

VIEWS FROM THE TOWER.

RELIGIOUS VIEWS.

EVEN in this day of rapid changes on every subject the changes on religious subjects constantly cause surprise. The secular press properly recounts as sensations the novel methods by which so-called ministers of the gospel and ambassadors for Christ are seeking to draw men after themselves by "tickling" their itching ears. One clergyman recently preached a bicycle gospel and illustrated it by using a bicycle in the pulpit. Another introduced a quotation from one of Shakespeare's plays and acted the part of Richard III. by falling as if dead upon the pulpit platform, as do theatrical professionals. Another has startled and almost magnetized, not only his congregation, but also the worldly of his city by declaring that dancing, card-playing, billiards and theater-going are not only not great sins, but positively virtues to be pursued as elements of Christian happiness. He said, "The Bible does not say that men and women are not to enjoy *to the full* the pleasures of the world. They are intended for the Christian." "*Satan*...in all his craftiness comes to us and says, 'If you become a follower of Christ, you must give up these pleasures' – to keep lovers of pleasure from joining churches." This Presbyterian minister wanted to build up a large membership, a healthy looking church from the worldly point of view, and was letting down the bars to get more goats into the flock. Indeed, we may presume that the goats already so outnumbered the sheep that the few true sheep of Christ were oddities – "peculiar people," and that nice goats had become the standard with this shepherd. Such conduct and teaching draws some, but will arouse and repel others; – those of whom the Great Teacher said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me....And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." – John 10:27,5.

The true sheep hear the shepherd's voice, saying, "If any man will come after me, let him *deny* himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "Now the just shall live by faith [not according to the course of this world, but contrary to it]; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." "Whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall *suffer* persecution." "Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. [At this] rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven." "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." – 2 Tim. 3:12; Matt. 5:11,12; 7:14; 16:24; 1 John 2:15; Rom. 8:14; Heb. 10:38,39; 1 John 5:4.

The Lord's course is said to be an example for his true followers, who are exhorted to follow him, to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth and to "walk in his footsteps, as he hath set us an example." How much of his time was spent in self-indulgent pleasure-seeking, in attending theatricals, playing billiards, etc.? Only so much as we find in his life, are we to copy. But so surely as being a true Christian means anything, it means to walk *not* according to the course of this world, but to be renewed by the transforming of our minds to the good, acceptable and perfect will of God, illustrated in the Lord Jesus Christ, – so surely as it means self-sacrifice and full consecration to the Lord, it means also the avoidance of even foolish talking [R1790 : page 80] and jesting, and the laying aside of all weights and hindrances which would impede us in our race for the prize set before us in the gospel. – Eph. 5:4; Heb. 12:1.

Another well meaning but much mistaken man, Bishop Fallows, has started what he terms the first "Home Saloon," in Chicago. In it he sells imitation beer, flavored like the genuine with hops, but devoid of

alcohol. To make it as much as possible like a regular "devil trap" is his aim; so it supplies free lunch, billiard tables, games and cigars, and adds, we believe, hot coffee.

Two ministers in New York City (Rev. Drs. Rainsford and Rylance) have gone still farther, and on March 14th addressed a mass meeting favoring the permitting of saloon-keepers to open their saloons on Sundays – before and after the usual morning church service hour.

What is the meaning of all this? There is but one answer. It is – False doctrine; a false conception of the true situation, and a consequent fumbling in the dark. The teaching of the Lord and the Apostles, that the object of the gospel is to select or elect a "little flock" of saints, who, when tried and made white, will, with their Lord and Redeemer, constitute the "holy nation" and heavenly Kingdom, which, during the Millennium, as the promised "seed of Abraham" (Gal. 3:16,29) and "royal priesthood," shall *ble*ss all the families of the earth with the clear knowledge of the truth, and grant to all the world the trial for life made possible by Christ's redemptive sacrifice – this gospel has been lost to sight; and, *instead*, the view is held (contrary to all the evidences), that *all men* are now on trial for eternal *life* or *death*.

With such wrong views, no wonder ministers leave off attempting the "*perfecting of the saints* for the [present and **R1791 : page 80** future] work of ministry" (Eph. 4:12), and instead try to clean up the world, the flesh and the devil a bit. To these, the preaching of a "narrow way" that few find seems inconsistent, because they have imbibed the erroneous idea that all who do not find the "narrow way" will never find any way to life. They do not see that after the experiences of the present "narrow way" of this Gospel age of the Church's trial has sifted and separated from among men, and polished and prepared through self-denial the heirs of glory who are to be joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord – then will come the world's trial under more favorable conditions, but for a lesser glory and honor; that then, instead of the present narrow way, the grand highway of Isaiah's

prophecy (Isa. 35:8) will be opened up, on which every faculty will be offered to every member of the redeemed race to accept the New Covenant and under its gracious provisions have life everlasting.

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On Sunday, March 3, Cardinal Gibbons preached a discourse on the Bible, in which he complimented it as the book above all others and the treasury of the heavenly science. He commended it to all Roman Catholics, clergy and laity alike. Our object in mentioning this is to point out the great *change* of policy in the Church of Rome on this subject. We say policy, not principle, for the principles of that institution never change, though its policy is always adapted to its own evil ends with a shrewd reference to circumstances and conditions. It is only a few years since Roman Catholics, by the Council of Baltimore, were given permission to read the Bible. It is only about twenty-two years since Bibles were openly burned by priestly orders in Spain, and only a little while, a couple of centuries, since men and women were by them hunted to death and burned at the stake for having and reading that Book of books which the Cardinal now commends.

