

A TRUE PICTURE;

OR

DESCRIPTION OF THE STATE OF THE CHURCHES.

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EXTRACT OF A DISCOURSE.

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." Luke xii, 35, 36.

PREACHING in ceiled houses, Sabbath after Sabbath, to the same congregation, appears to me little better than a mockery, when the awful state of Christendom arises before me, overshadowed, as it is, with the cloud of Almighty vengeance; and yet, were I to pursue the course that best accords with my present state of feeling—were I to cry aloud throughout the streets and lanes of this city, day and night, Wo, wo, wo to the inhabitants—wo to the corrupters of the pure gospel of the blessed Jesus, I should be regarded as a fanat-

ical maniac ; and, at the sacrifice of future usefulness, would only secure the lamentable satisfaction of having borne my testimony against a degenerate age, and an apostate church. My beloved hearers, I am well aware that the glance that I have taken, at this most alarming and exciting subject, is but ill calculated to prepare my mind, at least, for the deliberate investigation of the important doctrine which I have purposed to bring before you ; but depending for help, whence alone true help can come, I proceed to the consideration of my subject ; and, that your minds may not be confused by a variety of matter, I shall confine myself, in the present lecture, to the delusion that prevails respecting the state and prospects of the church and the world.

What is the opinion that the churches of the present day entertain of themselves, and of the world ?—My hearers, am I not stating a truth, when I say—Go where you will, either to the platforms of Bible Societies, or Missionary Societies, or to the pulpits of Churchmen or Dissenters, and you will hear one uniform tale of the increasing piety, and of the extending success of the gospel. You will almost be persuaded that the ministers and the churches are as holy and as zealous as they well can be—that the world is mending every day, through the influence of religious example, and that we may shortly expect the triumph of the gospel—the fulfilment of the promise that the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Now, without stopping to inquire what influence such statements as these, or such opinions, howsoever modified, of the church and of the world, are likely to produce upon either, let us see how they accord with Scripture and with fact. It is plainly stated by our Lord, that, until the end of the present dispensation, there should be the co-existence of Christianity and anti-Christianity—that the tares should grow together with the wheat until the end of the age

—not the end of the *world*, as it is rendered in our translation; and, if this be true, when shall every knee bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Lord?—When shall righteousness cover the earth, and when shall the earth be filled with the glory of the Lord? Most certainly, if Christ's declaration is to be taken, not during the present dispensation.—The Apostle Paul informs us that iniquity, which, at the beginning of the dispensation, only worked by way of mysteries, in the latter days would assume the character of an actual manifestation. In his second epistle to Timothy, he also declares that, in the last days, perilous times shall come; or men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemous, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good—traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof—ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth; men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the truth; evil men and seducers, waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. And the apostle Peter gives this addition to the awful picture:—There shall come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? Here, you perceive, my hearers, you have two descriptions of the last days, that is, of the present time, as widely different as two descriptions can possibly be; the first is of man's drawing, and the second of God's. Which of the two will you believe? But, lest there should be any mistake, let us fairly and honestly inquire whether this description of God's giving, actually corresponds with the present state of the churches and of the world; and, in tracing the correspondency, may God carry conviction to every one of your minds, as he has done to

mine. And now, if we want a standard whereby to judge of the apostasy of the present churches, we must take the church of Christ when the apostatizing spirit was least manifested, that is to say, in the apostolic age. With this pattern in our eye, where, I ask, are the gifts of the Spirit? Where is the confidence and brotherly love that made all things common?—and where is the selling of all that we have, and becoming a disciple of the Lord Jesus? Where has the spirit of self-denial and of cross-bearing fled? Where is the taking joyfully the spoiling of our goods?—Where is the persecution that all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall endure, and where is the being hated of all men for Christ's sake? Alas! alas! my brethren, the gifts of the Spirit are gone, and, I fear, most of the graces have gone with them; and, as to suffering and reproach, to which the church is called, such things have long been mere matters of history. But this general mode of remark will do little, I fear, in bringing conviction to the mind; let us at once go to the churches and take their members individually, and compare the Christian of the present day, with Christ; and where, let me ask, O! where will you find almost one feature of resemblance? There are none of you ignorant of the fact that our Lord, while in the world, not only made an atonement for sin, but he also set us an example, that we might tread in his steps. He knew what was in man; he knew what would be his most dangerous besetment, that is, the love of the world, the love of creature comfort, the love of ease, and of a present resting-place. To guard against this besetment, he chalked out a course for his followers, and for his church; and, let me tell you, it is the only one that can be safely followed: and what is this course? He became a pilgrim and sojourner in a strange land, and would not have so much of this world as even a place whereon to lay his head; he took no thought for the mor-

