

# The State of the Churches

*BY ELDER M. E. CORNELL.*

It is not with any desire to find fault, or like the worldling to dwell upon the imperfections of others, and make their backslidings an excuse for laxity, that we speak of the fallen condition of the churches, for we do it with sadness, and would God it were otherwise. The facts are so well known to keen-eyed skeptics, infidels, and the world at large, that if we refuse to acknowledge them it would indicate a want of honesty on our part. But while infidels rejoice over the matter, and make it an occasion of doubting and rejecting the Bible and the Christian religion, we note the facts with candor, and see in it a fulfillment of prophecy. Instead of an occasion of stumbling, we find it an occasion of stronger faith in the Bible, as of heavenly origin.

But while we speak freely on the subject, we need not appear before the world as confessing for the churches, as though they were unwilling to acknowledge the facts: for this they have fully done for themselves, as will appear from the copious extracts in the following pages.

Let not the unbeliever rejoice over the fallen state of the church, for it is an omen of no good to the world. If the truth has lost its power upon its professed friends, what can its enemies hope for? Let God's people return from their captivity and be saved; for, while we admit the fact that the churches, as bodies, have become sadly degenerate, yet we firmly believe there are many true-hearted Christians in the different denominations, who mourn over the desolations of Zion. Such, we doubt not, will heed the call, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

In endeavoring to show that the present condition of the churches is a most striking fulfillment of prophecy, we propose, first, to spring the following question:

## **WHAT IS BABYLON?**

It is the opinion of many of the best students of prophecy that the great Babylon of the Apocalypse embraces the popular Protestant churches--that they are the legitimate daughters of the so-called "mother church." If this view be found correct, we shall see in the fall of the churches the fulfillment of the second angel's message, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen," etc. Rev. xiv, 8; xviii, 2-4. The word, "Babylon," from the word, "Babel," signifies "mixture, confusion;" and most fitly represents the state of the great family of churches. The fall of Babylon cannot mean her destruction; because, after she falls. God's people are called out of her, lest they should partake of her sins, etc. Her fall must therefore be a moral fall.

The following testimonies will show that, themselves being judges, they are embraced in Babylon, and that they are in a fallen state.

The Church of Rome claims the Church of England as her daughter:

"If the Church of Rome were ever guilty of idolatry in relation to the saints, her daughter, the Church of England, stands guilty of the same, which has ten churches dedicated to Mary for one dedicated to Christ."--*Catholic Christian Instructed*, p. 18.

Mr. Wm. Kinkade, in his "Bible Doctrine," p. 294, says:

"I also think Christ has a true church on earth, but its members are scattered among the various denominations, and are all more or less under the influence of Mystery Babylon and her daughters."

Mr. Hopkins, in a treatise on the millennium, says:

"There is no reason to consider the anti-Christian spirit

and practices confined to that which is now called the Church of Rome. The Protestant churches have much of anti-Christ in them,

and are far from being wholly reformed from the corruptions and wickedness."

Mr. Simpson, in his "Plea for Religion," says:

"For though the Pope and Church of Rome is at the head of the grand 1260 year's delusion, yet all other churches, of whatever denomination, whether established or tolerated, which partake of the same spirit, or have instituted doctrines or ceremonies inimical to the pure and unadulterated gospel of Christ, shall sooner or later share in the fate of that immense fabric of human ordinances; and that Protestant churches should imitate the Church of Rome, in this worst part of its conduct, can never be sufficiently bewailed."

On this question of What is Babylon? Eld. J. N. Andrews remarks:

"It can symbolize nothing less than the universal worldly church. War, slavery, conformity to the world, pride, intemperance, politics, and the like, identify, with sad and faithful accuracy, the great body of the Protestant churches as an important constituent part of this great Babylon."

Alexander Campbell says:

"The worshiping establishments now in operation throughout christendom, increased and cemented by their respective voluminous confessions of faith, and their ecclesiastical constitutions, are not churches of Jesus Christ, but the legitimate daughters of that mother of harlots, the Church of Rome."

Lorenzo Dow says of the Romish Church:

"If she be a *mother*, who are the *daughters*? It must be the corrupt, national, established churches that came out of her." *Dow's Life*, p. 542.

In the Religious Encyclopedia (Art., Antichrist), we read:

"The writer of the book of Revelation tells us he heard a voice from Heaven, saying, 'Come out of her, my people, that ye partake not of her sins, and receive not of her plagues,' If such persons are to be found in the 'mother of harlots,' with much less hesitation may it be inferred that they are

connected with her unchaste daughters, those national churches which are founded upon what are called *Protestant Principles*."

