

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER.

A WALL STREET VIEW OF THE DECLINE OF FAITH

SOME striking editorials on the question of the decline of the belief in a future life have been appearing in recent issues of *The Wall Street Journal* (New York). From such a source the inquiry carries peculiar weight, especially to the type of mind which forms the majority in our commercial civilization. The articles in question, written by Mr. Sereno S. Pratt, the editor of that paper, expresses the "intense interest" of that journal "in the economic and political effects of any change in the thought, the habits and the lives of men." If there has been a decline in religious faith, Mr. Pratt asserts, that fact "alters the basic conditions of civilization," because a factor in the markets," "changes the standards and affects the values of things that are bought and sold," and "concerns the immediate interests of those who never had such a faith almost as much as it does the lives of those who have had the faith and lost it." Along this line Mr. Pratt continues:

"The question, therefore, of practical, immediate, and tremendous importance to Wall Street quite as much as to any other part of the world, is, Has there been a decline in the faith in the future life? and if so, to what extent is this responsible for the special phenomena of our time – the eager pursuit of sudden wealth, the shameless luxury and display, the gross and corrupting extravagance, 'the misuse of swollen fortunes,' the indifference to law, the growth of graft, the abuses of great corporate power, the social unrest, the spread of demagoguery, the advances of Socialism, the appeals to bitter class hatred? To find out what connection exists between a decadence in religious faith and the social unrest of our time, due, on one side, to oppressive use of financial power, and, on the other, to class agitation, might

well be worth an investigation by a commission of government experts, if it were possible for the Government to enter into such an undertaking."

Whatever may be a man's own personal beliefs, continues Mr. Pratt, "there is no one who would not prefer to do business with a person who really believes in a future life." If the world holds fewer men of such faith, it makes a big difference, and if faith is to continue to decline, this will require new adjustments. So the writer views the situation, adding these reflections:

"There are certainly, on the surface, many signs of such a decline. Perhaps, if it were possible to probe deeply into the subject, it might be found that faith still abounded, but is no longer expressed in the old way. But we are obliged to accept the surface indications. These include a falling off in Church attendance, the abandonment of family worship, the giving over of Sunday more and more to pleasure and labor, the separation of religious from secular education, under the stern demands of non-sectarianism, the growing up of a generation not instructed as our fathers were in the study of the Bible, the secularization of a portion of the Church itself, and its inability in a large way to gain the confidence of the laboring people. If these are really signs of a decay of religious faith, then indeed there is no more important problem before us than that of either discovering some adequate substitute for faith, or to take immediate steps to check a development which has within it the seeds of a national disaster."

The alternative of the "adequate substitute" does not recommend itself to the mind of Mr. Pratt, as may be seen from his view expressed in a more recent editorial, which deals with the materialism underneath both "the Socialism of Karl Marx and the financial concentration of which we may take that represented by E. H. Harriman as a type." Balancing the virtues of the two, Mr. Pratt sees in Socialism "the more attractive and impossible

program," while "financial concentration" he believes to be "the safer for the social order and civilization." In neither, however, is the remedy adequate to the ill. He concludes:

"The supreme need of the hour is not elastic currency, or sounder banking, or better protection against panics, or bigger navies, or more equitable tariffs, but a revival of faith, a return to a morality which recognizes a basis in religion and the establishment of a workable and working theory of life that views man [R3958 : page 84] as something more than a mere lump of matter."

– *Literary Digest*.

COMPARATIVE FAILURE OF CHRISTIANITY

BY REV. W. GALBRAITH

(The following is published by the Toronto (Ont.) Methodist Publishing House):

"It [Christianity] has fallen far short of its divine purposes and marvellous capabilities. What is the reason of this comparative failure?

"We answer, first, that in the days of Constantine it was baptized with the spirit of heathenism, and these foreign and enfeebling elements, transfused through the entire Christian system, grew upon it like a parasite for more than a thousand years, and are still a formidable obstacle to its progress and achievements. Heathen doctrines, usages and habits still linger to a greater or less degree in all branches of the Christian Church.

"We answer, secondly, that Christianity at this hour is largely baptized with the spirit of the world. Worldly maxims, methods and motives have invaded the heritage of Jesus. These are eating out its life, and obstructing all its efforts.

"Great and grievous wrongs are still rank and rampant in the Church and in the world. The Church, by her individual members, and in her collective capacity, is doing a great and glorious work for God and humanity, but, unhappily, mediaeval religion protrudes itself into the last quarter of this nineteenth century.