row; he made no such inquiries as these: What shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed; and, in praying to his Father, he could honestly, and with a sincere heart, say, give me this day my daily bread. My hearers, whatever apostate churches may say to the contrary, every Christian is bound, by our Saviour's example, and, what is more, God's positive command is upon him to walk in these very steps, and to observe the very same rule.

Oh! my hearers, find me a follower of Christ, find me a true pilgrim, a genuine sojourner, a man that is truly a stranger in this evil world, find me the man whose conduct tells the world he is living for eternity; find me the church who lay it down as a rule, that, for the sake of thoughtless, world-loving, comfort-loving, and pleasure-loving sinners, their ministers and members shall uniformly preach the following truths, by their lives and by their conduct: Men are probationers for eternity; the world is man's worst enemy; the world has damned millions of souls, and is damning millions more at this very moment.—Renounce the world, come out from the world, beware of the world, overcome the world. I hesitate not to say, such a man, such a church is not to be found; 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, not to speak of suffering in the flesh, as an evil that they are justified in using every means to evade: they are called to endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ, but, to a man, they love softness and ease; they are called to bear a testimony for Christ, to endure persecution, and to rejoice in tribulation; but they take good care to keep out of the way of both when they can. They are called to weep

and to mourn, and are promised a Comforter; but they prefer to be without the Comforter, rather than have the mourning. 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; and thus, blasphemy is added to apostasy. My beloved hearers, do I speak too strongly, have I overdrawn the picture? Come with me to Lambeth Palace, tell the number of its turrets, count its splendid halls and its painted chambers, give a tongue to these appendages of state, these contributors to luxury, and say, oh! say, What are all these calculated to teach a pleasure-loving and a world-loving sinner? Go to the salaried dissenting preacher, who has found a resting place in his five hundred, or his one hundred a year, and see whether his stipulated income, or the round of duty for which it is paid, will give you any just idea of the leader and the exemplar of Bible pilgrims. Go to the opulent professing churchman, or the wealthy deacon, go to the *Christian* merchant, or the *Christian* shop-keeper, and learn the church's comment on the two notable commandments of our Saviour, "Lay not up treasures on the earth," and "Labor not for the meat that perisheth." Where, oh! where is the world-hater, the money-despiser, the cross-lover to be found? Where is the Bible sojourner, the Bible probationer for eternity, the Bible sufferer for Christ's sake—Christ's living epistles, which sinners may read? Where have they their hiding-place? My brethren, my brethren, the whole gospel system, and the very gospel object is perverted, and yet am I censured as a reviler for calling the churches apostate. The churches do not know that iniquity is working in the way of mystery—the churches do not know that Satan's method of damning souls is by giving them much that has the ap-

pearance of good—that he will go the length of making a three-parts Christian to keep the inquirer in peace, that he may thus not only make his damnation more sure, but also bring deeper reproach upon Christ and his cause. Is the witness of the Spirit a thing inquired after? The sinner shall have it, but it will be counterfeit. Is peace, is joy, is a praying or preaching gift wanted? They shall be given, but remember, they are blessings and gifts too frequently of Satan's giving. Holiness of heart, and Christ's example, are the only things that Satan fears; and all partial piety, and half-hearted Christianity, are Satan's glory, and the church's shame. My hearers, I have given you a short sketch of what are called the Christian churches of the day, who are going to convert the world by their preaching and their example. Do I revile them? Nay, but, according to the light which God has imparted to me, I feel myself called upon, fearless of all consequences, to bear my testimony against them, for the honor of Christ and his cause, as a warning to the deluders, and for the benefit of the deluded; and it is my constant prayer, that they may awaken to a sense of their real condition, and humble themselves before God, from whom they have awfully apostatized, ere the vials of Almighty wrath give indisputable evidence that the measure of the iniquity of the Gentile church is full.

