

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER.
"AGNOSTICS IN HEAVEN."

DR. Lyman Abbott, like other thinkers, finds it difficult to believe that the divine plan is as narrow as Calvin's creed would make it appear. But Dr. Abbott is more fearless than many preachers and hence keeps well to the forefront as an expounder of the advanced thought which is invading all denominations. He is reported in the public press as having recently expressed the belief that there would be agnostics in heaven. It would appear that he received a considerable number of letters criticising his position, and urging that, tho hope might be entertained for the heathen, none should be extended to unbelievers in Christian lands. In response he preached a discourse from the words, "He that believeth in me, believeth in him that sent me."

Discoursing on the text, he is reported to have declared, "There is more faith in Christ in many an agnostic who spends his life in the service of humanity, than there was in Torquemada. There are many people who are trying to believe in Christ but cannot, and so call themselves agnostics."

The Doctor is sure that many unbelievers are far too good to be everlastingly tormented, and who in justice should not be punished in any manner for not believing creeds and theories contradictory to each other, and to reason, and much of which their own adherents repudiate unqualifiedly. Mr. Abbott feels that these moral people should not be consigned to torment for not acting the hypocrite and professing to believe what they do not believe, as so many professors in the churches do.

Quite right thus far, Dr. Abbott. But are you not wresting the Scriptures, and perverting the Lord's word of your text, in trying to convince these unbelievers that they are saved by morals and good

works, and that these constitute *faith*? Are not these unbelievers better men for confessing their lack of faith, than many in the churches who profess faith and have it not? Are you not in danger of making these honest unbelievers two-fold more the children of Gehenna, than they are at present, by getting them to profess a lie; as the Master said to some of the Doctors of the Law at his first advent?

But if God were to let Dr. Abbott have his way, and take to heaven all the unbelievers and all the heathen who cannot believe for similar reasons, we fancy that heaven would be so barbarous and uncouth, and its denizens so characterless, that Dr. A. and others who advocate the same unscriptural theory, that faith in the precious blood of Christ is unnecessary to salvation, would like to get away from such a heaven to some more civilized place.

How strange that, seeing the difficulties and unreasonableness of their unscriptural position, Dr. A. and the growingly large class who think along the same lines do not see and accept heartily the Scripture position, – (1) That faith in Christ is essential, and a development of character also, to any who would receive the gift of God, everlasting life; (2) That the present Gospel age is intended merely for the selection of a "little flock" along a "narrow way" which "few" find and still fewer care to walk in; (3) That another age of a thousand years is to follow this and be the Kingdom age, in which Christ and the "little flock," developed in the Gospel age, will be the world's instructors and judges – "kings and priests unto God" (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6) whose reign shall bless the **[R2247 : page 20]** world with full, clear knowledge and opportunity for the development of character and its reward of eternal life.

How strange that men, learned and thinking men too, will oppose this divine scheme of "restitution" which St. Peter tells us God has declared through all the holy prophets since the world began! (Acts 3:19-22.) Doctor Abbott and all thinking people see the necessity for *just such an opportunity* of salvation, for the ignorant heathen and

others, whom the "god of this world has blinded" so that they *cannot now see* and accept the divine provision (2 Cor. 4:4); yet these thinkers prefer to wrest and twist the divine Word, and teach the salvation of unbelievers in heaven in preference to the better as well as Scriptural plan of restitution and education and trial for eternal life on the earth during the coming Millennium.

This is passing strange indeed. Surely, they are "blind guides," as the Scriptures declare, and are leading their followers into the ditch of doubt and skepticism. Surely, they are not wilfully choosing the error! Surely, they do not *see* the beautiful, reasonable, Scriptural plan of God! The matter reminds us of an incident that is related respecting the great river Amazon. A sailing vessel at sea had encountered adverse winds and had lost its way, and had exhausted its supply of fresh water and the crew was famishing for water. Sighting another vessel, they signaled, "Famishing for water. Can you supply us?" The other vessel signaled back, "Throw your buckets overboard and dip all the fresh water you want." They were in the mouth of the Amazon River while still out of sight of land. The water they craved was all about them, but they knew it not. So it is with our friends who want to find some way of salvation for the heathen and honest skeptics: if they would only taste and see, they would find in the Bible on their pulpits and in all their homes the very water of life for all the willing and obedient, which their reasons crave and their hearts seek: they would find a plan of salvation there which fully meets every reasonable requirement.

