

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER.
THE CHURCH AS THE MAKER OF THE WORLD'S
CONSCIENCE.

THIS TOPIC is treated in a manner with which we sympathize but do not agree, by Rev. S. Z. Batten, in an article in the American Journal of Sociology. He asserts that money and military glory are the "false ideals" before the world, and inquires whether or not the Church has really spoken out against either of these. He thinks not and proceeds: –

"In church and college, in society and in the press, rich men are honored and flattered and held up as models to be adored and imitated. The influence of all this, as any one can see, is to degrade the common morals; it is to set up a false ideal of life; it is to fire the imagination of the young with unholy and unworthy ambitions; it is to cast discredit on the poorer and humbler workers in the kingdom of God. Every careful student of modern society declares that the reign of commercialism has come, and with the reign of this commercialism there has come a sad confusion of moral values. This commercialism places money above life, and things before men. 'Our whole society,' says Felix Adler, 'is infiltrated with the money-getting idea.' There is danger lest a commercialism utterly destitute of moral and spiritual conceptions shall usurp the place which should be held by truer and Christlier ideals....

"Closely akin to this is another false ideal which is set up before the people for honor and imitation. As every one knows, the military ideal has held sway for untold ages over the minds and hearts of men, and the great men of history are largely military leaders and conquerors. How far militarism is necessary in an imperfect and evolving society it does not concern us here to inquire. The military captain no doubt has had his work to do in the world, and let him have

his wreath of laurel leaves. But the military ideal, it is needless to say, is not the Christian ideal, and the two can never be completely harmonized."

Mr. Batten considers it the Church's duty to quicken the political conscience of the world; and considers it a dangerous sign that people have ceased to expect unselfishness in politics. He continues: –

"As every one knows, a double standard of morality prevails, and men have one kind of right for their personal and family lives, and a different kind of right for their political and commercial lives. All such things as sentiment, conscience and love are ruled out of politics, and we are told that the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount have nothing to do with a political campaign....The chancellor of the German empire has lately declared: 'I can not conduct foreign policy from the point of view of pure moral philosophy. It is not ours to ask what is right and what is wrong. The politician is no judge of morals; he has solely to maintain the interests and rights of his country.' Another man, not himself a practical politician, but a political philosopher, Professor Willoughby, declares: 'It is, in fact, quite superfluous to show in this age that from their own inherent nature divine and moral sanctions can have no application to political matters.' So long as such sentiments prevail in high places, it is not surprising that they should appear in low places. And so long as such sentiments prevail, whether in high places or in low, that long the church of Jesus Christ will have a most fiery and relentless mission."

Inquiring into the church's attitude on social questions, he declares that "in our time the power of Christianity is to be proved by its ability to create a Christian type of human society," and adds: –

"It is intolerable to all right religion that numbers of people should be miserable and needy while there is plenty to spare in the Father's house. No one who believes in Jesus Christ can believe that it is the will of the heavenly Father that one part of the human family shall go hungry and destitute while another part is living in luxury and ease.

The most tragic fact about this poverty and ignorance is not the hunger [R3112 : page 356] and suffering, though these are sad enough. The saddest feature about it all is the waste of human life, the fact that the wonderful possibilities in these human brothers are never unfolded and realized. A social and industrial system in which one man controls thousands of lives and is possessed of millions of money; in which able-bodied men willing to work walk the streets in desperation looking for a job; in which thousands of women, owing to oppressive labor and small remuneration, are under a continual temptation to barter womanhood for gain; in which are tenements not fit for pig-sties where women fight with fever, and infants pant for air and wail out their little lives; in which the sweater's den and the grog-shop thrive – such a society is very far, indeed, from that order which God wishes and ordains."

To the query, Isn't this a hazardous topic? he replies: –

"That may be; but hazardous to whom? To the preacher? All the real hazard to him arises from the fact that he is faithless to his trust. To the hearers? Would to God it were more hazardous to those who are guilty of the monstrous wrongs which hurt their fellows and hinder the kingdom of God!...

"The mission of the church is evident; the church's credentials are clear; the need of the world is great. Nothing could be more weak and pitiful than for the churches to confess that whole provinces of life lie beyond their interest. Nothing could be more cruel and cowardly than for the churches to say that they have no word to offer on the problems which make the peril and the opportunity of our time. Nothing could be more calamitous and short-sighted than for the churches to leave to outsiders, to unbelievers often, the discussion of current wrongs and the leadership in moral reform."

THE GENTLEMAN'S WRONG VIEW-POINT.

We admire Mr. Batten's zeal and courage for the right, but discern that, like many more, he is in trouble by reason of a misconception of the divine plan of the ages and the Church's mission thereunder.

The Church should, indeed, "lift up a standard for the people," the world; – in her pulpits, in her press, and in the "living epistles" of her people. But she is not to blame that the world in general will not follow her precepts and example. Did our Lord himself or his apostles transform politics? or reconstruct society? or abolish wars and injustices in their day? Assuredly not. Unsatisfactory as is the condition of things at present it was much worse for the poor "groaning creation" then. (Rom. 8:22.) Were our Lord and the apostles at fault then? By no means. Neither is the Church to blame that present conditions are what they are.

But perhaps Rev. Batten would reply: The conditions now are different from what they were in the days of the apostles; – now we have what we call the "Christian World" of Europe and America and in these lands of "Christendom"; surely we should expect Christian methods in politics, finance and society.

