

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER.

THE "SHAKING" of the ecclesiastical "heavens" continues. Dr. Hillis' denunciation of the Westminster Confession of Faith, which as a Presbyterian he has supported for many years, is about as strong as he could make it. He is credited with the following language in his discourse to the Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, N.Y., on Sunday, March 25th: –

"The Confession of Faith says that certain men and angels are foreordained to everlasting death, being particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished, and every young man who enters the Presbyterian Church has to solemnly swear to believe and teach this frightful view. And every attempt to revise and expel that statement from the creed has been successfully combated by a majority that wishes to retain the doctrine. It would seem as if a man would prefer to be burned at the stake rather than hold or assert or charge such infinite cruelty upon the all-merciful and all-loving God. The day the scholastics wrote that chapter in the Confession of Faith they got the devil confused with God.

"I would rather shake my fist in the face of the Eternal, and fling every vile epithet toward his stainless throne where eternal mercy sits with the world's atoning Savior, than lift my hand with that creed before God's throne and affirm that I taught or believed it."

The matter is before the Chicago Presbytery which is divided in sentiment, – many of its members averring that they agree to Dr. Hillis' views of the subject. The gentleman proposes to resign his connection with Presbyterianism if the latter objects to his attacks upon it from the inside. The world looks on approvingly, and says, Bravo, Dr. Hillis! But to our view the gentleman has little to be proud of; for, granting that, as he says, he has held privately for years the views he

now expresses publicly, it follows that for all those years he lived a lie before the whole world. And if for those years he kept silence because he was making a personal name and fame and following, which he has now attained, it follows that for all those years, according to the gentleman's own words quoted above, he was doing worse than "shaking his fist in the face of the Eternal," – worse than to have "flung every vile epithet toward God's stainless throne where eternal mercy sits with the world's atoning Savior."

What an astounding confession this is to be sent forth to the world! We are reminded of our Lord's words, "Out of thine own mouth I will judge thee!" And yet this side of the case strikes very few. Why? Because they are in a similar plight, having been for years directly or indirectly upholding this same creed and thus to the extent of their influence (either as ministers and officers or else as common members of churches avowing these creeds, they too have been thus blaspheming the Eternal and his stainless throne. Other ministers in Presbyterian churches look with envy at Dr. Hillis' freedom and wish that the time might soon come that they would have sufficient individual influence and prestige to stand alone, that they too might declare their independence and cease their blasphemy against the divine character, which causes uneasiness, notwithstanding long usage to it and notwithstanding the fact that "others do the same." Added to this is now another fear, that the tide of public sentiment is on the turn; – that the pews, if they knew as much as the pulpits respecting such matters, would be much more honest; – and that the risk of jumping out too soon as "reformers," and thus losing prestige and possibly bread and butter, may be offset soon by the reverse risk of not jumping soon enough to get glory as a "reformer" and on the contrary being covered with odium as those who have deceived the people as long as possible. **[R2614 : page 116]**

Surely it would have been much more to Dr. Hillis' credit to have first resigned all relationship to Presbyterianism and then in a very humble manner to have confessed to Plymouth Church his

shortcomings of the past and his resolution henceforth to preach the truth, or at least his convictions respecting it.

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Rev. Dr. Donehoo, of Pittsburg, the very next Sunday (April 1st) took a similar stand against the Westminster Confession, which, when ordained, he solemnly vowed that he believed and would teach. Yet, while still posing as a Presbyterian and doing violence to his oath of office, he confessed in the following language, quoted in the daily press, that he has for the many years of his Presbyterian membership and ministry been acting a lie – he confesses he "*never could believe*" what he professed. We quote: –

"The question suggested to me by the text is the following, 'Are men foreordained to be damned?' It is about the bluntest, harshest, most unreasonable one that an unprejudiced reader of the Bible could have presented for his consideration. I am sorry to say that it is one that has been present in my thoughts from my earliest recollection. I have heard it discussed in the pulpit, have read many works on the subject, and have often gravely considered it in private conversation with brethren, tho I have never for one instant had any doubts on the subject so far as I am concerned. Whatever the Westminster divines may have believed on the subject, their language as now understood expresses in unmistakable phrase that such was their belief. Thus they declare: 'By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others are foreordained to everlasting death, and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

"I never could believe such a thing, and I pray to God to preserve me from ever either unwittingly endorsing or so much as entertaining such an insane thought in my heart. Nor would I refer to this at all were it not just now published all over the land that the great Presbyterian Church was about to drag a faithful minister of the gospel to trial for protesting against the idea that any man is foreordained of God to be

damned to all eternity. If such a sifting process as that just now hinted at was to be fearlessly put in force throughout the church, and every man who preaches and prays every Sabbath day of his life the very opposite of this horrible dogma, whether he has the brains or the courage to admit it or not, there would be such a depletion in the ranks of the church as would throw St. Bartholomew in the shade."

The gentleman frankly avows that he would have kept quiet still longer, and have continued to tacitly endorse the slander against God had it not been his fear that a hunt for "heretics" might be started in Presbyterian circles. He hopes that a sufficient number of Presbyterian ministers will growl to deter the others from enforcing the laws and rules of the denomination. Yet strange to say, the men who stay inside the denomination and denounce it, and declare their perfidy in respect to its teachings and their unfaithfulness to God's character and Word, are honored; while honest men who refuse thus to stultify themselves and to blaspheme God's holy name for bread and "honor one of another" are disesteemed. After all then the chief fault is with the people; – the preachers merely debase themselves to supply the popular demand. It is time for all who have any moral honesty to show it. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues." – Rev. 18:4.
