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"AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."—John viii:32.

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THE LADDER BUILDERS

By The Rev. Samuel W. Purvis, D.D.

(A sermon reprinted from The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin)

Text: Behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. Genesis 28:12.

Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. John 1:51.

Strange to say, some objects familiar to us are not mentioned in the Bible. For instance, bridges are not mentioned at all, and a ladder but once—and that here. Yet a bridge and a ladder are not unlike in their frequent needfulness, forming as they do a means of communication between two places not otherwise connected. A ladder, like a bridge, is a means to an end. It helps us ascend where we could not by our own height or reach. It joins where we are, with where we would be.

The story connected with this ladder vision is, like all Bible stories, full of intense human interest. Jacob, the son of Isaac, has robbed his brother Esau of a spiritual heritage. Isaac said to Esau, "Thy brother came with subtlety and hath taken thy blessing." From that hour Esau watches his chance for revenge. Under the scourge of fear Jacob flees. We read, "And Jacob went out." The same words were written of Cain, "And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord." What a lash sin has! It drives out! Judas "went out" and hanged himself. Peter "went out" into the darkness weeping bitterly. So Jacob "went out" from his home in Beersheba on a perilous journey of 450 miles toward Pandanaram. There will be hard going, scanty fare, bad weather, exposure to murderous men and wild beasts; plenty enough to remind this prodigal that there's no place like home. But there is a worse thing than all these: A secret whisper at each step, "It need not have been."

The day is far spent. The night's coming on. Night's the time for heartache. There are more tears shed at night than in day. Jacob had traveled 48 miles since daybreak. Fast going! Fear drives like Jehu. The runaway boy has come to his first night from home. The darkness in his heart is deeper than the shadows of night. He lies down to rest. The sky for a roof, sand for a mattress, stones for a pillow. It is easy to sin—it is not easy to lie on sin's pillow. "The way of the transgressor is hard." Sin says, "You made your bed—lie in it!" There's no softness in sand, and rocky pillows are not featherery.

Jacob lies down to sleep. Soon the hoot of an owl in a tree, the cry of a jackal in the desert, the howl of a lone wolf on the moor, lull him to sleep. In that cloudless Syrian sky Heaven quickly lights her evening lamps. Jacob's spirit is now in the hands of God. Man's helplessness is God's opportunity. "And he dreamed." The barren mountain side becomes jasper. Its rocky tiers become gold. He's at Heaven's front door. A ladder set on earth is reaching to Heaven. Angels are descending and ascending. At the top is God, "I am with thee and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest." What! God the God of Jacob, the sinner? True! God often speaks, not to the man that is, but to the man that is to be. We sometimes think God is far off when He is only a ladder length away!

The Labor of Ladder-Climbing
Climbing is hard work, but it is worth it—if you are going up!

In these days of air-mindedness we give much thought to flying machines, and not much to ladders. We talk in terms of wings and motors when often faithful climbing is far more to the purpose. Autos and airplanes suggest speed—a ladder slow, painful progress. You

do not fly up a ladder, but climb, step by step—only that each rung brings you one round nearer the top. It is tiresome work. Every muscle is called into play. Hands must grasp the side, feet must be securely planted, legs must bear the weight of the body, the head must maintain its steadiness. It is no place for pranks. Foolishness may cause a fall.

And there's a tragedy! Once you start to climb, one misstep, one loose grasp, and you fall, possibly not to rise again. The higher one ascends the more caution is necessary—and that's true to life! At first-rungs a fall may not be serious—a bump or bruise. But from the heights falls are nearly always fatal.

We must set the ladder of our life plans on the earth, well based on our work-a-day world. Then uprising desires, like shining angels, will climb the mystic staircase. What is a staircase but a covered ladder. We do not begin our career as radiant angels, but as fallen mortals. We are all alike in this: The holiest saints began as sinners. To go up a ladder one begins at the bottom. He puts his foot on the lowest round. And that must be the beginning in earth's tasks, too. Whether with a music book or a reading primer. I say books, because books are ladders to the heights of literature and learning. We have to climb to reach all earthly heights; do we not speak of "the ladder of fame" and "the ladder of success"? And what if we do not reach those heights here? At the grave of a mountain guide in the Alps a humble grave-stone simply says, "He died climbing." Fine! And, at last, is not death itself an ascent—an achievement?