Dr. Cumming of England, speaking of our duty in reference to great Babylon, says:

"Then what is our duty? To call to all that at this moment. In the Church of Rome, whether sprinkled by her baptismal waters, or imitating within *another church* her forms her ceremonies, her pomp, and her grandeur, to come out of her, lest partaking of her sins they receive also of her plagues." --*The End*, p. 241.

## **BABYLON'S FALL**

The Scriptures plainly teach that the professed church of Christ will be in a fallen state in the last days. In giving the list of signs of the end near, our Saviour says: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Matt. xxiv. 12.

The apostle Paul, in his list of characteristics of the last days, speaks of "Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof." 2 Tim. iii, 1-5.

We will now see what the reforms and Bible students have expected would come in these days. By the sure word of prophecy they could see quite clearly what was coming before the end of time.

Martin Luther, just before his death, writing on the prophetic periods of Daniel, in his German Bible, says:

"About the consummation of these periods, this gospel will be shut out of all the churches and confined to private houses."

When one of Martin Luther's guests remarked that the world might continue fifty years, he replied:

"Pray God it may not exist so long; matters would be even worse than they have been. *These would rise up infinite sects and schisms*, which are at present hidden in men's hearts not mature. No; may the Lord come at once, for there is no amendment to be expected."

Matthew Henry, on Luke xviii. S. remarks:

"Now when he comes will he find faith on the earth? The

question implies a strong negative; no, he shall not; he himself foresees it. In general he will find but few good people, few that are really and truly good; many that have the form and fashion of godliness, but few that have faith."

Dr. Cotton Mather says:

"A little before the burning day the nominal church will be like a dead, putrid carcass, having no faith in the Lord's coming."

Dr. Gill, on the signs of Christ's coming, says:

"Which will yet be observed by a few, such a *general sleepiness* will have seized *all professors* of religion," etc.--*On Rev. iii*, 20.

Mr. Hopkins remarks:

"There is great reason to conclude that the world, particularly that part of it called Christian and Protestant, will yet make greater and more rapid advances in all kinds of moral corruption and open wickedness, till it will come to that state in which it will be fully ripe."

Mr. Harthy, a learned and sensible churchman, has remarked as follows:

"There are many prophecies which declare the fall of the ecclesiastical powers of the Christian world; and though each church seems to flatter itself with the hope of being exempted, yet it is very plain that the prophetic characters belong to all. They all have left the true, pure, simple religion, and teach for doctrines the commandments of men."

The above is sufficient to show what was expected, and now we enquire,

## **WHAT HAS COME?**

Dr. Cumming says:

"I believe that one-half of the professors of the gospel are nothing better than practical infidels."--*Time of the End*, p. 183.

Henry Ward Beecher says:

"Thousands of men in good and regular standing in evangelical

churches are giving no evidence of piety, are living in open sin, or in practices in business and in public affairs irreconcilably. I cannot ask such persons to the Lord's table just because they are regular members of a church."

Again he says:

"Gentility has nearly killed our churches."

Prof. Finney, of Oberlin College, says:

"Spiritual apathy is almost all-pervading, and is fearfully deep; so the religious press of the whole land testifies. It comes to our ears and to our eyes, also through the religious prints, that very extensively church members are becoming devotees of fashion--join hands with the ungodly in parties of pleasure, in dancing, in festivities, etc. But we need not expand this painful subject. Suffice it that the evidence thickens and rolls heavily upon us, to show that the *churches are becoming sadly degenerate*. They have gone very far from the Lord and he has withdrawn himself from them."

The *Christian Palladium* says:

"In every direction we hear the dolorous sound, wafting upon every breeze of Heaven, chilling as the blasts from the icebergs of the north--settling like an incubus on the breasts of the timid, and drinking up the energies of the weak; that lukewarmness, division, anarchy, and desolation are distressing the borders of Zion."

A Methodist journal says:

"Home religion among the Methodists is no longer what it once was. Family praise is almost wholly abandoned. Twenty-five years ago, a Methodist family might be known in any neighborhood by the morning and evening song of praise, in which father, mother and children took part. Whoever hears such a thing now?"

Dr. A. Barnes remarks that,

"With the increase of business, and the brightening prospects of commerce and manufactures, there is an increase of worldly-mindedness. Thus it is with all denominations."

The *Religions Telescope*, of Cireleville, Ohio, in 1844, contained the following:

"GREAT SPIRITUAL, DEARTH.--It is a lamentable fact, from which we cannot shut our eyes, that the churches of this country are now suffering severely on account of the great dearth, almost universally complained of. We have never witnessed such a *general declension* of religion as at the present."

