

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER

THE SIN OF THE CHURCH

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IT IS an appalling thought that the Church should have had a part in the crime of Calvary, and yet it did, and that the chief part. It is really the villain of the plot.

What was the sin of the Church that crucified Christ? Or, to put it another way, what are the characteristics of a perverted religion? They are chiefly two:

1. The ecclesiastical mind.
2. The ecclesiastical conscience.

The ecclesiastical mind is a closed mind – and there is nothing it resents so much as being pried open to receive a new idea. Its settled rule of judgment, its accepted test of truth, is "What is new is never true and what is true is never new." Philip Gilbert Hammerton has aptly compared the conventional process of religious instruction and training to the process of etching on glass. The mind of the pupil is first covered with an impervious coat of pious prejudice. The pattern of the desired creed is then carefully traced with the stylus of authority; and then only is the mind exposed to the sand-blast of reality and the acid test of experience, which cut along the exposed lines only and the desired creed is indelibly engraved upon the mind.

The other characteristic of a perverted religion is the ecclesiastical conscience. It is strikingly illustrated by one Good

Friday scene. A procession is sweeping through the streets of Jerusalem, bound for the Governor's Palace. Who compose this procession? They are the religious leaders of the people, the prominent divines, the chief ecclesiastics, the dignitaries and prelates of the Church, and the Sanhedrin, the chief religious legislative body of the nation. It is as if you rolled into one the Presbyterian General Assembly, the Methodist General Conference, the Episcopal General Convention, the Roman Catholic Hierarchy, and the House of Lords, with the whole Bench of Bishops.

What is the business they have in mind? They are intent on committing the greatest crime in history – a crime at which the whole world has shuddered ever since. They would crucify the Son of God. But at Pilate's threshold they stop. Why? Ah, they have stumbled across a statute with a penalty, a canon of the Church with a sanction. And these people have great respect for penalties and sanctions, if they have little for truth and righteousness. If they should enter a heathen house that Passover morning, they would become ceremonially defiled and unfit to partake of the sacrament. They would lose their reputation for strict churchmanship. They are indefinitely scrupulous and utterly unprincipled, entirely sincere and yet completely untruthful and unrighteous, pious and perverted.

The "ecclesiastical conscience" holds the precept so near the eye that it hides the principle; it substitutes petty, thumb-nail rules for the fundamental law of righteousness. It makes religiousness a substitute for righteousness instead of a means thereto. It puts technical priests and properties in the place of character. It makes churchmanship do for religion and "churchianity" for "Christianity."

And the ecclesiastical conscience is not confined to the Church. The lawyer who makes a legality his test instead of justice; the merchant who is satisfied simply to conform to the code of his

trade, whose excuse for any dishonesty is, "They all do it"; the "gentleman" or "lady" who puts good form and manners in the place of sincerity and kindness of heart, and politeness in place of courtesy – all are alike animated by the ecclesiastical conscience.

It was this ecclesiastical mind and this ecclesiastical conscience which crucified Jesus Christ.

MARCHING TO UNIVERSAL SLAUGHTER-HOUSE

Again we quote for the benefit of our readers, truthful words from an editorial of the *New York American*, as follows:

"We are living today in a time more trying to the souls of men than any period of the world's history. We are witnessing, in the war which involves every continent of the earth in the direct conflict of arms, a visitation of horror and destruction greater than the human race has ever suffered before. From North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, Australasia, from every corner of the earth and every clime, human beings are marching to the universal slaughter-house.

"In one year of this fearful struggle billions of property has been destroyed, and the bloody combatants already claim to have murdered or maimed more than four million human beings. This is all in one year, and no decision is yet in sight. Neither side has yet won a decisive advantage.

"The military experts believe that the war has only just begun. Lord Kitchener, head of the British forces, declared, even before the Russian defeats, that it would [R5798 : page 340] take three years to reduce the Teutonic allies and the Turks, while the disinterested military experts are doubtful if the Central Empires can ever be conquered.

"The French, the British, the Russians and the Italians are waiting until their factories, and our own American factories, can equip their armies with guns and ammunition which they need in order to bring to bear their greatest power for destruction. If four million men have gone in one year in which the side that is stronger in numbers has not yet brought its full strength to bear, what will be the wastage in human life if they fight it out to a finish?

"We Americans are neutral. But are we not interested? [R5799 : page 340] Are we not involved in this fearful struggle? Are we not involved in it as a part of the human family, as members of the white race, as participants in the Western civilization, all of which are threatened by a prolongation of this dreadful carnage?

