

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER.
ARGUING FOR DENOMINATIONAL UNION.

AT a meeting held in Washington City not long since, to favor the union of Methodist Protestants, Congregationalists and United Brethren, one of the speakers said: –

"Lutherans are divided into 16 different bodies, Baptists into 13, Presbyterians into 20 and Methodists into 17. Who is wise enough to show us how and to what extent the Kingdom of God is being profited by all these divisions? Does Presbyterianism have 20 and Methodism 17 different messages to the world? How ridiculous the thought of having 16 varieties of Lutherans and 16 Baptists in the same town or mission field. The fact is we are over-organized. Our machinery is too ponderous and complex. It requires so much energy and money to keep it going that we have but little to use beyond the machinery itself. Just think of the missionary and church extension organizations, of the publishing plants, colleges, theological seminaries and the great number and variety of other benevolent institutions which are fairly piled upon each other! No wonder there is friction and great waste. Nor need we be surprised that level-headed laymen are getting tired of seeing their money wasted and are beginning to seek a remedy.

"Away with the delusion that the God of all wisdom and grace has planned for the continued existence of these ecclesiastical divisions and sub-divisions, with 100 more that might be named, whose presence cannot be explained on any rational grounds or in harmony with the spirit of the gospel.

"Mere federation will not accomplish what we want. We must go further. The call of God at this hour to husband our resources and to

unify our forces, to the end that we may conquer and win, is loud and clear.

"How humiliating the thought that very much of the money raised in this country ostensibly to save the heathen is spent in keeping up ecclesiastical distinctions and consequently the most shameful rivalries. Why should a town of only a few hundred people be burdened with a half dozen churches, when two at most would answer every purpose? Yet we have scores and hundreds of such over churching towns. Christian work, so called, degenerates into a mere scramble for existence.

"In concentration we will find a solution of many of the problems which confront and annoy us; and this centralization is impossible where a multiplicity of similar organizations exist. It is a sin to waste God's money in duplicating agencies, and yet this is being done all the time."

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It seems remarkable that some of the most earnest and intelligent Christian people in all denominations are so misled by the present cry of denominational union. The majority seem to be entirely blind to the real issues: they are all carried off their feet mentally with enthusiasm for a united Church. They fail to see that such a union must be disadvantageous along the lines proposed, namely, the ignoring of doctrine, the ignoring of conscience, the ignoring of truth. In the union of Christendom which prevailed for over a thousand years before the Reformation, the basis of union was false doctrine supported by tyranny and force, persecution and fire. The Reformation movement was a breaking up of those evil influences, and practically every denomination into which Christendom split represented further endeavor to get to the truths taught in the Lord's Word. The union or federation of all denominations now proposed is to be one in which not only false doctrines will be considerably ignored, but also the true doctrines of the Lord's Word. Among those

to be retained as fundamental will be some of the gross errors that dominated Papacy during the Dark Ages, and much of the Reformation blessing will be entirely lost.

The union of the true Church is amply provided for in the Scriptures without any outside patent fastenings, bolts, rivets, cords, etc. The Scriptural proposition is that the Lord's people, instead of being united to him by sects and parties called "branches," **[R3426 : page 276]** should be united to him individually – as individual branches. As he declares in his Word, "I am the true vine, ye [individually] are the branches." As the Reformation led to the splitting off from Papacy and its errors various large composite branches or denominations, so we need still further reformation that will split every sect up into individual units, so that each individual Christian will have his own individual faith and his own personal relationship to the Lord as a "branch." Union of denominations, instead of favoring this proper condition which the Lord designed for his people, will be in opposition to it. But the true people of God will gradually be guided of him and separated from the Babylonian bundles, leaving therein only the tares. Thus the separation of this harvest time is progressing.

