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VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER

THE CHURCH AND THE SCHOOL

THE endeavor to bring the public school system of England under the supervision of the Church of England is causing considerable friction, and amounts to a modern persecution for conscience' sake that reminds of the persecutions of the long ago. Good people, whose consciences are perhaps not backed by proper knowledge of the Lord's teachings on the subject, and who therefore lack some measure of "the wisdom that cometh from above," are refusing to pay school taxes because such taxes would support schools which they disapprove. They thereby bring upon them the regular penalties: their goods are sold to meet the debt and some, in default of the money, have been imprisoned.

In Canada the same question is up in another form—the division of moneys raised by school taxes amongst sectarian schools. Many Canadians see in this an attack on the public-school system that would favor Romanism. They see correctly; but those who see that "the time is short," after voicing a reasonable protest may safely and quietly leave all in the hands of the Lord.

The "Churchman" (Episcopalian) makes some sensible comments on the subject. We quote:

"Does not the endeavor to ally the Church and Christianity with the public school place the Church in just as false a position as would the endeavor to ally it with the State? The Church represents Christ infinitely more than through a mere code of laws or a system of education. She is in the world to convert, to inspire, and to furnish the enabling power for the life of men and of society in its entirety.

"Definite religious teaching should be left where it belongs, to the Church and to the home. State officials could not teach even the Ten Commandments in other than a perfunctory way without arousing controversy. It is because the Church and Christian parents have failed to give the religious instruction, that they ought to have given, that the demand is made for such instruction in the public schools. With anxiety, it seems sometimes almost with desperation, they ask that the State shall do what the Church has failed to do. The State can not do what they ask, but the Church can. With renewed zeal and the best educational methods she must supply the religious instruction that the State and its schools can not give."

CHURCH UNION IN THE MAY CONVENTIONS

A marked tendency toward Church union characterized the May meetings of the various denominations this year. Among the definite steps taken were the organizing by the Northern and Southern Baptists of a permanent body to be known as the General Convention of the Baptists of North America; the agreement of the United Brethren, at their quadrennial conference in Kansas City, to accept the plan of federation with the Congregationalists and the Methodist Protestants, looking to a complete consolidation in the future; and the action of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church toward completing organic union with the Cumberland Presbyterians. The vote approving the latter merger was taken on May 22. Says a correspondent of the *New York Herald*, in reference to this vote:

“It was the final action of the General Assembly on one of the greatest questions which have come before it since the Civil War, and brings back into that organization a branch which went out during the war because of differences over negro slavery.

“If the opposition to the union has made any fight it has been chiefly at the secret meetings of the special canvassing committee appointed last Saturday, but there were to-day no signs of such a contest. The special committee in its report canvassed the votes taken by presbyteries on the question of union. It showed 144 yeas to 39 noes. Two took no action, one gave conditional assent, and five made no report.”

The same correspondent gives the following further details:

“The special committee in its recommendations

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asked that the proposition be referred to the Committee on Cooperation and Union; that the committee be increased in membership to twenty-one; that it have power to confer with a committee from the Cumberland Church; that it find what details must be worked out to consummate the union, and that a report be made to the General Assembly next year.

“This committee is to consider the corporate and legal rights of both general assemblies. The purpose is to keep the consolidation within legal limits, that all civil suits and injunctions may be avoided.”

THE RELIGIONS OF NEW YORK

A journal styled *Federation* has gathered statistics of religious conditions in New York City. Its conclusion is that “the greatest home missionary field in the United States is New York City, and

the sooner the churches realize it the better it will be for our city and our land.” The Sun, reviewing the report, says:

“At present the aggregate of the distinctively Christian population of the town is only two-fifths of the whole. This includes the whole of the Roman Catholic population and the total number of Protestant communicants. Besides these the *Federation* estimates a total of about half a million Protestants who attend Church more or less regularly and more than a million Protestants who are ‘churchless,’ or outside of any religious faith.

