

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER

A WALL STREET VIEW OF THE DECLINE OF FAITH

Some striking editorials on the question of the decline of the belief in a future life have been appearing in recent issues of *The Wall Street Journal* (New York). From such a source the inquiry carries peculiar weight, especially to the type of mind which forms the majority in our commercial civilization. The articles in question, written by Mr. Sereno S. Pratt, the editor of that paper, expresses the "intense interest" of that journal "in the economic and political effects of any change in the thought, the habits and the lives of men." If there has been a decline in religious faith, Mr. Pratt asserts, that fact "alters the basic conditions of civilization," "becomes a factor in the markets," "changes the standards and affects the values of things that are bought and sold," and "concerns the immediate interests of those who never had such a faith almost as much as it does the lives of those who have had the faith and lost it." Along this line Mr. Pratt continues:

"The question, therefore, of practical, immediate, and tremendous importance to Wall Street quite as much as to any other part of the world, is, Has there been a decline in the faith in the future life? and if so, to what extent is this responsible for the special phenomena of our time—the eager pursuit of sudden wealth, the shameless luxury and display, the gross and corrupting extravagance, 'the misuse of swollen fortunes,' the indifference to law, the growth of graft, the abuses of great corporate power, the social unrest, the spread of demagoguery, the advances of Socialism, the appeals to bitter class hatred? To find out what connection exists between a decadence in religious faith and the social unrest of our time, due, on one side, to oppressive use of financial power, and, on the other, to class agitation, might well be worth an investigation by a commission of government experts, if it were possible for the Government to enter into such an undertaking."

"Whatever may be a man's own personal beliefs," continues Mr. Pratt, "there is no one who would not prefer to do business with a person who really believes in a future life." If the world holds fewer men of such faith, it makes a big difference, and if faith is to continue to decline, this will require new adjustments. So the writer views the situation, adding these reflections:

"There are certainly, on the surface, many signs of such a decline. Perhaps, if it were possible to probe deeply into the subject, it might be found that faith still abounded, but is no longer expressed in the old way. But we are obliged to accept the surface indications. These include a falling off in church attendance, the abandonment of family worship, the giving over of Sunday more and more to pleasure and labor, the separation of religious from secular education, under the stern demands of non-sectarianism, the growing up of a generation not instructed as our fathers were in the study of the Bible, the secularization of a portion of the church itself, and its inability in a large way to gain the confidence of the laboring people. If these are really signs of a decay of religious faith, then indeed there is no more important problem before us than that of either discovering some adequate substitute for faith, or to take immediate steps to check a development which has within it the seeds of a national disaster."

The alternative of the "adequate substitute" does not recommend itself to the mind of Mr. Pratt, as may be seen from his view expressed in a more recent editorial, which deals with the materialism underneath both "the Socialism of Karl Marx and the financial concentration of which we may take that represented by E. H. Harriman as a type." Balancing the virtues of the two, Mr. Pratt sees in Socialism "the more attractive and impossible program," while "financial concentration" he believes to be "the safer for the social order and civilization." In neither, however, is the remedy adequate to the ill. He concludes:

"The supreme need of the hour is not elastic currency, or sounder banking, or better protection against panics, or bigger navies, or more equitable tariffs, but a revival of faith, a return to a morality which recognizes a basis in religion and the establishment of a workable and working theory of life that views man as something more than a mere lump of matter."—*Literary Digest*.

COMPARATIVE FAILURE OF CHRISTIANITY

BY REV. W. GALBRAITH

(The following is published by the Toronto (Ont.) Methodist Publishing House):

"It [Christianity] has fallen far short of its divine purposes and marvelous capabilities. What is the reason of this comparative failure?

"We answer, first, that in the days of Constantine it was baptized with the spirit of heathenism, and these foreign and enfeebling elements, transfused through the entire Christian system, grew upon it like a parasite for more than a thousand years, and are still a formidable obstacle to its progress and achievements. Heathen doctrines, usages and habits still linger to a greater or less degree in all branches of the Christian Church.

"We answer, secondly, that Christianity at this hour is largely baptized with the spirit of the world. Worldly maxims, methods and motives have invaded the heritage of Jesus. These are eating out its life, and obstructing all its efforts.

"Great and grievous wrongs are still rank and rampant in the Church and in the world. The Church, by her individual members, and in her collective capacity, is doing a great and glorious work for God and humanity, but, unhappily, mediæval religion protrudes itself into the last quarter of this nineteenth century.

"Fashionable and formal churches are found everywhere. The heathenish system of caste grows in Christian lands. Expensive churches, with heavy debts, popular preaching, artistic music, wealth and self-indulgence, have invaded the fair heritage of God. Mission churches have become a necessity to meet the needs and the condition of the poor. If Christianity were in its normal state there would be no mission churches.

"Goodness would be recognized as the only basis of true brotherhood, and the rich and poor would meet together.

"Intense, inveterate, stereotyped selfishness is crushing and blighting the world. It is seen everywhere.

"You cannot enter a street car, railway coach, shop, mart or stock exchange, church or legislative hall, but selfishness manifests itself in forms which must be offensive to a righteous God, and in striking contrast with the spirit and teachings of Jesus Christ. It forms immense monopolies and combinations on the one hand to grasp the wealth of the world. It forms protective associations and strong unions on the other hand for self-protection and to resist those grinding monopolies and combinations. It is manifested at both sides of the counter. On the one side, the would-be buyer wants goods at less than a living price, and drives the vender to deception and lying advertisements. Human beings, like wild beasts, prey on each other. . . .

"What is known as the "sweating system" in industrial life is a disgrace to humanity, and should not be tolerated in any Christian land. Hard workers are often inadequately remunerated for faithful toil. Often on the other hand, the time is put in and wages demanded for work that was never performed. Paul's counsel to servants and masters (Eph. 6:5-9) ought to be placarded in every store, factory and workshop.

"Is pure Christianity, if rightly applied, competent to correct all these wrongs, and to bring society into loving, happy, righteous harmony? I have no hesitation in affirming that it is thoroughly competent for this work. It operates along two distinct, yet not conflicting lines—Gospel and law. The Gospel teaches what men ought to be, and how they ought to live. 'Provide things honest in the sight of all men.' 'Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.' 'Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.' 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets.'

"The Gospel provides the example we should follow. In spirit and life all men should be like Jesus Christ. They should transact business just as Christ would do if he were in their place. 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked.'

"The Gospel presents us with the highest motives to a merciful and righteous life. It offers as an inducement for obedience to its teachings, the highest, truest and most mature manhood here, and the fullest felicity and glory hereafter.

"The Gospel provides us with the necessary inspiration and power to live this life. In other systems of religion and philosophy, there is much excellent teaching, but there is no motive power. The strongest and best machinery is of no practical utility without an adequate power to put it in operation.

"All the proposed plans and schemes for the reformation of society, outside the Gospel, are utterly devoid of the necessary motive power. To expect them to transform society, correct its abuses and redress its wrongs, is to expect from the human what can only be effected by the divine."

