

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER
NOMINAL CHURCH DYING, SAYS DR. EATON

BRETHREN, I say to you this morning that the American Church is dying. It is dying! It is dying! Don't forget it! Ten years from now if I lie in my grave I would be willing to have you confront me at the judgment seat of God with that statement. By that statement I mean that Protestant Christianity is dying with marvelous rapidity."

So spoke Rev. Charles A. Eaton at the Euclid Avenue Baptist Church, Cleveland. This was his seventh anniversary sermon before this congregation and with passionate earnestness he strove to bring vividly before his hearers the effects of commercialism which he contends is sapping the religious life in the United States. He showed that churches, instead of gaining, were losing throughout the world.

Dr. Eaton's sermon on "The Impending Crisis in American Christianity" is, in part, as follows:

"Throughout the entire Christian world we are swiftly passing into a period of profound religious depression, amounting to almost complete failure on the part of the Church.

"In Italy the headquarters of the great Roman Catholic Church, one-third of the people at the very outside, are more or less nominal followers of the Church of Rome; another third, possibly, are more or less sympathetic toward the Church, because it is politically useful; while another third are out and out continually and completely antagonistic, apparently not only to the Church of Rome, but to all forms of Christianity. This is the

land where the Church of St. Peter has had an unbroken existence for nineteen centuries.

BRITAIN'S GREAT LOSSES

"You enter France – the same story is true, only aggravated and multiplied a thousand fold.

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"You enter Great Britain, which I consider to be the last citadel of Christianity in the world, with a people more robust and sane in their religious interests and sympathies than any other people. And what is the condition there? The other day Mr. Shakespeare, the great leader of our Baptist Church in England, appeared before the Baptist convention and delivered an address upon the arrested progress of British Christianity. That, he said, covered the whole field of all the churches, but especially, of course, with reference to the Baptists.

"He pointed out that the nonconformist churches of Great Britain last year not only made no progress, but met, according to their statistics, with an absolute loss of 18,000; that the Baptist Church of Great Britain last year not only made no progress but according to their published statistics lost 5,000 people.

AMERICAN CHURCH DWINDLING

"You cross to America. We have one man in this country who I believe is doing more to educate the American Church, to arouse us to a realization of our condition, than any other – I refer to Josiah Strong. Dr. Strong tells that if eighty represents the gain of our churches on the population during the first half of the nineteenth century, twenty represents that gain during the last half. Four represents that gain during the last twenty years, and one represents that gain during the last ten years.

"In the year 1905 there were nearly 7,000 Presbyterian, Congregationalist and Methodist churches that had not one single member unite with them in twelve months. In a recent year in New York city, according to the statement of Dr. Aked, of the Fifth Avenue Baptist Church, 335 Protestant churches reported a net gain that year of 386 members. That is to say 335 churches gained one member apiece and fifty of them gained two in twelve months. In a city of 4,000,000 people, those churches comprise in their membership the mightiest men in finance, in commerce, in politics, that this nation has – which means that there is heaped up a fund of potential power, the like of which can be found in no other organization of that great city.

CAMPAIGN OF FAILURE

"And they stood there in the midst of 4,000,000 people pouring out their money like water, following the leadership of the great preachers of the American continent, following them week in and week out, for twelve long months, and all that they could do was to get one person out of four million in each church to accept the Lord Jesus Christ. These are facts.

"The American people for the last generation have seized that marvelous instrument furnished them by science, and have gone out to give themselves unreservedly to the material development of their nation. We are proud of the fact that we are a commercial and business people. Our art is now made the servant of our commerce. No longer do we build the glorious churches and cathedrals, except in certain instances, in our great cities, to express the artistic sense of our people. We build banks in this present age, decorate them with a lavish splendor worthy of God Almighty himself. We have turned the intelligence of our people, as keen and resourceful as any in the world, to this one question, 'How shall we produce material gain?'

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RICHES HIGHEST GOOD

"To-day we are not in the midst of a religious epidemic. We have not enough thought on the subject to create even a revival, let alone an epidemic. But we have to-day a financial epidemic. That is to-day the thing we think most of – the thing that we place at the bottom of our life, the thing that we hail as our highest good.

"That is the thing that men have gone mad over to-day, and so, sweeping over our land like a gigantic shadow, is this awful fear of financial ruin, which constitutes a commercial epidemic in our midst.

"The hope of the Church today lies in a rediscovery of Jesus. It does not lie in more organization. We have too much now. It does not lie in more wealth. We have all the wealth we need, if we had the head to use it. It does not lie in more culture. We have all the gifts that any group of people could possibly ask for. It does not lie in any lack of consciousness of need. We know the needs of the people as perhaps we never knew them before. It lies in a new acquaintance with Jesus.

