. Its influence is not universal, it is not general, but it has shown its capability;—its power to solve the hardest problems of degenerate nature. It has been tried in a thousand balances and never found wanting. If it can conquer one district of paganism, it can subjugate the world.

5. But there is another ground of encouragement which we especially wish to consider in the present discussion—that is, the general state of the world.

Leaving out of the account the church of Christ, the institutions of Christianity, and all direct efforts for the spread of the gospel, is the general aspect of the world one of discouragement or of hope? As we look through the great volume of history, what report have we to make? When we survey the long ages, as they stretch off into a dim antiquity, are we animated with hope or filled with forebodings? Is the Providence of God coöperating with his gospel in gradually leading the entire race to holiness and salvation? Or is God seen in history only as restraining what else would be intolerable depravity, or as an avenging Deity, laying bare his punitive arm?

There are only three possible theories on this subject. It is assumed by some that the world has been and is becoming gradually worse, that all supposed melioration is only on the surface, that the current of depravity is constantly running deeper and broader, that a funeral pall is by degrees extending over this once fair creation, that men will sin with a higher hand and a bolder face till some miraculous and dreadful catastrophe shall engulf them, introductory perhaps to a new order of things when the saints shall possess the earth and the tabernacle of God shall be literally with men. The only exception to this dark picture is the little Goshen where the people of God abide. As we do not know who the elect are that are to be gathered in, we are to proclaim the gospel to all whom our voice can reach, yet with small expectation of success. This might be called the discouraging or hopeless theory.

Another theory teaches that the world is in a state of perpetual vacillation; there are vibrations of hope and of despair; the earth is now verging towards the light, then is shrouded in darkness; there is a constant flux and reflux; empires rise and fall, but no progress is made.

Generations come and disappear, but the world is no wiser or better. All things continue as they have continued from the beginning. We can predict neither the redemption nor the destruction of the world. Uncertainty rests on all things. It is a confused mixture of good and evil, in which we can discern no positive elements, no great tendencies in either direction. All which we can say is, that the waves advance and then recede. It may be called the theory of *indifferentism*, sometimes of atheism.

The only remaining supposition is, that the world is gradually becoming better; that on the whole some progress has been making towards a brighter era. The change may be often exceedingly slow and nearly imperceptible. Light struggles with the darkness and sometimes seems to suffer total eclipse, but ultimately the cloud disappears. Knowledge, truth, virtue, civilization, are more and more distinctly recognized and highly prized. Apart from the church of Christ, separate from all direct religious influence, may we not be cheered with the hope, if not with the absolute belief, that the Providence of God in history is working out the same merciful design that the grace of God is in the church? Must we look upon the world, as destined, in its present order, to certain destruction, or as balancing to and fro, in inextricable confusion, or as giving indications, not to be mistaken, of a better destiny?

That the more hopeful interpretation is the true one, might be made probable at least, if not evident, by three distinct lines of argument or three classes of facts.

We might appeal, in the first place, to the existing state of the world, and show that there were never so many grounds for encouragement as at the present moment. There are certain auspicious changes, some of which go to the foundations of society. The rights of conscience were never so well understood nor so extensively respected. The distinction between the church and the State is more clearly defined and correctly appreciated. The rights of the vast mass, the lower classes, are not trampled under foot with the same proud disdain as formerly. Kings and cabinets are compelled to entertain the idea, that the legitimate object of government is to promote the real well being of the people. On no other theory can they retain their sceptres. Mere promises of reform are now of no avail. The days of court-favoritism and of peculiar aristocratic privilege are coming rapidly to an end. Moral and intellectual worth are beginning to assume their true position. The great science of humanity is more profoundly studied and its laws more sacredly observed. Penal codes, criminal legislation, and all that vast system of statutes, written and unwritten,

affecting the morals and manners of society, are undergoing most salutary changes. It would be impossible now to rebuild the dungeons of Olmutz, or of the Bastile, or of Newgate. The ear of despotism is reached by the voice of outraged humanity. Secresy—that worst attribute of tyranny—cannot be maintained. Now, these considerations are not invalidated by the fact that they are attended with partial evils, or by the assertion that they are counterbalanced by corresponding mischiefs. No one, it is presumed, would exchange, leaving Christianity out of the account, our own existing New England for that of the pilgrim fathers, or for the boasted old England of the seventeenth century, or for the Germany of the Reformers. In three hundred years there has been an immeasurable advance in points vitally affecting society, touching not simply its branches, but its trunk and its roots.