Robert Atkins, in a sermon preached in London, says:

"The truly righteous are diminished from the earth, and no man layeth it to heart. The professors of religion of the present day in every church are lovers of the world, conformers to the world, lovers of creature-comfort, and aspirers after respectability. They are called to suffer with Christ, but they shrink from even reproach.

"Apostasy, apostasy, apostasy, is engraven on the very front of every church; and did they know it, and did they feel it, there might be hope; but, alas! they cry, 'We are rich, and increased in goods, and stand in need of nothing.'"

Mr. O. Scott (Wesleyan Methodist), says:

"The church is as deeply infected with a desire for worldly gain as the world.

"The churches are making a god of this world.

"Most of the denominations of the present day might be called *churches of the world* with more propriety than churches of Christ."

The *Genese Evangelist* says:

"Our Zion is in a state of mourning. The Holy Spirit has not visited us as in former years, and we have great cause for deep humiliation, in view of the sins and worldliness and spiritual indifference of most of our churches."

Mr. Spurgeon says:

"Reflecting the other day upon the *sad state of the churches* at the present moment, I was led to look back to apostolic times, and to consider wherein the preaching of the present day differed from the apostles."

The report of the Michigan Yearly Conference, published in the *True Wesleyan* of Nov. 15, 1851, says:

"The world, commercial, political, and ecclesiastical, are alike and are together going in the broad way that leads to death.

Politics, commerce, and nominal religion, all connive at sin, reciprocally aid each other, and unite to crush the

8

poor. Falsehood is unblushingly uttered in the forum and in the pulpit, and sins that would shock the moral sensibilities of the heathen go unrebuked in all the great denominations of our land." These churches are like the Jewish church when the Saviour exclaimed, 'Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.'

The following extract is from an address before the Theological School, Cambridge, Mass.:

"I think no man can go with his thoughts about him into one of our churches without feeling that what hold the public worship had on men is *gone* or *going*. It has lost its grasp on the affections of the good, and the fear of the bad. It is already beginning to indicate character and religion to withdraw from religious meetings. I have heard a devout person, who prized the Sabbath, say in bitterness of heart, 'On Sundays it seems wicked to go to church.' And the motive that holds the best there is now only a hope, and a waiting."

Prof. S. C. Bartlett, of Chicago, in the N. Y. *Independent*, says:

"Religion now is in a different position from Methodism then. To a certain extent it is a very reputable thing. Christianity is, in our day, something of a success. Men "speak well of it." Ex-presidents and statesmen have been willing to round off their career with a recognition of its claims. And the popularity of religion tends vastly to increase increase the number of those who would secure its benefits without squarely meeting its duties. The church courts the world, and the world caresses the church. The line of separation between the godly and the irreligious fades out into a kind of penumbra, and zealous men on both sides are toiling to obliterate all difference between their modes of action and enjoyment."

If the church is the "light of the world," and the "salt of the earth," and their light is gone out, or put under a bushel, and the salt has lost its savor, a fearful result will follow, and the fruit will be seen in the world. It is therefore in order to inquire after



## THE STATE OF THE WORLD

The prophet Isaiah speaks of a time coming when

9

"Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street and equity cannot enter." Isa. lix, 14. Of the N. Y. judiciary, Henry Ward Beecher thus speaks:

"All the framework of society seems to be dissolving. On every side we find men false to the most important trusts. Even the judges on the bench are bought and sold like meat in the shambles. One must go into court with a long purse to obtain justice. The judiciary of New York stinks like Sodom and Gomorrah. Men say they hardly know a court in which to trust a case. It is no longer an honor to sit on the bench, for if the judge be an upright man his character will be contaminated by the great majority of his associates."

Says the *Christian Herald*:

"It is a fact that about in the same ratio that the cause of experimental religion declines, immorality and vice increases."

The Philadelphia *Times* says:

"Honesty has fled from the world, and sincerity has fallen asleep. Piety has hidden herself, and justice cannot find the way. The helper is not at home, and charity lies sick. Benevolence is under arrest, and faith is nearly extinguished. The virtues go a begging, and truth has long since been buried. Credit is turned lazy, and conscience is pinned to the wall."

Says the Hornelsville *Times*:

"The records of the past have never presented a more fearful and corrupt state of society than now exists throughout most parts of the United States. The newspapers from every quarter are becoming more and more loaded with the records of crime."

The *North American* says:

"From the terrible evidences of human depravity which develop themselves from day to day, we begin to think that our cities are rapidly descending to the level of Sodom and Gomorrah."

The N. Y. *Herald* says:

"Crimes of all descriptions are on increase, especially

10

those of the blackest dye, the increase being much greater than the proportionate increase of population."

