

## **VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER**

### **CURRENT AFFAIRS IN GERMANY**

ACCORDING to the advices received from the Society's representative in Germany there is a great religious unrest there at the present time. Roman Catholics are stoutly resisting the movement known as "*Los von Rom*" – *i.e.*, "Away from Rome" – and the tendency of our times to individual thinking on the part of its supporters. Its party in the German parliament – the Reichstag – is now very necessary to the government in connection with the passage of government measures, because the Socialist party has become so strong. Under the patronage of the Emperor, Catholics are proclaiming loudly the duty of loyalty to religion and the government, even though not a great while ago they were quite willing to inveigh against that very same government. The cry now is for the necessity of all religious people uniting in opposition to infidelity and revolutionary parties. Protestants, under similar influences, are taking somewhat the same stand, but decline to be brought too closely into union with the Church of Rome. Thus the question of the hour is held to be outward formalistic religion and patriotism to the government. Under this plea, no doubt, Socialists and Revolutionists will be more and more opposed year by year, and no doubt ourselves, and others considered out of line with the majority of "Orthodoxy," will be similarly brought under the ban, and treated as though we were in some way associated with or responsible for the revolutionary conditions and their program.

Unable to secure legislation desired by him Emperor William recently dissolved the German Reichstag (Congress) and ordered a fresh election at which a stout contest was made by the three leading parties, one of which, the Social-Democrat, had been too powerful for the Emperor's purposes. It is claimed that

the Emperor appealed to the Pope to influence the Catholic vote away from the Socialist party because they were a menace to both Church and State. The election certainly reflects this, for in it the Socialists lost 34 members of the Reichstag. The event was celebrated at Berlin, where noisy crowds saluted the Emperor and subsequently the Crown Prince.

The effect will be to more than ever separate the religious from the Socialists and drive the irreligious to them. Thus we see the cleavage coming along the very lines laid down in prophecy – on the one side "the Beast and his Image and the Kings of the earth and their armies" or supporters, and on the other side the army of anarchy, which unwittingly will as "the Lord's great army" overthrow all present institutions preparatory to the Millennial reign of peace and righteousness. But let us never lose sight of the fact that the "saints," the "elect," have nothing to do with supporting or assisting either side in that awful conflict. It is the Father that shall put all things *under* the control of the Christ. It will be accomplished by the letting go of natural laws, "the loosing of the winds," which will allow human selfishness on both sides to wreck the present [R3941 : page 51] civilization in a time of trouble such as was not before since there was a nation.

Emperor William at a banquet recently took occasion to emphasize his opposition to all who in any wise think or speak pessimistically, as implying and preaching trouble, – financial, social and religious – as we do. He declares that all pessimists should leave the country, and intimated that only those taking a hopeful view of matters need expect imperial favors. Nevertheless, the newspapers of Germany, religious and secular, are disputing both the accuracy and wisdom of the Emperor's words. They seem to believe that denying the existence of evils will not cure them. They are surely right; the Emperor is surely wrong: nevertheless we may readily imagine how he and others of like mind and political influence, combining with

Churchianity, Roman and Protestant, will be ready to go great lengths in crying "Peace, peace, when there is no peace," and in harshly treating those who proclaim the message of the Bible respecting "a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation" as being at hand. [R3941 : page 52] We are reminded in this connection of the experiences of Jeremiah with the king and princes of Judah – that time and again he was cast into the dungeon for proclaiming the Word of the Lord respecting approaching calamities.

Spiritism is said to be making considerable progress in Germany, too. Books on the spirit land, proclaiming that the dead are not dead – that all when they seem to die pass to a more complete enjoyment of life – are having wide sale. As already pointed out, Spiritism is bound to have a mighty influence in the next few years in deluding the people: everything is surely well prepared in that direction. The views of Christendom, that the dead are alive, have been thoroughly absorbed by the public; and as now doubt is creating individual thought along religious lines, Spiritism steps to the front, claiming to have the only torch to light the gloom beyond, and many are walking in its false light. It is difficult to know in advance how serious its misleadings may yet become – everywhere throughout Christendom. From Germany also comes confirmation of a report current there that a certain kind of "revival" has sprung up in India, attended with peculiar manifestations of an unseen power – apparently a counterfeit of some of the manifestations in the early Church following Pentecost – speaking with unknown tongues, not leading, however, toward intelligent knowledge of the Lord and his plan, but toward fanaticism.

