

LETTER FROM REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

Geneva—Its Religion; Its Claims; Its Men—Evangelical Alliance.

TO THE EDITORS OF CHRISTIAN WATCHMAN AND REFLECTOR:

The church of Geneva earnestly beseeches the Lord's people in every land to remember her in their prayers. In the olden times she has been a star in the hand of Jesus, flashing forth her light in the very midst of the thick darkness, and diffusing her brightness afar. She is a mother in Israel, and her children praise her in the gate. The sojourn of Calvin in her midst may well suffice to make her one of the royal cities of our divine commonwealth. He, the clearest and purest of all the reformers, was a man of such a mould that all the intervening centuries have not been able to produce his equal. His friends and pupils carried with them into other lands the precious truths which they first learned from his lips, and thus sowed seed which came forth from his granary. Geneva was like a fountain in the desert, as a field which the Lord God had blessed. At this time, however, her hour of peril is come, and she fears that sore travail awaits her. Shall she be forgotten and forsaken? Will not all her sisters take up her lamentation, and cry aloud in her behalf? God has blessed other churches by her means; will they not remember their obligations, and repay her with fervent love and tender sympathy?

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It is at the request of several brethren in Geneva that I attempt to state her case and plead her cause. This ancient city is now situated in the very corner of Switzerland, and is almost entirely shut in, on every side, with French territory. She is, now by her position, rather French than Swiss. The imperial policy of the last few months has led most men to fear that annexation may not cease with Savoy and Nice, that the "natural boundary" may require yet further rectification, and that thus Geneva may be absorbed into the domains of the ambitious Bonaparte. This political catastrophe would most surely bring with it sad calamities to the church of Christ. It might even rob her of her houses of prayer, and restore Anti-Christ to its ancient seats. But this is not the great fear of the spiritually-minded in Geneva; they dread far more the manners, vices and infidelity of France than all her armies or her tyranny. There is a large stream of French continually flowing across the border, and this brings with it new tastes, habits and opinions. Force might be repelled, or oppression might be patiently endured, but this is an evil for which no remedy remains but that which God Himself can apply. A Popish population increasing at an unusual rate, and infidelity and vice undermining both morality and religion, what can the people of God hope to accomplish alone? Here is need for Divine interposition and deliverance. It were a fearful thing if within a few years, rationalism should debase the theology of the ministers, and licentiousness corrupt the morals of the church-members, and yet the elements which are supplied by the border empire have that tendency in a high degree. It were equally terrible if the Popish party should by continual immigration outnumber the Protestants, and thus restore this gem of the reformation to the tiara of the Pope. There is something so seductive in the manners of the French that it will be no marvel if the Genevese learn first to admire, and then to imitate. How can a little State resist the influence of an Empire? Do not her daughters borrow the fashions of Paris? Do not her children speak the same language? What wonder then if the unthinking among her sons should thirst for a share of imperial glory, and long to be identified with so great a dominion? I do not believe that the Swiss Genevese have the remotest wish for an

annexation; on the contrary, they cherish the thought, and love to be men too much to have a wish to be slaves. The result of universal suffrage on that question in Geneva would be an undivided negative; at any rate, the true brethren of William Tell would require no consideration as to their choice. Many of the Genevans would leave their homes sooner than own a stranger's sway. It is, I say, not the political but the moral power of France which awakens the jealousy of the godly at Geneva. A natural love of liberty may keep the city free, nothing but the power of the Holy Ghost can make and keep her pure and gracious. Let us unite in constant prayer that the light may shine in the darkness, and that Geneva may endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

It gives me great joy to believe that the cause of God is, at present, progressing favorably in Geneva. I believe there is more union among Christians than heretofore. It was a happy sign when the Consistoire of the National Church opened its Cathedral to me, a Baptist, unrecognized by State, unconsecrated, even by Presbyterian ordination. All the brethren appeared to hail my presence in the pulpit of Calvin as a most extraordinary token of good will, and evidence of progress in the established church. Readily did I accept the generous offer of the pulpit, and the bondage of a gown and bands to which I have never before submitted, was a very trivial concession to a principle once so rare, but now, happily, more fully recognized, viz: The essential union of all the church of Jesus Christ. I met with the pastors of both the national and free churches, who all appeared to entertain the most fraternal relations towards each other:

I observed, also, a great desire for the salvation of men, a growing alarm at their spiritual danger, and an anxious inquiry concerning the means by which, in other lands, revivals had been obtained. It was my delightful privilege to address a large assembly of the believers of Geneva, on Monday evening, at the house of that eminent servant of Christ, M. Merle D'Aubigne. At his particular request I gave an outline of the religious movement in England, and endeavored to stir up the minds of the brethren to seek, more earnestly, the evangelization of their city and neighborhood. There were present among many others, whose names I cannot just now recall, those revered and faithful brethren, D'Aubigne, Gausson, Cesar, Malan, Frederick Monod, and Pasteur Bard. It was good to be there, for all was love, fervency and prayerfulness.

The Evangelical Alliance is to meet in Geneva next year, and the event is expected with great joy. A very large congregation greeted me in the Cathedral on Tuesday afternoon, and a full house at the Oratoire in the evening. I shall never forget Geneva, and as I earnestly pray for her, I entreat my brethren in America to join with me. O Lord, bless Geneva. So prays
C. H. SPURGEON.