My brethren, were I to attempt to draw the character of the churches of the day in full, of the churches who, according to their own account, are to be the honored instrumentality of evangelizing the heathen, and filling the whole earth with the glory of the Lord, the sun would go down upon us before one hundredth part of their corruptions and abuses could be brought before you in detail; even mere natural men and avowed infidels have but to direct their eye towards them, and the feeling of disgust is created, and the cry of shame is extorted, because of their party bickerings

and their unchristian animosities; but, with the record of their unhallowed contentions, or with the abuse of the powers they possess, and their aspirings after more, I have, at present, nothing to do; it is enough for my purpose simply to point at their apostasy from primitive purity and primitive simplicity, and their total want of primitive power. Alas! alas! the gospel-perverting nature of their conduct and operations, their worldly-mindedness, their spiritual darkness, their self-conceit, their party-spirit, their secularizing policy and utter selfishness, their having the form of godliness without the power, and their ever hearing and never coming to the knowledge of the truth, all, all about them, and of them, and in them, but too strongly mark them out as the prepared and the preparing objects of Almighty vengeance. Startling though the language be, I dare not hesitate to use it; God has forgotten to punish, if his arm be not lifted up against them, and mock piety is no longer offensive to a holy God, if the hour of their destruction be not nigh at hand. I fear much that the unconverted and backsliding portions of every Gentile church, I mean of the churches of the day, will laugh at this testimony, which I consider it my duty to bear against them; for they have closed their eyes, they have shut their ears, they have hardened their hearts, and God has given them over to their strong delusion; they are believing a lie, and they will assuredly be damned, because they have obeyed not the gospel, because they have held the truth in unrighteousness; but, blessed be God, there are some in every church, a small remnant, a little flock, whose eyes are still open, who weep and mourn over the general defection, who know the voice of the Spirit: and to them I address the admonitory language of my text, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he com-

eth and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately."

But, my dear hearers, I must take my leave for the present of the rich churches, the churches that are possessed of goods, the churches that can reign without Christ, the churches that love not his appearing, the churches that scoffingly cry out, Where is the promise of his coming; the anti-Christian, apostate Gentile churches, who are fitting themselves for the fire with which God will shortly plead with them; and I shall now direct your attention for a few moments to the awful state of the world, which the divines of the day would have you believe is improving in manners, and in spirit, through its intercourse with the churches which I have just been characterizing as apostate. But where, oh! where shall I begin? The heart sickens the moment that the eye falls upon the mass of iniquitous abomination that lies before it.—Take the Christian country in which we live, or, it may be better for our purpose, the Christian city in which we dwell, (London,) I ask, is it an improvement upon heathenism, to see a court at the opera on Saturday night, and at the sacramental altar on the Sunday morning? Are balls, and concerts, and theatres, and race-courses, places of preparation for the judgment-seat, and places of training for the mansions of the blessed, and for the eternal companionship of a holy God? Were there not a Bible in our land, could the iniquities of the heathen be more gloried in than they are? And yet, this is the capital of the world, which is so wondrously improved by the influence of Christian example. Take your Bible in your hand, and place your finger upon that portion of it which says, "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy," and go throughout the streets and markets of this city; and if your heart does not sink within you, and if your spirit does not fail you, you have neither the heart nor the spirit of a Christian. On

any Sabbath throughout the year, take your stand in Hyde Park, and see how daring and impiously the bulk of our nobility can insult the God of heaven.—In front of every equipage, I can see in my mind's eye an angel of the Lord crying aloud, for God's sake, and for our own sake, "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy;" and I can hear the infatuated worms reply, "Onward, onward, who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" Shall I speak to you of whoredoms? There are eighty thousand public prostitutes within the precincts of this wicked city, and who can count the number of the secret ones! drunkenness, dishonesty, swearing, and lying, and every kind and manner of abomination, have uncontrolled license; and there is not a street, lane, or neighborhood, that has not a polluted moral atmosphere.—This, my hearers, is but a slight etching of our Christian city, of our improving world, of the wicked harlot with which the Gentile churches have been shaking hands, nay, committing open whoredom, for fifteen hundred years. Tell me not, by way of palliation, that the persecuting spirit of the world is gone; the truth is, Christ is gone; there is no Christ in the churches to persecute. And as to the individual Christian, there is too little of the image of Christ, and of the power of Christ there, to excite either the jealousy of Satan, or the malice of the world. Be assured, my dear hearers, whatever Christians of Satan's making may say to the contrary, a God-despising, Christ-rejecting Spirit-resisting world, doth not lack malice towards Christ and his followers.—Let any minister of Christ fully take his Master's ground; let him begin at the palace, and, coming down through the members of the administration, the houses of parliament, the bishop's stalls, and the chairs of justice; let him tell every man, plainly and honestly, what he is, what he is doing, and where he is going—and you will soon see the arm of the law

