

## VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER

### WATCH TOWER VIEWS OF SOCIALISM

Some of the dear friends have quite mistaken our recent publication of items on the progress of Socialism. In the volumes of the *MILLENNIAL DAWN* series (especially in Vol. IV) we have endeavored to show that we have great sympathy with every movement designed to benefit mankind—including Socialism—but that from the Bible viewpoint the hope of the world lies in none of these human devices, but only in the second coming of Christ and in the kingdom of the heavens then to be established. We do point out, however, that God purposes to allow mankind to try various projects for its own relief only to learn their futility, and that the end of all these failures will be discouragement and anarchy; but that the Lord's people, better informed than others through the Scriptures, will not only not be led to discouragement and anarchy, but can by faith rejoice in the troubles knowing of the glorious outcome of peace and blessing these will usher in—the Millennium.

### THE FRENCH DISESTABLISHMENT

The church and its supreme Pontiff are blamed by Emile Combes, ex-Premier of France, for the disruption of the Concordat. As Mr. Combes was the leading spirit in the severance of this bond between church and state, his utterance, which appears in the *Deutsche Revue* (Stuttgart), is probably the most authoritative that has been given out on the Government's side of the dispute. He says in a recent article:—

"It is time that in France an administrative organization of clergy be suppressed, which transforms the pulpit into a political tribune, where with unrestrained liberty all the political and social reforms, all the measures taken in the interests of liberty and progress are controverted and pointed out to the faithful as so many crimes against religion. Separated from the state the church can utter what opinions it likes about statesmen and their acts, but this can not be permitted in a church allied to the state by a treaty which accords to ecclesiastics a legally recognized authority and all the privileges of state functionaries."

### A GREAT CONFERENCE FOR RELIGIOUS CO-OPERATION

The *Literary Digest* says:—

More than seventeen million church members, belonging to twenty-six different communions, we are told, will be represented at the great gathering in New York city, beginning November 15, to discuss and plan for church federations. Co-operation in service is said to be the goal the conference will have in view, and no organic union of denominations will be attempted. The idea of federation, represented by this conference, believes the *Chicago Tribune*, is practicable "because it makes possible union without fusion," and the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* surmises that its resulting organization "may become one of the great moral, social and religious factors of the coming age." The coming conference has been planned and promoted by the National Federation of Churches and Christian Organizations, which came into being in 1900.

Dr. F. M. North, writing of the approaching Interchurch Conference on Federation, says:—

"Should the present promise of its import be realized, there should be an influence in its utterance and its action so powerful as to create a new epoch in the progress of Christ's kingdom. . . . It is, however, in the Evangelical Alliance of the United States of America that the historian will find the organized influence which has most strongly emphasized the principles underlying federation."—See *MILLENNIAL DAWN*, Vol. III, chap. 6.

### THE POPE ON THE BIBLE

It betokens a marked change in the attitude of the church of Rome toward the Bible for the laity, when the Pope gives his blessing to an association engaged in sending it forth in the language of the people. The St. Jerome Association is engaged in this for Italy, and when requested to bestow his blessing on the new work and the spread of the Gospel, the Pope answered:—

"Gladly do I give my blessing, and that with both hands and with full heart, for I do not doubt that this work will produce the richest fruit and is already blessed by God. The more we read the Gospel the stronger our faith becomes. The Gospels are writings that are valuable for everybody and under all circumstances. I have lived among the common people and know what they want and what pleases them. Tell

them the simplest Bible stories and you will have attentive listeners and effect blessed results.

"Your purpose is to spread the Gospels. You are doing a noble work. Some people think that the peasants, with their plain, everyday way of thinking, would not profit by the reading of the Scriptures. This is incorrect. The average peasant is a shrewder thinker than we may suspect, and knows how to draw the correct lessons from the Scriptures, often even better than many of the preachers. But it is not only the common people and the lower classes who will profit by the reading of the Scriptures.

"No matter how many prayer books and books of devotion there may be for the priests, none is better than the Gospels. This is an unsurpassed book of devotion, the true bread of life. I grant an especial apostolic blessing on all those who preach the Gospel, who hear and read it, whether on a Sunday or a week day. I bestow my blessing on all members of the St. Jerome Society and all who co-operate in the sacred work of spreading the Gospel."—*Christian Intelligencer*.

### HIGH ENGLISH CHURCHMEN FAVOR HIGHER CRITICISM

London.—A committee of 101 clergymen sent out a request some time ago for petitions on the subject of Biblical criticism, or the so-called "higher criticism." Over 1700 clergymen of the Church of England having signed the declaration, the widespread and far-reaching character of the petition has aroused comment and caused criticism. That 1700 clergymen should have signed a document of that kind is regarded as an amazing thing. The document itself calls attention to the momentous intellectual character of "higher criticism" or Biblical criticism.—*Globe-Democrat*.