The Ladder Builders

I cannot help thinking of the forces that lift men up—the ways and means of our rising in the world. The top limb of a tree is highest, but it did not lift itself up there!

Can we count the number of forces or persons whose combined efforts resulted in so commonplace a thing as the making and placing of a loaf of bread on our breakfast table? When you and I came upon the scene of life the alphabet was formed, figures fashioned, multiplication table composed. When we came forests had been leveled, rivers bridged, mountains tunneled; not only were these rocks and rills, these woods and templed hills, that we sing about, made accessible by rail and road, but their liberties and laws were secured at Valley Forge and Gettysburg. The bottom of these ladders are placed not only at Arlington Heights, but on many another known and unknown patriot's grave. Our churches were built, our hymns composed, our creeds inscribed in the blood of martyrs. Who were these ancient ladder-builders for the race which now is, was, and is to come?

Many of us are ladder folks—others are rising on our shoulders. Humble parents toil that their children may go to school. As the life of the window cleaner may depend on the helper beneath holding faithfully, so the future of many a professional man has been maintained by the faithfulness of some humble one at home.

Life's Longest Ladder

"And he dreamed, and behold a ladder." It couldn't be stated more truly or more beautifully!

Every road in the Roman Empire led to Rome. Any Roman lad could step out his door and strike the highway with certainty of reaching the palace of Caesar. Any sunbeam, followed to the end,

leads to its effulgent source. The foot of the ladder on the spot on which you stand can lead straight to heaven and God. You do not have to go to Jerusalem, Rome or Mecca to find the first round of it. Try this just now. Close your eyes to concentrate your thoughts. Now lift that thought to God. Straight as the sunbeam's tracks, swifter than its flight, you are in the Divine presence. God has a telephone receiver and sender in the heart of everyone. How like the angels going back and forth are our thoughts and His!

Jacob's ladder represented communication between earth and heaven. The ladder must, of course, touch earth or no mortal could rise to it; it must touch heaven or no angel can descend upon it. However high heaven may be, the ladder of prayer reaches it. It is not like the Tower of Babel, a human construction, and so failing of heaven's heights. God's ladder reaches! No matter the depth of human guilt, it is not too low for the Saviour's reach. The Carpenter of Nazareth constructed a saving ladder—that ladder was a sacrificial Cross.

The crowning factor in the vision of Jacob's ladder is stated in the words, "The Lord stood above it." God at the top. Man at the bottom!

"In the gusty hall of life, Doors slamming, windows rattling, I stand in the dark on the lowest stair Looking up, and affirming God; He is surely there."

Angels "ascending and descending." Isn't the order somehow reversed? Shouldn't they have descended before they could ascend? Who and what are these angels, anyhow? I wonder if they might not be the angels of our better natures, our higher aspirations—repentance, humility, faith, prayer—all starting at the foot of the ladder and going upward? And the gifts of pardon, healing, assurance, grace, comfort, strength—be angels coming down the ladder from heaven? The angels of Jacob's prayer were rising, and the answers were returning—"I am with thee, and will keep thee in all the places thou goest."

Make sure your life's ladder reaches! Remember the old-time illustration?—Said a younger man to his college professor, "When I finish school I have brilliant prospects before me: I ought to become rich and famous." "And then?" "I shall marry and travel much." "And then?" "I shall settle down and enjoy life." "And then?" "I shall grow old and take things easy." "And then?" "Oh, I suppose like other people, I must die." "And then?" He stopped before that last "and then." His ladder did not reach to heaven.

In every place where there is a lonely life there is a ladder, especially for the sin-weary and the prodigal who is an exile from his Father's house. Prayer is life's longest ladder. Have one end on earth—the other in heaven. When both ends are on earth, it is only a step-ladder, you have to come down without reaching heaven's heights. If the earth's end rests on prayer it doesn't matter where it is placed. It may be in the field where Isaac went to meditate at even-tide, or in the lion's den where Daniel was thrown, or by the Brook Jabbok where Jacob wrestled, or in the prison where Joseph served, or in the jail where Paul and Silas prayed at midnight. Some, like the early martyrs, make ladders out of their crosses.