THE CHURCH DYING

"Brethren, I say to you this morning, that the American Church is dying – it is dying! It is dying! Don't forget it.

"Now, in closing, I sound the note of experience. I want to say to my members here, that *the next seven years upon which this church is entering are going to be twice as hard as the seven years just gone by*. I want to say to you men, that it will be harder for you to be a Christian to-morrow than it is today. I want to say to you, young men and middle-aged, whose hearts are stirring in response to the appeal of Christ, ponder well your step because

you cannot follow Jesus unless you break in your hands the box of precious ointment.

"I want to say to you who have meditated about surrendering your lives to the age, that that is the common tendency of all, and if you do it, no matter what your name may be, you have ceased to be Christians. I want to say to you Christians who are looking for the place that is easier than what you have now, that there is no longer any easier place. The next thirty years will be harder. They will stir the evil tendencies of this nation completely from center to circumference."

THE RELIGION OF SOCIALISM

Socialism, according to Mr. Richard Whiteing, does not, at present, seem to "want a religion of its own," but it is his belief that it will sooner or later come to want one. The Socialist movement everywhere, and especially that in England, he avers, will find that its foundation-principle "as a mere economic theory is absolutely inadequate. To get its full driving force it must have a faith of its own." At the present moment, as he sees the matter, "Socialists are content with the discovery that all existing creeds may, and even must, lead to their platform." This is the deduction derived from the fact that at a Socialist gathering almost every profession of faith is represented – "ardent Anglicans and Roman Catholics, Freethinkers, Moral Persuasionists, Ethical Theorists, and the rest of them." Mr. Whiteing, who is the author of "No. 5 John Street" and "Ring Out the New," is an ardent Socialist, and gives his views here quoted in the *London Daily Mail*. He looks upon the Rev. R. J. Campbell as typifying the tendency he here sketches. Mr. Campbell, he says, "has long been engaged in a process which might be not irreverently described as the cleaning of a picture – the picture being that of the Founder of the Christian faith. It is an attempt to

remove all the incrustations of dogma and traditional belief, and to reach the great original beneath." This pure image, he asserts, "will prove to be that of the first Socialist." The faith which Socialism will ultimately accept as its own is visioned by Mr. Whiteing as the following:

"As I have tried to express it elsewhere, "There must come to men the Appointed One, who will show them by his shining example what the religion is to be. We may only guess at his message, but surely it will be the purified conscience as the Word of God, no more no less, and never a line of text. Then saints, hierarchies, and choirs celestial will seem but poets' playthings. Taken seriously, they have given us the whole of that unhappy fakir tribe who are capable of thinking of their Maker to the total exclusion of the thing he has made. Will not the Appointed One bid us leave that Maker – Jehovah, God or Lord, First Cause or Universal Soul – to contemplations of his own nature more within the measure of his own powers, and listen merely for the voice of him in the purified breast, especially for the undertones in which the sweetness of its message lies? Then, when, haply, the voice says charity, in its larger rendering of love, brotherhood, self-sacrifice, obey it, and leave the metaphysics of the question to take care of itself. Above all, without waiting for any behest, burn the later doctors of the church (not by any means the earlier), as the madman's housekeeper burned his books. So will come the great change, and the democracy will step forth armed and equipped for its conquest of the world. The old mystery of regeneration is true as ever as a principle, in spite of its fantastic setting in the creeds of the hour.

"Democracy must get rid of the natural man of each for himself, and have a new birth into the spiritual man, the ideal self of each for all. This is its great lesson. The monstrous heresy of self-worship, self-absorption, whether as capitalist, artist, bonze,

or merely greedy fellow with storage for one and an appetite for two, is the essentially irreligious idea.

"Democracy is a religion, or nothing, with its doctrine, its form, its ritual, its ceremonies, its cenobites, its government as a church – above all, its organized sacrifice of the altar, the sacrifice of self. This is the deepest craving of human nature. All attempts to reconcile man's heroism to his interests have ever failed. His goodness must make him smart.'

"This is what is coming because this must come. Meantime I think many of us are trying to reduce all religions to their common denominator of liberty, equality, and fraternity, otherwise brotherly love. It is perfectly certain that the masses are growing more and more indifferent to the image of the Founder of Christianity in his present setting. If he is to appeal to them he must lay aside his crown of jewels of modern symbolism and resume his crown of thorns."

