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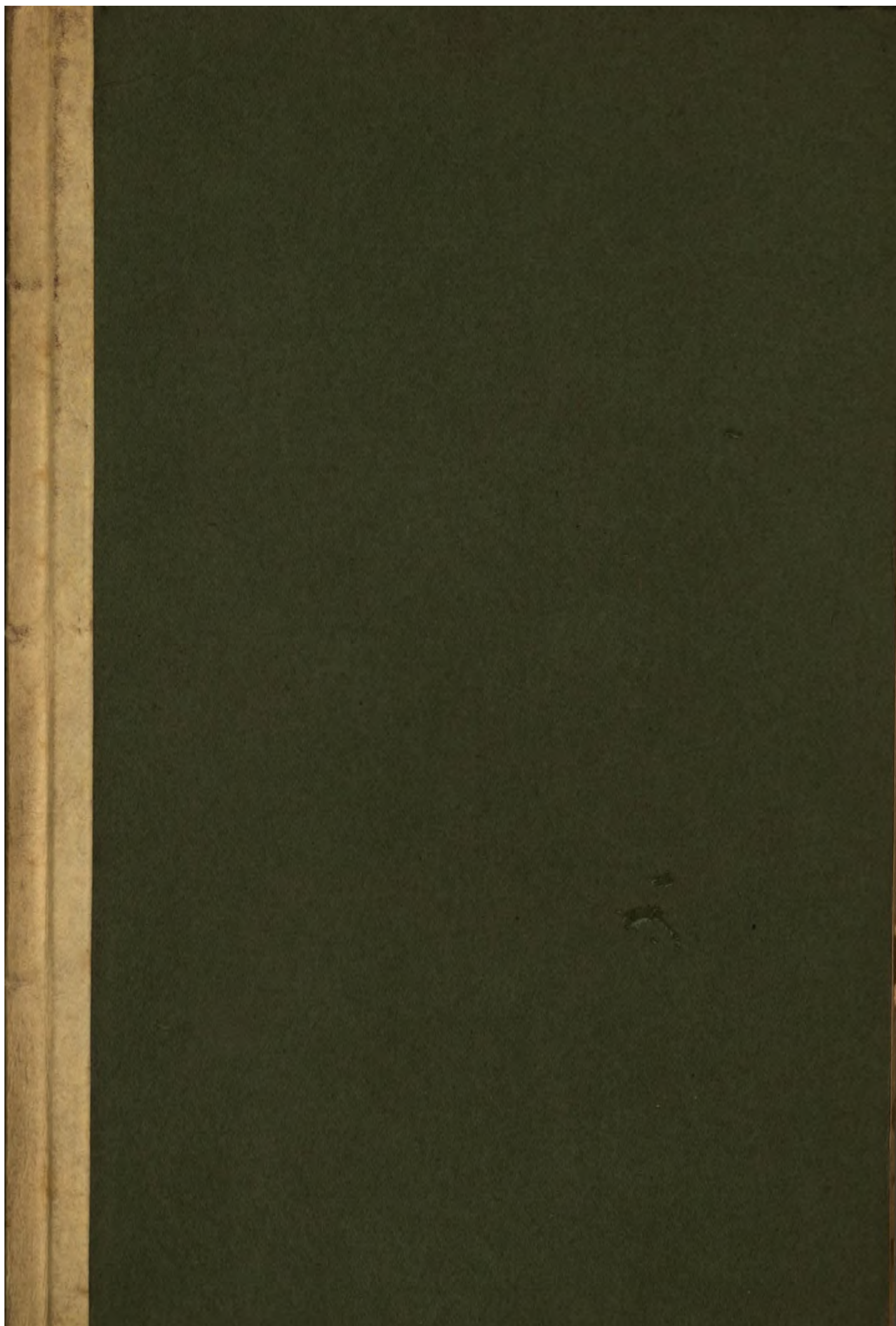
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