Thanks be unto God for his grace which has brought some of us "out of darkness into his marvelous light."

"ADMITS HE LIVED A LIE."

Under the above and similar captions the daily press of our land is calling attention to Mr. Henry Morehouse Taber, deceased, President of the Board of Trustees of the First Presbyterian Church, New York City, and long highly honored as a Christian millionaire, and prominent in Presbyterian circles. But tho Mr. Taber did not have the courage of his

convictions while he lived, he at least wished to be honest in his death; and hence he left a Will, recently probated, which has caused quite a stir by its candor respecting his total unbelief. It denounces all religions as frauds and shams based on superstition. In it he desires that no funeral services be held over his corpse, and that the same be cremated, instead of buried.

Was not this man positively injured by reason of being cajoled into a dishonest profession of faith in the Westminster Confession, by membership in the Presbyterian Church? Who will deny that this man would have been in a much better condition to meet his Redeemer and Judge in the General Judgment of the Millennial Day, if he had not lived a lie respecting his faith? There are thousands, we doubt not, in the pulpits as well as in the pews of all denominations, who are similarly living a lie; and the majority are not honest enough to make even a post-mortem confession, as Mr. Taber did.

These dishonest people do not wish to be dishonest, but act a lie for fear the truth would do injury to the Church. How much better to be honest and let God take care of all consequences. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her [Babylon's] sins and that ye receive not of her plagues," is the Lord's command to all who are *his people*, as soon as they get the light of present truth and thus get out of harmony with the falsities of Babylon's professions and confessions.

"AN INVISIBLE HAND IS SHAKING."

Rev. R. Heber Newton, one of the prominent New York preachers, on January 9, among other things said (as reported in the *New York Herald*): –

"All religions are moving in the same direction – reaching forth toward something new. The end of this century has been looked to by prophetic students as the end of a dispensation – the opening of a new order. Our fathers believed that Jesus Christ was to come again somewhere about this time.

"An invisible hand is shaking the intellectual kaleidoscope, and the figures familiar to generations are changing before our eyes. The traditional systems [R2248 : page 20] of divinity seem to hosts of men to-day of as much help as the charts of New York harbor drawn up by the primitive Knickerbockers would be to our steamers. Men are slowly and painfully realizing that there is no answer in the Thirty nine articles and Westminster Confession for us in the year 1898. Their whole thought is as antique and obsolete as the language of Chaucer and Spenser. Men ask now for a gospel in the vernacular of the nineteenth century: not necessarily a new gospel, but at least a translation of the old gospel of the mediaevals and ancients into a 'tongue understood of the people.'

"Sublimely unconscious of the day that is breaking outside the church walls, our priests go on droning the old refrain about an impossible Bible and an unnatural [R2248 : page 21] Christ, and anathematizing those who don't care to come in and listen to their music of the past. Pulpits are timorous and silent on questions of the age. Conventions reauthorize, at every triennial session, as text books for theological seminaries, treatises which are as accurate maps of our present knowledge as the celestial charts of the Ptolemaic astronomers....

"What is needed is not denunciation, but the quickening of a new idea and the kindling of a new ideal which shall once more guide and inspire man to a life higher than that of pleasure.

"The close of this century has witnessed the growth of monster nationalities. Are they under the inspiration of the Christian law? It does not look much like it, as we see the great Christian powers standing around China, waiting to dismember it. Have our Christian States become pirates, flaunting above their ensigns the black flag? The bishop of Breslau may invoke a benediction upon the fleet which goes forth for the protection of the cross, but the average man smiles cynically at such conception of Christianity.

"Every new advance of humanity is won against obstructiveness of the churches. Every social and political injustice that, one after another, is swept violently away – slavery, land monopoly, the tyranny of capital, war – is defended, up to the last, by the sign of Him who came to break every yoke and to let the oppressed go free; over whose cradle the angels sang, 'Peace on earth, good will among men.'

