

VIEW FROM THE TOWER.

**"Take counsel together, and it shall come to naught;
speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us."
– Isa. 8:10-16.**

IT is becoming more and more evident to the religious leaders of Christendom, that the various sectarian creeds will not much longer serve to hold together the membership of their several organizations. Hence new schemes are being formed to take the places long held by doctrines true and false, to unite the people, behind denominational fences, on other than doctrinal lines. The opening of the eyes of men's understandings is progressing at a marvelous pace, and the unreasonableness, and deformity and absurdity of the various creeds are becoming apparent to the most obtuse. What once passed for truth without a question, because promulgated by clerics or councils is now boldly challenged for reasonable and Scriptural authority. A prominent Presbyterian clergyman, Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage, is reported to have said: –

"I would that this unfortunate controversy about the confession of faith had not been forced upon the church; but now, since it is on, I say, Away with it, and let us have a new creed."

Another, Rev. Sawin, of Troy, N.Y., said recently: –

"I do not like the idea of Calvinism: Calvin was a murderer and a scoundrel. He said many good things and those I accept, but the Church should be an exponent of the gospel, and not of Calvinism."

Indeed one cannot read the daily press without realizing that the great nominal church, of all denominations, is being shaken

from center to circumference. The strife of tongues among both the clergy and the laity is sending consternation throughout all Christendom.

In this extremity of Ecclesiasticism a happy thought struck some one, and it has found an echo throughout the length and breadth of Christendom. It was to send the Macedonian cry around the world, to all its heathen priests and apostles, to "Come over and help us." And the heathen have heard and heeded the cry; and Christian ministers are looking forward with high hopes to this grand ecumenical council of all the religions of the world, to be held in Chicago next September, confessedly for suggestions as to how they may get up a new religion that will be acceptable, if possible, to the whole world.

A prominent New England Congregational minister, Rev. J. G. Johnson, is reported to have said with reference to it: –

"For seventeen days these various religions will have the opportunity to assert themselves. learn something ourselves. In every religion there is some trace of God; and what are the false religions but the broken and distorted echoes of the voice of Jehovah?"

The Rev. Mr. Barrows, of Chicago, spoke enthusiastically of the friendly relations manifested among Protestant ministers, Catholic priests, Jewish rabbis, and, in fact, the thinking heads of all religions extant, by the correspondence in reference to the great Chicago parliament. He says: – **[R1546 : page 196]**

"The old idea that the religion to which I belong is the only true one, is out of date.

There is something to be learned from all religions, and no man is worthy of the religion he represents unless he is willing to grasp any man by the hand as his brother. Some one has said that *the time is now ripe for the best religion to come to the front. The*

time for a man to put on any airs of superiority about his particular religion is past. Here will meet the wise man, the scholar and the prince of the East in friendly relation with the archbishop, the rabbi, the missionary, the preacher and the priest. They will sit together in congress for the first time. This, it is hoped, will help to break down the barriers of creed. All religions are but the imperfect rays shining from our Father."

The Rev. T. Chalmers, of the Disciples Church, says: –

"This first Parliament of Religions seems to be the harbinger of a still larger religious fraternity – a fraternity that will combine into *one world religion* what is best, not in one alone, but in all of the great historic faiths. It may be that, under the guidance of this larger hope, we shall need to revise our phraseology and speak more of *religious unity*, than of *Christian unity*. I rejoice that all the great cults are to be brought into touch with each other, and that Jesus will take his place in the companionship of Gautama, Confucius and Zoroaster."

The *New York Sun*, in an editorial on this subject, recently said: –

"We cannot make out exactly what the Parliament proposes to accomplish.... It is possible, however, that the Chicago scheme is to get up some sort of a *new and compound* [R1547 : page 196] *religion*, which shall include and satisfy every variety of religious and irreligious opinion [we would add – of note or influence]. It is a *big job* to get up a new and eclectic religion satisfactory all around; but Chicago is confident that it can finish up the business on the 27th of next September."