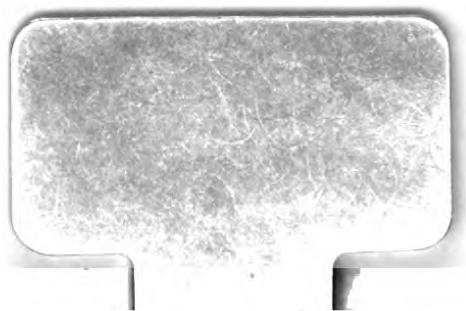
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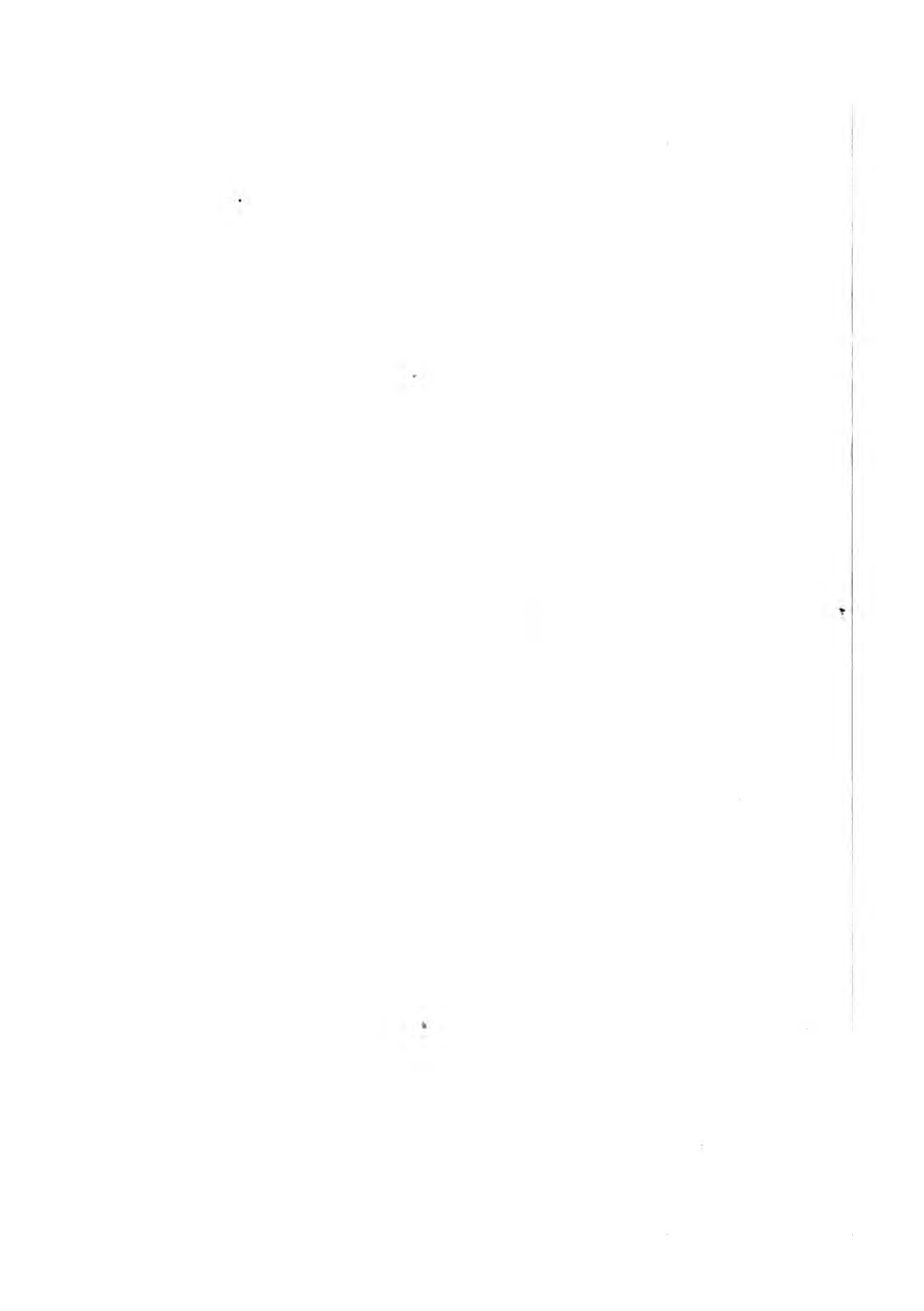