The writer of the foregoing sees something, evidently,—

he sees that the *nominal* Church is not even approximating the divine standard. But he does not at all see the cause of the failure, for he proceeds to express post-millennial views—that the Church should convert the world! The trouble lies in the abandonment of the faith once delivered unto the saints respecting the second coming of Christ, the resurrection hope and the Kingdom then to bless the world. How strange that one could recognize the need of divine aid to overthrow the power of sin and death and Satan and yet expect this through humanity after 1800 years of trial and knowing that there are twice as many heathen today as there were a century ago.

HELL A FAILURE, A CLERGYMAN SAYS

St. Louis.—Fear as an incentive to righteous living has gone out of date, according to the Reverend Doctor Gifford, of Buffalo, who spoke before the Baptist Congress at the Second Baptist Church. He said:—

“Seventy-five years ago the preacher scared his listeners

into obedience by opening back the creaking iron doors of an awful hell, where they saw the burning of the livid flesh. Then the motive was fear. Now if a preacher were to present such a picture his audience would sit and look at him with the same curiosity as they would examine an old dusty spinning wheel. There is not enough heat in hell to drive the machinery of foreign missions at the present time.”

* * *

Is it not quite apparent that the preaching of a burning hell of eternal torture for ninety-nine out of every hundred of our race is a matter of *policy*? Ministers seem to guide their conduct by expediency rather than by conscientious conviction. Their query seems to be, not What is the Truth on this great subject? but, What will my congregation approve? What will bring me popularity and another call at a better salary? What will increase the membership of my Church? Each seems to “look for gain from his own quarter.”—Isa. 56:11.

THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING OF THE PASSOVER

The Passover season draws near its beginning, as celebrated by the Jews, on the 29th of this month; but the interest of Christians centers especially in the slaying of the lamb, which preceded the Passover feast, and their celebration, therefore, properly begins on the evening of March 28th. We greatly regret, however, that while millions of Christians and Jews will in some formal ceremonies and in a perfunctory manner celebrate this great event of history, but few of either religion discern the real signification of the celebration.

THE PASSOVER INSTITUTED

Could their minds be awakened thoroughly to its true significance it would start a religious revival such as the world has never yet known. But, alas! as the Apostle declares, the god of this world has blinded the minds of many, and even some whose eyes of understanding are partially opened he describes as being blind and unable to see afar off, or holden and unable to see the deep things of God in respect to these ceremonies, which have been celebrated in the world for now more than 3300 years. And, by the way, it must be admitted even by the higher critics and agnostics in general that an event so prominently marked, so widely observed for so long a time, must have a foundation in fact. There must have been just such an occurrence in Egypt: the first-born of Egypt must have perished in that tenth plague, and the first-born of Israel must have been preserved free from it—all that observed the rule to remain under the blood—else this widespread celebration of the event would have been inexplicable.

We need not remind you of the particulars connected with the institution—that the Israelites were held in a measure of serfdom by the Egyptians, and that when the time, in the Lord's providence, arrived for their deliverance, their masters sought selfishly to maintain their bondage and refused to let them go forth to the land of Canaan. One after another the Lord sent during the year nine different plagues upon the people of the land of Egypt, relieving them one after another when their king craved mercy and made promises which he afterwards broke. Finally the servant of the Lord, Moses, announced a great crowning disaster—that the first-born in every family of Egypt would die in one night, and that in the home of the humblest peasant as well as in the home of the king there should be a mourning, as a result of which they would be glad finally to yield and let the Israelites go—yea, urge them to go, and in haste, lest the Lord should ultimately bring death upon the entire people if their king continued to harden his heart and resist the divine mandate.

The first three plagues were common to all in Egypt, including the district in which the Israelites resided: the next six plagues affected not the district occupied by the Israelites; and the last, the tenth plague, was declared to be common to the entire land of Egypt, including the land of the Israelites, except as the latter should show faith and obedience by providing a sacrificial lamb, whose blood was to be sprinkled upon the sides and lintels of their doorways, and whose flesh was to be eaten in the same night, with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, the eaters standing staff in hand and girded ready for the journey—with full expectancy that the Lord would smite the first-born of the Egyptians with death and make them willing to let the Israelites go, and with full faith also that they would share in this calamity were it not for the blood upon their door-posts and lintels.

“WHEN HE SEETH THE BLOOD THE LORD WILL PASS OVER THE DOOR AND NOT SUFFER THE DESTROYER TO SMITE YOU.”—EXODUS 12:23

The Israelites were commanded to celebrate this as the first feature of the Jewish Law and one of their greatest

memorials as a nation. As a matter of fact, we find that in some degree the Passover is celebrated by Jews in all parts of the world—even by those who claim to be agnostics and infidels. They still have a measure of respect for it as an ancient custom. But is it not strange that, with the bright minds which many of them possess, our Jewish friends have never thought it worth while to inquire the meaning of this celebration? Why was the lamb slain and eaten? Why was its blood sprinkled upon the door-posts and lintels? Because God so commanded, of course; but what reason, motive, object or lesson was there behind the divine command? Truly a reasonable God has reasonable commands, and in due time will be willing that his faithful people should understand the significance of every requirement. Why are the Hebrews indifferent to this subject? Why does prejudice hold their minds? It is for them to answer, and, answering, to get light and joy from the knowledge.

Although Christianity has the answer to this question we regret that the majority of Christians, because of carelessness, would be unable to give a reason and ground for any hope in connection with this matter. If the Jew can realize that his Sabbath day is a type or foreshadowing of a coming epoch of rest and blessing and release from toil, sorrow and death, why can he not see that similarly all the features of the Mosaic Law institution were intended by the Lord to be foreshadowings of various blessings, to be bestowed in due time? Why can it not be discerned by all that the Passover lamb typified, represented, the Lamb of God? that its death represented the death of Jesus, the Just for the unjust? and that the application of its blood symbolizes, represents, the application of the merit of the death of Jesus to the entire household of faith? Blessed are those whose eyes see that Jesus was indeed “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world”—that the cancellation of the world's sin is effected by the payment of man's penalty—that as the whole world lost divine favor and came under divine sentence of death, with its concomitants of sorrow and pain, it was necessary before this sentence or curse could be removed that a satisfaction of justice should be made, and that therefore, as the Apostle declares, Christ died for our sins—the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us back to God. Thus he opened up a new and living way—a new way to life everlasting.

“A KIND OF FIRST-FRUIT”

Those familiar with the Bible have noticed that therein the church of Christ is called the church of the first-born, and again a kind of first-fruits unto God of his creatures. (Heb. 12:23; Jas. 1:18.) This implies others ultimately of God's family later born; it implies after-fruits. Christian people seem to have overlooked these Scriptures so far as making application of them is concerned, and have generally come to believe that only those who are of the first-fruits will ever be saved and that there will be no after-fruits. But let us look at this type of the Passover—let us notice that it was God's intention to save all Israelites, and that as a nation they represented all mankind that will ever come into harmony with God and be granted eternal life in the land of promise. Let us notice that there were two passovers: a great one, when the whole nation by divine power was miraculously delivered by the Lord and led by a sandbar across the channel of the Red Sea especially prepared for them by the accentuation of winds and tides.