Says the *Expositor*, a political paper:

"Crimes, unprecedented in number and unequalled in atrocity, fill every section of our country with horrors, exhibiting a hardened barbarity, in their details, only to be exceeded in the bosom of demons," etc.

Says the *Scientific American*:

"It is admitted by all parties that crimes of the most outrageous and unprecedented character abound through the country, and probably throughout the world, to a degree wholly unparalleled."

Says the N. Y. *Tribune*:

"The telegraph wires bend under their weight of woe: the old earth quivers with throbs of agony from the center to the pole; cities are shaken down, countries are engulfed, fair domains are overflowed with red-hot lava; wife is arrayed against husband, mother against child, son against father; a hecatomb is sacrificed on one railway, half as many on another, and on still another the width of a hair stands between a thousand and sudden death. In social life, our newspapers are smutched all over with reports of divorce and separation trials, of infidelity and disgrace, of gigantic crimes undertaken, half accomplished, or completed. What shall be the end of these things?"

The *Christian Inquirer* says:

"Such an intense and insane rush and struggle for wealth, such reckless, ruinous, extravagance of expenditure, such a delirium for vulgar display, this country has never seen. And alas! not only taste, refinement, purity, and piety have gone down before the tide, but even honesty, etc. \* \* \* Every vice has increased in an alarming degree. Intemperance--not only are our streets and public places full of it--not only do young men and old men and mere boys fall before it by scores and hundreds, but even women, beautiful, accomplished, beloved wives and daughters carry its fire-blush on their cheeks, and reel and totter under its influence on the

sidewalks. There are more gaming places in the city to-day than there were dry goods stores twenty years ago; and the gamblers include all classes, from the boy of fifteen to the *roue* of fifty. But why enumerate? Every vice on the black

11

catalogue of transgression has more than doubled in volume and in victims within these five years, and our youth, the pride and hope of our land, are falling beneath the subtle destroyer faster than ever they fell in Southern campaign."

Says Dr. Griffon:

"The world! the world! the world! This is the object which engrosses every care; this is the supreme deity that is adored. Buy and sell, and get gain--out with the thoughts of death--away with the Judgment and Heaven--my farms, my merchandise; I will have them, though the earth trembles under my feet, and Heaven weeps blood upon my head."

## **THEIR COVETOUSNESS**

Another evidence of the fall of the churches is seen in their almost universal thirst for gain. Covetousness is the crying sin, both with priest and people. Describing the watchmen of the last days, the prophet says:

"Yea, they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter." Isa. lvi, 11.

"The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us." Micah iii, 11.

"For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them, every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely." Jer. vi, 13.

Many of the popular clergy have become rich from high salaries, donations, high pew-rents, etc., etc.

"The noted clergymen of New York are not to be reckoned among the poor of this world, though they may be rich in faith. Bishop Hughes is worth his million; Rev. J. W. Geissenheiner, of the Lutheran church, is worth a quarter of a million; Rev. A. R. Van Nest is reckoned at \$200,000, and has a million more in prospect; Rev. Dr. Spring has \$100,000, and his young bride three times as much more; Rev. Dr.

12

Adams is worth \$100,000; Rev. Dr. Potts, \$50,000; Bishop Janes, about \$100,000; Rev. Henry Ward Beecher and Dr. R. S. Storrs, of Brooklyn, are set down at about \$30,000 each." --*Springfield Republican*.

"For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. They are waxen fat they shine, yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked," etc. Jer. v, 26-28.

## **PRIDE IN MODERN CHURCH BUILDINGS**

Another evidence of their fall is found in the seeming effort to outdo the Catholics in extravagant church decorations and high steeples.

"The more they deck their cities, their houses, their possessions, and their own persons, the more will I be angry with them for their sin, saith the Lord." 2 Esdras xvi, 47, 48.

The Cincinnati *Daily Gazette* refers to Dr. Wayland's position as follows:

"EXPENSIVE CHURCHES.--Dr. Wayland is opposed to the erection of expensive churches, and the employment of ministers at high salaries, because in this way the masses of the people are excluded from the church, and turned over to the Devil. He says that, If we keep on in our present course, building expensive churches, and keeping up our expensive worship, our population will all be heathen eventually. Rich Christians will gratify their

pride, however, at whatever sacrifice to the religious interests of others."

A New York editor, speaking of the proposition of Bishop Hughes to have two spires on the great Catholic cathedral, either of them twenty-five feet higher than the spire of Trinity, remarks:

"Till that is done, let every true Protestant remember old Trinity with affection and pride!"