Another line of argument would consist in selecting some prominent events in the history of the church, and showing how they have exerted salutary effects on the world, which nothing has been able to counteract or destroy. The Protestant Reformation, for example, has impressed its character on the political world as truly as on the religious. It created in a sense a language and literature which are more influential than any, with perhaps a single exception. It breathed its genius and religious spirit into dialects spoken by sixty or seventy millions of men. It has left its witness in the hearts and memories of multitudes, a veneration for the author of that Reformation, an almost passionate affection for him which may contribute at length to lead them into the same path of holiness and truth. But its effects did not end with Germany. It awakened the human mind, so that it has never been able to slumber since. It engraved, as with an iron pen, the great doctrine of personal responsibility in the relations of man to man, as well as of man to his Creator. No perversions of this great event, no failures to carry out its principles, have been able to stay its influence, or efface its impressions. All Europe, politically and socially, is in a state essentially different and essentially better, than she was before the Reformation. In a thousand forms, it has pervaded society, and if not always with healing power, yet really and substantially so.

Some of these remarks are applicable to the religious movements of the present day. Their indirect, earthly benefits are not among their least. Foreign missions, missions in our own country, the distribution of the Bible, are constantly exerting a wider and happier influence upon those who take no part in the work and may never share in its saving influence. In proportion as Christians truly exhibit the spirit of their Master, being one with another as he is one with the

Father, copying his sublime example of benevolence, the world will be benefitted, temporally, if not spiritually; a salutary fear of a moral Governor and of an avenging Providence will more or less pervade society. Christianity thus becomes the salt, if not the salvation of the world. The mass of men are brought into a better and more hopeful state. It is impossible for the Christian religion to be exhibited in its true character of enlarged philanthropy, without insinuating its healthful influence through a thousand secret channels.

But there is another great class of events or facts, to which we would more particularly allude, and which, as it seems to us, conspire to the same end. These events or phenomena occur in civil society, separate from all the direct influences of Christianity. Do they, or do they not, cooperate with it? Is their influence, on the whole, and taking *long* periods of time, favorable to the gradual melioration of the race? They are secular in their character. Are they conservative or destructive in their effects? In other words, has the Providence of God been working in universal history with some great, ultimate, benevolent design? All acknowledge that the events which occurred among those tribes and nations bordering on the ancient Jews, were controlled or overruled so as to accomplish the purposes of God in relation to his church. The political condition of the Roman empire, at the introduction of Christianity, was shaped by Him who had given to his Son the heathen for an inheritance. Does this divine, yet not miraculous, interference extend beyond those nations immediately contiguous to the church—to those events which seem to have no connection with it? Is this shaping Providence universal, and is its great tendency in past times and at present towards the redemption of the race? Partial catastrophes, the destruction of a particular nation or race do not decide this question in the negative. They may be necessary attendant evils, a small part of the dealings of Him who is excellent in counsel and wonderful in working. To read *his* ways aright, we must not confine ourselves to single, detached events, or brief periods. We must select those occurrences which have had ample room for development, or whose magnitude have impressed themselves indelibly on the world.

To prevent misconception, two or three preliminary remarks are needed.

The first is, that all these events, or the general course of Providence as manifested in history, are acknowledged to be entirely inadequate to save the world. It is the direct influence of the gospel only which can convert the individual or regenerate society.

It may be inquired further, if the immediate agency of the gospel

be left out of the account, what auxiliary powers are to be found? What beneficial agency is at work in society coöperating in a greater or less degree with Revelation?

It may be answered that there are various influences, emanating from a Divine revelation, that have diffused themselves far and wide. No eye but the Omniscient can trace their secret history. It is possible that no realm of paganism is so dark, but that some straggling ray has reached it. Again, some of the events that occur in history, separate from all mediate or immediate influence of the gospel, are salutary in their own nature. Others may be the reverse, positively injurious. A single event may have qualities or aspects which are benign; others which are malignant. By a secret, overruling Providence, both classes are made to subserve a benevolent purpose. One is guided along its natural channel; the other is counteracted and impelled to subserve ends foreign to its nature. The wrath of man is either restrained, or made to praise the Lord.