The tare element in the nominal Church sees matters only from the worldly natural standpoint and hence, influenced by pride, etc., favors size and bulk rather than truth. The Lord is taking advantage of their worldly spirit and favoring their organization, that the gulf between the tares and wheat may daily, monthly, yearly become more marked. Meantime through the Truth and its various mouthpieces and ministers the Lord is calling the attention of the true saints to the bright shining of his glorious plan, now visible as never before; and as they perceive it and compare it with their surroundings in Babylon, it becomes to them the voice of God saying to them, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers **[R3427 : page 276]** of her sins and receive not of her plagues."

More and more, as the present "harvest" draws to its close, the uniting of the tares will progress and the liberty of the wheat will likewise progress: "Whom the Son makes free is free indeed." The wheat will more and more give heed to the words of the Apostle, "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

But while the wheat class are to be thus free, are not to be bundled like the tares, there will be, nevertheless, among them a union, not of bondage and creeds and disciplines, etc., but a union of hearts, accomplished by and through the Truth. Each one of this class, being united as a branch to the vine, will thus have a relationship to every other branch in the vine. This is the true union which the Lord desires amongst his people – union in Christ. Those thus united to the Head are his members or branches, and as they come to realize this relationship they will discern that they are not Lutherans, nor Calvinists, nor Russellites, nor Wesleyans, nor Campbellites, but are all one in Christ Jesus.

The secret of this individual liberty, individual faith, individual responsibility toward the Lord, yet complete union with all who are his, is found in the fact that these are all "taught of God," taught of his Word, guided by his Spirit. We do not by this mean that the teaching element in the Church is to be ignored, of which the Apostle declares, "He that is of God heareth us," and again, God hath set in the body the various members as it has pleased him, pastors, teachers, evangelists, etc. The point to be kept in mind is that evangelists, teachers, apostles are not to be given in our minds the place that belongs to the Lord, but at very most are to be esteemed as his servants and mouthpieces, and as such are to be critically examined by each believer to see that the teachings are in harmony with those of the Lord and the Apostles – "If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." Thus the true saints are all to be taught of God in that they will lovingly and critically examine every teaching and every teacher in the light of the divine message.

This is the union which the saints should desire and which the Lord is gradually accomplishing amongst his people, the wheat, while outward union is being favored by him as a means of separating the tares from the wheat.

BISHOP FOSTER TOO OLD FOGY.

Bishop Foster of the Methodist Episcopal Church has been dropped from the lists – superannuated. The gentleman took a too pessimistic view of Methodist progress. His views are lightly dismissed as childish and old fogy. Our readers can judge of these matters for themselves and form their own opinions. The Bishop's views, as expressed by himself and published in the *Methodist Journal*, are as follows: –

The Church of God is to-day courting the world. Its members are trying to bring it down to the level of the ungodly. The ball, the theatre, nude and lewd art, social luxuries, with all their loose moralities, are making inroads into the sacred enclosure of the Church; and as a satisfaction for all this worldliness, Christians are making a great deal of Lent and Easter and Good Friday and Church ornamentations. It is the old trick of Satan. The Jewish Church struck on that rock, the Romish Church was wrecked on the same, and the Protestant Church is fast reaching the same doom.

Our great dangers, as we see them, are assimilation to the world, neglect of the poor, substitution of the form for the fact of godliness, abandonment of discipline, a hireling ministry, an impure gospel, which, summed up, is a fashionable church. That Methodists should be liable to such an outcome, and that there should be signs of it in a hundred years from the "sail loft," seems almost the miracle of history; but who that looks about him to-day can fail to see the fact?

Do not Methodists, in violation of God's Word [R3427 : page 277] and their own discipline, dress as extravagantly and as fashionably as any other class? Do not the ladies, and often the wives

and daughters of the ministry, put on "gold and pearls and costly array?" Would not the plain dress insisted upon by John Wesley, Bishop Asbury and worn by Hester Ann Rogers, Lady Huntingdon and many others equally distinguished, be now regarded in Methodist circles as fanaticism? Can any one going into the Methodist Church in any of our chief cities distinguish the attire of the communicants from that of the theatre and ball-goers? Is not worldliness seen in the music? Elaborately dressed and ornamented choirs, who in many cases make no profession of religion and are often sneering skeptics, go through a cold, artistic or operatic performance, which is as much in harmony with spiritual worship as an opera or theater. Under such worldly performance spirituality is frozen to death.