The various religions of Earth will set forth their claims as to points of superiority until Sept. 26th, when as per announcement a conclusion will be sought, the theme for that day being, "The *religious union* of the whole human family." On the

next and last day, the Parliament will consider "The elements of *perfect* religion as recognized and set forth in the *different faiths*," with a view to determining "*the characteristics of the ultimate religion*," and "*the center of the coming religious unity of mankind*." Is it possible that thus, by their own confession, Christian (?) ministers are unable, at this late day, to determine what should be the center of religious unity, or the characteristics of perfect religion? Are they indeed so anxious for a "world religion" that they are willing to sacrifice any or all the principles of true Christianity, and even the name "Christian," if necessary, to obtain it? Even so, they confess. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked and slothful servant," saith the Lord. The preceding days of the conference will be devoted to the setting forth of the various religions by their respective representatives.

The scheme is a bold and hazardous one, but it should open the eyes of every true child of God to several facts that are manifest. (1) That the nominal Christian church has reached its last extremity of hope in its ability to stand, under the searching judgments of this day when "the Lord hath a controversy with his [professed] people" – nominal spiritual Israel. (Micah 6:1,2.) (2) That instead of repenting of their back-slidings and lack of faith and zeal and godliness, and thus seeking a return of divine favor, they are endeavoring, by a certain kind of union and co-operation, to support one another, and to call in the aid of the heathen world to help them to withstand the judgments of the Lord in exposing the errors of their human creeds and their misrepresentations of his worthy character. (3) This willingness to compromise Christ and his gospel, for the sake of gaining the friendship of the world and its emoluments of power and influence, should be evident to every thinking person. (4) Their blindness is such that they are unable to distinguish truth from error, or the spirit of the truth from the spirit of the world, and they have already lost sight of the doctrines of Christ.

Doubtless temporary aid will come from the source whence it is so enthusiastically sought; but it will be only a preparatory step which will involve the whole world in the impending doom of Babylon, causing the kings and merchants and traders of the whole earth to mourn and lament for this great city. – Rev. 18:9,11,17. [R1547 : page 197]

THE NEXT RELIGIOUS CONFERENCE AT JERUSALEM.

Another movement, having the same general end in view, has already been proposed, and doubtless took practical shape, at the celebration of the Fourth of July in the city of Philadelphia. The proposition, as clipped from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, is as follows: –

THE PROPOSED UNION OF SECTS.

"Independence Hall on the day of the celebration will be the scene of a meeting of representatives of the different sects in this city, at which resolutions will be adopted setting forth the scope of the proposed celebration of the advent of the twentieth century of Christianity by an international gathering at Jerusalem six years hence. The preliminary steps were taken yesterday in historic Carpenter's Hall. The idea, it is said, seems to take all over the United States. All seem to think that it is appropriate, and that it comes appropriately from America. It is proposed to send the resolutions to the World's Fair Commission and have them notify the representatives of all nations, governments and provinces there assembled of this glorious conception.

"Dr. McCook spoke of the difficulties in the way. 'The differences,' he said, 'were sentimental and conscientious. If Israelites, Mohammedans and all others can thus meet, it will be an auspicious opening for the twentieth century. They say, We want to get the Anglicans, Russians, Germans, Roman Catholics, Greek Orientals, Nestorians, and all others. There is no objection

in regard to sect or denomination in such a meeting. It simply brings the human family together.'

"A committee which shall have power to enlarge its numbers was appointed to push the movement. The idea is to have the proposed resolutions prepared by the different sects and read at the meeting in Independence Hall on July 4 before they are sent to Chicago."

This movement will doubtless supplement and further confirm the results of the great Chicago Parliament, the design of which is the "*religious unity of the race*," no matter what the character of the religion may be; for, as some of the projectors affirm, they think the present is no time for Christians to put on *any airs of superiority* about their particular kind of religion. This is the day of compromises demanded by "the exigencies of these times" of Babylon's judgment. And the compromises, they realize, must be made, or the whole structure of "Christendom" – *i.e.*, "Babylon," must hopelessly perish.