That picture or type shows the ultimate deliverance from the power of sin and Satan of every creature who will ultimately come into accord with the Lord and desire to render

him worship—not an Israelite was left behind. But that pass-over at the Red Sea is not the one we are discussing particularly on this occasion—not the one we are about to celebrate. No, the event which we celebrate was merely the passing over or sparing of the first-borns of Israel. Only the first-born were endangered, though the deliverance of all depended upon the salvation of the first-born. Applying this in harmony with all the Scriptures we see that the little flock, the first-fruits unto God of his creatures, the church of the first-born alone, is being spared at the present time—being passed over, provided they are under the blood. We see that the remainder of mankind who may desire to enlist and to follow the great antitypical Moses when he shall ultimately lead the people forth from the bondage of sin and death are not now endangered—merely the first-born.

"THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST-BORN"

The first-born—the "church of the first-born"—are those of mankind who in advance of the remainder have had the eyes of their understanding opened to a realization of their condition of bondage and their need of deliverance and to God's willingness to fulfil to them his good promises. More than this, they are such as have responded to the grace of God, have made a consecration of themselves to him and his service, and in return have been begotten again by the holy Spirit. With these first-born ones it is a matter of life and death whether or not they remain in the household of faith—behind the blood of sprinkling. For these to go forth would imply a disregard of divine mercy. It would signify that they would do despite to divine goodness, and that, having enjoyed their share of the mercy of God as represented in the blood of the Lamb, they were not appreciative of it. For such the Scriptures declare, "There remaineth no more a sacrifice for their sins;" they are to be esteemed as adversaries of God, whose fate was symbolized in the destruction of the first-born of Egypt.

We do not mean to say that the first-born of Egypt who died in that night and any of the first-born of the Israelites who departed from their homes contrary to command and who died therefor, have gone into the second death. Quite to the contrary: we understand that all these matters were types, figures, illustrations, foreshadowings of matters on a higher plane, and that the realities belong to the church of Christ during this Gospel age since Pentecost. If we sin wilfully after that we have received a knowledge of the truth, after that we have tasted of the good Word of God, after that we have been made partakers of the holy Spirit and thus members of the church of the first-born, if we should fall away—it would be impossible to renew us again to repentance—God would have nothing further for us, our disregard of his mercy would mean that we would die the second death. From this standpoint the church of the first-born, through the begetting of the holy Spirit and the greater knowledge and privileges they enjoy every way, have a greater responsibility in the world, for they are the only ones as yet in danger of the second death. This is the lesson of the type and applies to Christians only.

By and by the night will have passed, the glorious morn of deliverance will have come, and the Christ, the antitypical Moses, will lead forth, will deliver all Israel—all the people of God—all who when they shall know shall be glad to reverence, honor and obey the will of God. That day of deliverance will be the entire Millennial age, at the close of which all evil and evil doers, symbolized by the hosts of Egypt, will be utterly cut off in the second death.

"AS OFT AS YE DO THIS"

The Apostle clearly and positively identifies the Passover lamb with our Lord Jesus, saying, "Christ our Passover is slain for us; therefore let us keep the feast." (1 Cor. 5:7, 8.) He informs us that we all need the blood of sprinkling, not upon our houses but upon our hearts. (Heb. 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:2.) We are also to eat the unleavened bread of truth if we would be strong and prepared for the deliverance in the morning of the new dispensation. We also must eat the Lamb, must appropriate Christ, his merit, the value that was in him, to ourselves. Thus we put on Christ, not merely by faith, but more and more to the extent of our ability we put on his character and are transformed day by day to his glorious image in our hearts. We are to feed upon him as the Jews fed upon the literal lamb. Instead of the bitter herbs, which aided and whetted their appetites, we have bitter experiences and trials which the Lord provides for us, and which help to wean our affections from earthly things and give us increasing appetite to feed upon the Lamb and the unleavened bread of truth. We, too, are to remember that we have no continuing city, but are *en route* as pilgrims, strangers, travelers, staff in hand, girded for the journey, that we may ultimately reach the heavenly

Canaan and all the glorious things which God hath in reservation for the church of the first-born, in association with their Redeemer as kings and priests unto God.

Our Lord Jesus also fully identified himself with the Passover Lamb. On the same night that he was betrayed, and just preceding his crucifixion, he gathered his disciples in the upper room, saying, "With desire have I desired to eat this pass-over with you before I suffer." It was necessary that as Jews they should celebrate the Passover supper on that night—the saving of the typical first-born from the typical prince of this world—but as soon as the requirements of the type had been fulfilled our Lord instituted a new Memorial upon the old foundation, saying, "As often as ye do this [celebrate the Passover—annually] do it in remembrance of me! (1 Cor. 11:24, 25.) Your Jewish neighbors, whose eyes of understanding have not been opened, will not appreciate the matter in its true antitypical sense, but you—who recognize me as the Lamb of God, who in God's purpose has been slain from the foundation of the world—you who recognize that I am about to give my life as the world's redemption price, you will note this Passover with peculiar and sacred significance, different from all others. Henceforth you will not celebrate any longer the type but memorialize the antitype, for I am about to die as the Lamb of God, and thus to provide the blood of sprinkling for the church of the first-born and meat indeed for the entire household of faith.

"THIS IS MY BODY, BROKEN FOR YOU"

That the Lord's followers should no longer gather as the Jews had done previously to eat the literal lamb supper in commemoration of the deliverance in Egypt our Lord shows by choosing new emblems—"unleavened bread" and the "fruit of the vine"—to represent him as the Lamb. Thenceforth his followers, in accord with his injunction, celebrated his death as their Passover Lamb every year until after the apostles had fallen asleep in death, and a great falling away had confused the faith of nominal Christendom, producing the epoch known as the "dark ages." Even during the "dark ages" the teaching that Christ was the antitypical Passover Lamb persisted, though the celebration of his death in the Passover supper which Jesus instituted fell into disuse. It was crowded out by that most terrible blasphemy which has deceived and confused so many millions of Christendom—the mass, introduced by Roman Catholicism. This in the Scriptures is called "the abomination of desolation," because of the disastrous influence it has had upon the faith and practice of the Lord's people. Although Protestants in general have repudiated the mass, as being wholly contrary to the teachings of Christ and the apostles, nevertheless the practices of Protestants are largely influenced yet by that terrible error, from which they have only partially escaped.

THE MASS IS NOT THE EUCHARIST

Many Protestants will innocently ask, Is not the mass merely the eucharist, the Lord's supper, under another name? O, no! we answer—it is wholly different. The Lord's supper celebrates the death of Christ accomplished at Calvary; the mass represents a new sacrifice for sins made every time it is performed. Our Roman Catholic friends believe that when the priest blesses the wafer it becomes the actual body of Christ in his hands for the very purpose of sacrificing him afresh. High mass is a particular sacrifice of Christ for a particular sin by a particular individual. Low mass is a sacrifice of Christ for the general sins of a congregation. Roman Catholics claim to believe in the merit of Christ's sacrifice at Calvary—that it covered original sin, general sins that are past; but they claim also that the daily sins, shortcomings, blemishes of every individual, require to be cleansed by fresh sacrifices of Christ from time to time. Thus, from their standpoint, as represented in the mass, and as practised by the Roman Catholics and Greek Catholics and high Church Episcopalians, Christ is being sacrificed afresh all the world over every day. This in the Scriptures is called an "abomination" in God's sight, because it disregards, sets at naught, the statement of the Scriptures that Christ dieth no more, that by one sacrifice he hath perfected forever all who come unto the Father through him.—Rom. 6:9.