13

The Lockport *Telegraph* remarks:

"Costly palaces and magnificent temples are the great fountains from which the gospel at the present day is proclaimed to the people. Worldly splendor paves the 'narrow path 'to Heaven, and dresses the Christianity of the church in inviting robes."

A writer in the Chicago *Tribune* gives a description of a large church in that city, called "The Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church," as follows:

"The ground floor is divided into lecture room, library room, hall leading from the vestibule to the lecture room, two parlors, one on each side of this hall, 26x28 feet each; these open into the lecture room by heavy folding-doors. One parlor is to be used for a Bible-class room, the other for an infant class room. The interior appointments are complete. They equal, if not surpass, anything we have seen in the West. Beneath the vestibule and parlors is a basement, consisting of a large dining-hall, furnished with table accommodations for one hundred and fifty persons; a kitchen, with cooking apparatus, sinks, closets, dressing rooms, etc. The basement, under the vestibule and parlors, secures some desirable advantages; the social gatherings can be made agreeable and pleasant without introducing the refreshments into the lecture room or parlors."

Alas! has it come to this, that cooking apparatus and feasting rooms are as essential in the house of God as the pulpit and the gospel? We are credibly informed that such is becoming quite common in the new church establishments. This, then, is an index not only of modern Methodism, but of the popular Christianity of

the day. And must they feast away the last hours of time--eat, drink, and be merry, while destruction cometh like a whirlwind?

## **OPERATIC SINGING IN THE CHURCHES**

The N. Y. *Observer* says:

"The newspapers, sacred and profane, the English and American, are just now giving their attention to the invasion of our churches by operatic singers. Even our sober-minded

14

friends of the Philadelphia *Presbyterian*, under the significant head of 'Shameful,' and on the authority of some other paper, says:

"A few Sundays ago, in one of the New York Presbyterian churches, the place of the regular prima donna was temporarily supplied, during her absence, by another. The new voice was the subject of conversation, as some of the worshipers beguiled their homeward way, thus: 'Who was she?' 'Who can she be?' The answer was, 'She is a young timid girl, quite unaccustomed to such a congregation. Did you notice how she trembled?' It came out the next day that the timid, young girl was one of the performers in the 'Black Crook!'

"The 'Black Crook' is something or other, we know not what, that is going on nightly in one of our minor theatres, and is said to be the most indecent of the spectacles, but suited to the present tastes of theatre-goers. They have their theatre in Brooklyn, over the water from us, called the Academy of Music, and one of the newspapers says:

"Miss Florence A. Rice, the favorite cantatrice of Dr.---'s Presbyterian church, had a splendid benefit concert at the Academy on Monday night. She was assisted by Pattison, Thomas, Simpson, and Mme. Martinez. The audience was very large and proportionately enthusiastic.

"The regular opera is beginning to feel the effect of this church rivalry. Our Academy of Music was opened last Monday evening, after being closed a week or two, on account of the strike of the chorus singers. On Monday a young gentleman called upon a lady

friend, and asked if she would go with him to the opera that evening.

"Oh, no!" said she, 'I went twice yesterday.' "Why, you forget," he said; 'yesterday was Sunday.' "Yes, I know," she answered, 'but I went to the holy opera!'"

The Boston *Herald*, of Jan. 2, says:

"A Methodist church is finishing at Washington, D. C., costing \$200,000. Pews are made in it for the President, etc. Windows to be memorial, or historical, commemorating great men, and great events of the age. Altar and pulpit from cedar and fir wood, brought from Mount Lebanon.

The same paper of a later date, also says:

"The Methodists have dedicated the most magnificent church, probably, in the world, at Wilmington, Del. Bishops Scott, Ames, and Simpson were present."

15

The *Earnest Christian*, on such matters, says, and with all the truth on its side:

"There is a great rage for fine church edifices. \* \* \* Buildings that are large enough for the purposes for which a house of worship is intended, are sold for breweries, or some other base purpose. The arguments used for such a course are, 'If we do not have a fine church the rich will leave us.'"

"WHAT WOULD JOHN WESLEY SAY?--A correspondent of an exchange, writing from Newark, N. J., says: The N. J. Methodist Conference has just closed its sessions, which drew together a large number of clergymen. This denomination is eclipsing all other, strange to say, in splendid church edifices, having but just completed a second costly house, in which is a profusion of stained glass and elaborate architecture, and, not the least noticeable, a *very heavy organ*. Whether John Wesley would turn over in his grave at seeing all this, I cannot say, nor is it possible to predict the ultimate effect of this tendency upon Methodism."--*Michigan Christian Herald*.