We cannot afford, say the various denominations of Protestantism, to ignore and disfellowship that great branch of Christendom, the Church of Rome ["Babylon the great, the mother of harlots"]. All are now in haste to erase from their creeds those articles referring to Papacy as the Antichrist; and they say, We must secure Roman Catholic co-operation and assistance at any cost, while the Papacy only holds back for the privilege of dictating the terms of co-operation – which will be hers or none at all. The same compromising spirit is also manifest in the desire and effort to unite the various sects of Protestantism. In the more honest moods of former times Christians drifted apart because of their honest conceptions or misconceptions of divine truth; but now, too ignoble to confess their errors, yet anxious for union, they are ready to compromise their views of truth and their consciences for the sake of unity.

This was very noticeable in the late Presbyterian Assembly at Washington, D.C., in their consideration of the overtures of the Protestant Episcopal church for unity and co-operation. When one gentleman, Dr. Hollifield, ventured to remind the assembly of its duty of honest consistency and fidelity to conscientious convictions, he was speedily silenced, and his unpopular utterances were frowned upon and denounced as uncharitable and unchristian, because against the present clerical policy of union and compromise.

Dr. Hollifield said he thought the committee on church unity made a mistake when it proposed to shift the discussion from the *differences* between the two great ecclesiastical bodies named, to those in which they were *in harmony*. He was aware that the propositions were made with the best intentions in view; but he did not believe the unity hoped for could be secured by the means proposed. It was *these differences*, and not those points on which they were *in accord*, that had produced their alienation. The causes of the alienation should first be removed. The differences were not of minor [R1547 : page 198] importance: they were of a serious character. One obstacle was the Romish doctrines and practices of many (and a constantly increasing number) of the Protestant Episcopal churches. Many of them were so high – or, he would say, so low – that a stranger visiting one of them might mistake it for a Roman Catholic church. The Episcopal high church, he said, was nothing more nor less than a back door to Rome. This state of affairs was a barrier to Christian unity in its full sense, for they could not afford to enter into relations with a church whose trend was Romeward, if they were to be true to a pure gospel. This fidelity to a sacred trust, he said, is all the more imperative at the present, when Rome is finding a firmer foothold on our shores.

But this earnest exhortation found no response in the hearts of other members of the assembly, and even this gentleman, in

remaining in the organization, must submit his conscience in the matter to its majority decision, and thus become a partaker of their sins. His only proper course under these convictions would be to step out. – Rev. 18:4,5.

"RELIGIOUS RIOTS ARE ABROAD."

There is something very significant in the reported advice of Mr. Talmage to his congregation recently. He raised the question, What position shall we take with regard to the religious controversies now distracting the church? and then replied: –

"Stay out of it. While these *religious riots* are abroad, stay at home and attend to business. Why, how do you expect a man only five or six feet high to wade through an ocean a thousand feet deep? I have not given two minutes in thirty years to studying the controversial points of religion; and if I live thirty years more I shall not give one-thirtieth of a second to them. The world is now being creeded to death. The young men now entering the ministry *are being launched into the thickest fog that ever beset a coast.*"

What confession! and what advice from a professed minister of the gospel of Christ! He sees the churches floundering about in a dense fog of ignorance and superstition, with dangerous rocks upon which their barks may be dashed at any moment; yet, by his own confession, he has not spent two minutes in thirty years in "earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints," nor in studying to show himself "a workman approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth;" but has contented [R1548 : page 198] himself with delivering eloquent addresses to please the itching ears of an admiring public, instead of using his talents as a wise and faithful steward of his Master's goods. Such the Lord seems to denominate "wicked and slothful servants."

But it is becoming more and more impossible to stay out of these controversies as he advises, and to remain neutral in the midst of the judgments of this Day of the Lord. The fire of this day will try *every man's work*, of what sort it is (1 Cor. 3:13); and if his faith is built with the stubble of error it will surely perish.