It will be readily seen that the repeated sacrifices represented in the mass would have the general effect of nullifying and minimizing the value of the great sacrifice at Calvary represented in the Passover and its Memorial supper. How could those who had come to look especially to the mass for the cancellation of their sins be expected to look with as deep concern and as high an appreciation as otherwise, back to the antitypical Passover? While, therefore, the celebration of Good Friday has continued, the celebrations of the Memorial supper preceding it fell into disuse long ago.

As for Protestants, repudiating the dogma of the mass as wholly unscriptural, they have abandoned it and returned to a celebration of the Lord's supper. Meantime, however, accustomed to the frequency of the mass, they have considered it merely a matter of expediency how often the Lord's supper should be celebrated; hence we find some celebrating it every four months, some every three months, some every month, and some every Sunday. This general laxity and failure to reach a common ground of conformity is due to two things: (1) Because Christian people generally have overlooked the fact that our Lord's death was as the antitypical Passover Lamb, and that its celebration is the antitypical Passover supper; (2) Because they have misunderstood our Lord's words, "As oft as ye do this," to mean, Do this as often as you please, whereas the words really signify, As often as you, my disciples (all of whom are Jews and accustomed to keeping the Passover), keep this Passover supper, keep it in remembrance of me—not in remembrance of the literal lamb and the typical deliverance from typical Egypt and its bondage through the passing over of the typical first-born.

Those who celebrate the Lord's supper weekly consider that they have Scriptural precedent for so doing, because in the Bible we read that the early Church met together on the first day of the week and on such occasions had the "breaking of bread." It is a great mistake, however, to confound such breaking of bread with the Memorial supper, for the former was merely an ordinary meal. There is absolutely nothing whatever in the record to indicate otherwise; the wine, the fruit of the vine, is not mentioned in connection with it, and it is never said to represent the broken body of our Lord. It was a cheerful social custom in the early church to celebrate our Lord's resurrection on the first day of the week, and this common social custom helped to unite the bonds of brotherhood and fellowship. In many places the Lord's people follow this custom still. The Bible House congregation at Allegheny has such a breaking of bread every Lord's Day between the afternoon and the evening services—as a convenience for those living at a distance, especially as a desirable opportunity for extending fellowship amongst the Lord's people.

THE DATE OF THE MEMORIAL SUPPER

As we all know, the Jews used the moon more than we do in the reckoning of their time. Each new moon represented the beginning of a new month. The new moon which *came closest* to the spring equinox was reckoned the beginning of the ecclesiastical year, and beginning the fifteenth day of that month the feast of Passover lasting a week was celebrated. That week of seven days represents the joy, the peace, the blessing, which result from the passing over, and typified the complete joy, peace and blessing which every true Christian experiences through a realization of the passing over of his sins through the merit of Christ's redemptive sacrifice. All true Christians, therefore, in their hearts have a celebration of this feast of Passover continually—the completeness of the matter being represented in the seven days, seven being a symbol of completeness. Not seeing the matter from the same standpoint, the Jew thought less of the killing of the Passover lamb and the eating of that supper than he did of the week following it; but our Lord emphasized the importance of the killing of the Passover lamb when he announced himself as its antitype and when he invited us to celebrate his death on its anniversary until, at his second coming, our entrance into the kingdom would signify the complete fulfilment of all blessings.

It would be a great blessing, doubtless, to many Christians if they could see this subject in its true light, lay more weight upon the value of the death of Christ, and join more heartily in its celebration on its anniversary, instead of at various other times and seasons, irregularly and without special significance. However, there have sprung up all over the civilized world little groups of the Lord's people who are taking heed to this subject, and whose delight it is to celebrate the Master's death according to his request—"As often as ye do this"—annually—"do it in remembrance of me." We believe that such a celebration brings special blessing to both heart and head. The nearer we come to the divine requirements the greater is the measure of our blessing, the more closely are we drawn to our Master and Head, and to each other as members of his body. The date of this celebration this year will fall on March 28 after 6 p. m., because at that hour begins the fourteenth day of the month Nisan, according to the Jewish reckoning. We urge upon all of the Lord's people everywhere to gather as may best suit their convenience in little groups or families to do this in remembrance of our Lord's great sacrifice. The fact that it is the anniversary makes the matter more impressive.

"LORD, IS IT I?"

We recall the circumstances of the first Memorial, the blessing of the bread and of the cup, the fruit of the vine, of our Lord's exhortation that these represented his broken body and shed blood, and that those who are his followers should participate—not only feeding upon him but being broken with him, not only partaking of the merit of his blood, his sacrifice, but also in laying down their lives in his service, in co-operating with him in every and any manner. How precious these thoughts are to those who are rightly in tune with the Lord. Following this they may think of the course of Judas, who, though highly favored, loved filthy lucre to the extent that he was willing to sell his Master, but who was bold enough even while his treachery was being exposed toward the Lord to cry, "Is it I?" The very thought that any who had companied with the Lord could thus deny him and betray him to his enemies causes a proper loathing of such conduct, and should properly fill us with caution if not with fear lest in any sense of the word we should for the sake of honor or wealth or any other matter sell the Truth or any of its servants, the members of the body of Christ.

Let our minds, then, follow the Redeemer to Gethsemane's garden, and behold him with strong cryings and tears praying to him who was able to save him out of death—expressive of the Master's fear of death lest in some particular he might have failed to follow out the Father's plan and therefore be thought unworthy of a resurrection. We notice how our Lord was comforted by the Father through the angel with the assurance that he had faithfully kept his consecration vow and that he would surely have a resurrection as foretold. We behold how calm he was thereafter, when, before the High Priest and Pilate, and Herod and Pilate again—as a lamb before her shearers is dumb so he opened not his mouth in self defence. We see him faithful, courageous to the very last, and we have his assurance that he could have asked of the Father and had more than twelve legions of angels for his protection; but instead of petitioning for aid to escape his sacrifice, his petition was for aid to endure it faithfully. What a lesson for all who are his footstep followers!

On the other hand we remember that even amongst his loyal disciples the most courageous forsook the Lord and fled, and that one of them even in his timidity denied his Master! What an occasion is this for examining our own hearts as respects the degree of our faith and courage and willingness to suffer with him who redeemed us! What an opportunity is thus afforded for us to buttress the mind with resolutions that we will not deny our Master under any circumstances and conditions—that we will confess him not only with our lips but also by our conduct. Next we are shocked with the thought that it was the Lord's professed people, the Jews, who crucified the Prince of Life! Not only so, but that it was the leaders of their religious thought, the chief priests, scribes, Pharisees and Doctors of the Law rather than the common people. We hearken to the Master's words saying, Marvel not if the world hate you, for ye know that it hated me before it hated you; and we see that he meant the religious world in our case.