“New York, therefore, can not now be called a Christian city. Jews and infidels and the religiously indifferent or unattached constitute a majority of the inhabitants. The Protestant percentage is becoming less, the vast preponderance of the additions to the population being of Roman Catholics and Jews. The total of Protestant communicants and church attendants, as estimated by the *Federation*, is only about as great as that of the Jews alone, and by 1910 it is likely to be much less. By that time there will be more Jews here than natives of native parentage. The Jewish population has increased from only about 3 per cent. of the whole in 1880 to nearly 20 per cent. in 1905.”

NOMINAL CHRISTIANS DESCRIBED

We hear boasts of the progress of Christianity in connection with the project of converting the world. We see the estimate of four hundred millions of Christians. It is well that we examine the following picture of some of this number—the great mass of them. We quote from the New York *Herald* a description of the emigrants now coming to our shores. Alas! the name Christian has come to be a byword by reason of the attempt to count large numbers, and to stimulate the hope that some day the heathen world will be converted to as good conditions as is Christendom now. Alas! Christendom is “Babylon” in God’s esteem (Rev. 18:4) and really worse than heathendom—more excusable because of its grosser darkness, denser blindness. If the 400,000,000 of Christendom commit more and greater crimes and are every way more profane than the 1,100,000,000 heathen, which most needs converting?

The *Herald* says:

“They are barbarians most of them. Subtracting a certain small percentage of fairly intelligent—a percentage drawn for the most part from the better class of Scandinavians, Scotch, and Germans—the great residuum are to all appearances so densely ignorant, so utterly alien to all our preconceived notions of what constitutes civilization, that it is only with great difficulty that we force ourselves to remember that most of them have *been born and bred in the very strongholds*

of Christendom.”

REV. A. BEET, D.D.

Some time ago we called attention to Prof. Beet's acceptance of the Bible teaching of man's mortality: that eternal life is God's gift through Christ to those only who become his followers.

The following, clipped from the *London Daily News* explains the present situation. Prof. Beet's fidelity to the truth he has already seen has led him to renounce his honorable position and good salary for conscience' sake. May he be abundantly blessed and led into the still deeper truths now due to the household of faith. We quote as follows:

When a man loves truth better than dignities and emoluments, he is a man to be noted. Such a man is Dr. Agar Beet, Theological Professor at Richmond Wesleyan College, England. For eight years he has been under a cloud and an object of suspicion in certain Methodist circles on account of his Eschatological views. Under pressure he withdrew his book, "Last Things," from circulation, and gave reluctantly a promise not to issue another edition, "in order to avoid danger to the peace of the Church," and generally to keep silent on the dark question of the Doom of the Lost until the Wesleyan Conference gave permission for the book to be published.

To an earnest seeker after truth the position became intolerable and impossible. It was not a matter of surprise that after the last Conference had refused to unseal his lips he promptly announced his intention to vacate his chair this year and claim freedom of thought and action. It was the only course possible. Better cease to be a Professor than be placed under an embargo of silence.

Rev. Dr. Beet said to a reporter:

“What has brought about this crisis is that I can no longer withhold from the world a book that has already brought light and comfort to many readers. Even in its present form

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it has lifted the gloom from many hearts. Not less than a hundred ministers and many laymen have thanked me for blessings received from its perusal. I owe it to the Church, to Christ, and to conscience to place the results of my study of this solemn subject in the hands of readers, many of whom are groping in darkness. The opinion of Methodists on the doom of the lost has completely changed during the last half century. They have discarded the traditional belief in the literalness of hell-fire and the eternity of future punishment, but they have been without guidance as to a

positive article of faith to put in its place. This overthrow of the dogma has been carefully hidden. Godly ministers have nursed their doubts in silence, some under a sense of guilt for concealing their change of view, until the need for concealment has become to them a humiliating and intolerable bondage.”

“What is your view, the view to which strong objection has been taken?”