The question, stated in other words, is this: Does it appear that the Gospel, in the present order of things, is to be gradually yet not miraculously extended till it shall become universal, or does it appear that its influence is becoming more and more limited to those whom it has now actually saved and to a few besides, while, on the other hand, the mass of mankind are coming less and less under its influence and are gradually filling up the measure of their iniquities? It seems to us, that an impartial view of history, a consideration of the general course of Divine Providence, in past ages and at the present time, will lead us to cherish encouraging anticipations.

And here it may be remarked, that it is not necessary to extenuate any of the evils that afflict society. Many of them are radical and enormous. The records of history, as history has been commonly written, awaken the saddest remembrances, and excite in some minds little else but the most melancholy forebodings. It is a common impression that the profoundest students of human nature and of history will be least likely to indulge in favorable anticipations of the destiny of the race, and that it is only the superficial observer who can discern auspicious omens. But it is possible and not uncommon to err through the influence of despondent or morbid feelings, and to interpret every event according to certain individual or subjective views and impressions. That conclusion only should be admitted which is the result of a dispassionate, honest and comprehensive examination.

I. The first fact which we shall mention is the influence of the civilization and culture of the ancient Greeks.

We are not about to fall into the current strain of eulogizing the Greeks, as if it were by their own wisdom, by the might of their own arm, that they have been enabled so vitally to affect subsequent ages. It was God who wrought through them. It was not fortune or accident which hung above them those serene skies, which tempered their delicious climate, which multiplied in land and sea, on island and mountain, all the forms of beauty. It was the inspiration of the Almighty which breathed into them that soul, exquisite in its structure, those sensibilities quivering with life, that fine, apprehensive faculty never granted to man elsewhere in equal degree. It was God who attuned the ear so perfectly. It was an extraordinary combination of Providential circumstances which fitted to each other the organ and its modulated symbol. All these wonderful gifts were not for their own fame, to illustrate their own brief national history. It was for the good of the world. They have become, without in general intending it, the teachers of the race. The culture, of which under God, they were the authors, has become incorporated with all modern learning, with all refined sentiment, with the manners and habits of nations.

Let us be more specific, and take the idea of beauty, in form, in speech, in sentiment, in thinking, in action. The coarse polytheism has passed away, but this remains. Quarrelling Olympus has long since utterly lost its hold on mankind, yet this element of beauty still subsists in undiminished freshness. We cannot always see its progress, but we can evermore discern its effects.

A snow falls in the winter in a little valley in one of the Alpine summits. In the Spring and Summer it melts and disappears, but it is not lost; it waters the root of a lily many leagues away; it fertilizes the garden of a poor peasant hundreds of miles in the opposite direction; it makes the retired valley sing for joy—or it is the cold water which refreshes the thirsty traveller; then it cheerfully casts in its mites to help bear away the gains of a prosperous commerce. We cannot count the benefits of which it is made the rejoicing yet unconscious instrument. So of that element of thought and culture to which we refer. However commingled it may be with other ingredients, however invisible in some stages of its progress, its agency is still felt and is one of the most important in the higher departments of modern civilization. It may be subtle, intangible, apparently evanescent, but on that very account the more operative. How do we obtain our idea of the natural beauty of the Divine character? By transferring to it all the ideas of beauty which we possess and all which we can imagine. The quality in God is fixed and has a permanent value, but in

our minds it is capable of indefinite enlargement. The loftier our ideal is, the more cultivated our minds are, the more abundant the analogies and symbols of beauty which we possess, the worthier will be our conceptions of Him who is the source of all beauty.

