

wark against infidelity. The household is a church. The strong and ineradicable love of mothers for their offspring is priest, prophet, and preacher.

In nations where the Christian Church has been made partner with the State in great oppressions, there may be a wasting revulsion and, as in France, the popular instinct may be away from faith, and the grossest paganism may for a time prevail; but not in America. The Church here has always been of the people and for the people.

Its ministers have been leaders in education, in public spirit, in patriotism. There may be dogmas and doctrines to be ousted, but no wrongs to be avenged. From the colonial days men know that the churches of America have been the organized centers of benevolence, and from them have issued the faith which sustained the Colonies in dark days, the enthusiasm which has overthrown national dangers. There has never been an organized infidelity—unbelief has no Gospel. Eminent and good men have been infidel to church creeds, seldom to religion. The scoffing infidelity which believes nothing, and seeks to eradicate faith, root and branch, is uncongenial to the temper and good sense of Americans of native birth, and of American education. From nature, from training, and from domestic common-sense, as well as from a higher inspiration, our people are inclined to religion. They may tolerate change in its institutions, they may amuse themselves with the wit of good-natured infidels, they may applaud intelligent doubt which refuses the weeds which have been bound up in the sheaves of theology, and that unbelief which simply refuses to take a part for the whole; but, the rational reverence, the aspiring ideality, which work away from the gross and the low, will forbid the American mind to join in wasting skepticism. It will demand something better for everything it gives up.

That a great change, progressive and prophetic, is passing over the public mind, in matters of religious truth, there can be no doubt. It is worth our while to study the nature and direction of it, and the causes which are pushing it forward.

We are passing out of an age in which churches are revered as divine by an ordinance of God. Men are coming to believe the

function of churches to be eminent and divine, but not their structure and origin. Churches have grown from the necessities of human nature seeking moral elevation, as schools grow up from the necessities of intellectual development; as eleemosynary institutions grow from the requirements of humanity; as civil governments grow out of the necessities of society. God created human nature, and, in a sense, all that is necessary to it. He created iron, but not machinery; forests, but not furniture; textile substances, but not garments; colors, but not pictures; a religious nature in man, but not schools for religion. The progress of such views will ultimately give strength to religious organizations; will take them away from superstition and credulity, and plant them upon grounds of reason. Their usefulness will be their preservation. But a change in the philosophy of organizations does not destroy or even enfeeble Christian institutions. The activity of Christian churches shows no decadence; churches are found springing up in every nook and corner. They march with the army of emigration. They spring up in territories and new states at once. Not the cabin, the courthouse, or the school, are more sure to appear on the pioneer line than churches. They follow the plow, and spring up as seed from its furrows. Nor are the benign activities of Christian churches slackening; everywhere they are fountains of benevolence. They are in every village the organized centers of influence for morality, for education, and for public spirit. The activity and whole benefit of the churches are not to be found inside the churches any more than the benefit of the sun is within the sun. The light-house is not for its own illumination, but for those far and near upon a troubled sea. Churches shed their light through all the moralities of society.

Churches in America of all sects universally inspire intelligence, and lead in founding and nourishing schools for popular education, and institutions for higher culture. They follow the march of population, and, almost faster than emigrants build their houses, the organized Christianity of the land lays foundations of sound learning. Six millions of Africans have just passed through the Red Sea of war to the promised land of liberty. Already schools, colleges, and theo-

logical seminaries spring up among them, planted and watered by Christian beneficence. It would be wrong to say that beneficence is confined to Christian churches. But it is not to be denied that the Christian churches of America lead the way in every movement for the education of the common people, for the redemption of men from ignorance and superstition. The impulse of sympathy is not occasional, fitful, irregular; it is organized, steadfast, always abounding.

Certainly, in no other period or nation has religion been such an inspiration to whatever is humane, liberal, and generous; to whatever is genial, sympathetic, and chivalrous in public spirit; to whatever is brave, heroic and refulgent in just war, or indulgent and fruitful in honorable peace.

The religious sentiment was never so intelligent, or so strong, in America as now. If it seems less intense, it is because it is less narrow. It now embraces a world of influences unknown or unfelt in the Puritan period. Aspiration, reverence for God, sympathy with his works, the refinement of strength, sympathy with all that is generous, magnanimous, or just, were never so widely diffused. Men no longer are shut up in a church and a family. These are but sacred altars whose light and fire shine through an almost illimitable sphere. Riches have taken the place of poverty; with riches have come art, knowledge, variety in social life, innocent pleasures interlacing life's daily burdens; civil liberty has brought duties and occupation to all. The religious spirit diffuses itself as an atmosphere over all this firmament which declares God's glory, and the earth which is increasingly full, to men's apprehensions, of his handiwork. This diffusion of the religious spirit is more in consonance with the divine nature, and with the best nature of the world—with historic religion itself, than that circumscribed element which is to be supplanted.

A marked change has come over the spirit of worship. In mediæval and monarchic days, worship was veneration pivoted on fear. God was not yet a father, worship was not yet a love. To abase oneself, to fall prostrate before the unknown, to dwell upon one's inferiority, and to mortify one's natural and innocent impulses, was thought acceptable to God. Veneration is not less than formerly, but its language and attitude are changed. Its voice is

no longer the voice of fear. It has learned the manners and expression of liberty and of love. It has blossomed, and is more fragrant and beautiful than when in its early state it had but rude leaves. Those who have seen veneration only under black robes, in superstitious bondage to forms, and speaking the language of the ascetic, do not recognize it as it moves with freer step, a voice of music, and in garments of light.—H. W. BEECHER, in *N. A. Review*.

Twelve Thousand Card Tracts.

The Christian Sower Tract Fund has just received twelve thousand card tracts. There are five kinds: Salvation from Sin, Names for God's Children, Errors of the Anxious Seat, What is Baptism and Design of Baptism. They are much better printed than the first edition. They are printed on both sides, and are on different colored card board, each tract 7 inches long and 3 1/4 inches wide. Each contains from 1000 to 1200 words, or more than enough to fill a column in either of our newspapers. The card board has many advantages over paper. They are just the thing to put into the hands of busy people on steamboats or cars, or in depots and hotels. A longer tract might not be read. *The New Revision* says, Luke 1: 37, "No word from God shall be void of power," so the shortest message from him will have its influence.

The prime object of this fund is to furnish tracts free to those who are not able to buy them but who will distribute them. Thus destitute fields will be reached. Evangelists should go well supplied. Select, at least, one of those you know, and give him several hundred, or if you are not able send me his name and I will send him some. They will preach where he cannot go. They are 50 cents per hundred to those who will buy.

Do not neglect to send in the names of prominent sectarians together with 5 cents each, and have a copy of *Our Position* sent to each.

How much money do I make? None at all. Not more than 7 cents per hundred is made on the card tracts, and I give away as many as I sell. My services are free. The fund will not last long if the brethren do not contribute. Let me hear from you promptly.

J. W. HIGBEE, Trustee,
Madisonville, Ky.