“I hold that the New Testament represents Jesus Christ as declaring that for those who reject His Gospel there is nothing in the future for them but ruin, hopeless, utter, and final ruin, but he does not say implicitly what will become of the lost, or in what that final ruin consists. The references

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to the doom of the impenitent are too uncertain for us to dogmatise upon them. The traditional view is that those who reject Christ will think and feel for ever and will suffer endlessly. That dogma I reject unhesitatingly.

“That there are some passages in the Scriptures that seem to suggest conscious suffering I admit, but there are other passages which contradict that view, and in the absence of distinct and definite teaching on the subject why should we dogmatise? As to the natural immortality of the soul, that is not a Christian doctrine at all. It has been incorporated in Christian theology from the Platonic philosophers, but no proof of its truth is to be found in Scripture.”

FATE OF THE THEOLOGICAL STUDENT

Rev. Robert Ker contributes the following to the Toronto *Globe*:—

On behalf of the modern apostasy known as “higher criticism,” a plea is set up on the ground of liberty so-called. But there is no interference with anybody’s liberty, that an ordinary mind can see, and the Bishops rightly say to those wonderfully learned men—professors in colleges and holders of Church endowments in various forms—there is a “wide open door” through which you can pass, and through which, as honorable men, you ought to go, and not stand on the manner of your going. We may say to those who take this consistent course that we shall be very sorry to see them go, particularly so, as they modestly tell us that they carry with them all the scholarship and enlightenment of the Church. But it can’t be helped, and we shall struggle on in our own feeble way, wrestling with “the traditional view,” while they, freed from its oppressive trammels, shall have added to their manifold gifts and graces the homely virtue of honesty. A man who can deliberately recite a creed without believing it, and draws pay for doing so, is as little worthy of respect as the man who forges a check, because they are both “getting money under false

pretences.”

The theological student, as matters are going, will soon be as extinct as the Dodo. And need we wonder at it? Let the Bible be the hodgepodge which these wonderfully learned people represent, a mass of fiction and folly, and every honest man will see just one of two courses open before him—either plain and unvarnished infidelity, or absorption into the Papal obedience. It is astonishing how men pledged to honor and honorable dealing can blind themselves to the position that they must of necessity occupy in the sight of honest men. And what is it all about? Who is the great high priest of the new cult? The higher criticism had its birth and growth in licentiousness and infidelity. Its ostentatious claim to unprecedented scholarship is now ridiculed as little more and nothing better than hyper-criticism.

But there is a side to this question which is less considered than it ought to be. I refer to the prevailing and widespread indifference of the laity. There was a time in the history of the Church when things were very different from what they are to-day. I think it was last Christmas a clergyman of the city of Montreal sent around a Christmas card to the members of his congregation, on which, instead of a quotation from Holy Scripture, he treated them to a quotation from Harnack. Next year it will likely be a quotation from Tom Paine, Bolingbroke or Voltaire. There’s really no difference. But will it evoke any protest from the laity? Do they see that this new apostasy strikes at the root of revealed religion? Do they stop to think that this new “doctrine of devils” leaves them without Christ and without God in the world? “How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,” has no music for the man who has no faith in the resurrection or whose views respecting it, as a college professor avowed, were in a state of suspense. It is God-dishonoring to have such men in our pulpits leading men and women into the deeper condemnation.

Then what are we to say about the colossal folly of the men who, having eliminated the incarnation and the resurrection, talk about “a revival of religion?” Better far to call things by their proper name and pray for a revival of Paganism and the re-introduction of its licentious worship.

We are reproducing with extraordinary exactitude the conditions that prevailed in ancient Rome before she sank into the pit of her own digging. It behooves those who are sincerely on the Lord’s side in these days of alarming apostasy to stand fast in the faith.

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— August 15, 1905 —



Jeżeli zauważyłeś błąd w pisowni, powiadom nas poprzez zaznaczenie tego fragmentu tekstu i przyciśnięcie *Ctrl+Enter*.