Another great and enduring product of Greek culture results from the symmetrical and comprehensive education which the Greeks taught and attained. The Creator endued the mind with various powers, and thus indicated his will that they should be unfolded harmoniously and form a perfect being. The perversion of this Divine arrangement has caused a thousand melancholy evils. It is often the defective, ill-shaped, one-sided intellect that occasions remediless evils. A great design of the Gospel, perhaps its most prominent indirect effect, is to reintroduce harmony into these disordered faculties. With this tendency of his word, his Providence strikingly cooperated in the case before us. That intellectual people, whom He designed to be the teachers of the race, the lawgivers in human culture, laid the utmost stress upon this consentaneous and equal development of the human understanding. They taught it in theory, they exemplified it in practice; they insisted upon it as the only true model; they declared that in this way only, man could recover the image of his Maker; their highest idea of divine perfection was a sweet, untroubled accordance of all the moral and intellectual powers; they denounced as folly and sin all exclusive training of one or two faculties. The absorption of the soul in one idea or one pursuit, they looked upon as a species of madness.

This great lesson has not been without its effect. Wherever human culture has been conformed to the design of the Creator, or wherever the true idea of education shall be fully reached, it was and it will be essentially owing to the myriad-minded educators whom the Divine Spirit so endowed on the shores of the *Ægean*.

We may be allowed to refer to another influence from Greek culture that has affected fundamentally the condition of mankind, that is, personal freedom, taken in connection with another elementary truth, that there can be no political independence without morality, that politics must have sound principle as its basis. The doctrine of the real, substantive worth of the individual is fully taught in the Bible, even in the Old Testament. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. This was reasserted and practically maintained, even unto death, by the Greeks. In other regions, in Rome especially, all things were merged in the State. The individual was nothing, the political body was everything. But a man has a will, a conscience, a sense of inalienable right; he must appear in person before the great tribunal of law and of justice; there-

fore he cannot be made the tool of a despotism or of a priesthood; this was the Athenian doctrine, taught by her great historians, reiterated in words of fire by her orator, and tested in a thousand forms by her people. This is becoming the doctrine of mankind; it was exemplified by Luther before Charles V, by John Huss, outside of the walls of Constance, begirt with flames, restated by John Hampden at Whitehall and by the pilgrims at Plymouth. Other ingredients were doubtless intermingled; but the classic element was efficient and vital. It is the prompter to heroic deeds and disinterested suffering.

The other lesson, which should never be dissociated, the world has been less ready to learn. The doctrine that "all is fair in politics" is not of Grecian origin. The spirit which breathes through the writings of the great dramatists and philosophers is conservative and anti-radical. The structure of politics, it would build on the eternal foundations of right and of justice. Nothing, it maintains, is expedient which is not true and good. It would make no distinction between a politician and a statesman—a statesman and a virtuous man. Civil government has its archetype—its great exemplar in the Divine. Order should be man's first law, as it is Heaven's. Deeply imbedded in all true theories and forms of government is the fixed idea of right.¹ High over all temporary expedients and arbitrary fashions reigns a rewarding or avenging Deity. The opposite doctrine, which confounds moral distinctions, and which the apostle Paul so indignantly denounced, was not Greek wisdom, it was parasitic, an after-growth, an excrescence, not the teaching of the immortal poets and philosophers of Greece. Wherever the true doctrine has reappeared, as it does in the pages of Edmund Burke, the germ, the original source, the guiding lines of argument, may be traced to the sages of the Academy.

II. Coming down a few centuries, we select another great event—the overrunning of the Roman empire by the people of the North—the predominance of the Gothic race in Europe. Never perhaps did

¹ Pythagoras would make the external life dependent on the inward; civil freedom on that of noble sentiment; the administration of a State on the intellectual cultivation of the citizens; the prosperity of a city on the purity of morals.—*Schwarz Erziehungslehre*, I. p. 313. According to Plato, a State that would attain to the highest perfection must be administered by those who, in the common judgment of wise men, are the best citizens. These, beholding the beauty of virtue, not only admire and love it, but pursue and cherish it with the utmost earnestness. In directing both their own life and the affairs of the State, they follow in all things the heavenly pattern.—*De Repub.* L. V. "Those, who would undertake the highest offices of State, must possess three qualities—first, love to the existing government; second, the highest fitness for the duties of their office; and thirdly, virtue and justice."—*Aristot. Polit.* V. 14.

an event happen in civil history that seemed more providential, or that was attended with larger, and as we can thus far judge, with happier consequences. Some other contingencies were possible; one or two of them were perhaps more probable than that event which actually happened. Europe might have been overrun with Islamism as a large part of Spain was. It seemed to be several times in imminent hazard. Italy was long and sorely menaced; the Saracen was thundering at the gates of Vienna; his hordes were ravaging the fairest fields of France. They might have gained a temporary footing and been ultimately driven out as the Moors were from Spain, yet leaving their gloomy fanaticism and haughty arrogance enstamped on the European mind as it is now on the Spanish character; or the Roman empire might have declined some ages longer, its powers nearly worn out, a counterpart of what the nations of central Asia have been for centuries, finally becoming the prey of some fierce barbarian.

