

TORCH OF REASON.

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For the Torch of Reason.

This World of Ours.

BY ALONZO L. RICE.

I know 'tis sweet to think of those
Far valleys bathed in heavenly light,
Where nevermore the summer rose
Will know the autumn's blight,

And see the hills' high, sculptured domes
With paths of tossing verdure crossed,
And know they are the peaceful homes
Of those we loved and lost;

And know they walk by azure seas,
And press the shores of gleaming sand,
And feel the kisses of the breeze
We cannot understand!

But still, with this, I love to cling,
To hold to this old world of ours;
I love to hear the robins sing,
And smell the wayside flowers.

A lack of faith, or something, holds
My spirit to this earthly scene,
From rills whose crystal beauty rolls
Through fields of fadeless green!

The friend I lost long years ago,
I long to know in olden guise—
To hear his rhythmic laughter flow,
And look into his eyes.

Could "Auld Lang Syne" our tongues
employ,
Where summer makes her festal
throne,

I would not give that certain joy
For worlds of bliss unknown.

Ray's Crossing, Ind.

The Ten Commandments.

BY D. PRIESTLEY.

When you point out to a person who professes to accept the bible as a divine revelation, the utter savagery of almost the entire old testament, he will fall back upon the ten commandments as the basis and foundation of all moral and civil law. He will tell you that all our laws are based upon the Decalogue. He is willing to stake upon it the reputation of the entire book.

The subject may be looked at in this way. The Decalogue was the constitution of Israel, and the laws given to the Israelites, by Moses, were the statutes which God gave for the purpose of putting these laws into effect. With us the constitution is considered of highest authority, as coming directly from the people, while the acts of the legislature must be tested by the constitution, and if they do not agree with it they are pronounced invalid. But, if we had direct legislation, any statute, when ratified by the people, would be as authoritative as the constitution. So with the ten commandments. God gave the commandments and also the specific directions for carrying them into detail. The authority, coming directly from God, is the same in one case as in the other; and it seems to be worth while to let God explain his own commandments, and then we may be prepared to

say what we think of them and him.

In the first place, he was a tribal god. He did not want other nations to worship him. "I am the Lord, thy god, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt."

1. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

"If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, let us go and serve other gods, . . . thou shalt not consent unto him nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him; but thou shalt surely kill him. Thine hand shall be the first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people." (Deut. xiii. 6-10.)

How closely this resembles the first amendment to the federal constitution! "Congress shall make no law respecting religion or abridging the free exercise thereof."

2. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in the heavens above or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."

Punishment for making the golden calf:

"Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor. . . . And there fell of the people that day about three thousand men." (Ex. xxxii. 27.)

This commandment amounted to a prohibition of all art. Smith's Bible Dictionary, article Palestine, says: "When compared with other nations of equal antiquity—Egypt, Greece, Assyria—the contrast is truly remarkable. In Egypt and Greece, and also in Assyria, as far back as our knowledge extends, we find a series of buildings reaching down from the most remote and mysterious antiquity, a chain of which hardly a link is wanting, and which records the progress of the people in civilization, art and religion, as certainly as the buildings of the medieval architects do that of the various nations of modern Europe. But in Palestine, it is not too much to say that there does not exist a single edifice or part of an edifice of which we can be sure that it is of a date anterior to the Christian era. And as with the buildings, so with the other memorials. With one exception, museums of Europe do not possess a single piece of pottery or metal work, a single weapon or

household utensil, an ornament or piece of armor, of Israelite make, which can give us the least conception of the manners or outward appliances of the nation before the date of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus" (A. D. 70).

All mementoes of Israel before the Christian era are a few coins of the time of the Maccabees, about 165 B. C.

3. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

"And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death; and all the congregation shall surely stone him; as well the stranger as he that is born in the land. Whoso blasphemeth the name of the Lord shall be put to death." (Lev. xxiv. 16.)

Many states still have blasphemy laws, but they have become greatly diluted from what they were when the Lord made them. Some years ago the statute of Nebraska ran like this: "Any person speaking disrespectfully the name of God, of Jesus Christ or of the Holy Ghost shall be subject to a fine not exceeding one dollar nor less than twenty-five cents."

4. "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy."

"And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done with him. And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died." (Num. xv. 32-36.)

No wonder he died! Stoned by all the congregation! There were six hundred thousand able-bodied men. When they had all stoned him he would not only be dead and buried, but furnished with a monument. Jesus, who was God, came down to visit his chosen people, violated his own sabbath and got hanged.

5. "Honor thy father and thy mother."

"If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them; then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him unto the elders of the city, and unto the gate of his place. And they shall say unto the elders, This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men in his city

shall stone him with stones that he die." (Deut. xxi. 18-21.)

This is the way God told his chosen people to dispose of their sons. With a daughter it was different. Smith's Bible Dictionary says: "The exercise of paternal authority was limited to the sale of a daughter of tender age to be a maid-servant (slave), with the ulterior view of her becoming the concubine of the purchaser." (Ex. xxi. 7.)

So much for the first five commandments. The rest tell the Israelites not to steal from, rob nor murder those of their own tribes; but as to all other peoples, the command was, "When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And if it make thee an answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be that all the people found therein shall be tributaries unto thee and shall serve thee. And if it shall make no peace with thee, then thou shalt besiege it; and when the Lord thy God shall deliver it into thine hands thou shalt smite every male with the edge of the sword. But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies which the Lord thy God hath given thee. Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee; but of these cities which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth." (Deut. xx. 10-20.)

The plain fact is, Jehovah knew no more about ethics than he did about astronomy and geology. The Israelites were savages. They worshipped a horrid monster. They made their god like unto themselves.

Newberg, Ore.

The Rev. W. Berle Smith thinks that "what the church at large needs is a rousing revival of systematic giving". Undoubtedly the Rev. Smith would highly appreciate such a manifestation of the Holy Ghost among the laity of the church "at large", not to mention that inconsiderable portion of the church that is not at large, but, on the contrary, enjoys sequestration at the expense of the state. The fact that a rousing penchant for systematic taking has always existed among the clergy at large (resulting in sequestration not as often as might be wished) gives further color to the assumption that the Rev. Smith's wish is father to the tho't—of gain. "Christ our Klondike!" is doubtless the private slogan of more clergymen than the Rev. Berle Smith.—[Investigator.]