

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER

NEVER before has the prospect for the successful spreading of Present Truth had so favorable an outlook as that for 1909. Although vast preparations are under way for the conversion of the heathen, and the Federation of Churches is expecting to increase the strength and effectiveness of all the Federating Denominations, nevertheless there is a considerable element outside, as well as inside, those Systems, which is quite dissatisfied. It hungers and thirsts for something different, for something more than mere church organization, salaried ministers and paid choristers. This class feels a desire to get nearer to the Lord, rather than to be bound in a denominational bundle. It feels that there is an emptiness and formality connected with much that is called Christian, and that many apparently are drawn nigh to the Lord with their lips, while their hearts, their affections, are far from him and really fixed upon earthly things, good and bad.

The said class is ready for the Truth, but is in danger of falling into Christian Science, Theosophy, the Emmanuel Movement, or something of the kind. Alas, poor sheep! It is true of them, as the Master expressed it of a similar kind at his first advent, that "He beheld them as sheep and no shepherd" – needing guidance, needing help. We may be sure that the Adversary is on the lookout for these and that none the less the Good Shepherd cares for them. And surely he expects that we, who have already tasted of his grace and obtained some knowledge of his plan, will be interested also in their welfare, because we have his spirit. We may expect that he will use us in reaching these in considerable number, because, by his grace, we have the only message that can bring them the true blessing of grace and peace, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour and of his perfect work, past and to come.

OPENING THE DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY

Our opportunities for the New Year seem to be superior to those of any previous year.

(1) Because the WATCH TOWER readers are more than ever awake to their opportunities and responsibilities and privileges of service. Our Volunteer force is larger and more zealous, we believe, than ever before, and our new Volunteer matter is in a new and attractive form, which, we believe, will be blessed of the Lord in reaching many, both inside and outside of the various denominations. We hope to hear from the dear friends in every direction promptly, as to what they propose to do – how many of these they can and will judiciously use. United effort is advantageous. Each one spies another, and each one who labors receives a special blessing from the Lord in his own heart, besides the blessing which he may confer on others as an instrument of the Truth.

THE NEWSPAPER SERMONS

The publication of the sermons in many newspapers has begun, and appearances are that it will continue, under the Lord's blessing and guidance, and that thus millions of readers will be reached, including many on farms, whom we could not hope to reach otherwise. It is largely for this department of the work that arrangements have been made for the transfer of the WATCH TOWER headquarters to Brooklyn, New York. We expect to give all of our subscribers in the United States and Canada an opportunity for cooperation, in connection with this department, some time during the year. You will receive a letter indicating how you can cooperate advantageously. Meantime be active in other departments of the service. Our British friends also may have opportunity of sharing in this work later.

THE BASIS OF OUR CONFIDENCE

Some of the dear friends are expressing surprise; but for several years we have anticipated increasing numbers becoming interested in the work. Our expectations have been so largely realized that it seems proper to rehearse the matter, and to give the reason why these openings of Divine providence for the spreading of the Truth seem to us to be in fullest harmony with what we should expect, from our view-point, concerning the Harvest Field. Let us take a hasty re-survey. It may enlarge our expectations, and thus lead to an increase of energy for others, and thus to an increase of our own blessings.

We still believe that in the year 1881 the special call of this Gospel Age ceased as a *call*. Our understanding still is that at that date a sufficient number had made consecration to complete the predestinated figure, and that God would not permit others to be called, for whom there would be no place; that, instead, he arranged that others consecrating since that time, should, like the servants in the parable, wait for an opportunity to enter the vineyard – peradventure it might come, even at the eleventh hour. We still understand that all the consecrated and accepted ones in 1881 will be subject to testings, proving, and that as one will be found unworthy, his name will be blotted out and his crown set aside [R4303 : page 4] for another, and that thus vacancies have occurred and been filled from time to time without a formal call – merely the consecrated being admitted to the privileges of the service and blessed with the begetting of the Spirit and the knowledge of the Truth.

Looking back to 1881 we find that in the few years preceding that date a considerable work of evangelization took place – Moody and Sankey and, later, Whittle and Bliss revival meetings from 1875 up to 1881. Their work appeared to be of a more substantial kind than that of revivalists generally since. They made

prominent Justification by Faith through the merit of the precious blood of Christ, and urged a full consecration to the Lord, to a degree that has seldom been equaled by evangelists. Large numbers professed thorough conversion, under their labors, and the depth of their work and of its hold upon the people is witnessed by a large sale and use of their Gospel hymns. It is our thought that the Lord used these men, and through their ministry the fore-ordained number was completed at the fore-ordained time, 1881.

A SUPPOSITIONARY CASE

Let us suppose that in 1881, when the call closed, there were altogether 40,000 justified and consecrated believers in the precious blood. Some of these had been, perhaps, a long time in the way, and their day of trial was nearly ended. But if our supposition respecting the Moody work be correct, a considerable majority of that 40,000 were in 1881 mere babes in Christ, freshly accepted of the Lord and subject to the message, testings and provings. Seeing the Lord is very patient and [R4304 : page 4] long-suffering to usward, it should not surprise us if many of those would have from five to twenty-five years of testing and proving, before their crowns would be declared forfeited. If these suppositions be measurably correct, it implies that, as usual, only a little flock of the consecrated make their calling and election sure, and that the great majority of them have lost their crowns and had their names blotted out, as respects a share in the Bride Company.

