

PROMINENT CHURCHMEN DISCUSS DR. ELIOT'S STATEMENT ABOUT HEAVEN AND HELL

DR. ELIOT'S STATEMENT

"The fear of hell has not proved effective to deter men from wrongdoing, and heaven has never yet been described in terms very attractive to the average man or woman. Both are, indeed, unimaginable."

"The modern man would hardly feel any appreciable loss of motive power to ward good or away from evil if heaven were burnt or hell quenched. The prevailing Christian conceptions of heaven and hell have hardly any more influence with educated people in those days than Olympus and Hades have. The modern mind craves an immediate motive or leading, good for today on this earth!"—From "The Religion of the Future," by Charles W. Eliot, ex-president of Harvard University.

The New York World publishes the following comments by various New York churchmen and Dr. Gidding of Columbia on Dr. Eliot's statement about heaven and hell.

Archbishop Ryan

The fear of hell has deterred men from wrongdoing in the past and is deterring them from wrongdoing to-day. Let us at the great motives of human action. The young man contending with temptation, wrestling with some "badly demon." The pleasure promised is certain and alluring. Religion whispers in his ear: "Fear God, listen to your conscience; you know that to yield is wrong. Remember the punishment which God has threatened. Remember the heaven you renounce if you yield, and the hell whose punishment you deserve." Now all this warning is based on doctrine. Only whisper in his ear: "There is no hell, God is indulgent, or takes no cognizance of human action." "Strike down the great truth and you strike down the great motive."

But some one may say that it is utterly impossible that we should go back to the paganism from which Christianity has liberated us. There is no danger of our going back to the paganism from which Christianity has liberated us. Yet one must remember that human nature is always the same and that mere culture will not save us. Man is a religious being. If he worships not God he will worship himself. Deny the doctrine of faith and you try to kill Christianity and establish some form of paganism.

Dr. Franklin H. Giddings

The views of Dr. Franklin H. Giddings, professor of sociology in Columbia University, are very similar to those expressed by Dr. Eliot regarding the relationship of human conduct to conceptions of reward and punishment in a future world.

"The masses of people have never cared much about heaven or hell," he said to a World reporter who found him in his office in the Columbia Library. "And at the present day neither place is an appreciable factor in the make-up of any popular code of morals."

"Conduct is an extremely complex affair," he went on, "and is the combined effect of many contributory causes. Roughly speaking, inherited tendencies, habit and environment are the principal elements in determining any given act."

"It is generally admitted that experience is the best teacher. This truism can be applied quite as readily to the experience of the race as to the experience of the individual. Our ancestors have spent centuries in laboriously learning that certain lines of conduct are productive of pleasure and certain others of pain, just so that we might be born with the instinct to pursue the first and to avoid the second."

The professor smiled when he was asked whether various churches hadn't influenced men to a very great extent by the threat of hell to evil doers, and the promise of heaven to the virtuous.

"Special creed or dogma has always had an important influence on the lives of the masses. This influence I attribute, however, not to the fear or the hope concerning the next world which the priests were able to implant in the breasts of their congregations, but rather to the personal influence of themselves. If there has been a decline in the influence of the church it may be accounted for partially by the lessening of intellectual differences between priests and laymen. In the middle ages, for instance, the clergy had a monopoly of all the learning there was. It followed as a natural consequence that their authority on spiritual and intellectual questions should be unchallenged. The situation to-day is entirely different. The church will, nevertheless, always be a powerful factor in civilization, but its function will gradually change. Socialization and autocracy will be its ultimate role in the community. The fact that it usually stands for what is fair and decent and of good report is sufficient to make it a desirable if not an indispensable institution."

"How do you account for the New England conscience and the sense of sin on the basis of a sense of right and wrong founded on the mere aggregation of experience?" was the next question. The professor answered it without hesitation.

"The New England conscience is simply the result of a middle-class hatred of those who were termed gentry in sixteenth century England," he said. "The Puritans detested the class who ruled them, and as the men and women of this class loved the play and the hunt, and the dance, and the clothes, and rich food and wine, these things came to be associated in the mind of the governed with all that was to be shunned. The Puritan movement was colored by class struggle just as is the socialist movement of to-day."

