

VIEWS FROM THE TOWER.

RELIGIOUS conventions have been numerous during the past month. The American Baptist Union met in Saratoga. The Presbyterian General Assembly and The United Presbyterian General Assembly met in Pittsburg, and The Unitarian Association in Boston. The latter alone seems to be suffering a serious decline. The time was when Unitarians had a monopoly of "liberalism" and general disbelief in the Bible, its miracles, etc., but it has lost this distinctiveness; not by reason of any reform on its part, but because ministers in so-called "Orthodox" churches have out-run them in disbelief of the Bible, its inspiration, its miracles and its doctrines.

As for the Baptists, they are in great danger of losing their liberty and coming into bondage to their Ministerial Associations which, anxious for power, are drawing the cords tighter and tighter about their confiding lambs and sheep. Increase of wealth among Baptists in the large cities of the North is an important factor in the binding process. The poorer Baptist churches and their ministers are finding union more and more desirable. Baptists have been among the most firm defenders of the Bible: indeed, denying, as they do, all church authority, they have nothing else than the Bible as a foundation to their existence, and the denial of it would mean the destruction of every excuse for their existence as *churches*, and leave them merely moral and social clubs or societies. Nevertheless, among Baptists, as well as among the organized denominations, disbelief in the inspiration of the Bible and in the very foundation of Christian doctrine – that the death of Christ at Calvary was man's ransom-price – is spreading rapidly, especially among the ministers.

The U.P. Assembly received very warmly a committee from the Presbyterian Assembly, and heard and applauded their addresses, which were to the effect that they hold much of doctrine, history and practice in common, and little at variance, and that the two

denominations should become one, etc. They took steps looking to the control of U.P. Theological Seminaries, fearing a difficulty similar to that between the Presbyterian body and Union Seminary of Briggs fame. Evidently their hearts are failing them for fear as they see other quarters of the ecclesiastical heavens being shaken.

The Presbyterian Assembly decided that the graduates of Union Theological Seminary shall not be ordained as Presbyterian ministers. This seemed to many a bold, courageous course in defense of the Bible; but when all the facts are recognized, it appears very much less. It has taken cognizance of Prof. Briggs' teachings, has examined him, has recognized his teaching as Infidelity of the most pernicious sort, has refused to longer recognize him as a teacher and suspended him as a minister until he shall have time to recant. He repudiates all ideas of recanting, and still holds and teaches his unbelief in the Bible, with increased energy. The other professors at Union Seminary have approved Dr. Briggs' course and teachings, and are still recognized as good enough to represent Presbyterianism. The Directors of the Seminary have disregarded the orders of the General Assembly, have endorsed Dr. Briggs and retained him; and yet some of those very Union Seminary Directors were specially honored by being reelected to places of special influence by this very Assembly. Why? – Because of the love of money. Mr. Briggs' friends are wealthy and influential, and the past year has shown that Missionary and other Societies of the denomination have fallen behind financially; and Presbyterianism as a whole, as well as many of its ministers individually, keeps close watch as to which side of every question brings the golden butter to its bread. In no other way can its action be accounted for in selecting **[R1824 : page 140]** to its Board of Home Missions three out-and-out Briggs sympathizers. (Infidels so far as the Bible is concerned – believers so far as morality is concerned.) One of these, Mr. J. Crosby Brown (a very rich man and eminent banker who is President of the Board of Directors of Union Seminary, and who has a son a Professor in that institution), has been made President of the Board of Home Missions. Another made a director is Dr. Hastings, the noted leader and President

of Union Seminary, whose teachings are recognized as so bad that a man instructed there is so likely to be an out-and-out infidel, that no matter what he may confess or profess to believe he cannot be recognized as a Presbyterian minister. The Assembly is learning not to put much faith in the professions of men taught in Union. And, indeed, do they not know from their *own consciences* that not one minister in ten believes what he professes at the time of his ordination? Evidently it will not be long before the time-and-money-serving spirit will sweep all denominations into practical infidelity, as the Scriptures have pointed out to us.

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On Sunday, June 2, "Whitsunday," by a very general arrangement, sermons were preached in churches of various denominations favoring a union of all Protestant sects. The Pope, in an encyclical, offered Roman Catholics a premium to have them pray for the conversion of Protestants to the church of Rome. The premium offered was release from Purgatorial pains – so many days release for each prayer offered during the nine days preceding Whitsunday and for the eight days following it.

But neither the motives for union nor the desired object are good, reckoned from the Bible standpoint. They are on a par with the Pope's claim to control the future as well as the present life.

The same bigotry that during the "dark ages" established Inquisitions with their dungeons, and torture chambers furnished with every device that wicked hearts and brains and hands could prepare, would now fain grasp again the power lost in the Great Reformation. It would, no **[R1825 : page 140]** doubt, at first conduct itself more moderately than in the past; but minds trained to believe that God has prepared "hell" as a great bake-oven and that he is not only sweeping his creatures into it by the million, but that he has pleasure in so doing, – that he made that "hell" for those creatures and those creatures (foreknowingly) for that hell, are wholly unfit to be trusted with power

over their fellows. They are sure to be influenced by their perverted ideas of God's methods to perhaps send heretics a little sooner to the burning. The evil is only intensified by adding to these errors the superstition that the pope carries the keys of hell and purgatory (and delegates that power to priests), and controls the future destiny of fellow creatures, many of whom, thank God, are much better every way than himself.

Here is the *premium* for prayers referred to above, the words of the man who claims to be infallible, unerring, the *italics* and explanatory words in brackets being ours: –

"To all who, for nine consecutive days before Pentecost, either publicly or privately, recite some special prayers to the Holy Spirit, we grant on each of those *an indulgence of seven years* and *seven quadrgenes* [40 days]; and a plenary [full, complete] indulgence [from any and all sins that he may commit] on any one of these days, or on the feast of Pentecost itself, or on any day of the following octave, provided, having confessed their sins and received absolution and holy communion, they pray God, according to the intention which we have above expressed.

"We further grant that those who desire to repeat for the eight days following Pentecost upon the same conditions may gain both of the above indulgences. These indulgences *may be applied to the souls* [of the dead, already] *in purgatory.*"

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The Rev. Thos. Dixon (Baptist), on May 26, preaching in New York City, declared that Christianity is a failure in that city and had been repudiated by the spirit of Christ. He is reported by the *N.Y. World* to have said: –

"The Baptist denomination in this city owns \$4,000,000 worth of property, and, although within the last twenty years 15,000 children

have been born into that faith, they have in that time lost 2,000 members. The combined wealth of the Baptist, Presbyterian and Methodist churches here is \$16,000,000. There are in those churches the brainiest men of the age, and yet they are not holding their own. They are a curse, because they are only maintaining the traditions of a dead past."