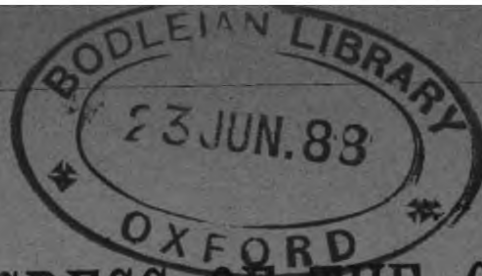
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THE PROGRESS OF THE CHURCH OF
CHRIST IN ENGLAND AND WALES
DURING THE PAST TWENTY YEARS.

A PAPER

READ AT THE

Autumnal Session of the Baptist Union,

AT BRADFORD, YORKS,

On THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9th, 1884.

BY THE

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THE
PROGRESS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST
IN
ENGLAND AND WALES
DURING
THE PAST TWENTY YEARS.

It must not be supposed that the title of this paper is intended to suggest a doubt as to the claim of Baptists to be considered members of the Church of Christ. We are Christians first, and Baptists afterwards. With us discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ precedes baptism. Baptism is an act of loyalty to the Saviour. We dare not build, nor be built, on any other foundation "than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." And, therefore, above all things else—our principles and traditions alike require—thus much of us—we desire to conform to the standards which the one Master has ordained; to be, in every sense of the phrase, members in the body of Christ.

But, while we make this claim, we acknowledge that the Church of Christ is much larger than the Baptist denomination. Far be from us the exclusiveness we deprecate in others. It would give us pain to learn that all save Baptists are left to "the uncovenanted mercies of God." We thank God that "whosoever believeth on" His only begotten Son, whether he followeth us or not, is "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven." The Church of Christ, we speak of, is made up of all those, and in it are none but those, who "are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Is this church, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all,"

making progress? Has the Kingdom of God worked in this country during the last twenty years like leaven in three measures of meal, assimilating to itself the individual, the church, and society? What has been the effect of contact with the church on the world? And what the effect of contact with Christ on the church?

In the first part of our inquiry we are concerned with the effect of contact with the church on the world. I think, through the influence of the church upon it, the world is better than it was. There is less of evil and more of good in the world. The world moves, and in the right direction.

This is seen in the improved tone of our national life. We are naturally impatient of the slowness with which our beloved country advances toward

“nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.”

In our impatience we are unjust to ourselves and to the times in which we live. Within the memory of many of us, subjects of the British crown held slaves. Who taught this nation to reprobate the slave-trade and to suppress it, to condemn the buying and selling of men, and to let oppressed negroes go free? If men like Wilberforce, Clarkson, and William Knibb had not championed the cause of the slave, England might still have sanctioned slavery. With this regard for the rights of man as man, there has been ever-increasing benevolence—a desire to provide for the needs of the sick and the poor and the orphan. Whence such generosity? Has it not been learnt from Him who said, “Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto Me”? Because our country has become more and more Christian, the laws of the realm are being changed and amended so as to promote the well-being of “the common people.” Our foremost statesmen, the chief tribunes of the nation, are not ashamed to

confess that they get their politics from the Bible. The Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, in discussing the relations of England to other peoples, said the other day at Edinburgh, "Let us take for our rule that simple rule drawn from the highest source, and endeavour to behave to each and all of them as we wish them to behave to us." The world is not stationary. It moves, and along the lines laid down by the King of kings.

