

## **VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER. TROUBLE AMONGST METHODISTS.**

FOR MANY YEARS Rev. Agar Beet, D.D., has been theological tutor of Richmond College, England. Of him a prominent English journal says: "Dr. Beet occupies a unique position in Methodism. He is the only Methodist theologian today who has won a very great reputation outside his own denomination. His writings, particularly on the question of eschatology, have won a very wide circulation and have produced a profound effect in many quarters." Dr. Beet, it seems, got to studying the Bible and found in it nothing to support the common supposition that God has so constituted man that he can never cease to be. He has found it to teach, on the contrary, that everlasting life is God's gift through Christ to our dying race, and that a refusal of that gift would signify death – not life, in torment or otherwise: that "the wages of sin is death;" that "the soul that sinneth it shall die;" that "he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God [the curse – the sentence of death] abideth on him."

Dr. Beet's crime consisted in teaching these Bible truths with which Methodist doctrines, like those of so many other "traditions of the ancients," conflict. To teach along these Biblical lines would quickly extinguish all the "fires of hell" which Methodists have poked so industriously for a century; it would relieve God of the charges of injustice and lovelessness and devilishness hurled against him by some of his fallen creatures who, nevertheless, know well that they are not so depraved as either to plan or work out such diabolical tortures; it would show up Methodism as well as other "isms" as slanderers of God in these respects, and would undermine confidence in the infallibility of their teachings, and send the people for instruction to the Bible instead of to creeds and catechisms of the dark ages and to other blind guides.

The "Wesleyan Institution Committee" concluded that the foregoing grounds were quite sufficient for dropping Dr. Beet from the college faculty. There is plenty of room for Higher Criticism Infidelity and for anti-Scriptural evolution theories in all such institutions, but no room for the truth – the Bible must not be heard, for it, being the great antagonist of error, would speedily make havoc of the multitudinous errors developed in medieval times and duly labeled "Orthodoxy." In a defense of his position, published in *The Methodist Times* (London), Dr. Beet says:

"During the last century Methodist opinion about the doom of the lost has completely changed. Very few Wesleyan ministers can now read Wesley's sermons on 'Hell' and on 'Eternity,' Nos. 73 and 54, without repudiating much of their teaching with indignation. Evidently the writer accepted on these topics current phraseology without duly weighing its meaning. But I notice that, when selecting fifty-three sermons as an embodiment of his distinctive teaching, Wesley did not include these sermons; and that, in the sermon on 'The Great Assize,' which he did include, there is very little which contradicts the teaching of my book.

"This change of opinion has been carefully ignored. Many scholarly and godly ministers have nursed their doubts in silence, some under a sense of guilt for concealing their opinions, until the need for concealment has become to them a humiliating and intolerable bondage. In some cases, men have not dared even to think, lest the thoughts they dared not utter should make them the more conscious of their bondage. This doubt and fear are very widespread. There has been a retreat from the position held by our fathers, along the whole line; for the more part in darkness and solitude. Of all this, I have abundant and pathetic proof, some of which I am able to produce."

A reviewer writing in one of the leading London dailies says on this subject: –

"For my own part I have no quarrel with Dr. Beet on this matter. I presume that few men of intelligence and culture accept today the old dogma of eternal suffering which was preached with so much fervour forty or fifty years ago. Even the Wesleyan Conference itself has expunged from its catechism the definite statements that once found so lurid an expression. I remember very well [R3049 : page 228] in the days of my childhood being asked the questions and giving the answers, both of which I had learnt from the catechism. 'What sort of place is hell?' Answer: 'Hell is a dark and bottomless pit full of fire and brimstone.' Question: 'How will the wicked be punished there?' Answer: 'The wicked will be punished in hell by having their bodies tormented by fire, and their souls by a sense of the wrath of God.' Question: 'How long will those torments last?' Answer: 'The torments of hell will last for ever and ever.' These questions and answers were in a catechism designed, as was said on its title page, for children of tender years. I presume, therefore, that the Methodist Conference has changed its views on these particular questions, or these questions and answers would not have been expunged from their catechism.