"If this war is fought out to a finish, shall we not suffer morally and materially, whichever side wins? If the allies are the conquerors and the German people are overwhelmingly beaten and broken, shall we not, as part of the world, suffer an irretrievable loss? Germany's wonderful contributions to the world of science and industry and commerce are known to all business men. But, great as they are, her contributions to governmental efficiency, to the ability of society acting as a social unit to perform wonders for the benefit of her people beyond even the dreams of individuals, have scarcely yet been recognized. She is making a contribution to socialistic experiments greater than was ever known to any people before. Her national Government owns its railroads, its telephone and telegraph companies. Her great cities own their waterworks, their gas and electric light companies and their street railways. They build wharves and docks and they plant forests and they develop land, not by individual initiative, but as a governmental function. They, first among the nations, began to free their workingmen from industrial slavery by old age pensions, workingmen's compensation laws and rigid safety appliance laws and inspections. They first devised the means of freeing the farmers from financial peonage by rural credits through which the farmer could borrow money from

the State to improve his farm. They are showing the world what the people in their organized capacity can do and how prosperous they can make themselves, even though crowded within the confines of a not too favorable territory. We Americans are every day copying something from the German socialistic experiments. Can we see them crushed without immeasurable loss to ourselves?

"If, on the other hand, the Allies should be crushed, it would involve the destruction of France and of a historically great people whose contribution to human liberty and to the economic freedom of the world John Stuart Mill, the distinguished political economist, has declared greater than that of any other, even including our own.

"Would it benefit the world to see the spirit of England broken and her commercial and industrial efficiency impaired and her purchasing power destroyed? There never was a time in the last twenty-five years when, if England could no longer buy from us, we would not have faced a financial crisis. We do not forget the great enterprises and the great industrial developments in America which English capital has financed. We cannot forget that most of the elementary principles of liberty which we call our own had their birth and first development in Great Britain."

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When, after reading the above editorial, we call to mind that the Lord in the Bible has foretold the direst things foreboded in the editorial, and much more – even to anarchy and the entire destruction of the present order of things – we might well weep. God has kindly veiled the eyes of humanity that they do not see the coming storm in all its dread severity; because they have no eyes of faith to see the resulting blessings as we see them.

How glad we are to know that ours is a God of love – to know that the millions that are dying in frenzied strife are not going to eternal torture, but in due time they shall share in the general

blessings of the world which Messiah's Kingdom will accomplish. Can we wonder then that our Master left the message, "When ye see these things begin to come to pass, then lift up your heads and rejoice; knowing that your deliverance draweth nigh"? – Luke 21:28.

If the deliverance of the Church meant eternal suffering to the non-elect, how could we rejoice in it? But as our eyes of understanding are opening, we see with astonished wonder the lengths and the breadths, the heights and the depths of the great Creator's love and mercy. We perceive that the glorification of the Church means the blessing of all then alive by the inauguration of the reign of righteousness and peace, and by the breaking of the shackles of sin and ignorance, and by the binding of Satan for a thousand years. And oh, so much more, the release of the thousands of millions of heathens who, for the past six thousand years, have been going down into the great prison-house of death – the Bible hell – the tomb! With this rosy view of the future, which the Bible so surely gives, darkness and clouds, sorrows and tears for the immediate present cannot daunt us. Our souls do magnify the Lord! We sing daily, hourly, the new song, "True and righteous are Thy judgments, O Lord God Almighty! Who shall not come and worship before Thee, when all Thy righteous dealings shall be made manifest?" – Revelation 15:3,4; 16:7.

THE SECRET PLACE

Wondrous the thought – that the Father
Knows of our every care;
Feels for us when the shadow
Lurks where the sky was fair:
Knows of the pent-up sorrow,
Feels for the eyes that weep;
Tells of a brighter Morrow
Where shadows never creep!

Precious to know the Good Shepherd
Tenderly guides His sheep
Over the stony places;
Cares when the path is steep:
Watches for greenest pastures,
Tends them with loving skill;
Guards them from fright and danger,
Leads them by Waters still!

Joyous the thought – that the angels,
Guardians are, to keep;
Bearing in hands so tender
Weary and wounded Feet
Daily are gaining access
To the dear Father's face;
Hourly are seeking succor
For those who crave His grace!

Blessed to feel we are dwelling
Safe in the Secret Place;
Under Jehovah's shadow,
Trusting till we can trace:
Knowing no ill can harm us,
Knowing His Arm of Love
Safely will shield, till He calls us
Unto His Home above!

– MARY CLEVELAND JEWELL.

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