Dr. Stephen S. Wise (Rabbi)

"Perhaps it is true that the fear of hell has in the past proved effective to deter men from wrongdoing, although it is a relative term. But two questions remain to be asked. Can the fear of hell continue to prove effective? I do not believe so. Though the fear of hell may prove effective with some as the result of the teachings of certain religions, men are beginning to understand that it is true that hell is doomed than that they are doomed to hell. The fear of hell is passing, and this is to be deplored only by those who prefer the old terrors and falsehoods to the new truths and the new hopes."

The second and more important question is: Seeing that the teachings of religion can no longer honestly speak of hell, what right in the name of truth is there to regret the so-called ethical losses

which arise from inability to terrorize men into virtue? The churches of the world happily are beginning to see that it is their office not so much to keep some men out of hell in another life as to get something of heaven into the lives of men of today.

The highest duty of the church is not to guard the graves of the dead, but to safeguard the rights of the living, not to perpetuate childish rites, but to conserve and defend the rights of every man, woman and child, not so much to dwell upon the music of the choir invisible as to bring some harmony into the discordant life of the obviously disinherited of the earth. Not so much to sing about the golden paved street of a Jerusalem that is to be as to secure decent and clean streets and livable homes for men, women and children here now.

The church that would constrain men to right living by the terrors of hell is a

policeman. The office of the church is not to guard the graves of the dead, but to safeguard the rights of the living, not to perpetuate childish rites, but to conserve and defend the rights of every man, woman and child, not so much to dwell upon the music of the choir invisible as to bring some harmony into the discordant life of the obviously disinherited of the earth. Not so much to sing about the golden paved street of a Jerusalem that is to be as to secure decent and clean streets and livable homes for men, women and children here now.

Rev. Dr. Chas. A. Eaton

The hell of fear has proved effective in deterring countless millions from wrongdoing in the future. Still, this fear is not as potent as it used to be. Of course there have been many men who have not been deterred from wrongdoing by fear of hell, just as there have been many men who have committed murder in the face of the death penalty. But the vast majority have been held in check by the fear of hell, just as the vast majority are held in check today by the fear of jail.

I believe that hell exists in the world as an evident fact; that the wages of sin is death is a grim reality, and hell begins in this world no matter where it is continued. In fact, it is one of the most terrible realities of the world.

It is impossible to describe heaven, but the hope of attaining it has undoubtedly aided many people in leading honest, upright lives. The idea of a heaven paved with golden streets is not attractive to me—I prefer green grass to golden cobble stones—but it has been and still is the idea of many and has worked incalculable good.

Heaven and hell exist in this world, although personally I have seen more hell than heaven in it. It is all right for our philosopher friends to declare that there is no hell—they are entitled to their opinions and must be heard respectfully—but those who encounter the grim realities of life know differently.

The fear of hell may not deter college professors from wrongdoing, but for the masses it is still effective. A policeman is not necessary to make college professors behave, perhaps, but he is usually necessary to keep the masses in line.

The trouble seems to me to be with our conceptions of heaven and hell. No intelligent person accepts literally the descriptions of heaven and hell given by Biblical writers or by Dante, Milton and the poets; for these only tried to imagine something that might convey some idea of these places of bliss and pain. Each man has a right to form his own conception of what they may be like.

The Pope Will Not Reply

Rome, Sept. 25.—A short time ago a cablegram was sent from here to several American newspapers purporting to be an interview with Father Brand, editor of The Christa Catholic, and stating on his authority that the Pope would make a formal reply to Dr. Eliot's pronouncement of a new religion. Father Brand has just returned from his holidays, now, and your correspondent took an early opportunity of calling on him.

"Father Brand," I said, "a story has been cabled to America that the theory of a new religion broached by Dr. Eliot has so stirred up the Church, even here in Rome, that the Pope has decided to make a formal reply to the doctor. Is that right?"

"It is not."

"Is it possible that the rumor arose by reason of some dignity of the Church assuming such a task?"

"You can say for me that nobody in Rome has ever seriously thought of writing a reply to Dr. Eliot's pronouncement on the new religion. Why should they? The subject is not worth a reply. The ideas ventilated in Dr. Eliot's address were broached a long time ago by Herbert Spencer and others, and they were simply repeated at the time. There is really no need to thresh old straw merely because it happens to be used again in an address by the President of Harvard."