But God, in his wonder-working Providence, had decreed otherwise. In his wise arrangement, the race had been training in the stern climates of the North, which in due time took possession of the old seats of civilization. Through the predominance of this race two great results have been effected. It has imparted vigor, physical, intellectual and moral to nearly all Christendom. Energy is its characteristic distinction. Vitality it has breathed into every department of science and literature. With some partial exceptions, the entire race has been for ages nearly stationary or else languishing and ready to die, except so far as it has sprung from northern Europe, or been reinforced from thence. The evidences of its power and skill are in almost every land, its life on every sea; the islands are literally waiting for its laws. It is true that this enormous energy is abused and becomes the instrument of atrocious crimes. This, however, is a perversion and not its natural tendency. It is the ally of good and honorable enterprises. We never look for a flourishing state of religion and morals in those communities which are characterized by decay and inertia. The nations that are not prosperous will as a general thing be degenerate in morals. Poverty is often the parent of dejection, discontent, envy, and open crime.

Another great effect of this supremacy of the northern nations of Europe is apparent in the department of morals and manners. Much of that purity of social intercourse, that true delicacy of feeling, that high-minded regard for the female sex, that observance of the general laws of decorum, which characterize the Germanic and Anglo-Saxon races, did characterize their ancestors two thousand years ago. Vices

they had; many daring crimes they committed; but they possessed that chivalric sense of honor, those virtuous sensibilities in the domestic relations, whose influences, now conjoined with and enforced by Christian principles, have become the permanent characteristics of great nations. The irresistible physical force of these Northmen has been tempered with kindness to the weak and unresisting; the intellectual power with which they grapple with the great questions of politics and morals is softened and made attractive by the nameless graces of refined feeling and just sentiment. Mohammed and his immediate followers could handle the sword with desperate bravery, but to all the finer feelings they were necessarily strangers, because they regarded one half of the race as unworthy or incapable of intellectual and moral culture. The Moslems were unfitted for any benevolent design of Providence, because in addition to the false faith of which they were devotees, they lacked the true sources and elements of social elevation and refinement.

III. We will advert to but one more event in civil history—the first French Revolution. Though this is of recent occurrence, yet it was of such magnitude, so immediate and so vast in its results, that we can now, in a great measure determine its influence. That influence, on the whole, must be regarded as beneficial. To this conviction, it is thought, we shall come whatever may be our opinion of the character of the great actors in it, or of him who finally controlled it. We may adopt the extreme British view, the one generally entertained in New England in 1812, or the one which is accepted in France, or any intermediate theory. Still, that preponderating good has resulted, either directly, or by the wise counteraction and shaping of Providence, cannot be denied. It is obvious both on the face and in the depths of European society. It is acknowledged now by men of the most enlightened and conservative views in those continental countries which suffered most severely from its temporary, destructive effects. Indeed it is fast coming to be, if it be not at the present moment, the opinion of the greater number who are most impartial and most competent to decide. Those who are accustomed to regard the French Revolution as an event of great and unmixed evil, do not sufficiently ponder its causes. That event was as inevitable as anything moral can be. No earthly power could stay it. That black and heavy tide which broke over every barrier and dike in 1793, had been accumulating for centuries. The night longest to be remembered for its unutterable atrocity was that following St. Bartholomew's eve in 1572. The age of preëminent wickedness in France was that of Louis XIV. The secret passages, the little closets, and the splendid halls of the

palace at Versailles could tell tales of wickedness which no public square or prison in Paris could rival.¹ In short the oppression to which the mass of the French people had been subjected, could not be borne a moment longer. The great day of God's wrath and their deliverance had come. The terrible disease demanded a terrible remedy. The pestilence which overspread the court and the nobility could be purged with nothing less than fire.

