

PITTSBURG PROPHETIC CONFERENCE.

THE announcement has been very generally made that there will be a Prophetic Conference at Pittsburg in October; and quite a number of TOWER readers are inquiring what part the Editor will take in the Conference. We answer that we have nothing to do with it; and as an explanation lay before our readers an article on the subject by the Editor published in a Pittsburg paper July 25, last.

Mr. Editor: – With others of your readers I have been interested in the announcement of a prophetic conference, soon to be held in our city. I cogitate upon the projects as follows:

That the Scriptures teach that our Redeemer will "come again" at the close of this Gospel Age cannot be disputed. That he comes to inaugurate a reign of righteousness in which the saints of the present age will be the kings and priests (rulers and instructors) to bless and lift up out of ignorance and sin and death whosoever wills of the at present "groaning creation," (Rom. 8:19-22; Rev. 20:6) should not be disputed by any who have studied the Bible and who have intelligently united in the Lord's prayer, "Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

This being the case, all Christian people should be interested in "conference" on the subject; in order that nothing that God has declared by the mouth of his holy prophets, bearing upon this subject, should be overlooked. (Acts 3:19-21.) And such a "conference" could scarcely fail to have the Lord's blessing and to bring clearer views of the subject to all concerned.

But, sir, all who know the history of these "Prophetic Conferences," held from time to time in the past, know very well that no real conference is proposed. The true idea of conference is discussion, examination, consultation; but if the proposed "conference"

shall resemble those in which some of the same gentlemen took part in the past, there will be no opportunity for conference; every utterance will be shaped and trimmed beforehand, by a committee so as to prevent conference. For instance, at the New York Prophetic Conference some years ago, when Mr. Charles MacKay, of Scotland, an invited and announced speaker, was asked to present his MS. to the critical committee, it [R1873 : page 227] was feared he would be hindered from speaking because he had no MS. prepared, not being used to "cut and dried" conferences in Scotland. He explained that he usually spoke extemporaneously, but would confine himself strictly to the Bible testimony; and he was then permitted to be the one exception to the rule.

But, mark you, sir, my objection is not to the character of the meeting, as it is proposed, but merely to its misleading name; for "those who pay the piper have the right to choose the music." If, therefore the present program be maintained, I beg to suggest that the promoters would reflect much more credit upon themselves as straightforward, candid men, by calling their meeting a "Pre-millennialist Convention," which would be a truth-telling name, whereas "Prophetic Conference" is misleading. But lest it be said that I am prejudging the coming conference, which may be held upon different lines, we note the fact that it has already been announced that "fools" and "cranks" are not connected with the movement. This clearly implies that they have already fixed their standard and decided who are the wise and who the foolish. Perhaps they forget, however, that much of the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, and that in their day our Lord and his prophets and apostles were all accounted "fools" and "cranks;" and that the same worldly estimate will continue to the end of this age. (See 1 Cor. 1:18; 2:14; 3:18; 4:10,13,14; Acts 17:18.) I very much fear that if Jesus and Paul and Peter were to attempt to join this "conference," they would be hustled out as "cranks." Yet, to those who have ears, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," and there can be no understanding of the prophets without it.

I object to the word "prophetic," as well as to the word "conference," as inappropriately used. Those who will attend the meeting will not only find that it will be a conference at which there will be no conference, no discussion, no hearing of "the other side," but they will find the very prophecies mentioned by St. Peter (Acts 3:19-21) almost ignored. Why? Because, forsooth, some of God's people who denominate themselves "Second Adventists" have made themselves foolish in the sight of the world by defective interpretations of the prophecies. Agreeing with "Second Adventists" respecting the manner of Christ's second coming (the writer differs widely, and he believes Scripturally, from both), they want to mark themselves out as entirely separate from them respecting the interpreting of prophetic times and seasons; and they therefore are obliged to pass by the prophecies which abound with figures, periods, etc. – especially Daniel's. But why then use the word prophetic?

In one of your issues I notice that the views of the conference are already fixed in several respects which I consider erroneous. I therefore criticize them, briefly, and thus afford the coming "conference" an opportunity to examine its faith afresh, in the light of the Scriptures which I shall cite.

