

*Eager*

Report of sermon preached before the Southern Baptist Convention, Washington, D. C., May 9, 1895; Dr. *Geo. B. Eager* of Alabama, preacher.

Dr. George B. Eager, of Alabama, had been appointed to preach the Convention sermon, and he took for his text Matt. 22;21. His theme was religious liberty. The text clearly recognized the existence and righteousness of two distinct governments in the world, civil and moral. This fact puts man into a twofold relation to government. The text teaches further the duties arising from this fact. But the text also declares the separate-ness of these duties, and it contains still further authoritative command to be loyal to both. The speaker said in the government of material things civil government had authority, but in the realm of conscience only God could direct. In the struggles of this principle to reach the light it had passed through four periods, (1) Persecution, (2) protection, (3) power, and (4) policy. Through all these it had pressed itself forward and into recognition. We need not look for the origin of this great principle among the laws of the nations. Christ is its author. In the soil of this government it has taken root and guarantees absolute freedom, not to any system of religion but to every order of thought. This same principle is at work in other governments. In England the separation of church and State is assumed. This is the dawning of a new day, the coming of which is looked for without alarm.

Reactionary influences, however, have been felt in our own land. Certain over-zealous persons are insisting upon a new amendment to the constitution recognizing of God and the Holy Spirit. Some are contending for the teaching of certain religious truths in the public schools. Sunday laws and any religious requirement for office holding are in direct violation

of this principle.

The sermon was thoughtful and scholarly. The time and place of its delivery rendered it quite appropriate, and it doubtless was listened to with pleasure by the vast multitude which heard it.

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