The change in the world for the better is not less evident in the success which has attended Gospel temperance missions. It is not for Christians to speak slightingly of the old temperance reformers. Joseph Livesey, the first Englishman to sign a pledge of total abstinence from intoxicating drinks, was an earnest Christian, and founded the Preston Temperance Society to help his Sunday scholars to resist the abounding temptations which had drawn so many from the narrow path to the broad road. But for thirty years the churches took little interest in the temperance movement. It has been different of late. One by one the denominations have joined the crusade. The result is well known. An impetus has been given to the good cause. Thousands of drunkards have been reclaimed and brought to the Saviour. In the name of Christ, the demon drink has been cast out of many a possessed man. The lessened consumption of intoxicating liquors has told upon the revenue. Seven years ago the country spent £147,288,759 on these drinks. The amount expended in 1883 was £125,477,275, less by £21,811,484 than in 1876. The end is not yet. There are many strongholds to take, and hundreds of thousands of captives to rescue from the mighty. I only report progress, and express the hope that Christians of all denominations will persevere in this holy war till England shall be no less a sober than it is a free nation.

The Church of Christ has exerted a great influence on the world in purifying our popular literature. Thirty years ago cheap

publications were of worse than questionable character. Christian men were shocked by the discovery that millions of pernicious sheets and small books were issued from the press year by year, and it was resolved to remedy the evil. No doubt there is still much of sensuality, vice, and blasphemous infidelity in the cheap literature which circulates among the multitude. But the antidote is provided. So far as I can gather, there is less of poison and more of wholesome stimulant than there was twenty years since in the reading of the million. Such societies as the Metropolitan Colportage Association and the Baptist Tract Society are doing a little to counteract the mischief wrought by traders in immorality, and we should rejoice if they could accomplish more. The main part of the work is done by others. Emulating the example of Messrs. Chambers, of Edinburgh, Messrs. Cassell & Co., of London, send out an immense quantity of cheap, pure, and wholesome literature. Last year their monthly magazines reached a circulation of from 600,000 to 700,000 every month, or nearly 8,000,000 copies in the year. Yet more marvellous are the statistics kindly supplied from the Religious Tract Society. I give the figures for 1863 and 1883 to show the progress in the last twenty years:—

	1863.	1883.
New Publications	410	859
Total Issues	41,590,000	79,380,000
Receipts	£98,000	£215,000

It must not be thought that nearly all these issues were of tracts. In 1883 this great Society sent forth, in addition to tracts, 498 new works, and sold 45,524,010 copies of publications. We sometimes fear lest the multiplication of books should lessen the attention paid to the Bible. It does not. Cassells have sold more than 500,000 copies of their Family Bible. The Scriptures, published in varied forms by many houses, have a large sale. I

find that the British and Foreign Bible Society has sent forth, exclusive of foreign sales, since 1863, as many as 30,000,000 copies of the Word of God, in whole or in part; whereas, in the previous twenty years the corresponding issues were only 20,000,000. From the publishers of the revised version of the New Testament I hear that "the sales since the date of publication have amounted to some millions." The Bible is still the most popular of works. No other work sells by the million year after year. The Christian religion is not losing ground in England. This country, more than in 1864, is the land of Bibles.

It is satisfactory to be assured that our Sunday-schools also bear witness to the undiminished and growing influence of the Church of Christ. Many predicted that the Education Act of 1870 would be the beginning of the end of Sunday-schools. This Act has been successful in raising the number of children in elementary day-schools from 1,660,000, in 1870, to 4,300,000, in 1884. This rapid progress has not been accompanied by retrogression in Sunday-schools. There has been, indeed, a considerable increase in the number of scholars. I give as samples the figures for three denominations for England and Wales:—

	1863.	1883.	Increase. Per cent.
Baptists	220,975 ..	426,836 ..	93
Primitive Methodists ..	202,631 ..	400,597 ..	97 $\frac{1}{4}$
The Friends	8,778 ..	31,348 ..	257

Mr. Hartley, the secretary to the London Sunday-school Union, reports that from 1851 to this year the population has increased forty-five per cent., but that, in the same period, the increase in Sunday-scholars has been 120 per cent. There are 5,200,776 young people in English Sunday-schools. This proves that the world has confidence in the church, and willingly entrusts to its members the religious education of children.