Has the purification been effected? Has the storm cleansed the moral and political atmosphere of Europe?

First, Romanism received a blow from which it has never recovered. It was this system in its root and essence—Jesuitism, which was leagued with the court and the *noblesse* against the liberties of the people. It has not, it never can, regain its lost dominion in France. At the time of the Revolution, the number of ecclesiastics in the Roman Catholic church was 114,000; now, with an increase of one-third in population, there are but 42,000; their revenues have decreased from 142,000,000 of francs to 36,000,000. A great number of monasteries and other ecclesiastical establishments have been suppressed, and what was more important than all—the infallibility of the church—the haughty idea of her inviolable sanctity, was exposed to a practical contempt from which the church can hardly recover. Though she has made some fresh efforts to regain her lost honors, she can never succeed, because she is compelled more or less to go through the ordeal of an enlightened public, if not Protestant opinion.

Second, the Revolution effectually broke up that secrecy in which the proceedings of courts and civil tribunals were conducted, with which crimes were frequently committed, and in which horrible punishments were inflicted. It poured in the light of Heaven on the cells of suffering humanity and on the dark abodes of vice. One-half of the severity of punishment often consisted in the mystery which hung over it. This great engine of superstition and cruelty was destroyed in a large part of Europe. While the Revolution demolished the inquisition in Spain, it opened to the public gaze civil and judicial proceedings in many countries of the Continent.

Third, it changed the whole interior condition of France; it annulled the feudal system; abolished the rights of primogeniture; appor-

¹ "The vices of the court," says Richelieu, "inundated the capital and the whole kingdom with much more fatal force than its pleasures. They infected even foreign courts and nations. Invisible vices still lurked in concealment, and were aggravated by universal hypocrisy. The novelists of the age imagined it impossible to make much further advances in depravity. The prodigious corruption of morals at the court of Louis XIV. first manifested itself by the excesses in which most of the princesses of the royal family indulged."

tioned the soil to small proprietors,¹ put law in the place of arbitrary prescription, equality in the room of privilege; delivered men from the distinctions of caste, and substituted in place of hoary abuses a state of things more conformed to justice and better fitted to modern manners.

Fourth. It planted or quickened the germ of representative and free governments for all Europe. Many of the continental countries would not consent to reinstate their hereditary princes on their thrones, till they had extorted from them the promise of establishing a coördinate branch of the government in which the voice of the people should be heard. This promise, till within a very recent period, has been indeed tardily fulfilled. But it has been impossible to prevent the extension of the system. The example is contagious. Russia cannot wholly crush these fermenting principles of freedom. Every step she takes in the great modern enterprise of effecting intercommunication among her provinces, is exposing her to the danger she so much dreads, is bringing her into the very focus of those influences set in motion by the French Revolution, into close contact with the freest and most decidedly Protestant nations of Christendom. In short this Revolution has effected, and is effecting, throughout Europe, a general improvement, physical, intellectual and moral.² Its chief actor constructed pathways, which shall last as long as the mountains which they pierce, or the rivers that they span. And these are but types of the greater changes which are taking place in society and in the church. Institutions, that have rested principally on immemorial usage or prescriptive right, are crumbling in pieces; childish superstitions, which have fettered whole tribes and nations for a thousand years, are secretly despised, or openly rejected.

The astonishing changes which have occurred during the present

¹ In 1818, it was estimated that there were 10,414,121 properties in France. On the supposition that more than one property may occasionally belong to one proprietor, the number of individual proprietors may be 4,833,000; and as most of these are heads of families, which may on an average consist of five persons, the total class of proprietors of land may be stated at 14,479,830, about half the population of France.—*MacKinnon's Civilization, II. p. 62.*

² It has been stated that, during the short period that the French remained in Egypt, they left manifold traces of amelioration; and that, if they could have established their power, Egypt would now be comparatively civilized. Many intelligent Spaniards have expressed regret that the French failed to retain their dominion in Spain. The same remarks, substantially, have been made by intelligent Germans. The question of the auspicious effects of this Revolution, it may be again stated, is entirely distinct from that which relates to the motives and many of the acts of the authors of it. It is the prerogative of Providence to educe good from evil. The intentions of the agent may be wholly reprehensible, while he is made the unwilling instrument of accomplishing great and permanent good.

year, and which may mark the history of Europe for some time, will not, it is thought, invalidate or annul the arguments which have been adduced. It is true that the greater part of the population of Continental Europe are ignorant and superstitious, while no inconsiderable portion of those individuals who are enlightened, entertain skeptical opinions, or theories inconsistent with the well-being of society. Proudly disdaining the lights of experience and the precepts of the Bible, they would reconstruct society on principles utterly at variance with all true progress.