Father Brand stands very high in authority in affairs of the Catholic Church in Rome.

Rev. Dr. Chas. F. Aked

Dr. Eliot is absolutely right. The fear of hell has never proved effective in deterring men from wrongdoing. I won't say that it has never deterred any man, but it has certainly not deterred men as a body from wrongdoing.

The most severe punishments have not deterred men from committing crimes. In states where murder is punishable by death it is quite as common as in states where less severe punishments are in vogue. Years ago there used to be a punishment by death in many countries, but thieves are not deterred from stealing. One of the greatest men I ever knew told me that the fear of hell had never made men good, and I re-echo his belief. Hell is unimaginable, as Dr. Eliot says. Even great geniuses like Dante and Swedenborg have produced only fantastic and incredible pictures of it.

And, as Dr. Eliot says, heaven has never yet been described in terms very attractive to the average man or woman. It, too, is unthinkable. I don't think the descriptions of heaven please the men and women of today. They don't even sound attractive to the little boys in Sunday school. While the little boys are singing "I Want to Be an Angel" they want to be pirates, policemen—anything but angels.

In the future the subject of evil will be approached from a new standpoint—that of resistance and prevention. It is not only Dr. Eliot who says so. These teachings come from the heart of orthodoxy.

I welcome Dr. Eliot's paper as a noble and most important contribution to the most essential things of human life, but as a matter of fact he has simply been killing

the slain Egyptians by the Dead Sea. What he says has been believed by thinking men and women for a long time. Thinking people have not believed for many years that the fear of hell has ever or ever will make people good.

We must remember that we are living in a new day. Many people have grown out of their old way of thinking, but they have not yet formulated a new. At the present time it is as if the Church were moving out of an old house into a new and larger one. Some things are worn out and have to be brightened up. Other things have to be given or thrown away. There is a little dust. The Church is moving out into larger premises, where it can entertain all its friends.

No living being can expound the religion of the present, much less the religion yet to be. There are tremendous gaps, omissions, that can be remedied only by the recognition of a personal Christ.

But this thing is to be remembered: We must approach the subject of evil from the standpoint of resistance and prevention. The fear of hell or the hope of heaven has never made men good.

Rev. Anna H. Shaw

Heaven and hell, as described to us in the current terms of the Christian religion, are both unimaginable and unessential to the educated men and women of today. We are not afraid of being burned in a real red fire. We would be tremendously bored in a heaven of eternal rest and psalm singing. Dr. Eliot is unquestionably voicing the modern conception as to the traditional hereafter—it simply doesn't count.

I would disagree with him only in his use of the past tense. Heaven and hell have counted in the centuries behind us. They have influenced "generations of devout and learned," as well as the unlearned masses. But now we have outgrown them.

We have learned to look at nature scientifically instead of emotionally, that is all. God's voice no longer speaks to us in the thunder. We know it is electricity. "The blue heaven above us" is merely intangible ether. We cannot accept the Christian fairy tales any longer as veritable facts.

Men and women today are more and more growing to consider good and evil as an end in themselves, not as means toward an end. Very small children are encouraged to be "good" by means of pennies. Likewise they are made to fear being "bad" by threats of punishment to come. So, in the earlier stages of the world's development, it appeared necessary, perhaps, to the priests and ministers to bribe and threaten their men-children and women-children with future bliss or woe.

But suppose dying does mean just going into sleep, and never waking up. I, for one, would infinitely prefer that denouement of the typical Christian conception of an eternal halcyon concert. And suppose it to be a fact, this simple blotting out—does that change the goodness of good or the badness of bad for us—here—today?

We know we have this world and that what we do must have an effect in it. Why do we need to bother about what we don't know? Mr. Bernard Shaw wisely remarks somewhere that the religious soldier will never have won his final victory till he has conquered in himself the mean little personal wish to continue as a personal factor and till he becomes willing to be thrown on the scrap heap after his work is done.

Now—here—those are the voices that call both the saints and sinners of New York. Not afterward—hereafter.