DRINK YE OF THE SAME CUP

The lesson to us, then, will be that we shall not be surprised if the opposition to the truth and the persecutions to the light-bearers in the footsteps of Jesus should come from the most prominent exponents of Christianity. This, however, should neither cause us to hate our opponents nor those who persecuted our Lord to the death: rather we are to remember the words of the Apostle respecting this matter—"I wot that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." Ah, yes! ignorance, blindness of heart and mind, are at the bottom of all the sufferings of Christ—Head and body. And the Father permits it to be so now, until the members of the body of Christ shall have filled up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ. With the completion of the membership of the body, the very elect, and the completion of their testing as to faithfulness unto death, will come the conclusion of this Gospel age, the resurrection change of the church to be with and like her Lord. Then, as our Master declared, those who now partake of his broken body and are broken with him in the service of the truth, those who now participate in his cup of suffering and self-denial, will by and by with him drink the new wine of joy in the kingdom—beyond the veil.

With that glorious morning will begin the great work of the world's release from the bonds of sin and death—the great work of uplifting, or, as the Apostle calls that great epoch, "The times of restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:19-

21.) The thought before the minds of those who participate in this Memorial should be the Apostle's words, "If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him;" "If we be dead with him we shall also live with him;" "for the trials of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." (Rom. 8:17; 6:8.) With these thoughts respecting the passing over of our sins of the first-born through the merit of the precious blood we may

indeed keep the feast of the Passover with joy notwithstanding trials and difficulties. So doing, continuing faithful as his followers, very soon we shall have the great privilege of leading forth the Lord's hosts—all who ultimately shall hear and know and obey the great King—out of the dominion of sin and death, out of Egypt into Canaan. Yes, dear brethren, in the language of the Apostle, "Christ our Passover is slain, therefore let us keep the Feast."

THE WINE OF FALSE DOCTRINE

Isaiah 28:7-13.—MARCH 24.

Golden Text—"Wine and new wine take away the heart."—Hosea 4:11.

The Scriptures refer to two kinds of drunkenness—with both the results are disastrous. It would be quite unjust to charge all the troubles of the world against intoxicating liquors, and yet when one considers how far reaching are the baneful effects of alcohol it certainly does appear to be one of the worst foes of the human family—even though it be, as one of the latest scientific discoveries shows, the integral part of the heating or stimulating influence of the blood in all animals. Evidently nature has provided in her own laboratories for the proper amount and all additions thereto are dangerous. We like to hear young people, and especially young men, able to say that they have never tasted a drop of intoxicating beverages. Such a testimony does not, of course, prove them to be saints, but it does demonstrate that in this one particular they have good judgment. He that never tastes can never be injured by this adversary. Before leaving this phase of the subject we quote words credited to the great agnostic, Robert Ingersoll, as follows:—

"I believe that alcohol to a certain degree demoralizes those who make it, those who sell it and those who drink it. I believe from the time it issues from the coiled and poisonous worm of the distillery until it empties into the hell of crime, death and dishonor, it demoralizes everybody that touches it. I do not believe that anybody can contemplate the subject without becoming prejudiced against this liquid crime. All you have to do is to think of the wrecks upon either bank of this stream of death—of the suicides, of the insanity, of the poverty, of the ignorance, of the distress, of the little children tugging at the faded dresses of weeping and despairing wives, asking for bread, of the men of genius it has wrecked, of the millions who have struggled with the imaginary serpents produced by this devilish thing. And when you think of the jails, of the almshouses, of the prisons and of the scaffolds upon either bank—I do not wonder that every thoughtful man is prejudiced against the awful stuff called alcohol."

OUR LESSON GENERALLY MISUNDERSTOOD

In our judgment those who provided the present lesson failed to grasp its real import as part of Isaiah's prophecy. We do not dispute that there may have been drunkenness of a most literal kind in Palestine at the time the Prophet Isaiah uttered these words. But we certainly do doubt that the drunkenness was so general as to justify this language except in some hypothetical and prophetic sense. Undoubtedly those of Isaiah's day were ready to accuse him of gross exaggeration in his statements—for instance, that all tables were full of vomit and filthiness, so that there was no place clean. It is only when we apply this chapter as a prophecy relating to the harvest time of the Jewish age, and again to the parallel time of the harvest of this Gospel age—only then do we begin to see that the Prophet's words were strictly true to the conditions they detailed.

The Apostle Paul, in 1 Cor. 14:21, quoted the eleventh verse of our lesson and applied it distinctly to the "gift of tongues," which, in apostolic times, the Lord used in connection with the establishment of spiritual Israel—to demonstrate divine power to natural Israel and to instruct those who would hear respecting the glorious message of salvation through Jesus; and again, in Romans 9:33 and 10:11, the Apostle quotes from this chapter (Isa. 28:16), and continuing his argument he quotes Isa. 29:10 in Romans 11:8. So surely as the Apostle was right in this application of this lesson, we are correct in claiming that it was not originally merely a temperance lesson to certain profligates of Isaiah's day.

At the time of our Lord's first advent Israel knew not the time of its visitation, and because outwardly moral, respectable, godly, they drew nigh to the Lord with their mouths while their hearts were far from him, having the form of godliness but denying its real power. (2 Tim. 3:5.) We have no reason to think that alcoholic intoxication was

a special feature of that time amongst that people, but we do know that they were drunk and blind and stumbled and were out of the way through the strong drink of false doctrine. Our Lord declared that they made clean the outside of the cup and platter, but that inwardly it was full of all manner of corruption: he cautioned the disciples to beware of the leaven, the corruption, of the Pharisees and Sadducees—that their teachings were not supported by their lives. He declared that they made void the law of God through their traditions—they were drunken with the traditions of the ancients—so stupidly drunken that they knew not the time of their visitation, and that when the Redeemer came unto his own his own received him not, but crucified him.

The Apostle Paul, in Rom. 9:10, shows that in their blindness the Lord allowed the Jews to stumble, and in Rom. 11 he assures us that this stumbling would continue until the full election of spiritual Israel, after which the Lord would bless them and pour out his spirit upon them and upon all flesh through the elect of this Gospel age. It was because of this intoxicated condition of their hearts that the Lord's messages were line upon line, precept upon precept, so that it was necessary to speak to them in other tongues in the early church, to gather out the less intoxicated, those who had any ear to hear the message of divine mercy. As the last verse of our lesson declares, and as the Apostle Paul corroborates, all the messages of the Lord failed because of this drunken condition—"And they did fall backward and were broken, snared and taken." Thank God that the time of their deliverance and the opening of their eyes is near at hand!

APPLICATION TO SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

We have heretofore seen that the Jewish dispensation was a type or parallel of the Gospel dispensation, only on a lower plane. It is proper, therefore, that we should expect in the present harvest time similar conditions of drunkenness, similar stumblings in nominal spiritual Israel. Is it not written that the Lord would prove to be a stone of stumbling or a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel? Do we not see how the first house stumbled because of intoxication with the wine of false doctrine? and do we not hear the Lord's messages in the symbolical book of Revelation telling us of the intoxicated condition of nominal spiritual Israel—all nations made drunk by the wine of Babylon's fornication, corruption, misapplications of the blessings and mercies and privileges granted in this time. It is in full harmony with this that the Apostle urges that the Lord's people have the right kind of wine, the right kind of joy, the right kind of stimulation, saying, "Be not drunken with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the spirit"—the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of the truth, the spirit of righteousness, the spirit of a sound mind—quite contrary to the spirit of error, the spirit of deference to the traditions of men, the spirit of antichrist, the spirit of superstition.