Still, it should be remembered that many of the most enlightened friends of liberty and improvement in Italy, Germany, and other countries, have learned the lessons of moderation, as well as of progress, of the necessity of uniting caution with zeal, of laboring, if possible, with existing governments, rather than against them, so that thus they may acquire a moral force which shall be irresistible.

Again, it should not be forgotten that, during the long interval of peace since 1815, extended efforts have been made with the happiest results, to spread the gospel and its institutions in many parts of the continent. An efficient instrumentality has been at work in France. Many enlightened and able Protestants have contributed, in various ways, to place that interesting country in a much more favorable, moral position than that which she occupied forty years ago. Whatever of conservative and Christian influence exists in any part of the world is now made to bear quickly and efficiently on every other part. This consideration makes an immeasurable difference in our moral estimate of the actors in the French Revolution of 1793, and of those of 1848. There is, also, at the present time, a powerful middle class in France and in every other civilized country, whose pecuniary interests are altogether in favor of maintaining order and obedience to law. This commercial class is very powerful, is pledged to the maintenance of peace, and is necessarily hostile to all radical theories in respect to the division of labor and property.

Should, however, the fears of the friends of order and virtue be realized, and scenes of fearful anarchy be again witnessed in France and in other parts of Europe, it would by no means follow that the French Revolution of 1793 had been, on the whole, a calamity to the world. In the midst of all this wild uproar, it may be true that the moral atmosphere is undergoing a purifying process, introductory to serener skies. It may still be true that every wise and thoughtful man would not hesitate to prefer the present age, with all its excitements and evils, to the iron despotism and unutterable crimes which marked the history of Europe up to the very close of the last century.

The preceding facts and arguments will, perhaps, be deemed conclusive, unless they are counterbalanced and neutralized by events of an opposite and deleterious character. The events and facts to which we have alluded are by eminence the leading occurrences and phenomena in civil history, and their effects have been, on the whole, permanent and salutary. Have these effects been annulled or vitiated by other destructive agencies?

What, then, have been these counteracting phenomena? The prevalence of Mohammedism, it may be replied. But this has never essentially affected Europe or Christendom. Asiatic or African history, we are not now considering.

The Roman Catholic religion, it may be affirmed, is another vast preponderating mischief. But this has been for three hundred years waning. When it lost its hold on the Germanic and Anglo-Saxon races, it in a sense, lost everything. The moral and intellectual power of Christendom is incontestably with the Protestant and northern nations. Its most efficient aids—the company of Jesus, are now exiles from almost all Christian lands. The freedom of the press, everywhere asserted, is one of the strongest supports and allies of Protestantism.

Again, modern rationalism, or existing forms of skepticism, may be adduced as powerful weights in the opposite scale. But the skepticism in question is comparatively limited in its influence. It does not affect in a very decided degree, the controlling civilization, the leading science and literature of Christendom. It has not penetrated into society so deeply, nor exerted such a malignant influence, as the infidelity that was rife in Scotland, England, France, and in the United States, near the latter part of the 18th century. Besides, this perverted learning, this haughty rationalism, is made to subserve the cause of truth. Its natural tendencies are restrained and counteracted. Its vast stores of learning and argument are compelled to promote the object which it seeks to destroy. The evidence for a supernatural revelation has been tested as it were by fire, with a thoroughness to which it was never before subjected, and it has come out of the ordeal triumphantly.

If the preceding argument be correct, then a miraculous intervention of the Almighty in the affairs of the world does not seem to be needed. The overthrow of the present system, does not call for the personal and visible intervention of the Messiah. The gospel, accompanied by supplies of supernatural grace, with the continued influence of a beneficent Providence, are adequate to the regeneration of society.