### **"TONGUES OF FIRE"**

From all parts of the world, but especially from the Pacific coast, come reports of what its friends call a fresh Pentecostal

blessing – an outpouring of the holy Spirit, etc., and what its opponents call a religious insanity. The movement is amongst so-called "holiness people" of various sects and parties – "missions," as their meetings are generally styled. People who have been seeking and claiming "divine healing" seem to be among the most susceptible. Amongst these are some who give evidence of deep sincerity and a superficial knowledge of God's Word. Though generally swift to speak and slow to hear, they, through indolence or fear, neglect systematic study of the divine message. They seem to come under the head mentioned by the Prophet (Hosea 4:6), "My people perish for lack of knowledge."

Reports of the movement in various directions seemed so absurd that we declined to believe them, supposing that since they were sent out by the secular press the facts must surely be misrepresented. Now, however, the "flame," as it is called, has reached Pittsburg, where at one of the Christian Alliance Missions we have an ocular demonstration of this delusion.

What we see here corresponds well with the general reports from elsewhere. The meetings are "bedlam:" everything is confusion, prayers to God are yelled or groaned or barked, – yelped. Now and then someone "gets the blessing" and falls in a trance-like condition on the floor, to remain rigid, perhaps, for hours. Another begins to talk some sort of gibberish interspersed with English. Another in a different guttural mumbles and then gives an interpretation in English. These are said to have the "unknown tongues" of Pentecost; but we remember that foreigners present did recognize those tongues as *bona fide* and got a gospel message from them. – Acts 2:8.

The people in attendance pay little heed to what is uttered by these "tongues" and their interpretations. Some are simply curious and attend as a free show: others are too engrossed with their desire to have a trance or an "unknown tongue" to do

anything else than groan their prayers to God for those "gifts," as evidences of his favor. Frenzied hugging and kissing and rolling on the floor (reported from elsewhere) are amongst the evidences that these poor people are surely under some spirit influence. And it certainly does not appear to be "the spirit of a sound mind." – 2 Tim. 1:7.

It is quite true that there was confusion at Pentecost, caused by so many speaking at once in foreign languages; but nothing in the record implies insanity or fanaticism: nor could we expect either of such sound logicians as the apostolic epistles show them to have been. On the contrary our experiences corroborate the declaration of St. Paul, that the operation of the holy Spirit of God in our hearts and minds has been favorable to the development of greater soundness of mind, by reason of our heed to the Word and its wisdom, which cometh from above. A WATCH TOWER reader in Los Angeles, Cal., writes that a neighbor woman got this so-called gift of tongues, and that a reputable Chinaman hearing her said that he understood her quite well – that she spoke his dialect of Chinese. Pressed for an interpretation he declined, saying that the utterance was the vilest of the vile.

In our judgment the facts justify the conclusion that these "flames" are of an unholy spirit, of Satan: that he is now producing a poor counterfeit for the deception of a class whom he cannot reach through Spiritism, Christian Science, Hypnotic New Thought nor Higher Critic Evolution theories.

Is it asked, Why would the Lord permit Satan to delude honest souls? We reply, that he has permitted "doctrines of devils" these many centuries amongst the heathen (I Tim. 4:1), some of whom doubtless are also sincere. The *time* for the binding of Satan is not yet – though we believe it is very near. (Rev. 20:2.) Doubtless Satan realizes better than we can how the binding or restraining is coming, and is actively maneuvering to

avoid it; while God on the other hand is willing to permit his activity because it can now serve a purpose – a sifting work – which must reach and touch every class and condition of professed Christians everywhere; – to test and prove them. Thus we consider this one of the many delusions of our day. Mark the Apostle's forceful words respecting this day of trial with which **[R3941 : page 53]** this age ends and the next is ushered in. He says: For this cause "God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie." Why? "That they [who fall] all might be [thus] condemned" – be manifested as not right, as out of harmony with God – as unfit to be of the "Bride" class. But why so? "Because they received not the truth in the love of it," but "had pleasure in untruth." – 2 Thess. 2:10,12.

