

DR. ELLIOT DOES NOT BELIEVE IN THE PLACE CALLED 'HELL'

(Kansas City Star)

Considerable local comment was aroused a few days ago by the statement of the Rev. Burris A. Jenkins, of the Linwood Boulevard Christian Church that he did not believe in a hell. Men of nation-wide prominence are engaged in a controversy on the same subject. Dr. Charles W. Elliot, former president of Harvard, recently made a statement in accord with that of Dr. Jenkins. Now an answer has been made to Dr. Elliot by Prof. L. T. Townsend, of Mass., one of the foremost Bible students in the country. The reply of Prof. Townsend appears in the Bible Champion, a publication founded for the purpose of spreading the belief in the Bible.

The statement of Dr. Elliot, which started the controversy, follows:

"In the present day no educated person believes in hell. This declaration will no doubt be publicly disapproved by some rather archaic ministers and also by some editors of religious papers.

"A new religion, Twentieth Century religion is bound to come. Whether it will prove as efficient to deter men from doing wrong and encourage them to do right is a question which experience alone can answer. In these two respects neither the threats nor the promises of the older religions have been remarkably successful in society at large.

"The fear of hell has not proved effective to deter men from wrong doing, and heaven has never yet been described in terms very attractive to the average man or woman. Both are indeed unimaginable. The great geniuses, like Dante and Swedenborg, have produced only fantastic and incredible pictures of their state.

"The modern man would hardly feel any appreciable loss of motive power toward good or away from evil if heaven were burned or hell quenched.

"The prevailing Christian conceptions of heaven and hell have hardly any more influence with thinking people in the present day than have Olympus and Hades. The modern mind craves an immediate motive of leading, good for to-day on this earth.

The new religion will build on the actual experiences of men and women of human society as a whole. The motive power it relies on has been and is at work in innumerable human lives, and its beatific visions and its hopes are better grounded than are those of traditional religion, and finer, because free from all selfishness and from the imagery of governments courts, social distinctions and wars."

Replying to this Professor Townsend says:

"When any man says 'I do not believe in hell,' one cannot but feel that an unscientific attitude has been taken and that whatever evidence may be presented to him is likely to be thrown out of the window.

"A challenge is sometimes put in this form: 'Do not ask me to believe in hell unless you can tell me where it is.'

"This it is impossible to do. No man living knows further than this, that it seems to be in a direction downward, which, however, may not signify a geographical direction.

"But because one cannot tell is no proof that there is not such a place. No one can tell where heaven is, though we point upward. This lack of knowledge, however, does not settle the question whether or not there is a heaven. No one knows where in this planetary system our earth is, whether near or far from the centre of the universe, or in what direction up or down, it is moving, or what are the bounds of space, but all the same the earth has a place and is moving, nor does our ignorance settle the question of the limit of space.

"Dr. Elliot some time ago visited countries in the far east. He doubtless has crossed to Europe several times, but how little he has travel-

led compared with what he has not! He has not walked along the star-decked Milky Way, he has not visited the Dipper nor the Southern Cross, nor Jupiter, nor Mars, the Moon, the North Pole, nor the South Pole, nor has he yet taken the death journey.

"Dr. Elliot is still in the land of the living. The invisible, spiritual, realms, the gates of heaven and God's throne are far beyond his ken. He has not diligently searched for nor devoutly heeded the evidence concerning the place said to be prepared for the devil and his angels, called Gehenna in the New Testament and translated 'hell.' Nor has he gone as far as Hades or sheol, the intermediate world, where the dead remain until after the judgment. How, therefore, can one allow any man who has travelled so little decide what is or is not in those realms that are far beyond visitation?

"The trouble with Dr. Elliot and with others of his way of thinking seems to be that they admit of no provision or qualification in their theological unbeliefs. There is no hell in their theology, no atonement; the Bible is only an antiquated book and Christ only another human being.