"Humanity is growing conscious of its magnificent possibilities of glorious life, which are still postponed from generation to generation because the churches, which should be consecrated to this task of social regeneration, have not the mind nor the heart to grapple with it. They are busied, as their prototypes of old, with their pretty, petty play of charities, while neglecting the weightier matters of the law, the stern and solemn sentences of justice.

"A GREAT REVOLUTION POSSIBLE."

"The era of competition is ended. The era of combination has opened. All business is concentrating. In this massing of capital there is coming to be an absolute domination over the wage worker, over the interest of the people at large, over the life of the State itself. Yet this movement is natural and necessary. It is in the line of economic progress. The real question concerning it is, Can this new order grow a soul within it, a spirit capable of mastering these monster powers and using them, not for self-aggrandizement, but for human service? If it cannot, there is a revolution ahead worse than any the world has hitherto known. If it can, there opens an era of boundless, beneficent progress. This is a question of religion. It is the old need of an ever fresh faith and hope and love.

"Plainly a real religion of some sort is needed, more needed than ever," said the speaker in conclusion. "It is the one thing which alone is really needed. All else will flow from it. Without it all else will disappear – political institutions, wealth, civilization, everything. Our duty as we find ourselves in this epoch of transition is to keep our minds open for the new light that God is preparing to send forth into the world,

and our hearts eager for the new life into which he is preparing to lead us."

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How many more see the same thing? and fear the same thing? What is lacking that these people do not receive the "present truth," the "meat in due season" for the household of faith? The trouble is that they have too much faith in each other, and not sufficient faith in the Lord and his Word. The blind people are looking to and following the blind leaders; and the latter are looking in the wrong direction to see "the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his beams." If the Lord's message of "present truth" and Scripture harmonization presented in the four volumes of MILLENNIAL DAWN were promulgated from some source more "highly esteemed among men," who can doubt that it would –

"Satisfy men's longings, as nothing else can do?"

So also, if our Lord Jesus had been a Pharisee and from a notable family and city, his message would have been received, and he would not have been crucified. God still *hides* his truth from the great and wise and prudent, and reveals it unto babes – the humble minded, the teachable. Nevertheless, the congregation of "All Soul's Church" which heard the above sermon should be an excellent field of labor for some earnest friends of the truth to labor in, – seeking to present the "harvest" message contained in MILLENNIAL DAWN volumes. And while a discourse like the above may not convert any one to Christ, it undoubtedly may shake loose some of the true "wheat" from Babylon's bundles and thus prepare this class for the food for which they are starving spiritually.

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**WHAT THE PRINCE OF PEACE MIGHT SAY,
IF HE WOULD SPEAK TO-DAY.**

"I have come, and the world shall be shaken
Like a reed at the touch of my rod,
And the kingdoms of men shall awaken
To the voice and summons of God.
No more through the din of the ages,
Shall warnings and chidings divine
From the lips of my prophets and sages
Be trampled like pearls before swine.

"Have ye 'seized' all my lands and my cattle?
Would ye keep back from labor her meed?
Would ye challenge the outcasts to battle,
When they plead at your feet in their need?
And when clamor of hunger grows louder,
And the multitude prays to be fed,
Will ye answer with prison and powder
The cries of your brothers for bread?

"I'd turn from your altars and arches
And the mockings of steeples and domes,
To join in the long, weary marches
Of the poor ones bereft of their homes;
I'd share in the sorrows and crosses
Of the poor, the hungry and cold,
For dearer to me are their losses
Than your mines and your altars of gold.

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"I will wither the might of the Spoiler,
I will end the reign of his hate;
The servants of Sin shall no longer
Be prospered in Church and in State.
Aye, the prayers of the poor are ascending
To be written with lightnings on high!
And the wails of all captives be blending
With bolts that shall leap from the sky.

"Then the thrones of your kings shall be shattered,
And the captives and surfs shall go free;
Then I'll harvest from seed that I scattered
On the borders of blue Galilee.
Yea, I come not now as a stranger –
Lo, my reapers shall sing through the night,
Till the star that stood over the manger
Shall cover the world with its light."

– *Selected.*