The mass of humble believers interpret the conception of the "Son of God – the Man of Sorrows" – says Mr. Whiteing, [R4205 : page 212] as "the great comrade who tried to get lowly and foolish and baffled people righted, and died for it – worse luck." But such a one, he maintains, "they don't find in the existing systems." The composite personality of the Son of God – the Second Person of the Trinity – "all that 'the church' holds most dear, leaves them quite mystified and, I must say it, quite cold." Mr. Whiteing goes on:

"One day I ventured to call a Hyde Park orator a Christian Socialist by way of compliment, but he flew into a great rage. 'Nothing of the sort, *if* you please – a Socialist Christian, at best. Don't put the cart before the horse.' He meant that the Socialism was the touchstone, not the Christianity, as they understand it in the churches now. You could not be a Socialist without being a Christian, whether you knew it or not. You might easily think

yourself a Christian without being the other thing, and the Socialism was the root of the matter. Just that and nothing more.

"The image of the Christ in the popular mind is that of one who came to bring more happiness in this world to poor men and women beaten in the struggle – material happiness. Do not be in any doubt about that – a more equal distribution of right-down pounds, shillings, and pence, the second loaf in the cupboard, good shoes and stockings for all the children, and the Sunday suit for all.

"What they think, what they say, when they are able to say it, is that the rich people and the theologians between them, **[R4205 : page 213]** often working hand in hand, have 'nobbled' the churches, and made their symbolic cup a mere opiate for hard luck, instead of the healing draft. The parsons are paid to keep people quiet, that is the ruling idea. They cannot get their money for current expenses without the rich, and so getting it, of course, they preach the rich man's creed.

"The attempt to substitute feasts, fasts, and festivals of the church for all this, with elaborate processions, will, historically, I feel convinced, mark the end of the present religious system. Let our Anglican revivalists just try to recognize how a poor, dim creature, born into everlasting short-commons, without volition or vocation, stands apart from all that, and sees nothing in it but embroidered garments and futile excitements about Quinquagesima Sunday and other functions with long names that touch him no more than a birthday at court!

"Believe me, as I once ventured to say, people in West Ham look on your ecclesiastical anchorites as mere 'ammytures' in the artistry of privation, with the sacred institution ever behind them as an ark of refuge to save them from the worst. Be out of work for six weeks, and out of earnings that never rise to more than the

docker's tanner, and see what you'll think of St. Francis and his flirtation with the lady of poverty then.

"No, no, 'Here and now.' That is how the church began. The clever fellows got hold of it as a going concern, 'imperialized' it, and so started to make it pretty much what it is to-day. Charity is still its abortive message; justice is what the others want."

– *Literary Digest.*

WAS JESUS A SOCIALIST

Among Socialists Jesus has frequently been claimed as one of themselves. "One would like to say that he was," observes a writer in *The Interior* (Chicago), for he was "social in the largest sense because he sacrificed himself for the welfare of other men." But since "socialist" in the modern world has come to mean (the writer interprets) "the adherent of an economic cult that would reorganize society on the public ownership of property," he does not allow the ranking of Jesus among them. Against what he calls the "rash assertions of agitators," he places this "proposition" as capable of being established from the gospels: "*Neither socialism nor any other economic doctrine ever entered into the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.*"

"He simply paid no attention to the economic phases of life. He treated industrial questions exactly as he treated political questions; he let them alone.

"There were doubtless two reasons for this. Jesus didn't come into the world to meddle with the clock of human progress. Some day the world would learn that democracy is better government than despotism, free labor a better industrial system than slavery, and would get hold of the facts all the stronger for

having had to dig them out. Jesus had no time to stop to teach the world what it would eventually come at on its own account.

"The second and positive reason why he did not concern himself with social questions was because it was part of his mission to throw temporal considerations into the background. *'His principal teaching business was to spread a doctrine of life that made a man's economic condition a secondary matter.*

"Here Jesus differs from Socialism the whole length of the diameter. The thorough-going Socialist thinks poverty the worst thing that can happen to a man. His great plea is to abolish poverty. Jesus didn't think being poor mattered much – not at all if the man was the right sort. He was poor himself, and didn't care in the least.

"The overmastering principle that decides how Jesus looks at any or all human circumstances on this earth is this: *'If a man does the will of the Father in heaven, nothing in his earthly circumstances can be wrong.*

"This confidence is half a faith that the Father will compel circumstances to turn out favorably; half a faith that a man who lives for the Father can be happy in any circumstances."

The nearest Jesus ever came to an economic question, the writer points out, was "when he saw that some certain man's economic condition was hindering his development in unselfish, God-loving and man-loving character." He goes on:

"Modern social philosophers say it is the poor who don't have a fair chance at fine character, but Jesus thought different – he considered the rich the most handicapped.

"When with his marvelous inlook into the heart the Master understood that the rich young ruler thought so much about his wealth that he couldn't think much about his neighbors, the prescription for cure was instantaneous and unsparing: 'Sell that which thou hast and give to the poor.' Jesus didn't speak so out of hate for the property but out of yearning for the man. If he could in this way give the youth a big heart full of spontaneous impulse to help people, he knew it would be worth the price.