"In theory, however, there has been no change in Methodist doctrines or dogmas. The standards are the same today as at the beginning. Wesley's 'Fifty-three Sermons,' with his 'Notes on the New Testament,' remain the ultimate court of appeal. At the Synods Wesleyan ministers are still asked the old questions, and are expected to give an affirmative answer. Though there has been no change in Methodist dogmas or standards, there has been an unmistakable change in the character of Methodist preaching, and that change has been noticed, not so much in what has been said as in what has been left unsaid. Questions on which forty years ago, or even twenty years ago, Methodist ministers were emphatic, today they are very largely silent on, and this silence is not always because the ministers themselves feel in any doubt or uncertainty on the questions, but because it is not considered wise or prudent to stir up any kind of religious controversy. The gospel of expediency is very popular in most religious communions.

"Dr. Beet, in his manifesto, says: 'This change of opinion has been carefully ignored. Many scholarly and godly ministers have nursed their doubts in silence, some under a sense of guilt.' If this statement be true, it seems to me to show a lamentable lack of moral courage on the part of the ministers in question. It is sincerely to be hoped that none of these ministers preached what they had ceased to believe. I am afraid that the atmosphere of ecclesiastical communions generally is not favourable to the growth of courage or the development of an independent spirit. The dead hand of the ancient creed-makers is still upon us.

"I am told that those who are anxious that Dr. Beet should no longer occupy the Professor's chair at Richmond College are very desirous of maintaining what they call 'the purity of doctrine.' It is all very well to stand for 'purity of doctrine,' if we only knew what purity of doctrine is. One, of course, can admire their zeal, and in some measure share their anxiety. But it seems to me that if we were one-half as anxious about purity of conduct as we are about purity of doctrine it would be very much better for the world. There are a hundred questions of doctrine on which we may disagree, and our disagreement will not affect by a hair's breadth the condition or the destiny of communities or of individuals....We are horrified at what we call heresy, but we wink at drunkenness. We plunge the whole denomination into convulsions because a man dares to depart, even in the smallest degree, from what we conceived to be the standard set up a hundred and fifty years ago; and yet we allow publicans and brewers and Stock Exchange gamblers and company promoters and swindlers and oppressors to occupy prominent positions in the Church, to take the chair at missionary meetings, and lay foundation stones of churches and Sunday schools.

Notwithstanding the fact that all nations have been made drunk with Babylon's wine of false doctrine (Rev. 17:2) we find the non-professors rather less intoxicated than are professing Christians and able to give some rather sound advice, as in the article just quoted.

Thank God that the Millennial Morning is here and that it will not be possible to keep the world and the Church asleep, stupid, thoughtless much longer! The silver Jubilee trumpets are being sounded by the priests (of the "royal priesthood") announcing the Jubilee, and incidentally awakening all true Israelites to the fact that for a long time they have been subjects of "nocturnal hallucinations" and horrible nightmares, without basis or reason.

### **LAWS OF NATURE VS. LAWS OF GOD.**

The Christian, accepting the Bible as his standard of philosophy, long ago found himself in conflict with so called Science which, ignoring a personal and almighty God whose will controls Nature, defies Nature; places Nature's Laws high above all others and attempts to prove Nature to be her own Creator by evolutionary processes under the Laws of Nature. The followers of the Lord, Jehovah, recognize his right to control the universe and – both directly and through his Son and his apostles and others to so control Nature that winds and waves and demons and disease would obey. Those who believe in the miracles of the Bible neither deify Nature nor reverence its operations as unalterable laws, but they do, on the contrary, sanctify the Lord God in their hearts.

It is pleasant to find a Scientist committing himself on these lines and renouncing his worship of Nature as a god. Prof. S. P. Langley, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institute, recently took this position in a paper read before the Philosophical Society of Washington. Among other things he said: –

"It is perhaps a hard saying to most that there are no such things as 'laws of nature'; but this is the theme on which I have to speak.

"These, then, are the laws of man's own mind, or the effects of his own mind, which he projects outside of himself and imagines to be due to some permanent and unalterable cause having an independent existence...