### FIFTEEN PER CENT OF NEBRASKA CHURCHES ARE PASTORLESS

Lincoln, Neb.—Fifteen per cent. of the Protestant churches of Nebraska are without pastors, and it is impossible to secure ministers to fill the vacant pulpits. According to reports received at the headquarters of the Congregational, Methodist and Lutheran churches here scarcely a week passes but some minister breaks away from the calling to engage in another line of work. The prosperity of the farming industry has called away the greater number, but many have also gone into business and other professions.

### DISPROOFS OF THE EVOLUTION THEORY

"To the student of architecture it may be surprising to learn that the arch, until recently supposed to have been unknown to the ancients, was frequently employed by the pre-Babylonians. Such an arch, in a poor state of preservation, was, a few years ago, discovered in the lowest stratum, beneath the Babylonian city of Nippur. More recently an arched drain was found beneath the old city of Fara, which the Germans have excavated in Central Babylonia. The city, although one of the earliest known, was built upon an earlier ruin, and provided with an arched drain constructed of small plano-convex bricks. It measures about one meter in height and has an equal width.

"While delving among the ruined cities of the world, we are thus finding that at the time when we supposed that man was primitive and savage, he provided his home and city with 'improvements' which we are inclined to call modern, but which are only reinventing."—*Prof. E. J. Banks*.

### UNTIL HE COME!

When we celebrate the Lord's Memorial supper we show forth his death, until he come—until at his coming he changes, glorifies us, setting us up as his kingdom.—1 Cor. 11:26.

We are using our talents, until he come.—Luke 19:13.

We are fighting the good fight of faith, until he come.—

1 Tim. 6:12-14.

We are enduring tribulation, until he come.—2 Thess. 1:7.

We are to be patient until he come.—James 5:8.

We wait for the crown of righteousness, until he come.—

2 Tim. 4:8.

We wait for the crown of glory, until he come.—1 Pet. 5:4.

We wait for re-union with departed friends, until he come.—1 Thess. 4:13-18.

We wait for Satan to be bound until he come.—Rev. 20:3.

Until he come, then, does not point to a special moment, hour or day, but to the period of his presence (*parousia*), during which his "harvest" work will gather and glorify his saints and establish his promised kingdom.

## ANENT THE WITHDRAWAL LETTERS

We urge none to withdraw from "Babylon." We point out to the truth-hungry the "meat in due season," and encourage them to eat thereof freely, heartily, and to grow spiritually strong in the Lord. As each develops in knowledge and in grace it must be by confessing with his mouth as well as by his conduct his relationship to the head and to all whom he recognizes as his "members." He cannot suppress the truth and continue his spiritual progress; and to confess it will bring opposition from the adversary and from all in darkness under his blinding influences—social, financial and Babylonish. It is only a question of time when such will realize that *loyalty* to God, to his truth and to the brethren will *call him out of Babylon* and into fuller fellowship with the Lord and *all* the brethren and *all* the truth.—Rev. 18:4.

When such are ready to act they need assistance, advice. They are liable to one of two extremes, according to their natural temperament: either (1) with too much combativeness they are liable to act and speak too harshly of those who are still asleep, as they once were, or (2) with too little positiveness they are likely to miss a glorious opportunity for declaring meekly but firmly for the Lord and his Word. Thereby they not only lose a blessed reward at the time, but they unwittingly place in the hands of the adversary a lash for their future chastisement, a cord for the restraint of their influence.

Alas! how often we witness this last experience. Some dear brother or sister purposes a *quiet* withdrawal from one of the sects, and sends his letter of withdrawal to the pastor or other prominent official. The matter is kept quiet, his name remains on the rolls, and his associates consider his absence an evidence of unfaithfulness to his covenants. Grad-

ually they come to regard him as a back-slider and his influence is forever damaged. Worse than this: sometimes the pastor or official, seeking to serve his sect, will falsely and maliciously and slanderously circulate rumors that he has become an infidel, or that he is mentally unbalanced. This is done in order to offset the influence of the truth upon other members of the sect, which they feel must be upheld at any cost.

### THE PROPER COUSE FOR ALL

To meet these conditions we have prepared a "Withdrawal Letter" suitable to all cases, which we advise should be sent to every member of the congregation withdrawn from. You did not join the minister, but the congregation, and you should address to the latter your withdrawal. We print these "Withdrawal Letters" in large quantities and supply them with tracts and envelopes *free*. You merely need to sign and date them, and put on postage and mail them.

These letters are carefully and moderately worded so as to prevent your friends in "Babylon" from misunderstanding the step you are taking, and extends to them your Christian greetings and a helping hand out of a darkness, which to some extent they realize, into God's marvelous light, which, if true disciples, they are longing and seeking for. It is a most kind and effective way of giving your witness for the truth. And the sooner done the better, though better late than never.