stretched out against him ; and let the efforts of this faithful minister be zealously backed by a few equally bold and resolute denouncers of iniquity, let one fair stand be made for Christ and for God, and you will quickly behold the fires of Smithfield re-kindled, or some other more civilized invention in active operation, to rid the land from troublesome, soul-alarming, and Satan-disturbing disciples of Christ. But why should I keep my eye, and yours, so long fixed upon the world ? did not the first glance satisfy you all, that it was ripe for destruction ? It is true, God is a long-suffering and a merciful God ; but what can he do, that he has not already done ? And, after having done everything that was consistent with his own nature, and with man's position, as a probationer for eternity, for the church's reformation, and the world's salvation, it were directly libelling God to say he has not done so ; and after having done all this in vain, as far as either the reformation of the one or the salvation of the other is concerned, a lengthening out of the day of mercy would, in my estimation, be most unmerciful. I see it to be just a crowding of hell with daily increasing victims, and a seven-fold heating of its flames, by hourly despised privileges. Because I love mercy, and pity the sinner, my continual cry, is, Lord, come speedily to judgment ! Because I feel for God's insulted honor, I cry, Lord come to judgment ! and, because I know the penalty of continuing to resist the Spirit, and to trample upon the blood of the Lamb, I must cry, Lord, come quickly to judgment ; and I am as sure as that there is a merciful God in the heavens, that he is hastening on the day of the wicked's destruction ; and as soon as this, his purpose, can be accomplished, it will be accomplished. Wo, wo, wo to the Bible-despising, gospel-hardened inhabitants of this land ; for assuredly the fearful day of retribution, the terrible day of God's reckoning, with this worse than heathenish people, is

nigh at hand. Sinners of Great Britain, depend upon it, the last offer of mercy and salvation is being made to you—your last day of grace is hastening to its close. I look upon it that you are placed as a nation in precisely the same situation as the Jews were, when Jesus Christ, weeping over Jerusalem, cried aloud, in the anguish of his soul, Oh! that thou, at least, that thou hadst known the things that belong unto thy peace; but now—and the sentence is irrevocable—now they are forever hid from thine eyes.—Notwithstanding the awful sentence, Jesus Christ commanded his disciples to begin the preaching of the gospel at Jerusalem—and why? Simply because, though the national doom was fixed, individuals might, even at the last hour, be induced to accept of a Saviour. Apostate churches of Christendom, the measure of your iniquity is full. Godless, Christless world, your destiny is fixed; your destruction is inevitable, but shall I not begin at Jerusalem? Oh! that in these last days God would give me energy of body and of mind, and the mighty power of his Spirit, to warn the individual sinner with effect; that some might yet escape for their lives, and take refuge from the coming calamity, in the hitherto despised, but still outstretched arms of their Saviour.

ADDRESS TO THE MINISTERS OF CHRIST.

Ministers of Christ, and ye men of God, who are scattered throughout the churches, suffer the word of exhortation; what have you to do with the doctrinal squabbles, the secularizing policy, and the party interests of existing churches? If you be, indeed, men of God, spiritual men, you must long ago have been tired of their mud, and their filth, and their shallows. I entreat you, in God's name, and for Christ's sake, put away your apathy, and awake from your slumbers; come out from among them, lest ye become partakers of their plagues. The cry is raised,