The application of the lesson to the Jewish harvest is eminently proper. It is quite evident that the harvest of this Gospel age, being in many respects much more important, the application should be made here with still greater force, and we have so done—as will be seen by noting the references to the various volumes of the MILLENNIAL DAWN series and ZION'S WATCH TOWER in the margins of our special Bible.

"THEY ERR IN VISION, THEY STUMBLE IN JUDGMENT"

The prophecy that great Babylon would make all nations drunken with her false teachings (Rev. 18:3) has been most literally fulfilled. The professed followers of the Lord of every nation and kindred seem to be under the delusions of these false doctrines; hence they err in vision, they cannot see the riches of divine grace: the nightmare of eternal torment at the hands of demons is vividly before their minds as the truth so that they really blaspheme the gracious Creator unintentionally, misrepresenting his glorious arrangements for the redemption and recovery of the

children of men. Many of them so stumble in judgment that they preach as did Jonathan Edwards, that the eternal torment of the great majority of the race was foreknown and premeditated by the Almighty before Adam was created, and that such treatment of his creatures must be recognized as just—yea, more, as loving—so that the Lord's true people, with all this in mind, should praise God the louder and should consider that his justice was thus made manifest. Alas! what erring in vision, what stumbling in judgment, what inculcation in the spirit of antichrist and the "doctrines of devils."—1 Tim. 4:1.

"TABLES FULL OF VOMIT"

Today as never before this Scripture is fulfilled—"All tables are full of vomit"—not literal tables, but symbolical tables of the various denominations. Each denomination has gathered together at the table of the Lord, to be fed of him upon his words of truth and grace, "Wonderful words of life." But today, having gotten rid of some of the ignorance and superstition of the "dark ages," the Lord's people of various denominations, as they gather at their respective tables, feel sickness, nausea, as they contemplate the spiritual food provided for them and which they have pledged themselves to eat. The various dishes, are garnished with choice rhetoric, and the table is grand with flowers of lovingkindness, mercy and benevolence. Few eat at all, but all gather regularly as a matter of duty. The odor of the dishes is sufficient, and even this is occasionally so strong as to produce nausea and vomiting—the rejection by the more enlightened of the doctrinal monstrosities and horrible misrepresentations of divine justice and love, inconsistent and unpalatable to the last degree.

Truthfully the prophet says, "All tables are full of vomit." Of which creed is it not true? at which denominational table do we find intelligent Christians gathering and really feasting upon that which they declare to be the divine revelation of the divine purposes toward the children of men? Surely it is true that each denomination is ashamed of its own table. Surely it is true that no one will be found in any denomination willing to defend in public the sectarian creed which he has professed. Is it any wonder that the whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint amongst the Lord's nominal people? The wonder rather is that these sick and disgusted ones do not rise and repudiate the tables at which they can no longer eat and be nourished and comforted, and that they seek for the true table of the Lord, of which the Scriptures tell us, "Thou hast furnished me a table in the presence of mine enemies." Respecting which the Scriptures again assure us that our Lord at his second advent will gird himself as the servant of his true people and come forth and serve them, presenting to them things new and old from the storehouse of grace and truth. O, surely all who are of the right character of heart, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, will find the true table of the Lord and will be satisfied, filled thereby.

THE TABLE OF THE LORD VERSUS THE TABLE OF DEVILS

The Lord does not hold himself responsible for the false doctrines that were so generally received during the "dark ages" and which the Apostle describes as "doctrines of devils." All the while he has had the true table for those who were of true heart, for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, but he has permitted also that the great adversary prepare a table for those who are not of the spirit of the truth. It is the Apostle who asks, "What communion hath light with darkness?" and what accord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an unbeliever?" (2 Cor. 6:14-16.) It is the same Apostle who again points out the distinction, separateness of those who are truly the Lord's people, saying, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils."—1 Cor. 10:21.

True, the various tables of the various sects of Christendom were started as tables of the Lord, and adorned to some extent with food from his storehouse, the Word. But the great adversary placed upon these tables various errors, delusions, doctrines of devils, which have blemished them as a whole; wherefore it is appropriate now to apply to them the words of the Scriptures, "Come out from amongst them and be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing." "Babylon is fallen, is fallen [rejected of the Lord]. Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and receive not of her plagues." (2 Cor. 6:17; Rev. 18:4.) Surely she shall fall utterly, as a great millstone cast into the sea of anarchy.—Rev. 18:21.

"WHOM SHALL HE TEACH KNOWLEDGE?"

Ah, here we have it! The knowledge of the truth con-

trasted with the confusion and drunkenness of the error in the present condition, with the Lord's people gathered around various sectarian tables, failing to recognize that there is but one table of the Lord as there is but one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all. Under these conditions the Lord through the prophet inquires, "Who can receive instruction?" Who would be ready for the truth? Evidently only a few is the implication—peculiar people, more zealous for the favor of the Lord than for name and fame amongst men or earthly honors and emoluments. These and these alone are in the attitude of heart to be taught of the Lord, these he will teach knowledge. And he is teaching them; the saints are being gathered from one end of heaven to the other, away from the various tables of men to the spiritual food and refreshment which the Lord himself is providing at this time according to his promise. Amongst these never was there such rejoicing, such feasting, such pleasure—at last they have found the meat in due season for the household, the Lord's provision, and they find it strengthening and joy-inspiring.

As a further part of the question, as an explanation of the kind of teaching, of the needs of the hour, the Apostle says, "Whom shall he make to understand doctrine?"—the message of the Lord? The majority of those who have already vomited, rejected, the creeds of men feel so great a disgust for everything in the way of doctrine that they can barely endure to hear that word. They are inclined to say, "We have had enough of doctrine for the rest of our lives, let us hear no more of that, let us think nothing in particular, decide nothing in particular, know nothing in particular, merely hope something, hope that in some way unknown to everybody God will eventually do for the human family that which it really needs." No wonder, then, the prophet inquires, "Whom shall he teach doctrine?" with the implication that few will be ready or willing to receive doctrine at this time when the creeds of Christendom are being rejected by all thinking people—at heart, if not outwardly.

But our dear friends go to an extreme. It is not the doctrine of God and his Book that is wrong; it is not the divine plan that is in error; it is the teaching of the adversary, which he combined with the Word of God, that caused the drunkenness and subsequently the sickness, the nausea. What need there is to realize that the defilement came from the adversary, from human traditions, and that then while rejecting human traditions we must learn to go to the Word of God, the real storehouse of food and truth, the real table of the Lord, with greater zeal, hungering and thirsting for the truth that we may be filled. We have need to look to the great Master himself, who promised to be present in this time and to send at the hands of his servants the things new and old to the tables of his people. We need to scrutinize all that we receive, lest we ever be taken again by the delusions and hallucinations of the adversary, the doctrines of devils.