Order a sample of these letters, and if you decide to use it order the quantity necessary for the congregation and get out your testimony, your witness for the truth, as speedily as possible. We now have a fresh supply.

## THE EDITOR'S WESTERN TOUR

(CONCLUDED FROM LAST ISSUE)

### AT SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Although our train was considerably late, about a dozen of the friends of the truth awaited us at the depot with greetings in the Lord. After a bountiful supper and a good night's rest we enjoyed a day of glorious fellowship in spiritual things. In the morning a service of praise and testimony was followed by a discourse from the Chart of the Ages by Brother MacMillan. In the afternoon about 160 were present—interested ones from the city and surrounding, with their friends. The discourse was, we trust, encouraging and helpful for those already acquainted with present truth. Following it seven were baptized in symbol of their consecration unto death with Christ.

The evening service for the public was attended by about 600, who gave closest attention to our discourse on "The Oath-bound Covenant." We considered it an excellent hearing, considering that it was a Saturday night—the busiest of the week. The dear friends of the cause brimmed over with the joy of the Lord and shook our hand time and again, some telling that they had come over ten, others over twenty, others fifty, and others over a hundred miles to enjoy the blessed associations of those few hours. Many, with tears, told how they longed for the "general assembly of the church of the first-born." We encouraged them to wait patiently for the Lord's time, meantime remembering that all the trials of faith and patient endurance and brotherly kindness and, in general, of our love for the Lord and for all—even our enemies—are necessary for us, that we may be approved and make our calling and election sure.

### AT HOUSTON, TEXAS

Here the experiences were almost an exact duplication of those at San Antonio, except that the interested numbered 250 to 300 at the morning and evening sessions, while the service for the public brought out 750. The difference in numbers was due in part, no doubt, to the fact that these sessions were on Sunday. The afternoon topic was "To Hell and Back. Who are there? Hope for many of them." The close attention given and the subsequent greetings from strangers as well as friends, encourage us to hope that a work was accomplished in some hearts at least, and that some heads were assisted to clearer views of the divine character and plan.

### GALVESTON'S ONE-DAY

We had but one session here. We arrived too late for a morning meeting and left too early for an evening one. About seventy-five of the interested (fifty whites and twenty-five blacks) assembled for an afternoon session which lasted two hours. We received the closest attention while we discussed "The Very Elect," and how we must make our calling and election sure by faithfulness to our covenant. We recalled the Lord's words, "Gather my saints together unto me, those that

have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." "They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels." The colored friends gave every evidence of being as deeply interested and as fully consecrated as their white brethren and sisters—which is saying a great deal for them.

### DALLAS, TEXAS, OUR NEXT STOP

The Dallas friends had arranged for excursion rates on the railroad, and nearly a hundred came from nearby points. The morning rally numbered 150. The afternoon session for the interested showed about 250. The evening session for the public was attended by 550. Six symbolized their consecration by water baptism. The attendance and interest were excellent for a week day. Indeed all of our experiences in Texas, as well as along the entire route, tended to show that the religiously inclined public is becoming more and more awake along the lines of present truth. And this is just what we should expect at this the zenith of the "harvest" time.

The Dallas meetings were very enjoyable to us and we trust also to all in attendance. Our afternoon topic was "Consecration unto death" and the glorious rewards—present and future. The topic for the public was, "To Hell and Back."

### AT SHERMAN, TEXAS

Our last appointment of the trip was at Sherman, where we had time for a morning session only. About 100 were present, of whom forty were previously interested. During an hour and a half we discoursed to them of the great "Oath-bound Covenant," showing its import to the church and also to the world. Our words received the closest of attention from thoughtful-looking people, five of whom, we were advised, were preachers of various denominations. A three hours' ride brought us back to Dallas for supper and for our night train homeward.

### HOME AGAIN AT ALLEGHENY

A ride of two days and two nights brought us to Allegheny and the Bible House, as pleased to be back to the labors of the office as we were pleased just a month before to depart to visit and address the far distant brethren. Our journey covered 8,650 miles and included thirty-three addresses of an average of an hour and a half each, besides numerous semi-private talks. We thanked God for the privileges enjoyed, and felt refreshed in spirit, though weary in flesh by reason of the rapid going necessary in the interest of the work demanding our speedy return.

We were met by a reception committee at the depot and on arrival at the Bible House found the office force (30) gathered to greet us and welcome us back with outstretched hands and kindly words and with a hymn and prayer of thanksgiving for our home-coming. In the evening (Sat-

day) about two hundred of the Allegheny congregation met us in the chapel and extended their welcome similarly through a chairman and by praise and prayer. We thanked these dear ones, as well as the morning gathering, for their many manifestations of love, and assured them that, although we had met many dear ones residing afar off, and although we love all and enjoyed the fellowship of all, yet none could be more precious to our hearts than the tried and true of the home congregation.