Jesus, the Son of God, is the staircase by which we bridge the distance between earth and heaven. He said: "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Christ is the ladder of our salvation. The foot of the ladder is at the foot of the Cross—its summit is at the throne of God.

THESE COLLEGE GRADUATES OF OURS

By DR. KELLY MILLER

The August number of the Crisis is its annual educational issue which is devoted to the American Negroes in College 1937-38, and 3,079 graduates with collegiate and professional degrees are listed. This imposing list of graduates fairly suggests interesting indications and gives rise to serious reflections.

I. The Rapid Rise in the Number of Negro College Graduates

The rapid rise in the number of Negroes with Academic Degrees is noticeable and highly significant during the past few decades. To an observer like me who has witnessed the curve of Negro college graduates rise almost from the zero point to its present high registry and which is still on its sharp upward trend, these figures are peculiarly significant. Does this intellectual enrichment of the race connote corresponding increase in power and social efficiency of an educated leadership? This query must be pondered seriously.

II. Co-eds

The increase in the female contingent is the most surprising. While the Crisis does not furnish exact statistics of the proportion of the sexes, yet we know from collateral information that the co-eds constitute a large majority of the 24,000 Negro college students and of the 3,000 graduates. Fifty years ago a colored woman college graduate was regarded like "The Female Novelist" of Gilbert and Sullivan's Mikado, as a "peculiar anomaly." The first colored woman to graduate from the college of Howard University was my classmate, Mrs. Josephine T. Washington, who is now retired as Dean of Women of Wilberforce University. For a number of years thereafter such graduates were like angels' visits, few and far between, but today the women constitute 1,121 against 1,119 men in Howard's total enrollment. If we subtract the students preparing for such masculine professions as physicians, dentists, druggists, preachers, lawyers, engineers and architects, the female preponderance would be still more glaring.

It is also noticeable in Howard University, that the female students usually carry away the scholarship honors. The Crisis carries the photographs of twenty-one female and nine male graduates. It is presumed that the editor of the Crisis selected the list with reference to scholarship standing and was not influenced by pulchritude. The higher education of the Negro has already become feminized.

III. Negroes in Northern Colleges

The number of graduates from white colleges cannot fail to excite attention, in which there were 2,525 students and 192 graduates. New York University had 494 students, Ohio State 451, Wayne 431, University of Kansas 192, University of Indiana 168, Hunter College 150, University of Illinois 112. Negroes in Northern colleges are more numerous than our entire collegiate enrollment two decades ago. Negro students are admitted practically to every college and university in the United States outside of the proscriptive region of the South. This increase of Negro students in Northern colleges and universities carries its own suggestion and significance. The Crisis does not list any professional degrees granted by Northern Universities. This seems to be an oversight and somewhat vitiates the appraisal of the effectiveness of Negro and Northern Colleges.

IV. Graduate Courses

Howard, Fisk and Atlanta operate graduate schools leading only to the first graduate degree of Master of Arts and

Master of Science. No Negro university is yet equipped to confer creditably the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. There were nine Negro graduates with the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, all of which were conferred by Northern Universities. There were 211 Masters of Arts and Science degrees of which 98 were conferred by white institutions, 45 by Howard, 42 by Atlanta, 18 by Fisk, 4 by Hampton, 4 by Virginia State.

Neither Howard nor Atlanta has a complete graduate setup but limit their curricula to the Master of Arts and Master of Science, the first graduate degree, which contemplates one year of advanced study beyond the Baccalaureate. This graduate work is designed primarily to give the student additional insight and grasp upon his college courses so that he may more effectively teach in secondary schools. It will be some years, perhaps fully a generation, before they can acquire the requisite equipment, staff, and student body to justify the higher graduate degree.

I find that these reflections on our college graduates are so engaging that I shall have to continue them in my next release.

ECHOES FROM THE ATLANTIC SYNODICAL SUMMER CONFERENCE

By Rev. H. M. Scott

"The song is ended, but the music lingers on." To all those who attended the Atlantic Synodical Summer Conference at Irmo, S. C., Aug. 6-12, 1938, these words might be truly applied. It was really a great Conference.