The second part of our inquiry concerns the effect of contact with Christ on the church. I trust we all agree in the conclusion that the world is making progress, thanks to the influence of the church. Is it also true that the church is progressing? If so, it is through contact with Christ the Lord and Saviour.

By means of the church the Lord seeks and saves the lost. It is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain the extent to which the church ministers to the salvation of men. Even when the Lord Jesus was upon the earth there were secret disciples. Nor may we cast reflection on their discipleship. In those dark hours, when the crucifixion cast a deep shadow on the followers of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathæa, and Nicodemus, who were disciples secretly, were not less faithful and heroic than was Peter, who had so loudly protested his loyalty. To-day also there are many who, unknown to the churches as the 7,000 were to the Tishbite, nevertheless trust in and love the Saviour, and are members of "the general assembly and church of the First-born." At the same time, additions to the churches represent to some extent the work which the Lord is accomplishing. In this respect the church has made progress during the last twenty years. Neither Roman Catholics nor the Church of England supply us with statistics of membership. In the case of the former, while we gladly admit that many Romanists, as Martin Luther said of Bernard the Monk, take of the one thing needful, and so are saved, faith in the Pope far more than belief in the Lord Jesus Christ is the test of orthodoxy. It is different with the Church of England. We should be grateful if the clergy and adherents of this latter communion could see their way to the sole supremacy of Christ; to the exclusive authority of the New Testament Scriptures as a written standard of doctrinal truth; to separation from the State with a view to closer alliance with the Saviour. But, notwithstanding many drawbacks, the Church of England is rendering much Christian service. It pros-

pers. In congregations, and particularly in communicants, it can tell of increasing numbers. Other denominations report their members or communicants. With some hesitation, and no less doubt, I give their returns for 1863 and 1883. We cannot put all the facts into figures, and all the figures are not facts. Since 1863, the population of England and Wales has increased about twenty-eight per cent. The following table shows the increase in the membership of some of the principal Nonconformist denominations:—

	1863.	1883.	Increase per cent.
Baptists*	199,767	299,162	49 $\frac{3}{4}$
Congregationalists †	266,090	426,452	60 $\frac{1}{4}$
Presbyterian Church of England ‡ ..	37,440	58,425	56
Calvinistic Methodists (Wales) ..	93,160	124,505	33 $\frac{1}{2}$
The Friends	13,761	15,223	10 $\frac{1}{2}$
Wesleyan Methodists	329,704	407,085	23 $\frac{1}{4}$
Primitive Methodists	146,581	196,480	34
United Methodist Free Churches ..	59,792	67,081	12
New Connexion Methodists	24,510	27,218	11
Bible Christians	25,760	35,776	38 $\frac{3}{4}$
	1,196,565	1,657,407	38 $\frac{1}{2}$

* See paper on the Progress of Baptists since 1863, by Dr. Angus.

† It is assumed, in the absence of returns of members, that the average membership in Congregational Churches is the same as among Baptists—118 per church. A deduction of ten per cent. has been made from returns of churches as an allowance for errors, mainly in returning branch places as separate churches.

‡ No returns of members for 1833. The churches returned by United Presbyterians and the Old Presbyterians in England are assumed to have had an average membership of 192.