Formerly every Methodist attended class and gave testimony of experimental religion. Now the class meeting is attended by very few, and is in many churches abandoned. Seldom the stewards, trustees and leaders of the church attend class. Formerly nearly every Methodist prayed, testified or exhorted in prayer-meeting. Now but very few are heard. Formerly shouts and praises were heard; now such demonstrations of holy enthusiasm and joy are regarded as fanaticism.

Worldly socials, fairs, festivals, concerts and such like have taken the place of the religious gatherings, revival meetings, class and prayer meetings of earlier days.

How true that the Methodist discipline is a dead letter. Its rules forbid the wearing of gold or pearls or costly array; yet no one ever thinks of disciplining its members for violating them. They forbid the reading of such books and the taking of such diversions as do not minister to godliness, yet the church itself goes to shows and frolics and festivals and fairs, which destroy the spiritual life of the young as well as of the old. The extent to which this is now carried on is appalling. The spiritual death it carries in its train will only be known when the millions it has swept into hell stand before the judgment.

The early Methodist ministers went forth to sacrifice and suffer for Christ. They sought not places of ease and affluence, but of privation and suffering. They gloried not in their big salaries, fine parsonages and refined congregations, but in the souls that had been won for Jesus. Oh, how changed! A hireling ministry will be a feeble, a timid, a truckling, a time-serving ministry, without faith, endurance and holy power. Methodism formerly dealt in the great central truth. Now the pulpits deal largely in generalities and in popular lectures. The glorious doctrine of entire sanctification is rarely heard and seldom witnessed in the pulpits."

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As respects the Methodist Church, past and present, we are inclined to concede much of what the Bishop presents as truth and not as childishness. We are inclined to think that higher criticism and evolution theories, etc., have turned the minds of the Methodist leaders as well as of the leaders in other denominations, so that they take a more worldly view of all affairs of life than was customary in the past. We are not by this meaning to say that Methodists and others are less moral or less benevolent than in former times, but we do incline to say that they and others of our day have less faith in God, less faith in his Word, less faith in Jesus and the merit of his precious blood for the forgiveness of sins, and less consecration to his service than in times past.

The great sifting, the separating work of this harvest time, is in progress: the tare class of nominal Christians are being separated from the sincere and consecrated wheat class. The latter will be found largely in the minority and will be considered "old fogy," and their faith and hopes will be greatly at a discount in the nominal system, but at a premium in the Lord's estimation. The Lord is gathering out his jewels and will leave none of them in Babylon. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and receive not of her plagues."

The Bride of Christ, the true members of the great High Priest, are not falling away in this time of general worldliness, unbelief, skepticism and forms of godliness without the power, but are growing in grace, growing in knowledge, growing in love and in the fruits of the Spirit. The difficulty with the world is that they see the nominal Christians and see not the true Church: "The world knoweth us not because it knew him not."

MISLEADING THE YOUNG TO HATE GOD.

Before us is an advertisement of "Books for Children and Young Persons – Book 10, THE SIGHT OF HELL," by Rev. J. Furniss, C.S.S.R., published by J. Duffy & Co., Dublin, Ireland. The advertisement gives two extracts which we reproduce below with a deep sense of shame that in this twentieth century and under the British flag there should be people to publish and others to buy and circulate such terrible, blasphemous misrepresentations of divine providence. How we long for the binding of Satan and the opening of the eyes of human understanding promised in the Millennium. Surely, when some of the poor, deluded ones come forth from the tomb they will rejoice to know the true God and to participate in his glorious plan of salvation at present understood by so few. The extract from page 19 reads thus: –

THE RED HOT FLOOR.