"To decorate our own guesses at nature's meaning with the name 'laws of nature' is a presumption due to our own feeble human nature, which we can forgive for demanding something more permanent than itself, but which also leads us to have such an exalted conceit of our own opinions as to hide from ourselves that it is these very opinions which we call nature's laws.

"The history of the past shows that once most philosophers, even atheists, thus regarded 'the laws of nature,' not as their own interpretations of her, but as something external to themselves, as entities partaking the attributes of Deity – entities which they deified in print with capital letters – as we sometimes do still, tho these 'laws' now are shorn of 'the glories of their birth and state' which they [R3049 : page 229] once wore, and are not turning out to be, 'substantial things.'

"But are there not really things (like the fact of gravitation, for instance) external to ourselves, which would exist whether we were here or not, and which are part of the order of nature? Apparently, yes, – but part of the *laws* of nature, no!

"The present generation has begun, if not to be modest or humble, to be somewhat less arrogant in the assumption of its knowledge. We are perhaps beginning to understand, not in a purely poetical sense, but in a very real one, that there may be all around us, in heaven and earth, things beyond measure, of which 'philosophy' not only knows nothing, but has not dreamed.

"As a consequence of this, there is growing to be an unspoken, rather than clearly formulated, admission that we know little of the *order* of nature, and nothing at all of the *laws* of nature....

"Let us repeat, and repeat once more, that tho nature be external to ourselves, the so-called 'laws of nature' are from within – laws of our own minds – and a simple product of our human nature. Let us agree that the scientific imagination can suggest questions to put to

nature, but not her answers. Let us read Bacon again, and agree with him that we understand only what we have observed. Finally, let us add that we never understand even that, in the fulness of its meaning; for remember that of all the so-called laws of nature the most constantly observed, and most intimately and personally known to us, are those of life and death – and how much do we know about the meaning of *them?*...

"The lesson for us is we must not consider that anything is absolutely settled or true."

Ah yes! Now we know that they know that they don't know. Believers alone know the knowable things, and all else they leave to the all wise One in whom they trust. "Thy Word is Truth," and it is scientific from the standpoint of The Divine Plan of the Ages and from no other standpoint.

### **"WITHOUT RELIGION MAN IS LOST."**

The Atheists of Berlin, a numerous body, are criticising the Kaiser for his pronounced religious tendencies and the publicity he is giving his views on the subject. They remind him that the ablest minds in Germany do not share his belief in a hereafter, that in proof of it the Berlinese are the least given to church attendance of any large city in the world, and that disbelief instead of hindering actually does more to advance the material well-being [R3050 : page 229] of the empire than Christianity has done or can do. The critics inveigh particularly against the royal pronouncement that a man whose life is not founded on religion is a lost man. This reasoning they contend belongs to the benighted centuries and is a reflection upon enlightened Germany of today. The address which has aroused this complaint was delivered last week in Posen. Here is the part objectionable to infidelity: "The German empire to-day is rooted in simplicity and fear of God. I look to all, priests and laymen, to help me uphold religion among the people, in its health and strength. This applies equally to the two creeds, Catholic and Protestant.

"It is with pride and joy that I am able to tell you that the pope said to my special ambassador who went to Rome on the occasion of the Holy Father's jubilee that he had always had a high opinion of the piety of the Germans, and especially of that of the German army. The pope asked my ambassador to tell his sovereign that the one country in Europe where order and discipline still prevailed, with respect for authority and regard for the church, and where the church could live, was the German Empire, and for that the Papal See was indebted to the German Emperor.

"This justifies me in saying that our two great creeds must, while living side by side, keep in view their one great aim – to uphold and strengthen the fear of God and reverence for religion. Whether we are 'moderns' or whether we labor in this or that field, does not matter at all. He who does not found his life on religion is a lost man. I rejoice that I have placed my whole empire, my people and my army, as well as myself and my house, beneath the Cross and under the protection of Him who said, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.'"