From these returns it is evident that, in reported membership, much more in actual conversions, the church increases much more rapidly than the nation. We regret the lower rate of progress in the Methodist churches, for to them England owes much, and the future of the country depends largely upon them. But we are thankful for the greater success which attends the labours of the three denominations, and earnestly pray that Baptists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians may continue to declare the whole counsel of God till all England shall be filled with Gospel doctrine. There is one denomination which has increased in membership only 10½ per cent. from 1863 to the present time. I refer to the Society of Friends. We all deplore the smallness of the increase in the number of the Quakers. Who can forget their fearless speech, heroic self-sacrifice, and patient suffering when the Stuarts reigned in England? In more recent years they have pleaded the cause of the slave; advocated reforms in prison discipline; supported all attempts to improve the condition of the poor, and to promote education; and have been foremost in battling for civil and religious liberty. No denomination can mention three nineteenth century names more worthy of honour than the names of Mrs. Fry, Joseph Sturge, and John Bright. We should hail with delight the promise of a revival of activity and zeal in the Society of Friends, and pray God to establish the work of their hands upon them. There is no ground for despondency in the state of the denominations. Their statistics bid us thank God and take courage.

Quality tells for more than quantity in spiritual things. Have the members of the Church of Christ during the last twenty years become less worldly and more Christ-like? The Church and the world are on better terms with each other than they were. But why? Is it because there is less of enmity to the spiritual in the world? Or, because there is more worldliness in the Church?

There are among us those who think that Christians are no longer strangers and sojourners, as their fathers were, but are as much at home in Vanity Fair as in the Palace Beautiful. In the days of our boyhood, to be a member of a Nonconformist church meant separation from the world. Is it so now? It is stated that professed disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ meet the godless in the theatre, at the ball-room, around the card-table; that some "who profess and call themselves Christians" are not so scrupulously honest and honourable in business as many who make no such profession. Are these things so? I cannot believe that declension is general. The many have not bowed the knee to Baal, or worshipped the golden image, or are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." Still, I fear there is increasing laxity in the churches, growing conformity to the world. The strength of the Church is in its spirituality. If this be lost, we shall be "weak as other men." Only the unworldly can conquer the world. The godless suspect the sincerity of professors who are as gay, or as mercenary, or as selfish as themselves; while they respect those who refuse to walk in "the way of sinners," and are never found near "the seat of the scornful." A chief condition of church success is holiness of life. The historian, Gibbon, in accounting for the progress of the Christian religion, laid considerable stress upon the character of the early Christians. He described them as "averse to the gay luxury of the age," as remarkable for "chastity, temperance, economy, and all the sober and domestic virtues," as winning the good opinion of the profane by "the strictest integrity and the fairest dealing," and as practising "humility, meekness, and patience." By this character they "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," and compelled the world to do homage to the religion they professed. A like remark is true of earnest Christians in England and Wales in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and the first quarter of the nineteenth.

They were "not of the world," "of whom the world was not worthy." Would that all the members of our churches were like them!

"O spirit of that early day,
So pure and strong and true,
Be with us in the narrow way
Our faithful fathers knew!
Give strength the evil to forsake,
The cross of truth to bear,
And love and reverent fear to make
Our daily lives a prayer."

Then the Church of Christ would go on from conquering to conquer.

We are not so doubtful as to the progress made in the grace of charity. There is less bigotry and more brotherly love than there was twenty years ago. Bigotry is not dead, nor dying. It will be some time before this monster is seen, as Bunyan's pilgrim saw Giant Pope, "so crazy and stiff in his joints that he can do little more than sit in his cave's mouth, grinning at pilgrims as they go by, and biting his nails because he cannot come at them." In many places, notably in hundreds of villages, bigotry is rampant, regarding Dissenters with scorn and disdain, and inflicting on them social ostracism and other pains and penalties to mark its sense of the enormity of what is called "the sin of schism." But there are signs of improvement. With occasional exceptions, which help us to mark the progress made, the clergy of the Church of England have shown courtesy and friendliness towards Non-conformists in administering the Burials Act of 1880. It has been discovered, surely to the mutual satisfaction of the parties concerned, that it is possible to differ about forms of church government and articles of belief, and yet to love the same Lord and respect one another. Mr. Moody is reported to have said, just before leaving England some two months since:—"There is much more brotherly

feeling, more Christian union, among the various denominations than in 1876." To a similar effect is the testimony of Mr. Spurgeon:—"I marvel sometimes as I look back at the fierce controversies of early days, and contrast them with the brotherly love and sympathy which prevail now." This witness-bearing is true. When the Church Congress met at Leicester its members accepted an invitation to a reception given by a Baptist mayor. The manly speech of the Rev. James Thew, and the equally noble response of the Bishop of Peterborough, on that occasion, emphasised as both were by the hearty applause of the clergy present, contained the promise of healthier and happier relations between Dissenters and Churchmen.