NEW YORK AND ITS TAX RATE

A severe indictment of New York's present day municipal methods is contained in an article on the "Budget and the Citizen," by Mary B. Sayle, which appears in the Outlook. The article is illustrated by charts which show in tabulated form how the money raised in taxes is spent.

The writer says that: But when we have learned that twenty-eight out of every hundred dollars paid in by the taxpayer are paid out in interest and redemption charges on the city debt, or in instalments thereof; that eighteen dollars go to the department of education, nine dollars to the police department, between one and two dollars each to the health department and the department of public charities, and so forth, we are as far as ever from an answer to the second half of our question, "Are we getting our money's worth?"

In New York, as in many another American city, large and small, it has long been a settled conviction in the public mind that we are not getting our money's worth. Specific proof in support of this conviction has been furnished from time to time by sporadic instances—or rather by sporadic discoveries—of "graft" or of conspicuous inefficiency on the part of public officials and on several occasions the public has expressed its anger enough to insist on the expenditure of a "non-partisan" or a "reform" administration. In every instance, however, this mood has proved evanescent; reform has failed to "make good" in the eyes of sufficient numbers of the voters, and the city has been turned over again at the earliest opportunity to the tender mercies of the ever-watchful Tammany tiger. Thus it has come about that the public has become more and more confirmed in pessimism.

The padding of the pay roll is described as one of the reasons why the tax rate of the city is high. The hope of the city, according to the writer, rests with the Bureau of Municipal Reform.

Two Points Of View

"Every citizen should," says the writer, "consider the budget from two points of view; that of the resident, anxious to secure the largest possible measure of protection and opportunity for himself and his fellow-residents—results to be compassed only by the expenditure of many millions annually by the great city

departments; and that of the taxpayer, direct or indirect, anxious to prevent unnecessary increases in the various departmental appropriations which make up the budget, and consequent increases in the tax rate."

"Here it is that the Bureau of Municipal Research steps to the front with an answer and a solution—partial, as all things earthly must be, but practical, of immediate applicability, and yet so far-reaching in effect that we can scarcely yet begin to measure its probable consequences. 'Yes,' declares the Bureau, 'there is a way out; not a way of entirely preventing the increase of taxes, indeed, for the city must be prepared to provide for its own growth, but a way to keep that increase within modest and reasonable limits. Insist on knowing exactly what your money is to be spent for, and on getting full value for your money; cut out the possibility of waste and graft; replace antiquated labor, and money-wasting ways of doing the city's work by modern business methods, as every private firm and corporation has to do if it is going to compete successfully in the business world. By such means you will save enough money now being expended without due return to pay for most of the developments in preventive health work and education, and so on, that you will need for years to come.'

Budget Reform

"This answer makes clear at once both the importance of budget reform and its place as a part of a larger social and economic programme. If we do not know exactly what our money has been and is to be spent for, we cannot judge whether we are getting our money's worth when we do know, we are enabled to take the next step, to frame the next demand for information needed to guide us in deciding what we want and how to get it. If we should discover, for example, that salaries of five hundred dollars each were being asked for the wardens of a group of institutions who were already receiving more than they should; or that twice as many nurses were being requested for a new hospital as would be required in the best private hospitals to care for the same number of patients; or that, while thousands of school children were being adequately instructed in essential elementary branches, it was proposed to spend thousands of dollars to provide teachers of some relatively unimportant subject, we should then be in a position

Lessons for Other Cities

"What is the lesson which other cities can learn from the spectacle of this struggle of New York to free herself from the shackles of antiquated method and place her business on the same footing as that of any legitimately successful private corporation? Here and there, all over the country, groups of men are making to the existence in their own community of similar evils needing correction. In Philadelphia and Cincinnati Bureaus of Municipal Research are already organized; in Memphis, Buffalo, and other cities special investigation looking to the same end have been undertaken or are soon to be begun. We have often been told that municipal government is the weakest point in all our American system, and at the present moment it would seem that we are coming with a rush to the realization of the fact and the discovery and application of effective remedies. While it may be confidently hoped that evils in the smaller communities will be found to be less firmly rooted, it is safe to prophesy that there will be work enough to be done in many of them to keep their public-spirited citizens busy for more than one decade to come."

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Hon. John F. Dryden, President,
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