The N. Y. *Independent* giving a report of a missionary meeting in a western city, says:

"It was almost a failure for want of numbers, and this the writer would fain attribute to the rainy evening had he not learned that hundreds had failed to get seats at the opera that night, and that a party given by one of the church members the same night was numerously attended."

Says the *World's Crisis*:

"There appears to be an active competition between the church and the world, as to which shall furnish for unsanctified human nature the most attractive amusements. In appeal to taste, the church may justly claim the verdict. In but few communities can the other resorts of fashion vie in magnificence with the so-called houses of worship."

## **RELIGIOUS GAMBLING**

"A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof? Jer. v, 30, 31.

16

Obtaining money by games of chance, at church festivals, fairs, and donation parties has become quite general in the churches of the day. Church lotteries are common. Of its tendency, the *Watchman* remarks:

"A member of a church went to his Pastor and entreated his personal intercession with his favorite son, who had become ruinously addicted to the vice of gambling. The Pastor consented, and seeking the young man, found him in his chamber. He commenced his lecture, but before he concluded, the young man laid his hand upon his arm and drew his attention to a pile of splendid volumes that stood upon the table. 'Well,' said the young man, 'these volumes were won by me at a *Fair* given in your church; they were my first venture; but for that lottery, under the patronage of a Christian church, I should never have become a gambler."

The *World's Crisis* quotes and endorses the following:



"To pay the preacher, a donation party is held, and the old and young, professor and worldling, devote the evening to feasting and merriment. Festival, picnics and excursions, oyster suppers and lotteries, are resorted to, for the purpose of replenishing the funds, or reviving the flagging interests-- not religious--in the prosperity of the church."

SEYMOUR, CONN., JULY 13, 1865.

"*Messrs. Editors:* The town of Seymour is alive this summer. Picnics, fairs, festivals, and the like, are the order. The last was an ice-cream festival, given for the benefit of the Congregational Society, Rev. Mr. Quick, Pastor, in the basement of their church. There were present, 'lots of fair women and brave men.' and as at all festivals, cream disappeared, and fun and frolic prevailed. The church made money!"

DANCING FELLOWSHIPED.

Of the wicked, Job says: "They send forth their little ones like a flock, and *their children dance*. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. *Therefore* they say unto God. Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Job xxi, 11-14.

17

David danced before the ark, but it was with holy, religious rejoicing. There is no proof in the Bible that among God's people the sexes ever mingled in a dance, as they now do in ball-rooms.

"'Tis not for man to trifle: life is brief,  
And sin is here;  
Our age is but the falling of a leaf,  
A dropping tear.  
We have no time to sport away the hours;  
All must be earnest in a world like ours."

Says the *Methodist*, when speaking of the ball given in New York to the Prince of Wales:

"Ministers of the gospel of several different denominations -- men who ought to be the nearest representatives of the Saviour of sinners--were there, as if to give the sanction of Christ's authority

to the *most monstrous earthly vanity*. What now becomes of wholesome Christian discipline? What becomes of the line so clearly drawn by Christ between the church and the world? What of his command to deny ourselves of all ungodliness and *worldly lust*, and live soberly, righteously and godly in this evil world? May the Holy Spirit himself intervene to restore the broken bulwarks of sacred discipline, and to trace again the *fading line* between the aggressive world and the invaded church."

"THE DANCING CLERGY."-- The *Western Times*, an English paper, records the names of not fewer than *ten clergymen* of the Church of England as being present at a *fashionable ball* recently given at Newton, in the south of Devon.

The *Unity Magazine* laments as follows:

"Christianity is indulging in fashion, and giving away to the spirit of the world. Dress, amusements, entertainments, fritter away its time, secularize its spirit, and eat out its soul! At watering places, in the theater, and among the mazes of the *dance*, you may find Christians (!) even among the foremost, and the most frivolous! And can their profession be anything more than a name."

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away." --*Paul*.

18

A corresponding editor of the *World's Crisis*, says:

"An astonishing instance of a church lowering its standard of piety to suit the perverted tastes of the pleasure-seekers of the age, has lately come to our knowledge. A large and influential denomination, having an organized existence of sixty-four years, experienced an outpouring of the Spirit, followed by a revival. More than one hundred persons shared in the blessing. The whole community was powerfully stirred during an entire winter. The period drew near when ninety-four persons, who had professed conversion, were to be baptized and admitted to full membership. Of these, more than a score were young people, who had followed the custom of attendance at balls and dancing. This pastime, the rules of the church for two-thirds of a century had strictly prohibited its members.