The only safe way for any child of God to do is to ignore the advice of all such time-serving shepherds, and to see to it that his faith is securely founded upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, our Redeemer and Lord; and that its superstructure is built only with the gold and silver of inspired truth. But to do this, he would best take the advice of the Lord and the apostles in preference to that of Mr. Talmage or others. – "Search the Scriptures," and believe their testimony, rejecting all that is contrary to them. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." – Isa. 8:20.

What, indeed, may we expect to be the character of the "new," "electic" "world religion" which is to be evolved out of the present disorder and confusion – out of the present "thick fogs," "religious riots," and "ecclesiastical hysterics," as the present unrest is variously designated by prominent clergymen; when the leaders of Christendom have lost their landmarks and see nothing in Christianity whereof to boast over the superstitions of heathenism? Consistency would call in their missionaries.

The church of Rome is determined that the character of the coming "world religion" shall be Papal, and is making every possible effort to that end. It is reported that within the last year Pope Leo XIII., in negotiations with the Greek Catholic church, has practically brought within view the reunion of the long **[R1548 : page 199]** separated Greek and Roman Catholic churches. And every intelligent observer of the times knows of his policy and its progress here.

The spectacle of Christendom to-day is indeed unique. On the one hand the power of the disintegrating elements is strikingly conspicuous, while on the other, the tendency to unity is very pronounced. The spirit of liberty and independence of thought and action, the increase of knowledge and general intelligence, and the awakening faculties and sensibilities of all classes, is rapidly tending to disintegration of the old creeds and of the great systems built upon them. The daily press reports a recent split, even in the Roman Catholic church in France, which is significant of the disintegrating work, even in the strongest holds of superstition. Thus men are being shaken apart and made to stand alone upon their own convictions.

Such is the *natural* tendency of the present times in accordance with the Lord's design. The tendency to unity is, on the contrary, an *artificial* one and the efforts in that direction are made for policy's sake by those whose financial and social interests are bound up with the old tottering systems. The clergy are making use of their office to withstand the inevitable current of the present natural tendency; and they will doubtless succeed for a time, but only to make the final outcome more appalling.

The one thing most desired by the clergy, whose craft and reputation and honors are in danger, and which they, as a class, are most earnestly striving for, is Union at any cost; because in union there is strength. But thus saith the Lord of hosts by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah (Isa. 8:9,10), "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye [heathen] of far countries; gird yourselves and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together and it shall come to naught; speak the word and it shall not stand."

"SHE SHALL NOT BE MOVED."

But, while assuring us that the nominal church will be utterly broken to pieces in this her *judgment day*, after, by her own strife

of tongues, she has confessed her own blindness to truth and reason, her own nakedness, so far as the robe of Christ's righteousness, and her own unfaithfulness to her espoused Lord, God assures us it shall not be so with his true Church. Hidden for centuries in the great mass of tares of the nominal systems, the true Church as represented by its living members will now be manifested; although the world which knew not her Lord and Head will not recognize her worth or beauty. But the Lord knoweth them that are his, and will be gathering his elect ones out of the various divisions of Babylon, and will bless and feed them, while Babylon is falling. Hence now the cry, "Come out of her [Babylon] my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." (Rev. 18:4.) The peaceful keeping of his true Zion, by the Lord, throughout this stormy day, of judgments upon civil, religious, social and financial systems, is shown in prophetic symbology in Psalm 46.

[R1559 : page 199]

REST IN THE LORD.

Just to let thy Father do
What he will;
Just to know that he is true,
And be still.

Just to follow, hour by hour,
As he leadeth;
Just to draw the moment's power
As it needeth.

Just to trust him: this is all!
Then the day will surely be
Peaceful, whatsoe'er befall,
Bright and blessed, calm and free.

Just to recognize its light,
All-enfolding;
Just to claim its present might,
All-upholding.

Just to know it as thine own,
That no power can take away:
Is not this enough alone
For the gladness of the day?

Just to let him take the care
Sorely pressing,
Finding all we let him bear
Changed to blessing.

This is all! and yet the way
Marked by him who loves the best:
Secret of a happy day,
Secret of his promised rest.
– *Selected.*