We would be glad to think that real reform is taking place, and that Roman Catholics are learning to love that which once they hated and persecuted; but the light of history forbids such a conclusion. The experiences of past centuries should and do teach us that Rome's conduct has always been marked out by *policy*. And so we believe it is now; she is working another policy for her own aggrandizement.

What will she gain, and what could she lose, by outwardly making friends with the Bible?

She may gain much; she expects to lose nothing. She sees the trend of Protestant teachings toward "higher criticism" – infidelity. She knows from experience that the masses of the people are conservative, and will by and by shrink back from so ultra a position; – and meantime she is favoring Christian union, adopting the Bible, etc., and when the

time shall come, which will be soon, for a revulsion of sentiment, she expects that the masses of Protestants will recognize her as the one safe hiding-place.

Besides, she may well reason that, if Methodists, Presbyterians and others can read the Bible, and yet each hold as firmly as ever to his sectarianism, so can and will Roman Catholics cleave to the traditions of their system, no matter what they find in the Bible when they read it. Alas! how true the reasoning, how safe the power of priestcraft, and how little likely it is to lose its hold upon the laity!

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Here is an illustration of another class of Protestants. While the "great teachers" are becoming "higher criticism" infidels, and those of the laity who will think for themselves are becoming skeptical, another class, calling themselves "Holiness people," are discarding the Bible in another way, – claiming that their own minds are superior guides without the divine revelation. Note the following extract from the *Galt Daily Reformer*: –

"Simcoe, Canada, March 8. – The 16th annual convention of the Canada Holiness Association convened yesterday afternoon. The convention was opened by singing and prayer by the president, Rev. N. Burns, B.A., of Toronto. Mr. Burns in his remarks alluded to the distinctive mission of the Association, which was to teach and practice that each individual could know from God what is truth for himself, personally, independent of tradition, or even the Bible. Vice-President Dickenson and Mrs. Truax spoke along similar lines."

Alas! how evidently the great enemy is leading God's professed people captive, some in one direction and some **[R1791 : page 81]** in another; some blinded in one way and some in another. "When the Son of Man cometh shall he find *the* faith on the earth?" Only with a "remnant," as in the end of the Jewish age.

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The following cablegram explains itself: –

"London, March 23. – The interview between Viscount Halifax, President of the English Church Union, and the Pope yesterday is regarded in Roman Catholic circles here as really of great importance and significant of the enormous strides the Catholic Church has made recently in England. In a recent cable letter *The Dispatch* correspondent noted the number of English clergy who have taken orders in the Roman Church during the last two years. The mere fact of Lord Halifax's visit would have raised a storm in the English Church a few years ago, but it hardly excites comment in to-day's newspapers.

"The Church Union has in its membership 3,000 of the Anglican clergy and 30 bishops. Lord Halifax is reported as asking the Pope to send 'a tender and gracious message to the Anglicans in the forthcoming encyclical.' On what ground and with what purpose is not explained."

In a fourteen-column article in the *Church Times*, Lord Halifax recently advocated church re-union. He expressed the opinion that –

"The Pope desires nothing so much as to take the first steps for the reunion of the Church, and by means of a reunited Christendom to find the solution for the political, social, and religious difficulties of the time. Surely, it is our duty to do our utmost to further such wishes. Surely there was never a period in the history of Christendom when there was a more favorable opportunity for the realization of such desires."

THE SOCIAL VIEW.

The announcement of the Czar of Russia, that he will uphold aristocracy as ardently as did his father, greatly disappointed the hopes

of those who looked for him to favor Republican institutions in Russia. However, he is showing his interest in the general welfare by arrangements for compulsory education and free schools.

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"Speaking recently at a banquet, the Pope's delegate, Mgr. Satolli, concluded by saying that the opinion was certainly growing that we were nearing a most critical point in history, and that in this country, especially, great problems would soon demand positive solution. All the horrors of a social revolution were predicted by men as renowned for accurate and calm thinking as Prof. Goldwin Smith and Prof. VonHolst. The Apostolic Delegate held, with a recent magazine writer, that the Catholic Church alone held the true solution of the terrible problem, which lies on the threshold of the twentieth century, and that it belongs to the Pope alone to pronounce a social *pax vobiscum*."

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"General Booth, of the Salvation Army, a close observer of men and things, expressed himself as follows to a reporter of the *Toronto News*, when asked respecting a prophecy made by him since his arrival in Canada to the effect that the 19th century would close with greater horrors than did the preceding century: –

"Any one who knows the world and society, and hears the rumblings of discontent, if he is not blind, can easily see and forecast serious results. The masses are dissatisfied, and they are determined that their wrongs shall be righted. They have been gaining power to this end for many years by extending the franchise, and unless Governments, and those who control affairs, can bring about harmonious relations amongst all classes, there will be an outburst such as the world has never known."

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All men are coming to see what our readers have for fifteen years been viewing from the Watch Tower of Zion through the telescope of God's Word. And now, as showing men the futility of hope in their own efforts for the *relief needed*, the world is witnessing the general disintegration of labor unions. A labor paper, the *Chicago Dispatch*, says:

"The labor union is rent by internal dissensions and bickerings, and unless the hard feeling engendered during the past six months is eradicated the hopes of the workingmen in the battles to be fought this spring are small indeed. ...Ninety-nine per cent of the quarrels and splits in the labor movement are caused by the failure of ambitious men, totally incompetent to be elected to office. These, with the assistance of the disorganizers, have been doing their work well."

The effect will be a general discouragement for a time, in which hope will be smothered; until finally, the pressure becoming too general, as well as too heavy, the explosion and disruption mentioned by General Booth and the Pope, but long ago predicted by the Lord, will come to pass. – Dan. 12:1; Jas. 5:1-4; Zeph. 3:8,9; Matt. 24:21,22.