"The converted dancers were bent upon joining the church, but how were they to meet the prohibition. For they were determined to dance on, whether connected with the church or not! A concerted plan was formed. They would answer the official questions affirmatively, and openly promise not to dance--but with a mental reservation. The dodge which was decidedly jesuitical--succeeded. An official, leading member overheard the words. The rulers of the church were instantly summoned in secret convention. The pastor was in the chair. The official member who had got wind of the plan, stated the young converts' scheme (!) to the assembled leaders. He then demanded that to save the young people about to join from directly lying, on the day of their admission to membership, the prohibition against dancing should at once be stricken from the rules of the denomination. 'He believed in dancing, and should his request fail to be complied with, he would join another religious body, whose members were not forbidden to dance.

"The deed was done; the obnoxious rule expunged; the dancing converts won the day, received the ordinances and the hand of fellowship. Which to them has the greater fascination, the prayer-meeting or the ball-room, we have not learned. And the pulpit of that same church warned the community not to go and hear the Advent preachers! Alas, alas! no comment but this is needed."

## **PRIDE AND FASHION**

"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of

19

the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John ii, 15, 16.

"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array, but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." 1 Tim. ii, 9, 10. See also 1 Pet iii, 3, 4.

"And the *pride* of Israel testifieth to his face; and they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him for all this." Hosea vii, 10. "Pride hath budded." Eze. vii, 10.

The Michigan *Christian Herald* says:

"Too well, already, do we all know how the foul tides of *fashion* and *folly* have swept to the *very altar-places of our faith*."

The *Advocate*, Methodist paper published at Charlestown, Mass, says:

"Notwithstanding the prohibition of the Methodist principle, it is a serious fact, and one generally to be deplored, that there is *more jewelry and superfluous dress* worn by the Methodists of this day than there is by any other class of religious professors in our land."

A correspondent of the *North Western Christian Advocate*, giving an account of a young lady slowly wasting away with consumption, says:

"I strove to recommend religion to her in the best way and manner that I could. She had been reading her Bible for some time, desiring to find peace in believing, still she found none. *She saw so much pride in professors of religion, so many artificials, gold and costly apparel, that she was afraid they would cause her soul to be lost forever.*"

A writer in the *New York Tribune*, speaking of the FASHIONABLE RELIGION and WORSHIP of this boasted age of PROGRESS, says:

"Now the worshipers one after another glide in, silks rattle, plumes wave, satins glisten, diamonds glitter, and scores of forty-dollar handkerchiefs shake out their perfumed odors!

20

What absurdity to preach the gospel of the lowly Nazarite to such a set! The clergyman knows better than to do so. He values his fat salary and handsome parsonage too highly. So with a velvety tread he walks all around the ten commandments--places the downiest pillow under the dying profligate's head, and ushers him with seraphic hymning into an upper-ten Heaven."

Says Mr. Spurgeon:

"Do not rank and fashion gather most readily in those places where their senses are delighted, while their souls are deluded? Yes.

Through the means of our Popish Establishment there has been an onward rush of error which is perfectly appalling. Watchman, when they ask thee, 'What of the night?' canst thou say, 'The morning cometh?'

Ye that love the Saviour, will you open your ears to catch the meaning of all these things? Men dying, men perishing, the church slumbering, and error covering the land!"

The Portland *Advertiser* says, "Put this and that together;" then quotes from the N. Y. *Express*:

PEWS IN REV. II. W. BEECHER'S CHURCH.-- The sale of choice pews this year amounted to \$29,483, nearly \$3,000 more than last; this, with the rental--\$12,158, makes the pew income \$41,594, \$400 being paid for choice of pews.

"Simultaneously with the above announcement, there appeared in '*The Boudoir*,' the ladies' illustrated paper of fashions, the following notice: "The readers of *Boudoir* should not fail to peruse every one of the pages this week. Each is filled to its limit with the liveliest reading and gossip of life, the news of fashion, the affairs of the *beau monde*, and all matters of general interest to ladies. We gave last week the current fashions as displayed at Beecher's church, and in this issue we notice them as displayed at St. Stephen's."

By putting this and that together, we may understand why high prices are paid for pews, and also what many people in these days go to church for.

Fanny Fern, a few years ago, said:

"When I go to the theater, I care not how common and plain I am dressed, for all go there to see the performance on the stage; but when I go to church I put on my best, for people go there to see the latest fashions!"

## **WORSHIP IN NEW YORK**

A correspondent of the Cincinnati *Commercial* gives the following description of fashionable worship at the present day, in New York city. Making all due allowance for the sarcasm of his style, he states

facts which show the fallen and lifeless condition of the churches, and which cannot be denied. He writes thus:

"I was inveigled into attending a fashionable church, last Sunday, on the promise held out that I would hear some of the most heavenly music ever vouchsafed to human ears. So far as pleasing the senses went, I was perfectly gratified. The organ of said fashionable church is a superb instrument, and the same may be said of the tenor, the bass, and, indeed, every voice hired for the occasion.