They do not pretend to fix the time of the Lord's second coming. They hold that of that event no man knows the date nor will any ever know beforehand. They feel positive of this because of the Lord's statement in St. **[R1873 : page 228]** Mark 13:32. But they overlook the fact that if our Lord meant to tell us that no man would ever know he did not so state himself. And since he included himself and the angels, it would equally imply that neither he nor the angels would ever know, which would be an absurdity; for our Lord could not come a second time without knowing it some time previously. The time was unknown then and was to so continue until God's due time for making it known; for "the Lord God doeth nothing but he revealeth it to his servants the prophets." And this is all clearly stated and explained in Daniel 12:9,10.

If the times and seasons of prophecy give them no light, why do they surmise that the event is nigh? Is it not with them a guess in the dark? If they have not trimmed their lamps, and gotten more light on the subject than had those who have vaguely looked and hoped for the Lord for eighteen centuries, why do they think the great event near? (Matt. 25:1-13.) Do they not see that the repeated injunction, "Watch!" implies that the "wise virgins" did not know, but were to watch in order that in due time they might know? Wherein would be the necessity of watching for an event that would be known to them no sooner nor more surely than to others? Does not the command, "Watch!" imply that at the proper time the watchers will be rewarded by a knowledge which the unwatching will not have? – 1 Thes. 5:1-3,4-6.

These Christian friends have a fixed belief respecting the manner of Christ's second coming, which we believe it would advantage them to refix more in harmony with reason and Scripture. They believe that he will come literally, but by that they mean that they expect him again in the flesh. Do they forget that when he "was made flesh" at his first advent it meant the laying aside of the superior glory and honor of the spirit nature, a humbling of himself to "the form of a servant;" and that, thus, he who was "rich" as a spirit being, became "poor" when he became "the man" Christ Jesus? How can they think of his body as being marred and yet being of transcendent beauty? How can they expect to see those scars for all eternity and yet expect that things of the present time will no more be remembered? How can they suppose that the Lord has the same wounded body without supposing that the saints also in their resurrection will have deformed and sin-scarred bodies, such as they have at present?

Surely they admit that Christ finished the work for which it was necessary for him to take man's nature; viz., "for the suffering of death," that he might give his flesh "for the life of the world." (John 6:51.) How can they think he is still flesh and will come a second time as a flesh-being? Surely they will admit that "him hath God highly exalted" again. (Phil. 2:8,9.) Surely they will admit that he was "put to death in the flesh

but quickened (made alive) in spirit." Do they not remember, also, that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God"? How then can they expect a flesh and blood Christ to be the great King and to set up the great Kingdom promised?

Do they not remember that one apostle explains that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," but that "when he shall appear we shall be like him, and see him as he is?" – not he like us, that we might see him as he was. – 1 John 3:2.

Do they not remember that another apostle declares that the church must be "changed" by resurrection power, from animal bodies to spiritual bodies, in order that she may be united to the Lord in the Kingdom which flesh and blood cannot inherit? – 1 Cor. 15:44,49-53.

Do they not remember that after his resurrection our Lord not only showed the apostles that he was alive again, but proved to them that he was no longer "the man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom," but the King of Glory – a spirit being. He proved this by showing them that he was no longer limited to human conditions. He came into the room where they were met, while the doors were shut. He vanished from their sight when the interview was ended. Indeed, they saw but little of him during the forty days after his resurrection, and the world saw him not at all. And during his interviews with his disciples he showed himself in various forms or bodies, just as he did before he became man, when as a spirit being he appeared to Abraham in human form but without being of human nature. – Gen. 18:1-8.

But they tell us that their belief that Christ's coming will be in the flesh is based upon the facts recorded in Acts 1:9,11; especially the declaration, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

We inquire, Is there in this anything difficult? or that would demand that all of the foregoing Scripture teachings respecting our Lord as a spirit being should be cast aside, ignored? I think not. I suggest that

this passage when rightly understood, is in full accord with the others. It is the *manner* of our Lord's coming again that is to resemble the *manner* of his going away. Was the manner of his going quiet, unaccompanied by outward display, unknown to the world, and known and recognized only by his chosen? Yes. Then surely in "like manner," and not in a different manner, should his chosen look for him to come again. Quietly, unknown to the world, known only to those who "watch," he will come again.