It was with great interest that we noted car after car drive on the beautiful, rolling campus of Harbison Institute, Aug. 6, loaded with happy delegates, coming to attend the Conference. Dr. and Mrs. Porter were, with their co-workers, all ready to receive the delegation. Rooms were waiting for the delegates to occupy them; the pantry was stocked with supplies for the appetite, and class rooms and chapel arranged for the smooth running of the daily program. The stage is now set, and the curtains rise!

Now, who was there? You ought to have been there and "seed fur yu' self." They came from parts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. There was a delegation of five all the way from Key West, Fla.—over 900 miles. Some one said that it was quite a contrast to the number who came from a distance of 25 miles. Again, some one said that it was a surprise that more within a radius of 25 miles did not attend. Nuf said. It might be of interest to note that Knox Presbytery had 23 delegates registered at the Conference. Now did some say that Fairfield and McClelland had less than 23 combined? NO.

We are mentioning only a few of the activities at the Conference. We wish to congratulate the Student Council for the very fine way in which the daily activities in the dining room were handled. The Chairman of the Council will be continued for the next Conference, with her associates, we hope.

The Blues and Reds waged a bitter battle, with the Blues coming out victorious in a closely fought contest. To the regret of the Reds, Miss James, of Camden, suffered bodily injury, yet her spirit remained in the game. My co-worker and Dean of the Catawba Summer Conference, Rev. R. L. Jeans, injected a real spirit into the veins of the Reds. Shall we forget the parson's sermon in the dining room?

The leaders who had charge of the evening programs brought to the Conference messages long to be remembered. At the close of the day, in the glow of the evening sunset, it was Dr. Cotton, of Henderson, N. C., who held the Conference spellbound with his inspiring messages at Vesper hour. Others who gave the Conference messages fraught with power, inspiration, and information, were Rev. F. Gregg, Chairman of the Board of Directors; Rev. O. M. McAdams, of St. Petersburg, Fla.; Dr. De Barritt, of Key West, Fla.; Dr. A. C. Griggs, of Augusta, Ga., and Rev. J. H. Toatley, of Chesterfield, S. C., who gave us the fine sermon at the Sunday morning worship hour.

In the midst of all the joy and happiness at the Conference, there were some very solemn moments. The Dean regrets that he will not have the opportunity to "introduce" or "present" a certain outstanding person as "Director" at the next Conference. The Conference will not soon forget the touching moments when, out of its appreciation and gratitude for services rendered by its former Director, Dr. A. B. McCoy, it presented to him a token of appreciation. We wish to thank Mrs. C. McC. Jamison, the daughter of the former Director, who so gracefully accepted the token on behalf of him. "The song is ended, but the music lingers on."

The Conference goes forward with its new Director, Rev. A. H. Prince, of Charlotte, N.C., and the Associate Director, Rev. C. H. Richmond, of Savannah, Ga. The curtains have fallen to rise again in Key West, Fla., August, 1939. All aboard for Key West, 200 strong!

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WORLD COUNCIL WINS FAVOR

Twelve Communions in the United States have already formally approved, at least in principle, the constitution of the proposed World Council of Churches drafted at Utrecht, Holland, in May. They are the following: Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Presbyterian Church in the United States, Congregational-Christian, Northern Baptist, United Lutheran, Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod, Evangelical and Reformed, Reformed Church in America, United Presbyterian, Protestant Episcopal, Disciples of Christ and Methodist Episcopal.

The next meetings of the American Sections of the Faith and Order and the Life and Work Movements, which are the basic bodies caring for plans for the World Council, are to be held in New York City September 28.

FOR FULL-GROWN CHURCHES

How Churches can be developed on the foreign field which will be truly independent of the home Church and self-supporting is one of the chief problems to be faced by the World Conference at Madras, India, in December. At least half of the 450 delegates will represent the new Churches which foreign missions have developed during the past century. At the last previous world missionary conference, held in Jerusalem in 1928, less than a fourth of the delegates were from the Churches on the foreign field.

FAMED S. C. LAWYER DIES

Columbia, S. C.—Sept. 9—Funeral services for N. J. Frederick, a director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and a well-known lawyer, were held here today at 4 P. M. in the Wesley M. E. church.

Mr. Frederick was 61. His most famous case involved his defense of the Loman family, whose horrible lynching at Aiken, S. C., by a white mob aroused the entire nation in October, 1926.