What folly, dear brother! Is it possible for us to deceive ourselves into thinking that the world is Christianized? Is it possible for us even to consider that the professed church-membership is Christianized? Surely the term *Christian* world is as much a misnomer as the term *Christian* Scientist. Calling worldliness Christianity no more makes it so than calling black white would change it.

The Church "whose names are written in heaven" consists *only* of those who have the spirit, mind, will, disposition of their Lord and Master, their Redeemer. These, today as ever, are but a "little flock" as compared to even the nominal church, and are scattered here and there throughout the sects, whose Babylonish, worldly, fleshly spirit troubles them, but whose wine of false doctrine deceives them. (Rev.

14:8; 17:2; 18:3.) Wherever they are, they are striving after and more and more attaining to the high ideals of their Teacher, whose word they hear, reverence and follow. During the absence of the Chief Shepherd the flock has become greatly scattered by "wolves," and misled by "goats" into various [R3113 : page 356] sectarian pens, where the wolf and goat influences are very unfavorable and trying to them; but they still remain sheep and still listen for the Shepherd's voice.

We are living now in the day of the Shepherd's return; – he is calling his sheep not into a different pen and bondage, but to Christian freedom, with himself. And they are hearing his voice, "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.) As at his first advent he gathered the Israelites indeed out of the Fleshly House, so now he will gather the same class out of the nominal Spiritual House. Then will his Kingdom come and his faithful have a share in it with their Lord.

Then, the social and moral and religious and political and financial standards of the world will be in their hands (I Cor. 6:2); with full power and authority to execute justice and judgment, and to lift up the poor and the needy, and him that hath no helper under the present regime of selfishness. But now, the true Church does not rule the world, but is an insignificant minority, charged by their Master to learn lessons in meekness, patience, faith and character-likeness to himself and merely to let their "light" shine before men whom they are forewarned they will be unable to influence to any appreciable extent; – because the darkness hateth the light and will refuse to be scattered by their tiny lamps, and will flee only when the Lord and his glorious Kingdom shall shine forth as the Sun of Righteousness. [R3113 : page 357]

The Church indeed is to have as correct standards as possible now, and to display these before the world. They have already modified and do continually modify the world's conscience and

standards; but they cannot *transform* them. The few who are transformed become soldiers of the cross; – "not of the world" even as their Master was not of the world.

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As for the world, it is probably no worse at heart than it has ever been; but it has greater opportunities than ever for exercising its selfishness: moreover the world is probably more sincere, more candid, less hypocritical than of yore, and with a greater freedom each encourages the other to speak and act more nearly out of the abundance of the heart than formerly. This, however, it cannot be denied is dangerous under present conditions. Full liberty is sure to be more or less dangerous to all except saints, – the true Church – and even they must keep constant guard, and realize that they are not their own – that they have given up their liberty to the Lord and become his bond-servants, at liberty only to do what he approves.

OURS A HIGHER STANDARD.

The Lord's people are not to forget that while they should live up to the spirit of the world's best laws, they may go much farther than these in many respects. These laws represent the world's ideals as respects justice and generosity and kindness and unkindness; and frequently fall far short of the Lord's standards. It is not enough, therefore, that we keep within the laws of man: it is for the true members of Christ to "lift up a standard for the people" – God's standard, the Golden Rule.

In morals, too, the Lord's people are not to measure themselves by the world's standards; but to remember that it is their duty as exponents of the divine standards to discern sin and meanness and selfishness in the bright light of the spirit of the Truth and to measure up to that as nearly as their imperfect bodies and their environment, with the Lord's grace assisting, will permit.

SEES INDUSTRIAL WAR JUST AHEAD.

Dr. E. G. Hirsch sees in the struggle between the rich and powerful of America and the dependent classes the same conditions that existed in France just prior to the French Revolution. In a sermon delivered last night at Temple Israel, treating on the situation in the anthracite coal region of Pennsylvania, he sounded a note of warning to the "men who so audaciously declare that the treasures of the earth are by unquestionable right their own, to have and to hold against all mankind."

Today he reiterated the statements of the sermon.

"Our religion teaches," he said, "that a man's property is not his own, but is merely held by him in trust for the benefit of all. The powerful of earth should realize that we are in the midst of the same conditions that existed in France and which brought on the Revolution.

"The rich and powerful classes in France refused to take warning from what was going on about them and relied upon the power which they fancied they had. The Revolution came like the eruption of a volcano, and we in America should take warning.

"The earth belongs to God and not to individual men. Therefore whatever man produces should be administered to the benefit of all and not for that of the selfish few.

"The proper social condition is not one where men crush down the multitudes and disregard their claims upon their consideration, but where wealth is so distributed and organized that social well-being is within the reach of all honest and virtuous men.

"Right now we are standing over a volcano which may burst forth with all the fury of Pelee. The security of the men who despise the downtrodden burden-bearers is a fancied security.

"In times past the police and military forces of the country have been willing to protect them. They forget that these forces are drawn from the very ranks of the people they are oppressing, and that their sympathies are naturally with their own people. Therefore if they continue to disregard the wishes of the people and to fling insults at them the time will come when their calls for protection will fall upon unheeding ears.

"It is a saddening thought that a 'captain of industry' could become so inflated with his own arrogance as to lay God-given claim to his holdings upon the earth. Such a man is but fanning the smoldering embers of hate, discontent and unrest, so that the prosperity for which he hopes will pay the penalty. If they are temporarily successful in their oppression they must expect the discontent and hatred of the conquered to continue to rankle and to burst forth anew as soon as the oppressed have rested and recruited their strength.

– *Chicago American.*

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