

## **VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER**

### **DR. ABBOTT'S OUTLOOK**

"A minister asks a question which I may summarize thus: *How can one who has accepted the newer thinking in theology so present it as to satisfy the desires of those who are longing for the old religion?* It is a question which a great many ministers and some laymen are asking. The answer involves a consideration of the use and value of sermons and church services.

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"One reason why many naturally devout persons have discontinued church attendance is because the church service for them no longer promotes the religious life. It seems to them unreal. They still wish to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk reverently, but the church service does not help them to do so. They have abandoned the Church, but they have not abandoned religion. To bring them back to the Church the Church must somehow put new life into its services. It must make its expression of the religious feeling more effective in promoting the religious life.

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"When astronomy compelled a *new theory of the Universe, and modern biology and anthropology a new theory of the origin of man and of sin, and modern criticism a new theory of the Bible, and modern sociology a new theory of redemption*, the Puritan churches began of necessity to construct a new theology. The ministers who were familiar with modern discovery and the modern mind began to teach a new philosophy of religion.

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"We no longer express penitence, thanksgiving, and consecration by offering sacrifices. But penitence and thanksgiving and consecration are essentially the same experiences that they were in the days of Ezra. *Theology has changed. We no longer believe that man was created perfect six thousand years ago, and that sin came into the world as the result of the fact that a woman was persuaded by a serpent to eat a forbidden fruit.* But doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God are essentially what they were in the days of Abraham.

"In our time there are a number of self-sacrificing and devoted philanthropists and teachers who have discarded both worship and theology and are endeavoring to promote the higher life by ethical instruction, illustrated and enforced by moral example. But while they endeavor to promote doing justly and loving mercy, they make no effort to promote reverent comradeship with God. They substitute the religion of humanity for the humanity of religion. Some of them are preaching ethical sermons in Christian pulpits. Some of them have come out from the Church altogether and are devoting themselves to various forms of social service. They are doing unselfish work for their fellow-men, and in the lives of many of them Christian ministers might well find both example and inspiration.

"But I do not believe that ethical culture can take the place of spiritual life. If all that humanity wants is well-regulated conduct, ethical culture might possibly furnish it – though that is doubtful. But that is not all that humanity wants. It wants character. What men think is important; what they feel is more important; but what they *are* is most important of all. For out of what they **[R5468 : page 163]** are will come naturally and spontaneously their thinking, their feeling, and their conduct.

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"The minister who would satisfy the need of his people must realize that their need is not a form of worship nor a philosophy of religion, but a life. If he uses a prayer-book, it must serve him as an expression of his own penitence, thanksgiving, consecration. If he does not use a prayer-book, his prayers must be real communion with God, not an address to his congregation. *Whether he believes that man has been six or sixty thousand years upon the earth, that sin is the consequence of a fall from perfection six thousand years ago or the consequence of the animalism in us from which we have not yet fully emerged, that Jesus Christ saves us by having paid once for all the penalty of our sins in a sacrifice suffered long ago or by living with us and giving life to us in a perpetual sacrifice, is not unimportant.* BUT IT IS INSIGNIFICANT BESIDE THE QUESTION WHETHER PENITENCE FOR HIS OWN SINS AND JOY IN HIS LIVING SAVIOR ARE REAL EXPERIENCES OR ONLY BOOK-LEARNED THEORIES. If they are real experiences and he can communicate them to his hearers, he will satisfy their real needs. If he communicates them through the old theology, some of his hearers will think him old-fashioned in his thinking; if he communicates them through the new theology, some of his hearers will fear he is not quite sound. But if he succeeds in giving to them that life the fruit of which is doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God, they will accept the gift with thankfulness, whatever may be the philosophy which he employs in imparting the gift."

– *Lyman Abbott.*

## **COMMENTS ON DR. ABBOTT'S OUTLOOK**

We have wondered how such noble men of good thinking capacity as Doctor Abbott regard the future and their own change of religious sentiment. We have above, Doctor Abbott's own words on the subject. His expression probably represents fairly,

generously, the sentiments of the large class of scholarly men among whom he is a leader. They have abandoned the old landmarks altogether. The personal God who takes personal interest in the affairs of man is unknown to this class. Some of them recognize a force operating in nature, and give this blind force the name of god – Nature god. Others, admitting that they have no real ground for their contention, hold that there is a personal God who is so great that He [R5468 : page 164] takes no more account of man and his interests than men take account of ants, insects, microbes.