Taking the whole number as 40,000 and taking the overcomers to number one-fourth of these, and counting the three-fourths as going into the Great Company, it would mean the vacating of 30,000 crowns, and hence, mean opportunity for a similar number to enter in to possess those crowns.

A preference would surely be given to the justified ones, who, exercising faith in the blood and consecrating themselves to the

Lord, would be represented by the Parable of the Vineyard, as waiting and bidden to enter at the eleventh hour, without a specific promise of reward. It is our conviction, in harmony with the foregoing, that there is now a large number of crowns vacated and awaiting new claimants. This is more than a groundless surmise, for have we not the fact before us that a considerable number have lately come from worldliness and sin into the light of Present Truth, into the privileges of the Vineyard, and evidencing by their fruits of the holy Spirit that they have been begotten of the Spirit? Since the Divine methods are unchangeable, and since the justified and the children of the justified hold first place in the Divine opportunities of this Gospel Age, the inference is plain that a large number of crowns are now unportioned. And in full accord with this is the wider scope being granted for the circulation of Present Truth.

These are our grounds for our great expectations in connection with the opening year. Additionally we might remark that it is only to be expected that those who have come into the light of Present Truth, and who have, as it were, been gathered as wheat from the tares, should begin to receive their threshing, to separate fully and completely the wheat from the chaff. So, then, while anticipating great progress for the Truth, we must also anticipate sore trials and, perhaps, disappointments, in respect to some of whom we had expected better things – even joint-heirship in the Kingdom.

"A THOUSAND SHALL FALL"

"A thousand shall fall at thy side; ten thousand at thy right hand," is the prophetic picture of the testing time that is now upon the Church. We see the tens of thousands already falling into Higher Criticism, Evolution, Theosophy, Christian Science and various other delusions. And closer to us, at our side, consecrated like ourselves, some are falling. The question seems not to be, Who will fall, but, as Scripturally put, "Who shall be able to stand?" In the ninety-first Psalm the Prophet tells who will stand, namely, Those whose habitation is the Lord; those who abide under his shadow; those who trust under his wings for protection. The picture is that of

a mother hen, who, when the hawk is about, clucks for her brood, calling them under her shadow, under her wings, under her special protection. Corresponding to the cluck of the hen in this picture seems to be "the Vow," or solemn Resolution to great faithfulness of living, in harmony with our original vow, in thought, in word and in act.

As a result of obedience to this warning call, numbers of us have been drawn very close to the Lord, under the shadow of his protecting care, where no harm can come nigh us and only with our eyes shall we see what will come upon others, who refuse this refuge – others who will stumble in this evil day, and be snared and taken by the great Fowler and his demon hosts. It is painful to write, or even think of some, who, twenty and thirty years ago, were with us heart and hand climbing up Zion's Hill, fighting the good fight of faith, laying hold upon eternal life, developing the fruits and graces of the holy Spirit, and anticipating shortly sharing with the Redeemer the glorious work of the Kingdom, but who have since become weary or faint in their minds, or turned aside to strife or vain-glory. It is both our duty and our privilege to do all in our power to recover such from the power of the Adversary. But after doing all that we can on their behalf, it is not for us to question the wisdom and love of God in connection with the matter, but rather, with full reliance, to know that the Lord is supervising the affairs of all who are his sheep, and will not suffer us to come under greater temptations and trials than, by his assisting grace, we shall be able to withstand. Let us set to our seal that the Lord is true, faithful. Whether we or others shall fail of gaining the promised prize, it will not be the result of Divine negligence or inefficiency, but our own.

While considering this subject we take the opportunity to point out that our trials and testings as spirit-begotten New Creatures in the Truth will surely be on three points:

(1) Faith. (2) Humility. (3) Love.

To fail in any of these will mean disaster. To come off conquerer in all three of them will mean energy and devotion to know and to do the Father's will. The time is short. The tests will be severe. But he who is on our part is greater than all that be against us and ready to render every assistance needful, if our hearts be but loyal along the points mentioned; and if not loyal, then it would not be the will of God that we should be [R4304 : page 5] numbered amongst the Elect, because we would not be of the fore-ordained class, "Copies of his Son."

PAY THY VOWS UNTO THE MOST HIGH

These thoughts lead us up to the propriety of good resolutions, holy vows, and the opening of the year is a most excellent opportunity for the beginning of these. Whoever is of a really and properly thankful heart will feel at this season particularly like saying, with the Psalmist, "What shall I render unto the Lord, my God, for all his benefits to me?" Then comes the response, "I will take the cup of salvation (which is the cup of sacrifice), calling upon the name of the Lord (for grace to help me). I will pay my vows unto the Most High, in the presence of all the people." Those following this course, whether they call it a Vow or Resolution, and whether they report it to others or keep it to themselves instead, have a blessing. But to acknowledge and pay the vows in the presence of the brethren and sisters of the Lord's family is Divinely indicated to be our proper course. And the more fully we comply with this arrangement, the more complete, we believe, will be our blessing, and the greater our progress toward the Heavenly Inheritance.

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