"WEANED FROM THE MILK"

The prophet describes the class that will be ready to receive the truth—that they must pass the stage of infancy and be ready for the stronger meat of the divine Word. In this connection we notice that while theologians have prepared the malodorous doctrines of devils as the standards, they have for some time been withholding these from the people and endeavoring to have them, as "babes," use merely the "milk of the Word." This certainly is better than partaking of the adulterated, sickening, doctrinal presentations of the various sects; but, as the Apostle here intimates, it will not be sufficient in this time that one should be a babe in Christ and use merely the milk of the Word. In order to be an overcomer he must grow in grace and knowledge, and possess the fruits and graces of the Lord's spirit, and this cannot be obtained merely through the milk of the Word. As the Apostle declares, we have need of strong meat, that as men we may be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. This strong meat that he refers to is the strong doctrines, the strong teachings, the deep things of the divine Word. Only those who are weaned from the milk, drawn from the breasts, who have ceased to be babes and made some development—only these will be prepared for the instructions that the Lord now has to give, precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little.

As in the harvest of the Jewish age the Lord took the unlearned and gave them foreign tongues and inspirational powers for the dissemination of the truth then due, and did not use the tongues of Scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees,

so in the present harvest time he is also using other tongues than those which had previously been used. The table of the Lord will not be established within the lines of sectarianism, but outside of them, and those who listen merely for the voices of the doctors of divinity will miss the instruction which the Lord will give in this time, and which will be given by other tongues outside of Babylon entirely. Thus it is written, "In her [Babylon] shall be heard no more the voice of the bridegroom and the bride." The bridegroom's

voice is outside, and all who have the spirit of the Lord and who are therefore true virgins, eligible to be his bride, will hearken to his voice and speedily come out of Babylon, in harmony with this declaration. But this will be but a little flock as compared with the mighty hosts of nominal Babylon; for the latter the same blinding, rejection, stumbling is as certain as it was to natural Israel in its harvest time. "He shall be for a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to both the houses of Israel."—Isaiah 8:14.

"THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS"

2 Timothy 2:19.—MARCH 31.

This lesson is intended as a review for the quarter—from the Creation to Jacob. The golden text which we have chosen as the caption gives the key-thought of this lesson, namely, that the Bible, while incidentally dealing with many things that appertain to the earth and its people, mainly has reference to those who manifest a reverence for the Lord and to whom he correspondingly manifests his favor in various ways in various ages, coöperating with them for their present joy and their everlasting welfare.

The Scriptures everywhere represent the Almighty Creator as benevolent, generous, kind toward his creatures, desiring their welfare, and, where punishment is necessary, inflicting it merely with a view to their recovery out of wrong conditions or to make examples for others who may thus be deterred from wrong doing. True, the Scriptures do also present Satan and the forces of evil, but always picture them to us as adversaries of the Almighty and of all who are good and in harmony with righteousness. Thus the Bible is in many respects a history of the conflict between good and evil, and it faithfully shows us, as an artificial record would not, that the general tendency of our race is sinward—that the smaller proportion escape the delusions of the adversary, develop a reverential love for the Creator, and manifest loyalty and obedience. However, the Scriptures are very explicit in their assurances that it shall not always be thus: that the time for the triumph of right over wrong, of God over Satan, is arranged for, its time fixed, and its accomplishment certain. Everywhere also they point us to the fact that the reign of righteousness could never be accomplished without divine assistance—that our race is so impaired and weak through the fall that perfection is a matter of impossibility on our part, and hence that our help cometh from the Lord.

It was this promise of a coming blessing that worked so marvelously in the hearts of the patriarchs, fixed their minds upon the Lord and separated them from the ways of evil. And it is the same gracious promise which, in proportion to our faith in it, helps us of today as it helped the patriarchs of old. "According to thy faith be it unto you," is still God's rule, and those who have much faith and loyalty of heart to the Lord are sure to be blessed of him, for "the Lord knoweth them that are his." Moreover, it is the high reward which God has promised to these his faithful ones that constitutes a large proportion of the incentive

which strengthens us in our battle with the world, the flesh and the adversary. It was so with the patriarchs and so it is with us of this Gospel Age.

"AS THE HEAVENS ARE HIGHER THAN THE EARTH"

It is when we get the grand sweep of the divine plan that we can see God's ultimate purpose of vanquishing sin and blessing all the families of the earth with the knowledge of his goodness and with a favorable opportunity for reformation—when we come to see that the election of the Jewish age and also of this Gospel age are but means to that grand end of blessing the world. Then we begin to discern how high are God's ways above man's ways and God's plans above man's schemes, and to discern the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of God's love and provision for the blessing of the world. And proportionately as we look upon this glorious picture we are strengthened by his might in the inner man, and lifted out of our narrowness and selfishness, and more and more constituted images of God's dear Son, and thus also images of the heavenly Father. O, then, that we might each and all be of those who are known of the Lord as the "very elect"—of those whom he will use in the present time in connection with his present work of electing the little flock, and will be used by and by in his great work of blessing all the families of the earth. What trials and difficulties we might well endure with such a prospect!

If from five to twenty years are counted a reasonable portion for the education of children for the duties of a life of half a century, how much education would be reasonably appropriate for an eternal life? Nay, more, how much of an education would be necessary for the kings and priests who will be the teachers and judges of the world of mankind to develop them for eternal life? We are lost in amazement of thought, and wonder how any can be developed in the brief space at our disposal. How valuable, then, is every moment, every day, as it sweeps past, for the development of this character which our Lord seeks for, the learning of the lessons so necessary to our present joy and our everlasting usefulness in the Master's service. Let us heed the Apostle's exhortation to lay aside every weight and every besetting sin and to run with patience the race set before us in the Gospel, looking unto Jesus, the Author of our faith, until he shall become the Finisher of it.

RESPONDING TO DIVINE PROMISES

Genesis 28:1-5, 10-22.—APRIL 7.

"Behold I am with thee and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest."—Gen. 28:15.

Jacob, perceiving that his esteem for the Abrahamic blessing and his perseverance in procuring it, had brought upon him the ill will of his brother Esau, showed that it was not the elder son's share of his father's possessions that he sought, and proposed a journey to the home of his mother's brother. Rebecca, in sympathy with the program, urged it upon Isaac, saying that she was vexed by the heathen wives of Esau and desired that Jacob should select his companion from amongst the God-fearing relatives. To this Isaac assented, and when Jacob was ready for the journey blessed him and confirmed to him again the Abrahamic blessing, saying, "And God Almighty bless thee and make thee fruitful and multiply thee that thou mayest be a multitude of people, and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee and thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land of thy sojournings which God gave unto Abraham."

The journey was undertaken on foot and alone. Jacob, after the custom of the people of that country even today, at night wrapped himself in his outer garment and slept in any convenient place, using a stone for a pillow. On the evening of probably his third day from home he slept in a

place near to the town of Luz, and was there granted a vision or dream in which he saw a ladder extending from earth to heaven and on it holy angels ascending and descending, and at its top the Lord himself, who spoke to him precious words of encouragement. Thus did the Lord comfort one who trusted in him—one who had so great respect for the divine covenant made with his grandfather Abraham that he esteemed it of more value than all earthly riches and comforts. It was largely on account of his faith in the Abrahamic Covenant that Jacob was now practically an outcast from his home, fleeing in reality through fear of his brother Esau. It is not wonderful that God rewarded such a heroic faith, neither does it surprise us that it was because of the lack of this faith that God took the inheritance of this Covenant from the unbelieving Esau, "profane Esau," as the Apostle describes his sacrilegious disrespect to the divine Covenant.