In other words, the "Present Truth" has been sent hither and thither throughout the bounds of Christendom that, like as a magnet would attract all the particles of steel within the radius of its influence, the Truth might attract all the Israelites indeed, for further schooling and ripening, preparatory to their "change" to Kingdom glory. Meantime, the Lord allows Satan to organize various human agencies, those not of his "very elect," that such may fall farther and farther from the Truth, until finally none will "stand" except the elect, and they "on the sea of glass mingled with fire." (Rev. 15:2.) All others are to fall more or less, through some will subsequently be rescued from the catastrophe – "saved so as by fire." – I Cor. 3:15.

## **THE DOCTRINE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST AS AN ESSENTIAL**

In the *North American Review* Professor C. A. Briggs, D.D., D.Lit., in an article entitled, "Criticism and Dogma," states as follows: –

"When it is said that the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is essential, it is meant that it is essential to the system of doctrine

and the Faith of the Christian Church. The Church can no more dispense with that doctrine than it can dispense with the incarnation of Christ himself. It is not, however, essential to the faith or Christian life of individuals. The doctrine may for various reasons be so different to them that they cannot honestly accept it. They may content themselves with the doctrine of the incarnation and refuse to accept any doctrine as to its mode. They may even go so far as to deny the Virgin Birth, and hold to the theory of ordinary generation without accepting the legitimate consequences of that doctrine. Theologians are not always consequential. Men are responsible for what they believe and teach, not for what others think that they ought logically to believe and teach. The Church may, and in the present situation and circumstances of Christian Theology, ought to tolerate opinions which it cannot endorse. **[R3942 : page 53]**

"Christian dogma is in a process of reconstruction, owing to the partial adoption by theologians of the principle of development. Science and Philosophy are also in a condition of reconstruction and restatement. Confusion of thought is inevitable under these circumstances. The Church, the most stable of all human institutions, can afford to be patient and charitable, and to wait until its scholars have removed the difficulties that in this age envelop Christian dogma. These can only be overcome in the arena of chivalric scholarship, not in ecclesiastical courts ruled by ecclesiastics, who are usually more concerned about the forms of things than about their reality. Christian scholars as a body are not at all dubious as to the Virgin Birth. It is not at all a question of Biblical criticism, but of Christian dogma. They are generously inclined towards those who at present are either doubtful about it, or even disposed to deny it. Biblical and historical scholars are just as decided in its maintenance as dogmatic theologians. For it is a dogma which is inextricably involved in the Christological principle that lies at the basis of Christian dogma and Christian institutions. They

cannot possibly recognize that the birth of Christ was by ordinary human generation, for that would be a revival of the Nestorian heresy and be a denial of all the Christian philosophy of the centuries, with all the serious consequences therein involved. It would turn back the dial of Christianity nearly two thousand years: it would break with historical Christianity and its apostolic foundation, and imperil Christianity itself."

### **NEWS FROM KINGSTON, JAMAICA**

DEAR BROTHER: –

You are aware that on January 14th we were visited by a disastrous earthquake which has almost completely demolished the entire city. We are glad to report that no injury has occurred to any of the Lord's people, so far as we have heard, save that one interested friend, who was a constant attendant here, was killed.

A remarkable thing is that many of the heads of business houses were killed, which will cause some delay in business restoration. Hundreds are under medical treatment, woefully mangled. But what makes me sit in wonder continually is that our meeting hall is the only place of religious worship in the city that is standing and in a condition to be used; and it is all brick like the others, save that the two upper rooms which we occupy are of heavy frame set on top of the lower building, making it more dangerous. Our faith has been greatly strengthened by the experience. The Lord be praised! Yours faithfully,

J. A. BROWNE, – Kingston, Jamaica.

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