"Fashionable and formal churches are found everywhere. The heathenish system of caste grows in Christian lands. Expensive churches, with heavy debts, popular preaching, artistic music, wealth and self-indulgence, have invaded the fair heritage of God. Mission churches have become a necessity to meet the needs and the condition of the poor. If Christianity were in its normal state there would be no mission churches.

"Goodness would be recognized as the only basis of true brotherhood, and the rich and poor would meet together.

"Intense, inveterate, stereotyped selfishness is crushing and blighting the world. It is seen everywhere.

"You cannot enter a street car, railway coach, shop, mart or stock exchange, church or legislative hall, but selfishness manifests itself in forms which must be offensive to a righteous God, and in striking contrast with the spirit and teachings of Jesus Christ. It forms immense monopolies and combinations on the one hand to grasp the wealth of the world. It forms protective associations and strong unions on the other hand for self-protection and to resist those grinding monopolies and combinations. It is manifested at both sides of the counter. On the one side, the would-be buyer wants goods at less than a living price, and drives the vender to deception and lying advertisements. Human beings, like wild beasts, prey on each other...

"What is known as the "sweating system" in industrial life is a disgrace to humanity, and should not be tolerated in any

Christian land. Hard workers are often inadequately remunerated for faithful toil. Often on the other hand, the time is put in and wages demanded for work that was never performed. Paul's counsel to servants and masters (Eph. 6:5-9) ought to be placarded in every store, factory and workshop.

"Is pure Christianity, if rightly applied, competent to correct all these wrongs, and to bring society into loving, happy, righteous harmony? I have no hesitation in affirming that it is thoroughly competent for this work. It operates along two distinct, yet not conflicting lines – Gospel and law. The Gospel teaches what men ought to be, and how they ought to live. 'Provide things honest in the sight of all men.' 'Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.' 'Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.' 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets.'

"The Gospel provides the example we should follow. In spirit and life all men should be like Jesus Christ. They should transact business just as Christ would do if he were in their place. 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked.'

"The Gospel presents us with the highest motives to a merciful and righteous life. It offers as an inducement for obedience to its teachings, the highest, truest and most mature manhood here, and the fullest felicity and glory hereafter.

"The Gospel provides us with the necessary inspiration and power to live this life. In other systems of religion and philosophy, there is much excellent teaching, but there is no motive power. The strongest and best machinery is of no practical utility without an adequate power to put it in operation.

"All the proposed plans and schemes for the reformation of society, outside the Gospel, are utterly devoid of the necessary motive power. To expect them to transform society, correct its abuses and redress its wrongs, is to expect from the human what can only be effected by the divine."

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The writer of the foregoing sees something, evidently, – [R3959 : page 84] he sees that the *nominal* Church is not even approximating the divine standard. But he does not at all see the cause of the failure, for he proceeds to express post-millennial views – that the Church should convert the world! The trouble lies in the abandonment of the faith once delivered unto the saints respecting the second coming of Christ, the resurrection hope and the Kingdom then to bless the world. How strange that one could recognize the need of divine aid to overthrow the power of sin and death and Satan and yet expect this through humanity after 1800 years of trial and knowing that there are twice as many heathen today as there were a century ago.

HELL A FAILURE, A CLERGYMAN SAYS

St. Louis. – Fear as an incentive to righteous living has gone out of date, according to the Reverend Doctor Gifford, of Buffalo, who spoke before the Baptist Congress at the Second Baptist Church. He said: –

"Seventy-five years ago the preacher scared his listeners into obedience by opening back the creaking iron doors of an awful hell, where they saw the burning of the livid flesh. Then the motive was fear. Now if [R3959 : page 85] a preacher were to present such a picture his audience would sit and look at him with the same curiosity as they would examine an old dusty spinning wheel. There is not enough heat in hell to drive the machinery of foreign missions at the present time."

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Is it not quite apparent that the preaching of a burning hell of eternal torture for ninety-nine out of every hundred of our race is a matter of *policy*? Ministers seem to guide their conduct by expediency rather than by conscientious conviction. Their query seems to be, not What is the Truth on this great subject? but, What will my congregation approve? What will bring me popularity and another call at a better salary? What will increase the membership of my Church? Each seems to "look for gain from his own quarter." – Isa. 56:11.