The effect of contact with Christ on the Church is seen in the extension and development of evangelistic zeal. "Lovest thou Me?" demands the Saviour. To those who reply, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee," He says, "Feed My sheep. . . . Feed My lambs. . . . Preach the Gospel." Thus tested the Church proves more fully than it did its love for the Master. During the last twenty years the different denominations have been diligent in seeking out the lost, in publishing good tidings to the poor. The visit of Messrs. Moody and Sankey to this country some ten years ago did not originate the evangelistic movement. Other men had laboured, and they entered into their labours, largely reaping what parents and ministers and Sunday-school teachers had sown. Less than twenty years ago Mr. Booth and his Salvation Army began their aggressive work. In passing, I take the liberty of saying that, though there may be much in the form and details of this organisation which we cannot commend, and still more in the methods employed to attract and to interest hearers which we dare not adopt, it is not for us to condemn. To his own Master, General Booth standeth or falleth. Who can see drunkards reformed, the dissolute converted, prostitutes reclaimed,

and those who were possessed by evil spirits "sitting, clothed and in their right mind, at the feet of Jesus," and not give thanks? "Therein I rejoice; yea, and I will rejoice." "What is the chaff to the wheat?" saith the Lord. Chiefly, however, we note the evangelistic zeal of the churches. Special Gospel missions, alike in the Church of England and among Dissenters, have been frequent. Yet more encouraging is the manner in which the work of denominational extension, which means, or ought to mean, the extension of the kingdom of the Redeemer, has been prosecuted. The Congregationalists last year aided 795 churches to become centres of "light and leading" to the neighbourhoods in which they are located at a cost of some £37,000. Churchmen are as active as are Congregationalists. The Pastoral Aid Society, according to the Year-book of the Church of England, expended more than £50,000 last year in grants to 268 churches and 401 mission rooms. From the same authority we learn that the Additional Curates' Society spent £44,557 in assisting to support 658 clergymen. In nearly every diocese there is some Home Missionary organisation. In London the Bishop of Bedford superintends an evangelistic work among the poor which costs £9,000 yearly, and at Liverpool there is a Church of England Scripture Readers' Society with an annual income of £4,000 or thereabouts. This is only part of what Churchmen are doing in mission work at home. Other denominations are scarcely less aggressive. More than in any past period the Church responds to the promptings of its Lord, and there is reason to hope that more and more the Church will express the love and compassion of Christ for sinners and His resolve to save them.

Close and sympathetic contact with Christ makes a missionary church. To those who are nearest and dearest to Him the Lord gives the commission, "Make disciples of all nations." The Church of Christ is increasingly loyal to the Saviour in this

matter. Great progress has been made since 1863. During these twenty years the number of English agents in foreign fields has advanced—I have the returns of twelve denominations—from 1083 to 1501. There has been a corresponding increase in contributions. Where practicable, I have deducted the receipts from churches in the missionary field. The following table supplies the income in the several denominations for foreign mission work:—

	1863.	1883.	Increase per cent.
Church of England	£219,051	£334,803	52 $\frac{3}{4}$
Wesleyan Methodists	82,164	108,803	32
Congregationalists	66,509	74,821	12 $\frac{1}{4}$
Baptists	27,189	60,722	123 $\frac{1}{4}$
General Baptists	3,003	4,037	34 $\frac{1}{4}$
Presbyterian Ch. of England	5,549	37,576	577
Calvinistic Methodists (Wales)	2,554	5,248	105 $\frac{1}{4}$
United Methodist Free Churches	6,567	13,163	100 $\frac{1}{2}$
Primitive Methodists	8,116	14,040	72 $\frac{3}{4}$
New Connexion Methodists ..	4,566	7,293	59 $\frac{1}{2}$
Bible Christians	4,061	10,566	160
The Friends		8,000	
Totals*	£429,329	£679,072	58

These figures leave much untold. They say nothing of the missions set on foot by the Christian ladies of this country, and by which religious instruction is given in the Zenanas of the East.