A mistake of these friends has been to infer that "manner" means flesh, and they have failed to notice the real "manner" of his going – quietly, unobserved of the world. Our Lord had a body of flesh when the disciples beheld him taken up into heaven, but the flesh was no longer he, as before his resurrection, but merely a form, like his clothing, that represented (but veiled) his real, glorious, spiritual body, which St. Paul saw afterward, at the cost of his sight. – 1 Cor. 15:5-8; 9:1; Acts 9:3-18.

The fact that our Lord manifested himself in a body of flesh after his resurrection, before his ascension, by no means proves that he will similarly manifest himself in a fleshly form at his second advent; for "manner" and condition are wholly different things. I believe from other Scriptures that instead of his appearing in the flesh, his saints when "changed" to spirit beings will "see him as he is," as St. Paul saw him "before the time;" but with the [R1874 : page 228] powers of their "changed" conditions they will not suffer from the sight of the Lord's glory, but will be with him and behold and share his glory.

We would like, too, that these gentlemen, when they meet, should not fail to notice the peculiar Greek word *parousia* – rendered "coming" in connection with our Lord's second advent, the signification of which is presence. Notice that Matt. 24:37 contains the word, declaring: "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the presence of the son of man." In the time of the Lord's second presence the world will proceed as usual – eating, drinking, planting, building, etc., and know not of his presence

and the approaching trouble, as in Noah's day they knew not of the coming flood. Compare also Luke 17:26. Our friends err also in their interpretation of Zech. 14:4, "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives." The passage does not refer to the literal feet of Christ at all, but symbolically to the feet of his father, Jehovah, as will [R1874 : page 229] be clearly seen by reference to the preceding verse, if the English reader will remember wherever the word "Lord" occurs in the Old Testament in small capital letters, the original (Hebrew) is Jehovah – exclusively the Father's name.

A very large proportion of Christian people are post-millennialists (believers that Christ will not come until the church shall have introduced and finished the Millennium). Nevertheless they see that eighteen centuries have done but little even in the most civilized parts, toward bringing about the condition in which God's will shall be done on earth as (perfectly as) it is done in heaven; and they see that even now the nominal conversions in heathen lands are not five per cent of the births, while in the most civilized lands the really sanctified are few. Many of these would be prepared to look for the Lord's coming and kingdom as the only tangible hope for the groaning creation: but they are repelled by such pre-millennialists, as propose this "Prophetic Conference," who claim that Christ will come again in the flesh marred and wounded, but shining, and that with his saints, also in the flesh, with their deformed features shining, he will set up a fleshly kingdom, an earthly court, after the order of kings, emperors and popes of the present time, but more magnificent and beneficent.

If, therefore, the coming meeting could be a real conference, and if the conferees could come to see that Christ at his second advent, and his associated saints, will be no longer flesh and blood, but spirit beings, whose majesty will be completely hidden from mortal view, but whose power and authority will be everywhere in evidence (as Satan, "the prince of this world," a spirit being, is present, and invisible, but nevertheless powerful, working in and through, the "children of disobedience"), it would do much to convert thousands to pre-millennial

views; for thousands are too consistent and too spiritually minded to suppose that God, having begun in the spirit, will perfect his plan on such a plane of the flesh.

I would be glad to see these brethren make their proposed meeting a genuine prophetic conference; and, if they will confer thereupon, we will cheerfully and freely supply them the evidences, chapter and verse, that demonstrate that the Lord has come upon them "as a thief," and that, not watching aright, they "knew not" that the day of the Lord's spiritual presence (*parousia*) began in the autumn of A.D. 1874, as is abundantly attested by the prophets and corroborated by the "clouds" of trouble in which he first reveals himself to the world in judgments; to be followed by his revelation as the "Sun of Righteousness," to heal and bless all who will accept his grace.

To me the Scriptures clearly demonstrate that the great antitypical Jubilee began with our Lord's presence in 1874, and that the little period of forty years between then and 1915 is in Scripture called the "day of vengeance" in which God will overturn all present institutions, financial, social and religious (the smiting time of Daniel 2:44,45), preparatory to the inauguration of the Kingdom of Righteousness symbolised by the divided Mount of Olives (the two parts of God's kingdom), upon which symbolically Jehovah's feet shall rest, when he shall make the place of his feet (the earth, his footstool) glorious. – Isa. 60:13.

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