Yet still there is in the human heart a yearning for the sympathy of a Divine Friend, which causes some of these bewildered leaders of human thought to ignore their own theories and to crave and worship a personal God of Love whom they know not, and who has made, they think, no revelation of Himself or of His plans, respecting which they make liberal guesses, frequently altered, mended, amended, contradicted. St. Paul seemed to have some such philosophers in mind when he wrote, "without God, and having no hope in the world." Jesus seems to have had some such persons in mind when He spoke of "blind leaders of the blind" falling into the ditch.

### **A DEPLORABLE CONDITION OF UNBELIEF**

With many of these good people the trouble begins with their loss of confidence in the Bible as the inspired Revelation of God for the instruction and guidance of His people. As soon as any assume this attitude toward the Bible, they are like the mariner on the high seas who has lost his charts and compass and has become befogged. Occasionally a little rift in the fog gives him a view of some bright star; and for a moment he rejoices in the thought that he at least knows by the stars which way to steer his craft. But as the fogs shift, he is pitiably bewildered. He dare not even confess to the trusting passengers under his care the real status of affairs.

He must be brave; he must secrete his fears and doubts and ignorance.

This appears to be the deplorable condition of the Higher Critics and Evolutionists. If we misjudge them, we shall be glad to have them set us straight. We shall be glad to be informed by what process of reasoning they have any knowledge whatever respecting a future life of any kind in any place. We shall be glad to be informed respecting any process of reasoning along the lines of their presentation that would go to demonstrate that they have, or could have, any expectation of a future life, except representatively through their children, who in some future time, thousands of years ahead, might be evolved to such perfection of mind and body and to such a mastery of conditions of nature as would permit them successfully to combat germs, microbes and hereditary weaknesses, and to live forever.

But how poor a prospect is this in comparison with the hope set before us in the Gospel – the hope of a personal future life by resurrection from the dead, a hope which Evolutionists and Higher Critics deride as chimerical! We can only return the compliment by declaring that the Christian's hope, founded upon the Bible, "the hope of the resurrection of the dead," seems to us far less chimerical, far less unreasonable, and much more advantageous to us in every way, than the hope of the Higher Critic and Evolutionist that though they perish, some of their great, great grandchildren may achieve everlasting life.

While we have no sympathy with Higher Criticism and Evolution, we have every sympathy for the many noble minds that have accepted these theories, to the destruction of their own joy, peace, and faith. Our experience gives us this sympathy. Once we had very much their position. We thank God for our deliverance from it into the brighter light from Heaven which shines in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord, shines through His words, shines

through the writings and prophecies of the past, as explained by the appointed and especially inspired Apostles of Jesus. Quite probably the majority of those whose views we are criticising came to their present views as did the writer.

### **A GREAT LESSON TO BE LEARNED**

For three centuries the darkness of superstition has been gradually breaking; and although the Bible has come back to the people, it has been interpreted through creedal spectacles of various hues, but all of them dark. We have been unwittingly trusting the creeds and not the Bible. But more and more the absurdities of those creeds have become manifest in the advancing light of the Millennial Morning. We have now come to the place where practically no intelligent people any longer believe the creeds of the past. But in repudiating those creeds, all have been in danger through the error of the supposition that those creeds represent the Bible teachings. Hence, to nearly all of us, the repudiation of the creeds has meant the repudiation of the Bible, however much we have desired to hold to the Bible as the Divine Light in a dark place.

The great lesson for us all now to learn is that while we have been right in repudiating the creeds, and while every one of them should be publicly as well as privately repudiated, we should return to the Bible and give it a fresh examination, totally untrammelled by the theories of the darker past. We should go to the Bible, expecting to find it in opposition to these creeds – expecting to find that the pure Message of Divine Truth, as given out by Jesus and His authorized Apostles, was corrupted during the Dark Ages – during the time when the Bible was ignored in favor of creeds formulated by bishops who mistakenly thought themselves Apostolic bishops, and who under Satan's misguidance led Christendom into atrocious errors and "doctrines of devils." – 1 Timothy 4:1.

Only by such radical change of attitude toward the Bible – only by such confidence in God, confidence in the Bible as the Revelation to man of a God of all Grace, the Father of Mercies, are we prepared to view the Old Book from the proper angle, to see its real meaning, and to be convinced that it is the Message of Hope for the world, and of glory, honor and immortality for the Church, and indeed true and worthy of all acceptance.