"One is sometimes led to wonder whether such a man as Dr. Elliot, learned as he is said to be, has ever seriously taken into account the fact that there are two sides to some theological questions or whether he has ever considered thoughtfully what it means that men of the highest standing in scholarship and mental grasp have firmly believed what he does not believe? Are the opinions of these orthodox men, simply because they are orthodox, to have no weight in the settlement of these profoundest of problems?

"It may be as well to call attention to another fact of no small importance, which is this: Orthodoxy has at present fully as much to contend against as at any time during the Christian era. Towards its more rigorous demands and teachings there are feelings both of defiance and indifference. Church members are so absorbed with business affairs that attention to theological and religious subjects is almost out of the question. The preaching that is now largely in favor is that which does not entail upon the hearer any considerable burden of thinking. Two or three bright things, a bouquet or two of rhetorical flowers, a sprinkling of anecdotes, one or two of which shall have a pathetic cast, but not one word about God's austerity or about the death or eternity is the pulpit entertainment called for.

"The opinion of Dr. Elliot, if we may continue the repetition of his name is this, that the thought of hell no longer has any use and so may as well be abolished.

"If the rantings of the late Robert G. Ingersoll and the more dignified announcements of Dr. Elliot express actual conditions or a general conviction then the ethical motive for holding and advocating the Bible doctrine of either heaven or hell would be so largely diminished that pulpit silence on the subject may as well remain unbroken. But on the other hand the opinions of many experienced and wise men is that the thought of the ordinary man and woman and that the deep rooted expectation of a merited punishment after death, as in all ages and countries, acts as a wholesome and restraining check upon humanity."

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

Mr. Robert Bickerdike, one of the members for Montreal, introduced a motion into the House at Ottawa favoring the abolition of capital punishment. It did not get beyond the first stage, and there was such a consensus of opinion against the proposed bill that it is likely to be dropped.

The abolition of capital punishment is supposed to be an evidence of advanced civilization. Its advocates point to several of the smaller European countries, such as Switzerland, in support of their views that the question is far too broad to be settled by the experience of one nationality or one race. It is now generally conceded that the purpose of all punishment is mainly deterrent. It is for the protection of society that men are imprisoned or hanged, as the case may be, and obviously that system which yields the maximum of safety to the public is the best. It is a matter in which statistics are very misleading, except so far as they can be compiled in countries where the law is well administered. For instance if one were to take the statistics of murder in the United States, where capital punishment is in vogue, it would be possible to argue that it is almost ineffective as a deterrent. With seventy-two thousand murders committed in half a decade, it might well be claimed that the death penalty is valueless. But when one considers the infinitesimal percentage of murderers who are brought to trial in the States, the value of the argument diminishes to a vanishing point. If, for instance, the same percentage were put on trial and executed as the figures in England indicate, there is little doubt that murder would cease to be popular in the States. On the other hand if the death penalty were abolished in that country, where human life is held so cheaply, it is open to doubt whether it would be safe to live there. If one falls back for statistical information upon countries where the law has been well administered, such as England, then it is clearly shown that capital punishment has acted as a deterrent, and that under its operation the crime of murder has greatly diminished.—The Week.

TIRED OF HIS JOB.

A despatch from St. Thomas, Ont., states that George Draper, an employee of the Bell Telephone Company, was arrested there on the request of the Bracebridge police and has been taken back. Draper it is alleged, recently agreed at Bracebridge to turn over his wife and three children to a man whom she said she loved better, and even went so far as to help the latter get a license and acted as best man at the wedding. Then he cleared out, but the father of the woman had both men arrested.

RELINQUISHING BUSINESS.

Announcement was made in Saturday's Colonist of the closing of the jewelry business of Messrs. Redfern & Son. This marks the passing of the oldest jewelry concern in the city and one of the oldest mercantile firms in the province, Mr. Redfern having established himself as a jeweler in this city in 1862, and has been in business continually since that time. Mr. Redfern has no plans for the immediate future, but having been actively engaged in business so long feels that he has earned a rest and is going to take it.

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