We are living in a peculiar time in more respects than one. While the whole "religious world" is losing its faith in the Bible and accepting instead a belief in Evolution; – that Nature is our god which made us and is evolving us into higher conditions by some kind of "Laws of Nature" – and while doubt is growing respecting a personal Creator or any interest he takes in mankind; – at the same time each skeptical person seems more anxious than ever that the common people should maintain their respect for "religion." They care little what kind of religion – good or bad – so long as it has some fear, some terrors, connected with it that will restrain the common people. They realize that if the latter ever get to see matters in the same skeptical light in which the wealthy and educated view them it would mean a death knell to the *present* order of things social, political, financial and ecclesiastical. They want no change; realizing that any possible change would surely be to the detriment of their "interests."



The Kaiser is one of the world's wise men; and it is for this reason that he throws his influence more and more toward Papacy which, he realizes, will hold its influence upon the "common people" longer than will Protestantism; because it has a firm grasp upon the reason and intellect of its votaries. This disposition is a growing one: Patronize every religion that will maintain superstition.

We do not complain at this worldly wisdom, believing, as we have frequently stated, that the worst form of government is better than anarchy, and that even gross superstition has points of advantage over scoffing atheism. It is for this reason that we seek to avoid setting free with the truth those who would use their liberty as a license for evil doing.

But in this general tendency we foresee some of our coming tribulations. As the Pharisees and rulers and Doctors of Law, in the harvest of the Jewish Age, were "grieved that they taught the people" and fearful that the truth would lead to dire calamities upon their nation, so we apprehend it will ere long be in this harvest of the Gospel Age. Not only will the nominal Church preachers feel jealous that their flocks should understand the Bible better than themselves, but civil rulers, public men, legislators, etc., [R3050 : page 230] will sympathize with and assist in suppressing anything that would "unsettle the faith" of Christendom.

Poor fellows! they do not realize that the people generally have almost no faith to unsettle; and that the vast majority are too indifferent to heed and search for and thus obtain the truth and too weak-kneed to stand up for it if they did see it. Nor do they know, as we do, that the Lord has so arranged it that – "None of the wicked shall understand but the wise shall understand." – Dan. 12:10.

## HIGHER CRITICISM INFIDELITY REACHING THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Having conquered the college professors and through them the ministry, during the last twenty-five years, this latest form of Infidelity has permeated denominational literature and public school text books, and now the question is how to deal it out in the Sunday Schools *wisely; i.e.* how to insidiously introduce it to the young so as not to shock them and lead them to a total repudiation of Churchianity and all else built upon the Bible, and so as not to shock any of the parents who may still be "old-fogy" believers in the Bible's divine authorship. The ideas of one prominent in the preparation of the "sincere milk of the Word:"

Rev. A. E. Dunning, D.D., editor of The Congregationalist and one of the International Committee on the Sunday school lessons, describes the situation as follows:

"A widening chasm divides the teaching of the Bible in schools and colleges from its teaching in many Sunday schools. The accepted principles of the development of life and of the growth of literature, as taught in public schools, are being contradicted in Sunday schools, in the effort to defend theories of the creation of the universe and of the composition of the Bible which are contrary to known laws of the evolution of nature and of literature. The consequences of such opposing teachings are not difficult to predict.

"The main conclusions of Biblical criticism are now accepted with practical unanimity by all scholars who have given attention to them. They have been reached by patient investigation, and have displaced traditional theories among educated people.

Zion's Watch Tower cheerfully takes its place amongst the uneducated who refuse to accept the guesses, philosophies and conclusions of "science falsely so called" in contradiction to the testimony of "holy men of old who spoke and wrote as they were

moved by the holy spirit," – the Bible. All of Satan's attacks of the past have been weak and puerile as compared with this one, – this deflection, or revolution, rather, inside the ranks of those professing loyalty to God and the Bible. Our expectation is that it will spread with amazing rapidity, and constitute a part of the sifting of wheat from tares and chaff. And many will be surprised at the results unless forewarned by the voice of the Lord through his Word, that – "A thousand shall fall at thy side, ten thousand at thy right hand." – Psa. 91:7.