"But where he didn't find worldly possessions hindering the growth of a man's nobler character, he simply ignored them. Giving half delivered Zaccheus from the bondage of avarice, and Jesus asked no more. He was equally at home with the poor and with the rich. He loved both for common qualities which are counted in no coin of earth. *"Jesus taught neighbor-love absolutely, not as an incident but as an essential of religion, but he never so much as hinted at a social programme for demonstrating that aspect of religion."*

"Jesus was no programme-builder. This is one of the very hardest things for the modern age to comprehend in the Master. The latter day must have an organization at work or it thinks it has nothing. But Jesus had an unbounded faith in the power of a spirit at work in and through the lives of individual men. He did not organize even his church; he simply put the motive of it in a few lives, and trusted that motive to make an organism.

"Likewise, when he said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' he did not deposit the dynamic of that love in some artificial social body, either then existent or afterward to be created, but he imparted it by contact to the affections and wills of his friends, and left them to extend it in the same manner.

"Their first expression of it – the communism of the Jerusalem church – was economically faulty; it wouldn't work. Taught by their experience, the early church leaders did not

attempt the same system elsewhere. But the spirit which their initial communism crudely manifested did not disappear with that experiment. In that generation and in all generations after, adjusting itself more and more to the laws of society as they are continually better known, the manward love of Jesus Christ has found, and is yet to find, an ever larger and more adequate demonstration."

– *Literary Digest.*

A NEW JERUSALEM IS BUILDING

Adolph Sterner writing from Jerusalem to a friend in this country says:

"People here are not goaded on by competition and their surroundings make for indolence and stagnation. Nevertheless a spirit of progress has developed which commands respect. If you lived here you would know what a new house in Jerusalem means and you would stand aghast. I did when I was told that two hundred had been completed in the last three months. At Jaffa the improvements have been more extensive. An art school under the direction of Boris Schatz, who was at the head of the Bulgarian Academy of Fine Arts at Sofia, is flourishing, and carpet and rug-weaving, carving, modeling and metal working are taught to boys and girls who are of the same class as children who years ago were taught to beg from the tourists. Jerusalem is shaking off its garb of antiquity – a new Jerusalem is building."

– *The American Hebrew.*

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MIRACLE WHEAT

**NEW VARIETY PRODUCED YIELDING 277 BUSHELS
OF GRAIN TO ACRE**

Wheat with stalks like sugar cane and yielding 277 bushels of highly nutritious kernels to the acre has been produced as a result of experiments made in Idaho by Allen Adams of Minneapolis.

The new wheat has been named "Alaska" because of its hardiness. It is either spring or winter wheat, just as the farmer desires to sow. It is so sturdy that storms that ruin other stock affect its giant stems but little, and the heads remain upright through ordinary hailstorms.

The yield shows that Adams has been able to obtain an increase of 222 fold. One head of the giant wheat was planted in the fall of 1904. The seeds from that head were planted the next year and seven pounds of seed obtained. This was sown in the spring of 1906, and from the seven pounds were harvested 1,554 pounds that fall. In the fall of the same year he sowed it as winter wheat, but conditions were adverse. Almost all the "blue stem" and "club" were destroyed, and only a third of the crop of experimental wheat came to maturity, yet there was a yield of 50,000 pounds. A heavy hailstorm in July was the cause of the ruined wheat crop, which left scarcely any of the ordinary wheat standing.

Further experiments brought forth a yield of 277 bushels to an acre. The Idaho College of Agriculture has made a laboratory test of the wheat and reports the grain plump and sound and that it should make better bread than the ordinary wheat.

– *Beloit Free Press.*

THE CZAR IN THE NET OF SPIRITISTS

What we have been hearing rumored, now seems to be certain, namely, that the Czar is being counceled into the snare of spiritists. This hard-pressed and unfortunate man gets his future foretold by spiritualistic mediums. His judicious premier, Herr Stolypin, has called his attention to the danger and it appears that he was warned repeatedly, but without success. The spirit mediums have earnestly warned the Czar against Stolypin, wherefore the latter has to guard himself from saying anything further. The physician advised the Czarina to leave the country for her health, but a spirit medium communicated to her that her youngest son will die if she leaves Russia. Thereupon she decided to remain at home. The mother of the Czar sought to drive away the mediums, but in doing this she only succeeded in falling into the Czar's disfavor. It is a repetition, in the case of Nicholas II., of the story of Saul, who, in the time of need, betook himself to the Witch of Endor.

– *Translated from the Apologete, Cincinnati, Ohio.*

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