

## **VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER.**

### **REV. E. L. EATON, D.D., ON THE CHURCH OF TODAY**

WE feel a keen interest in Dr. Eaton, with whom, it will be remembered, we had a friendly debate about two years ago. We keep hoping to note some influence from our Scriptural arguments showing that not the reformation and conversion of the world is the Lord's program for this Gospel age, but rather the selection or election of a "little flock," the Church, the Royal Priesthood, through whom under Jesus their High Priest all the world shall be mentally, morally and physically assisted out of present degradation and death conditions to life-everlasting privileges.

We see little sign that Dr. Eaton has fully accepted our position, but in a recent sermon he seemed to have a clear view of *the nominal church*, as separate and distinct from the true Church composed only of "*the few precious and godly men and women that can be found in all churches*," so that we may not yet abandon hope for a further opening of the eyes of his understanding. He certainly cannot hope that the nominal mass of "Christendom" can ever "save the world" to any higher standard than its own. Yet here are his own words describing Churchianity, exactly reproduced: —

"What is the exact state of the Church? I do not mean North Avenue church. I do not mean the few precious and godly men and women that can be found in all churches. I mean the entire Christian establishment in these United States. What is its condition to-day? From what I have seen during the last dozen years, and from what I constantly read, I am persuaded that the Church, with all its wealth and culture and prestige, is not leading the procession. It is not advancing as fast as our population is advancing. It is in a state of moral dearth, a spiritual dry-rot prevails all too generally. It is not winning the unsaved in great numbers. It has not seen a sweeping

revival in thirty years. Its ministry – probably more than half of them – are willing to admit that the days of revivals are past, and that our only hope now is to try to save the children; that there is not power enough in the Church, the preaching, nor in the Gospel to save a grown-up sinner any more. We are not looking for great and all-inundating revivals as of yore.

"The Church has generally become a social club, so nice and respectable and so fine that the poor do not feel at home in it, and the working men have turned their backs upon it almost from one end of the country to the other. And, next to the quarter of a million of America's licensed saloons, the saddest fact in America to-day is the alienation of the poor and the laboring classes from the Church! The climax of the catalogue of Gospel blessings which our Lord sent to John the Baptist in prison to comfort his sore heart was "To the poor the Gospel is preached!" But the Church is not reaching the poor, nor the rich in great numbers, not the submerged one-tenth, nor the criminals, nor the fast young men and women that swarm in saloons and club rooms, crowding them to suffocation these Sunday afternoons and nights. **[R3584 : page 195]**

"But this state of things does not greatly disturb the Church. The majority of it is satisfied, apathetic, indifferent. It has not moral earnestness nor spiritual vim enough to attend Church, if at all, but once a day on Sunday, and prayer-meetings never. It has no testimony except a daily life that is exactly on the plane of the world. It has not fervency. It is cold. Its sentiments upon every question of morals is exactly the sentiment of the world about it. Its Bible is the daily newspapers. Its Sunday reading is the Sunday press. It is not looking for a revival. It does not want one. It don't enjoy that kind of entertainment. It prefers generally to spend its long winter evenings in the theatre. It prefers to see the half-dressed ballet dancers than to witness the wrestling of a lost soul at the altar of the Church. It prefers opera music to the song of Moses and the Lamb, and wants it brought into the Church on Sundays to crowd out the old fervent soul-stirring

melodies that used to take our fathers and mothers by the hand and lead them up to the very gates of glory. That is the mental and moral state of the Church as it is represented by more than half of its members to-day. Revivals! The last thing on earth that it is thinking of, looking for, or desiring.

"But this is not all. The Church has not seriously attacked a moral reform in forty years! The social evil is spreading beyond anything ever before known. The Lord's day is desecrated until in some parts of the country it is entirely wiped out. Civic crime and municipal corruption are engulfing our cities, until every great city in this country is a cess-pool of political rottenness and crime. And the increase of saloons, drink and drunkenness for the past thirty years is appalling and phenomenal. Yet with all this, the Church utterly disclaims any responsibility, and is either indifferent or utterly unwilling to raise a protesting voice, or even to vote against it. Probably not five per cent. of the voting church will register its protest on next Tuesday against the saloon, which is the center, source, inspiration and procuring cause of seven-eighths of all this moral devastation and retrogression. The Church of Jesus Christ must wake up and **[R3584 : page 196]** attack these problems and lift this country *out of the stark heathenism toward which we are fast drifting*, as the early Church lifted the old Roman civilization out of its social wickedness and its national sins, or we are gone without hope and without remedy."