* Great care has been taken to secure accuracy. The difficulty, however, of distinguishing in every case between income from contributions in England and Wales and other income makes the figures approximately and not absolutely correct. In one or two instances, the figures relate to 1882 and not to 1883, but this does not affect their substantial accuracy. Only the Church Missionary Society and the Propagation Society are included in Church of England Missions.

Such statistics cannot tell how some twenty years ago there were ninety missionaries in the sea-board provinces of the Chinese Empire, the interior being closed against them; how, soon after, all China was opened to the trader and the missionary; and how to-day there are some 400 missionaries among the Chinese, many of them sent out from England. Nor can the figures given tell the story of missions to Central Africa; how in 1866, Stanley, in search of Livingstone, travelled from Zanzibar on the Eastern Coast across the continent to the mouth of the Congo on the Western Coast; how, helped as much by the counsel as by the liberal gifts of Mr. Robert Arthington, of Leeds, the Church of England Missions and the London Missionary Society, and our Presbyterian brethren, and Baptists, responded to the cry for help from the heart of Africa, and proceeded to establish a chain of Missionary Stations, stretching from the Eastern Coast to the Western, in the trustful hope that ere long all Central Africa may be filled with the knowledge of God and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. It is a noble enterprise, nobly planned, and heroically carried out. The Church of Christ is not degenerate, but more than ever like its Lord, who died to save sinners, and lives to complete their salvation.

The task assigned to me is finished. I have striven, so far as knowledge and space and ability have permitted, to report facts and to present a fair estimate of the progress of the Church of Christ, from 1863 to 1883. Our retrospect, to be of any service, must point forward. What will be the near future of the Church of Christ in this country? As to its ultimate triumph there can be no doubt. The Saviour "shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." We cannot be so sure respecting the denominations, which we regard as so many sections of the Church of Christ. I do not share the fears of many of my brethren. The older denominations, which appeal more to the judgment and conscience than to fear, show no signs of decay. We do not see

in them the weakness of age. Their "eye is not dim, nor their natural force abated." They have "the dew of their youth upon them." Nevertheless it is impossible that the progress made should satisfy any Christian who is jealous for God and earnest in the desire for the salvation of men. It is more than time that mankind knew and trusted and loved this Saviour. What hinders? Are we straitened in God? Is not His grace sufficient, are not His resources equal to the conversion of every tribe and people and nation? Did not the Lord say, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." Is He not "able to save unto the uttermost?" He "willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." It is with us as with the Israelites. We are straitened in ourselves. If the Church of Christ would speedily conquer the world, all sections thereof must be less denominational and more evangelical in their objects and plans and motives; must become a real brotherhood, neither envying nor despising one another, but cherishing mutual respect and love; must live pure and unselfish lives, content to toil and sacrifice and suffer if only by such means the world can be saved. To win the world the Church must be pervaded by the presence and filled with the power of Christ. What is most needed is that He should take possession; should dwell in the midst of His Church; should reign, "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." This Divine Captain seeks admission into His own city. The vision reveals "a white horse," and He that sits thereon is "called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. . . . And He hath on His garment and on His thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords." A herald cries aloud, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." Do, you ask, "Who is this King of Glory?" The answer is given "The Lord strong

and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." Therefore, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." Is the question repeated, "Who is this King of Glory?" Again the herald speaks, "The Lord of hosts, He is the King of Glory." With such "a leader and commander," the Church could not fail, but would "be strong and courageous," as was the Jewish king who said, "With us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles."

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