Behold, the Bridegroom cometh ! as you value your souls, disobey not the command : but " Go ye forth to meet him." 'Tis vain to imagine that, by remaining where you are, you may still be a leaven for good. The churchman will remain a churchman, the independant, an independant, and the methodist a mere methodist, in spite of you ; mother's children are they all. They do not bear the image of the heavenly, and I am satisfied, as regards the great bulk of them, the Father never begat them. The little zeal that they have hath self for its spring, and party aggrandizement for its object ; and either self-interest or self-exaltation constitutes the bond of this union. If ever they knew anything of God individually, I am afraid the most of them died in the weaning, when the sensible comfort, the milk that God hath provided for the babe in Christ, was withdrawn, because they had been long enough babes—they would not learn to feed upon the word—they would not take to the flesh and to the blood of Christ : and, consequently, that which was given them hath been taken away from them. The preaching gift and the praying gift—yea, and part of the decently-living gift, may remain ; and because they must have peace, and joy, Satan will take care that they are furnished with both ; but as to the life of God and the image of Christ, they are scarcely anywhere to be found. Men of God, can you make the members of your several churches sensible of their state ? Can you convince them of their delusion by remaining amongst them ? Never. Will such men unite with you in hastening on the coming of your Lord ? Will they mourn with you over the apostasy of the churches ? Will they weep with you, will they cry with you for all the abominations that are existing in the world ? O, no. You will uniformly find them on the side of the scoffer, and they will tell you, We are doing well—we are increasing in goods, we are triumphing, we are reigning, and

what care we for the promise of his coming? Men and brethren, from this moment come out from among them, and be ye like unto them who are waiting for the return of their Lord. Bear your testimony boldly and openly against them, and thus you may succeed in alarming some of them. You are injuring them, you are hindering the work of Christ, you are weakening one another's hands, by continuing in your present position. Oh! may the spirit of Elijah, who must come, and of John the Baptist, be given unto you. Let your loins, like theirs, be girded about; let your lights burn where they may be seen, and let your united cry awaken both the slumberer and the sleeper. "Prepare to meet thy God." I have a conviction on my mind, that it is God's purpose that yet once more the note of alarm shall be sounded throughout these realms, and that this last trumpet will, under God, either have the effect of hardening or saving the sinner. I clearly see that both processes have already commenced under my own ministry, and if you, my fellow-laborers, will only be faithful, and in your several spheres and stations stand out boldly for God, the harvest of this land will soon be ripe. I feel as if death or life was in every word; and every time I make the inquiry, Watchman, what of the night? the answer cometh with increasing thrill to my soul, The morning cometh, and also the night. And, Oh! may every soul now before me tremble at the voice of the Spirit, and take the prophetic warning in time, make haste—return—come! Ministers of Christ! men of God! to your knees for oil, to your Bibles for light; away with every trapping of worldly policy; strip your party-colored robes of Satan's weaving; take to you locusts and wild honey; have done with the poisonous dishes of man's providing: strengthen your loins as with a girdle, with the promise of his coming, with the blessed hope of the glorious appearing of the great God and your

Saviour, and let your voice be a united voice—the voice of one crying in the midst of this wilderness of apostasy, blasphemy, ignorance, pollution, and sin—“Prepare the way of the Lord.” Thus will you be “like unto the men who are waiting for their Lord;” and take the promise for your comfort, “When he cometh, and shall find you thus watching; verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make you sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve you.”—Amen.

“Spiritual apathy,” said Prof. Finney, in 1844, “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, &c. 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.”

Luther, just before his death, speaking of the state of things near the end, while 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.”

Says Charles Beecher: “Oh, woful day! Oh unhappy church of Christ! Fast rushing round and round the fatal circle of absorbing ruin! Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and *knowest not* that thou art poor, and miserable, and *blind*, and *naked*!”

REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE.

How prone are professors to rest off their lees,
To study their pleasure, their profit and ease;
Though God says arise, and escape for thy life,
And look not behind you; "Remember Lot's wife."

Awake from thy slumbers, the warning believe,
'Tis Jesus that calls you, the message receive;
While dangers are pending, escape for thy life,
And look not behind you; "Remember Lot's wife."

The first bold apostate will tempt you to stay,
And tell you that lions are found in the way;
He means to deceive you—escape for thy life,
And look not behind you; "Remember Lot's wife."

How many poor souls has the tempter beguiled!
With specious temptations how many defiled;
O, be not deluded, escape for thy life,
And look not behind you; "Remember Lot's wife!"

The ways of religion true pleasure afford,
No pleasures can equal the joys of the Lord;
Forsake then the world and escape for thy life,
And look not behind you; "Remember Lot's wife!"

But if you determine the call to refuse,
And venture the way of destruction to choose,
For hell, you will part with the blessings of life,
And then, if not now, you'll "Remember Lot's wife!"