### **THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION – WILL OUR PRESBYTERIAN FRIENDS REPUDIATE IT?**

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, which met a few weeks ago at Winona Lake, Ind., discussed the overtures made by the presbytery of Nassau, L.I., to drop the Westminster confession of faith and substitute therefor the brief statement of the reformed faith. Between the conservatives and radicals there occurred a very lively discussion.

This was recently adopted by the General Assembly as a brief statement, but not as a creed of the Church, the old confession, known as the Westminster confession, which contains many doctrines that have caused sharp controversies between clergymen, being retained.

### **PLEADS FOR REFORM**

The Rev. Dr. Samuel T. Carter, New York City, last September sent an open letter to the presbytery at Nassau which attracted wide attention. He assailed certain doctrines "received by the Church, but not generally believed." The reading of the letter at the Presbyterian meeting at Oyster Bay precipitated a discussion over the statements it contained.

The controversy continued until the next meeting, held in December. It was believed that Dr. Carter might be tried for heresy, but after appearing before the presbytery at Nassau and making an eloquent appeal for the truth and the dropping of misstatements, however, time honored, he triumphed in that instead of trying him for heresy the presbytery voted to make overtures to the General Assembly to drop the Westminster confession.

### **DR. CARTER'S STATEMENT**

A statement has been given out by Dr. Carter, in which he says:

"The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church meets in the month of May. The presbytery of Nassau asks it to take the necessary steps towards dropping the Westminster confession and adopting the brief statement of the reformed faith, the simple and kindlier creed which has already been indorsed by the Church.

"The General Assembly can reject the petition more or less courteously. But can it afford to do so? It is important to rid the Church of bad creed, but still more important to dispel from the minds of men the gloomy ideas of religion which go with the old creeds and

most of all the dreadful dogma of endless torment which has caused such intense suffering.

### **CONDEMNS BEFORE BIRTH**

"The secular press has thus far treated the matter so courteously and sympathetically that I feel it to be a privilege to present my appeal before the public through it. The Westminster confession presents for the worship and allegiance of man a God who, according to the good pleasure of his will, has assigned millions of the human race to endless torment before they were born or had done good or ill.

"Of this number a large proportion died in infancy and committed no personal transgression. The whole heathen world formed another large company. By the teachings of the confession Homer and Virgil, Plato and Socrates, Cato and Antonius, Confucius and Gautama are at this moment roasting in the literal flames of hell fire and shall so burn forever and ever.

"Has the Presbyterian Church the face to make this declaration to men in this generation? The Westminster confession, in fact, says that God is a monster; modern theology says he is not. In this sentence lies the whole gist of the confession.

### **REJECTS GOD OF CONFESSION**

"Every fibre of my moral being rises up against this God who dishonors theology; with the utmost fervor in my soul I reject this God of the confession, and as fully as I reject this God, so gladly do I receive the God of the gospel, Jesus Christ.

"The father in the great parable, who runs forth to meet his wretched, but repenting son, falls upon his neck and kisses him. Sham theology is sure to make sham religion, and sham religion is sure to lead to the horrors of the Roman empire and the French revolution, to the eruption of the human volcano.

"It has been well said, 'Repelled light becomes lightning.' Of such a state of affairs as this, Martineau sadly says: 'Will not bad creed, then, be got rid of? Not a bit; and year after year thousands of clergymen will solemnly profess before tens of thousands of assenting people a creed which is false to the heart of them all.'

"This is what they are doing in the Presbyterian Church to-day. The General Assembly will do nothing so good as to make an end of it. It is more seriously important than sending missionaries to China. There is no use of sending truth abroad if we live a lie at home."

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