

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER.
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY CHURCH.
– AN "ORTHODOX" VIEW. –

THE REV. HAWEIS, of St. James Church, London, England, gives his views of this subject in the London Daily Chronicle, from which we extract the following interesting items: –

"The only hope for the Church of the Twentieth Century is that it should make a clean sweep of 1900 years of theology and get back to Christ. We now know what this theology can do for us. It has done a great deal, for its statements at different times have approved themselves to different ages, and been the vehicles of a certain amount of Christian truth; but as Dean Milman said in his wise History of Christianity, Theophilus of Antioch, who invented the doctrine of the Trinity – or, at all events, coined that theological word – did not thereby very greatly benefit the Church. The same may be said of every other Christian dogma. It isn't that we don't believe the very important spiritual truths underlying every Christian dogma, but a form of expression of truth which is a living and a satisfactory one to an age immediately becomes false and dangerous when a better and a more complete expression is devised.

THE NEED FOR RE-STATEMENT.

"The Twentieth Century Church will insist upon Re-Statement on a large scale. Present theological text books are obsolete. They practically teach men and women infidelity. The Cimmerian darkness of Sunday-school teaching must be abandoned; the conscientious agonies of devout Sunday-school teachers must be relieved. They don't believe in the old hell themselves, but they have to teach it; the children don't believe it, but they have to put their hands behind their backs and tell the teachers these naughty lies every Sunday. The teacher does not

believe in the Bible in the way in which he is supposed to teach it. No one believes it unless he is a fool or a brainless idiot....His creed, in the same way, as has been finely said, "merely stands sentinel over the heart to keep it empty." "I believe," he says, "in the resurrection of the body." He doesn't; nobody does; but he is not allowed to teach instead: "I believe in the survival of myself," which was practically all those of old meant by the phrase, "the survival of the self," being to them inconceivable apart from the resurrection of the body, and so on ad infinitum. Our mistake is in pretending to believe obsolete statements which once expressed truth, but which are now seen to be defective. We should discard them openly and plead for proper re-statements....

"People now despise the clergy on account of the old rubbish they are not ashamed to teach. The twentieth century will not tolerate them unless they mend their ways. The twentieth century will go solid for fact in the shape of re-statement. 'Dear me!' people say, 'the working man doesn't go to church. How odd!' Very much odder if he did. The twentieth century will insist upon a clear statement of what we may call exact knowledge of God or the moral nature of the Sovereign Will ruling the universe. ...Then the twentieth century will have to entirely change its attitude to the religions of the world, and it will have to admit that God has always been revealing Himself, His will, His purpose, as fast as man could receive it, and that the different and imperfect faiths and creeds are the result of the obscured mediums of the intelligence and the undeveloped spiritual faculties of man. The sun that always shines is seen through many diverse and distorting media – smoked glass, clouds, or mere tiny cracks in a darkened room, or again the prism, sunset clouds, or through folded lids of closed eyes seen hardly at all, but still the sun is always there. The teachings of Buddha, Zoroaster, Confucius, Moses, by a certain moral and spiritual solidarity, show that *all religions* are of Divine origin, though Christianity is the religion which belongs to the fulness of time.

MISSIONS AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

"Then all this will surely alter the twentieth century Church's ideas of missions! Just think for a moment. When missions were most active last century [R2930 : page 4] the universal belief was that all savages were doomed to everlasting fire. With the abatement of that fear there will be a certain diminution of enthusiasm to break up the privacy of their lives. We must distinguish between missions and missions. There is an enormous difference between attacking with the most inferior statements of Christianity, ancient civilizations and religious philosophies promulgated by some of the greatest and best men and deepest thinkers of antiquity, and simply interposing in case of savages in order to prevent cannibalism and slaughter. Anything which stops that is, on the face of it, more than respectable, although under the influence of clothes and the brandy bottle, which seem to follow disastrously in the wake of the Bible, what we call the lower races show a tendency to improve themselves off the face of the earth.

"The whole missionary method must be altered in the coming century.

"The Christian religion can only spread properly from the Christian life – the lives of Englishmen and Englishwomen, not merely from the Christian dogma, nor the Christian machinery, the Christian calico, or even the Christian bayonet. The only way for missions to be healthy is for the English people abroad so to improve their minds and intelligences as to make the natives come and implore them to reveal the secret of such marked superiority and goodness, which under their own faulty system they seem unable to attain. The real Christian influence should spread as Christ spread His religion, by enthusiasm for ameliorating the physical as well as the spiritual condition of the people. These things must spread not by way of proselytism – plucking the brand from the burning, which was the way of the Inquisition; true Christianity is the unconscious outflow from a positive life. 'Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works.' At

present what they mostly see is a whirl of Bibles, beer, brandy, mutual jealousies, shoddy stores, and bad lives. The twentieth century must change all that.

"Don't I think the clergy want educating in their own theology?"

"Yes, but the more you educate them on the present lines the worse they will be. The proper education of the clergy would consist in teaching them to understand the real nature of the Bible, instead of only teaching them what various theologians in the past have thought about the Bible, which is a very different thing from what modern research has shown about its records and the value to be attached to them. It is unfortunate that the chief doctrines of Christianity, as understood by the clergy, should have been left out of the Sermon on the Mount, the most perfect expression as some suppose of the Christian religion. It is also unfortunate to note that no one can read the closing chapters of St. John without seeing that our Lord can hardly be accounted quite sound on the doctrine of the Trinity, as it is stated in the Athanasian Formula. The twentieth century will probably read the Sermon on the Mount again...."

"Humanitarianism, or pulpit interest in Politics and Sociology, is a wholesome tendency as far as it goes, because it shows the irresistible pressure put upon the clergy to make their moral instruction bear directly on affairs of practical life; but it is dangerous as tending to confuse what is roughly called the secular with the spiritual. You can't insist too much on the fact that Culture is not religion; religion always means one and the same thing – the sense of a spiritual nature – and dependence upon a spiritual source external to ourselves. I hope the twentieth century will develop both. They run on parallel not antagonistic lines, though it would not be fair to say they will never meet, for there is moral and physical intercommunication between the two. The Church of the twentieth century will be deeply spiritual, even spiritualistic, I am sure, in a very wide sense of the word. Spiritualism, in all its many forms, however people may dislike it, does,

nevertheless, stand as a stout protest on behalf of man's spiritual nature and his spiritual affinities, and the twentieth century Church will have to look very largely to the recognition and development and purification of these spiritual manifestations and beliefs."

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