Again, a new interest is imparted to the page of history. It is not, as it often seems to be, a record of disconnected events, a medley of inconsistent and confused details, a labyrinth to which no clue can be found. It is not merely a scroll of mourning, lamentation and woe, revealing the punishments which God inflicts on sinning nations. One purpose, could we ascertain it, runs through the great volume. One key alone will unlock its mysteries. Were our eyes only illumined, like those of the ancient prophet, we should discover, not horses of fire or chariots of fire, but one vast, orderly, consistent plan, events great and small taking their appropriate places in the scheme; all tending to one final, auspicious consummation, for which the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together until now. The history of the world would be the history of redemption. The first qualification for what we call a secular historian would be faith in Christ, and faith in the coming redemption of mankind. History would be the last work in which an infidel or a mere scholar could engage. His insight would be of necessity feeble, his judgments shallow or incorrect. To do his work aright, he must assume as far as possible, the position of the Divine mind, or like the apocalyptic angel stand on the central, illuminating orb. He needs clearness of vision, a delicate discrimination, an enlightened moral sense and a hopeful frame of spirit more than learning, or judgment or any intellectual gift.

From this discussion the reasonableness of the foreign missionary enterprise is apparent. It is not an isolated work. It is not to be charged with enthusiasm or fanaticism. It is falling in with the great teachings of history and acting in accordance with the general course of nature and Providence. It is eminently a rational undertaking. It would hasten the developments of history and impart efficacy to powers otherwise inadequate. It would reaffirm and invigorate the voices of nature. It would demonstrate the perfect unity between the kingdoms of Providence and grace.

From the general course of Divine Providence the true philanthropist may derive great encouragement. He has no possible ground for despondency. His co-workers are God and his truth, the Holy Spirit, the Redeemer with his atoning death and interceding power, the verdict of his own reason, the testimony of conscience, his holiest sympathies and feelings; and not these alone,—

—“Thou hast other

Powers that will work for thee, air, earth and skies.
 There's not a breathing of the common
 Wind that will forget thee! Thou hast great allies!
 Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
 And love and man's unconquerable mind.”

Long ages past are on thy side, the present and the dim future. Thine are the revolutions of States and empires. Thy work in doing good is consentaneous with all changes from the birth of creation to its end. Willing or unwitting all agencies coöperate, not one is exempt. By invincible necessity or voluntary choice, all things shall work together, till those new heavens and that new earth appear wherein dwelleth righteousness.

—“ From heaven the clouds shall roll,
The earth no longer be the vale of tears.
Speed on your swiftest wheels, ye golden spheres
To bring the splendors of that morning nigh.
Already the forgiven desert bears
The rose; the pagan lifts the adoring eye;
The exiled Hebrew seeks the day-break in the sky.”

ARTICLE IX.

GREEK TRANSLATION OF PSALM CXXXVII.

[For the following translation of the 137th Psalm into Greek hexameters, we are indebted to MR. CHARLES SHORT, of Roxbury. De Wette's version of the Psalm as found in "Die Heilige Schrift," edition of 1839, has been followed by the translator. This version is prefixed. A few Notes are subjoined.—E.]

1. An Babels Strömen, daselbst saßen wir, und weinten, indem wir Zions gedachten. 2. An den Weiden im Lande hängten wir unsre Harfen auf. 3. Daselbst forderten von uns unsre Sieger Gesang, und unsre Quäler Freudenlieder: „Singet uns Gesänge von Zion.“

4. Wie sollten wir singen Jehova's Gesang im Lande der Fremde? 5. Vergess' ich dich, Jerusalem, so vergesse [mich] meine Rechte! 6. Es klebe meine Zunge an meinem Gaumen, wenn ich dein nicht denke, wenn ich Jerusalem nicht sehe über die höchsten meiner Freuden!

7. Gedenke, Jehova, den Söhnen Edoms den Unglückstag Jerusalems: die da riefen: „Reißt um, Reißt um bis auf ihre Grundveste!“ 8. Tochter Babels, du Verwüsterin! Heil dem, der deine Kinder ergreift und zerschmettert an Felsen!