"This is the style of things in New York, and the churches vie with each other in getting up first-class orchestral accompaniments to what they are pleased to call divine worship. In one aristocratic circle of the Lord's elect, a negro minstrel leads the choir, and in all of them hired voices--if not from the opera, at least from professional sources--praise God in machine music.

"I don't profess to be so pious as to be shocked beyond recovery at this sort of thing. The poor girl from the opera, or the harmonious 'nigger' from the minstrels, may have much heart, and true prayer in her or his soul, when pouring out the praise the sweet voice makes acceptable; but I am disgusted at the spirit which procures the music as an entertainment, and a boast, rather than an effort, to offer thanks to the Lord in the sweetest gift granted the human family.

"While one sweet, clear voice went soaring up like a bird, in music stolen from the Catholic church and the opera, I felt that a round of applause, with a subdued cry of 'bravo,' and 'encore,' would be appropriate. This is the spirit that pervades the congregation. All sense of religion was lost in admiration of the singer, and a mean; pride of being equal, if not superior, in the way of music, to any other church in New York.

"This sort of church music is but part of the ostentation that makes up two-thirds of the religion here. It is not very extensive--only one-tenth of the population claim to be religious, and if we count out the Catholics, Universalists, and the Hebrews, the number is still less. And these three named are counted out by the

Young Men's Christian Association, for I notice in the advertisements put up in prominent places,

22

directing strangers to places of worship in New York, these three are not honored with a place. Probably this is right enough; as one of the strangers in New York, I make no complaint. If the Y. M. C. Association had omitted the advertisement altogether I would not complain. But, as I was saying, but a small part of New York make profession of religion, and those who do, make *only* profession.

"Religion here is ostentatious, and it is a cheap sort of ostentation. It does not break out in huge cathedrals and ministers, as the blind faith of the dark ages did in Europe, when delicate spires rose, cloud-capped, to be worshipped by art through all coming time. It expends its religious fervor in paint and putty. The churches are small and insignificant, but the upholstery is immense. We have here the church of the Sainted Zebra, and the church of the Holy Grapevine. They are wonderful in their way--their way being the upholstery.

"How close we cast out little vanities to the river of death, I thought, while gazing at a congregation dressed as carefully and gaily as if gotten up for an opera. The preacher would have been as much at home in a barber shop as in the pulpit. He might lack faith (he certainly lacked sense), but he was eminently respectable. St. Peter might shake hands with him and not lose caste--St. Peter might, with entire security, introduce the parson to the other eleven. I rather think the parson would require an introduction. And my ugly thoughts grew grotesque. Suppose, speaking of introductions, that the meek and lowly Saviour, who once trod our earth, barefooted and sore, the friend of the poor and down-trodden, who took no heed of what they should wear, should enter and seek a seat in this temple erected to his glory. How quickly that keen-eyed sexton would seize on him and lead him out.

"If the music was paid for the preaching was conventional. I never heard a more powerful discourse on the sweetness of holiness and the sinfulness of sin; and it must have pleased every one, for no one's conscience could have been touched. So far as phraseology

went, it was just such an exhortation as a Hebrew rabbi might have given to a congregation of Moses and sons, eighteen hundred years ago, in Jerusalem.

"It is not my province to be theological, but as we moved slowly out to the music of a fashionable *galop*, played on the organ, I could not help thinking that in these degenerate days there were just two sects left that were in earnest and meant business--one is the Catholic and the other the Methodist. They have convictions; the rest have sentiments."

23

THE CHURCH'S DESOLATION. WELL may thy servants mourn, my God, The church's desolation; The state of Zion calls aloud For grief and lamentation. Once she was all alive to thee, And thousands were converted; But now a sad reverse we see, Her glory is departed. Her pastors love to live at ease; They covet wealth and honor; And while they seek such things as these, They bring reproach upon her. Such worthless objects they pursue, Warmly and undiverted, The church they lead and ruin, too-- Her glory is departed. Her private members walk no more As Jesus Christ has taught them: Riches and fashion they adore-- With these the world has bought them. Adieu! ye proud, ye light and gay! I'll seek the broken-hearted, Who weep, when they of Zion say, Her glory is departed. Some few, like good Elijah stand, While thousands have revolted; In earnest for the heavenly land, They never yet have halted. With such religion may remain, If they are not perverted; By separation they'll regain The glory that's departed.