"Look into this room. What a dreadful place it is! The roof is red-hot, the walls are red-hot, the floor is like a thick sheet of red-hot iron. See, on the middle of that red-hot floor stands a girl! She looks about sixteen years old. Her feet are bare. She has neither shoes nor stockings on her feet; her bare feet stand on the red-hot burning floor. The door of this [R3428 : page 278] room has never been opened since she first set her foot on the red-hot floor. Now she sees that the door is opening. She rushes forward. She has gone down on her knees on the red-hot floor. Listen! she speaks. She says: 'I have been standing with my bare feet on this red-hot floor for years. Day and

night my only standing place has been this red-hot floor. Sleep never came on me for a moment that I might forget the horrible burning floor. Look, she says, at my burnt and bleeding feet! Let me go off this burning floor for one single moment, only for one single, short moment! Oh, that in this endless eternity of years I might forget the pain only for a single moment!

"The devil answers her question: 'Do you ask,' he says, 'for a moment; for one moment to forget your pain? No, not for one single moment during the never-ending eternity of years shall you ever leave this red-hot floor!'

"'Is it so,' the girl says with a sigh that seems to break her heart, 'Then, at least let somebody go to my little brothers and sisters who are alive and tell them not to do the bad things which I did, so they will never have to come and stand on the red-hot floor.'

"The devil answers her again: 'Your little brothers and sisters have the priests to tell them these things. If they will not listen to the priests, neither would they listen even if somebody should go to them from the dead.'

"Oh, that you could hear the horrible, the fearful scream of that girl when she saw the door shutting, never to be opened any more. The history of this girl is short. Her feet first led her into sin, so it is her feet most of all which are tormented. While yet a very little child she began to go into bad company. The more she grew up, the more she went into bad company, against the bidding of her parents. She used to walk about the streets at night and do very wicked things. She died early. Her death was brought on by the bad life she led."

THE RED-HOT OVEN.

"See! it is a pitiful sight. The little child is in this red-hot oven. Hear how it screams to come out! See how it turns and twists itself

about in the fire! It beats its head against the roof of the oven. It stamps its little feet on the floor of the oven. You can see on the face of this little child what you can see on the faces of all in hell – despair, desperate and horrible! ...God was very good to this child." (!!!)

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To know that such things are believed and taught today helps us to comprehend that once they were almost the exclusive teachings of Europe; – helps us, too, to understand that people who held such erroneous ideas of God's arrangements could and did prepare similarly diabolical tortures for those who differed with them, and might do the same again if circumstances favored it. It is difficult for humanity to rise in conduct above its conception of God and his conduct.

DEFIED GOD AND FELL DEAD.

Baltimore, Aug. 20. – Consternation reigns in the little town of Allen, in Southern Maryland, over the strange death of Walter H. Whitney, a pronounced atheist, but one of the most popular residents of the place. On Sunday night Whitney was conversing with some friends, when he suddenly exclaimed: "I defy the Almighty to strike me dead!" Instantly Whitney fell to the floor, and when those about him picked him up he was dead.

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Not long since we called attention to the case of a young man whose challenge that if there be a God he might be assured of it by being stricken deaf and dumb. He was stricken instantly and is reported to have recovered about a month later. The above is on the same line. The clipping was handed us during the Boston Convention, and we read it to the large audience as an illustration of divine judgments in execution, and the awe and obedience they would quickly inspire throughout the world.

Imagine the Millennial reign inaugurated, with its prompt rewards for right doing and prompt and just punishments for wilful sins, and we can see that a wonderful change in the morals of the world would speedily be effected. Such will be the *judgments* of that thousand year judgment day. "When the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."

Of course, the death of the young man mentioned in this dispatch is not to be considered lasting death or Second Death, because he was really ignorant and showed it. Undoubtedly he will be awakened during the Millennial day of judgments, and be granted a clear knowledge of the Lord before he could be liable to the final penalty – the extreme penalty – "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" – the Second Death, from which there is no hope of recovery.

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