### **A NEW STIMULUS TO BIBLE STUDY**

One of the chief aims of the PHOTO-DRAMA OF CREATION is to re-establish faith in the Bible as the inspired Word of God. It is our conviction that many of God's consecrated people are trembling on the brink of infidelity. The teachings of Higher Criticism and Evolution, which have gone forth from the colleges and intellectual leaders of Christendom for the past forty years, have permeated, leavened, the thought, the sentiment of the whole world.

God's consecrated people need the helping hand which He through this DRAMA is, we believe, extending to them. It is wonderful to note how some of these are being reached by it, and how quickly some of them respond. A young man who witnessed the DRAMA in the New York Temple (W. 63d St., near Broadway), inquired whether or not there was something more that he could read along the lines pursued in the DRAMA. He was told of the six volumes of THE STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES. He purchased them at once and read them. Returning, he said, "I had \$700 saved up to put me through a theological course. I have concluded that in these volumes I have the theological course that I need."

The fairness of the DRAMA, its faithfulness to the Bible, and the gentleness with which it treats opposition, commend it to sober-thinking, honest-hearted people; and while all classes are welcomed, this special class is particularly desired and

appreciated by the promoters of the DRAMA. Only those who have been rescued from the darkness, obscurity and "mentally lost" condition of Higher Criticism and Evolution, can fully appreciate what it means to be saved from all that darkness, doubt, fog – what it means to have a firm foundation for faith in a [R5469 : page 165] God of Justice, Wisdom, Love and Power – what it means to *know* God and to have an intelligent appreciation of His great and wonderful Plan of the Ages, in which the Church has first place, but in which the whole world of mankind is yet to receive a blessing and a glorious opportunity for everlasting life.

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### GERMANY DESERTING THE CHURCH

Church attendance in Protestant Germany is shrinking in what *The Christian World's* Berlin correspondent, quoted in *The Christian Work* (New York), calls an alarming way. According to a census made on a recent Sunday only 11,252 persons were attending the 68 State Protestant places of worship in Berlin. In the town of Chemnitz, in Saxony, with 300,000 Protestants, "the church attendance on this particular Sunday was 2,248." Or, taking the communion statistics as a test, "in Berlin, last year, only 14.81 per cent. of the Protestant population partook of the communion."

Of course, says our informant, the numbers are more satisfactory in country districts, but "in the towns, and in numerous country districts as well, not only is the number of communicants sinking, but it is rapidly sinking, and has been rapidly sinking for several years past." And we read on:

"In Berlin it is an established fact that the number of those who make a practise of going to church is rapidly decreasing. A serious journal here has been investigating the causes for this, and



as a result of its inquiries among the working classes, it has obtained the following six reasons for the falling off:

"(1) The influence of the anti-religious press.

"(2) Social Democratic agitation against Church.

"(3) The influence of evil-disposed neighbors and fellow-workmen on those who would otherwise attend.

"(4) The notorious unbelief of the educated classes.

"(5) The widely spread suspicion and dislike expended on the clergy, especially the belief that they do not themselves believe what they teach, and that their piety and truth are merely hypocrisy.

"(6) Finally, the fact that all public places of amusement are open on Sunday, and that it is exactly on Sunday that the proprietors of these places use the greatest efforts to fill them. Another reason given for the increasing absence of young people from Divine service is the recent institution of associations such as scouts, wanderers, and boys' and girls' brigades, all of which have their gatherings on Sundays. The great horse-races are held on Sunday, also the chief athletic events. It is stated that all these things help to deplete the churches.

"Another journal in examining the causes at work in emptying the churches does not hesitate to remark that the antiquated methods employed by the clergy in addressing their flocks and in conducting their services are becoming 'repulsive' to churchgoers. Modern men in modern life will not tolerate a man in a pulpit calling them 'beloved hearers.' They hate the sanctimony and unctuousness inseparable from so many pastors. It irritates them to hear, 'firstly, my beloved,' and 'secondly, my dear brethren,' and 'thirdly and lastly.'

"Then there is a strong impression that much might be done to modernize the service of song. The Germans are the most

musical people in the world and possess some of the most magnificent church music ever written. But they are beginning to lose all patience with those slowly droned-forth chorales in which there is neither force nor fire. With a sigh they think of the bright services of song in English and American churches."

– *Literary Digest.*