It is so still: God always honors faith. Those who now for his sake and because of their respect for the divine promises suffer the loss of earthly home and privileges and comforts may be sure that these testings of their loyalty to God will not go unrewarded. The Lord seeketh such to

worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth, only with such is he well pleased, only to such does he let down the golden ladder, only to such do the angels of heaven minister, for we read, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:14.) That golden ladder fitly pictures our dear Redeemer, who is the Way to God as well as the Truth and the Life. His own words are, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." Upon this Mediator between God and man all the blessings of God descend to us, and through him our prayers and our offerings are acceptable to the Father. And as the Father spoke to Jacob from the farther end of this ladder, so with every one of us: it is the Father's drawing, the Father's message, the Father's love that our dear Redeemer has revealed to us, and brought us into contact with every good and every perfect gift coming down from the Father of Lights. All things are of the Lord and all things are by the Son.

THE PROMISES RENEWED

From the further end of the ladder Jacob heard the Lord's voice saying, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham thy father and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest to thee will I give it and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold I am with thee and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Here was the very comfort and encouragement that Jacob needed; here he had the assurance not only that his grandfather Abraham had a covenant with God, and that this had not passed to Ishmael but to Isaac, and that now it had not passed to Esau but to himself. He was content with the loss of all things else since he still had the divine favor and was thus acknowledged of God as being the heir of this wonderful promise, the full import of which he could but faintly appreciate. And so it is with all who have heard the Father's voice and been drawn or attracted by his promises, and who have surrendered all other ambitions in life that they might attain to the divine favor and chief blessing as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord. No conditions under such circumstances could really be heard; hence, as the Apostle says, we are enabled to rejoice even in tribulation, knowing that even our tribulations are working for us patience and the various experiences of life necessary to our preparation for the glorious position to which we have been called of God. With the Apostle then we can say, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ and be found in him."—Phil. 3:8, 9.

AS THE STARS AND AS THE SAND

It will be noticed that in this blessing the Lord likens the seed of Jacob to the dust of the earth, but not to the stars of heaven. We remember that in the divine promise to Isaac (Gen. 26:4) the reverse of this is stated: the posterity like unto the stars of heaven is mentioned, but no illustration of the dust of the earth, while to Abraham God used both of these illustrations, saying, "Thy seed shall be as the stars of heaven and as the sand of the seashore for multitude." In the Abrahamic promise both the spiritual seed, likened to the stars of heaven, and the natural seed, likened to the sands of the seashore, are properly mentioned, because both the heavenly and earthly seeds and the heavenly and earthly blessings proceed from that original covenant. We remember in this connection the Apostle's statement, "We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise": we are the spiritual seed of whom in the first resurrection the prophet says, "They shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars forever and ever." (Dan. 12:3.) The Apostle refers to the same class as celestials, comparing them to the stars—"as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the [first] resurrection of the dead—it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." (1 Cor. 15:40-44.) Similarly Jacob is referred to by the Apostle as a representative of natural Israel: for instance, telling us of the blessing that shall come upon natural Israel at the end of this Gospel age, when the spiritual Israel shall have been glorified, he says, "A deliverer shall come out of Zion and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant with them when I shall take away their sins."—Rom. 11:25-30.

Not only did the Lord assure Jacob that he was in the right way as an heir for the promise, but, further, that whatever his experiences might be he should remember that the

Lord was with him and would not let go of him until he had fulfilled toward him all these gracious promises. What a force, what a power, this experience and the Lord's testimony must have been to Jacob in future years! And it still appertains to natural Israel. The Lord has held that people under his care nor let them go for over thirty centuries, and as surely as it is here written he will accomplish for them the promised blessing and will yet make them a blessing to all nations. Nevertheless, as Jacob had trying experiences in the interim, so his posterity have had and will have until the blessing of the Lord under the New Covenant shall come to them at the hands of the great Mediator of the New Covenant, the glorified Christ Jesus and the church, which is his body—spiritual Israel.

A comforting lesson comes to all of us who are spiritual Israelites also, for we reflect that it is the same unchangeable God who has given us the chief blessing, which the natural Israelite failed to receive, as it is written, "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." We, the elect, Israel spiritual, may feel sure that if God's promises to natural Israel are all to be fulfilled his promises to spiritual Israel are yea and amen in Christ. To us he has also promised that, into whatever situation we may be brought in his providence, he is able to make all things work together for our good, and to bring us off conquerors, yea, more than conquerors, through him that loved us and bought us with his precious blood.

THE HOUSE OF GOD—THE GATE OF HEAVEN

When Jacob awakened from this refreshing vision, dream, he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not. What a place for awe is this! It is none other than the house of God, the gate of heaven." He was awe inspired, and if the dream inspired the future patriarch with awe, what should the knowledge of the reality bring to us, we who with the eyes of faith see Jesus as the ladder reaching from our humble, fallen condition clear to the heights of the heavenly glory and presence! With what reverence should we look up and hear the Father's voice coming to us through him. How little we should feel ourselves to be, how great the Giver of every good and perfect gift. Surely, as Jacob said, the resting-place of this ladder must be the house of God, the place where we may meet with our Almighty Creator. It was this that was symbolized by the Tabernacle of old, which was called the tent of meeting, not because the Israelites entered it, but because Jehovah could enter and there meet with the people through their representative, the priest, the Lord's presence being indicated by the light on the mercy seat, the Shekinah glory.

Similarly the Temple was a house or meeting-place between God and his people, and similarly now with spiritual Israel—Christ at the lower end of the ladder is the meeting-place between God and man. This meeting-place for the present time is not a building made with hands—is not a temple nor even a tent, but a house or household of faith, the house or church of God. Wherever this may be is "Bethel,"—"wherever two or three of you are met in my name there am I in the midst;" there the ladder, at the upper end of which is the Father, touches the earth. And every such assemblage is truly a gate of heaven. What wonder, then, that the Scriptures encourage the Lord's people to meet in his name, to have fellowship with the Father through him, and to have their petitions borne upward to the Father and the blessings to come down from the Father upon them. What wonder that the Apostle exhorted that we should not forget the assembling of ourselves as the manner of some is, and so much the more as we see the day approaching.—Heb. 10:25.

"And I knew it not," said Jacob. And so with us. We knew not at first about the Lord's gracious arrangements and provisions for our blessing. It was only after we had heard his voice and come to an appreciation of his grace and forgiveness that we learned to love him, and that perfect love casts out our fear. The fear or reverence, however, which we had at the beginning of our experience, was a proper and useful one. Whoever comes not to the Father through a reverential fear does not appreciate the privilege of relationship and contact with the great King of the Universe.

NOTING AND MARKING BLESSINGS

After he had awakened, thought over his dream and experienced reverential sentiments, Jacob arose, although it was still early, before the breaking of day. He must take time to acknowledge the divine favors he had just received. He did this in three ways:

(1) He took the stone upon which his head had rested and set it up as a monument at that spot and poured oil upon it as signifying honor, distinction and appreciation;