Then we detailed some of the incidents of our tour and assured the friends that we brought love and best wishes and heart greetings to them from all along the route. We concluded with a little dissertation on Christian love—its breadth and depth—chiefly toward God and the brethren who have his heart-likeness, but also sympathetically toward all men, yea, even toward our enemies who despitely misrepresent us and our endeavors, even as they have long misrepresented the Father and his plan.

## THE KINGSTON, JAMAICA, CONVENTION

The second annual "Convention of Believers in the Atonement through the death of the Man Christ Jesus, a ransom for all, and in his Millennial Kingdom." will long be remembered by the Jamaica brethren who assembled in Kingston from various parts of the Island to receive that blessed refreshment which accompanies the communion of saints.

Theatre Royal was the scene of such a "holy convocation" as it had never before witnessed, while the joys of the brethren were two-fold increased as we remembered daily that our loved ones in Portland were enjoying a similar blessing at the same time; and some one even suggested that perhaps our brethren in the Most Holy were holding a sympathetic convention during those very hours. Thrilling thought!

A rich program awaited the longing appetites of those who came, and none were turned away empty. Two subjects were calculated to draw the public, and they did not fail. About 400 were present on Friday night, Sept. 8th, to hear "Which

is the True Church?" and more than 600 on Sunday night to listen to a discourse on "The Day of Judgment."

The closing session was a question meeting which became extremely interesting because of the presence of a reverend opposer of the truth, whose violent speeches and scurrilous writings were well known throughout the Island. Because of his previous threat we were at first fearful that the assistance of the police authorities would have been needed, but the Sword of the Lord and of Gideon was sufficient, and the gentleman who wrote "Millennial Dawnism Condemned" has been trying ever since to re-gild his tinsel by nightly harangues at the public square in the presence of the unintelligent populace. We are glad to believe that his questions were providentially permitted for the enlightenment of our visitors, many of whom, as a result, have become friends to the cause of truth.

Reported by the Society's representative,  
BROTHER BROWNE.

## BEREAN BIBLE STUDY FOR NOVEMBER

31. How does brotherly kindness apply "the Golden Rule"? F. 376, ¶ 1, 2; F. 406, ¶ 1, to 409; Z. 00-218 (2nd col. ¶ 1 to 4) and 219 (2nd col. ¶ 1, 2).
32. How should brotherly love exercise itself toward the *special servants* of the church? Z. '00-80 (2nd col. last ¶); Z. '05-173 (1st col. ¶ 2, 3, 4); Z. '96-305, 306.
33. How should we exercise brotherly love toward our brethren still "in Babylon"? Z. '05-116 (2nd col. ¶ 3, 4, 5); Z. '05-164 (2nd col. ¶ 4 to 7); F. 150. ¶ 4 to 7; F. 150, ¶ 2.
34. How should brotherly kindness consider "social obligations"? F. 588 to 590.
35. What course will brotherly love dictate in the matter of "borrowing and lending"? Rom. 13:8; F. 564, ¶ 1, 2; F. 569, ¶ 1, 2; Luke 6:35; F. 567, ¶ 2; F. 568, ¶ 1, 2.
36. How should brotherly love regard visiting, "borrowing a neighbor's time"? F. 570, ¶ 1, to 572.
37. What is the relation between brotherly love and communism? D. 474 to 481.
38. Do those who have reached "the mark" still have trials along the line of brotherly love? F. 190, ¶ 1, 2.
39. Why is brotherly love "*one of the final and most searching tests*" of the brethren and how may we prepare to meet it? 1 Pet. 3:8; Z. '99-88 (1st col. ¶ 3, 4; 2nd col. ¶ 1, 2); Z. '98-201 (1st col. ¶ 1).
40. What should be "the main-spring back of brotherly kindness"? 1 Jno. 4:7, 8; F. 137, ¶ 1.

## THE REMEDY CO-EXTENSIVE WITH THE CURSE

Rom. 5:12-21.

In reading this scripture, some who are unable to follow the Apostle's argument have become somewhat confused and therefore request assistance.

The difficulty with such probably arises from the fact that they have failed to notice that verses 13-17 are parenthetical, and that the main line of the Apostle's argument passes from verse 12 to verse 18, irrespective of the parenthesis, which is merely incidental, being introduced to offset a misapprehension on the part of the Jews to the effect that their Law Covenant conflicted with the New Covenant in Christ, of which Paul was a minister. It was difficult for the Jews to accept the fact that under the New Covenant there was no difference made between Jew and Gentile, but that "the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."—Rom. 10:12.

In verses 12, 18-21, the Apostle is showing that by one man sin entered into the world, and death as the penalty for sin; and that this sentence of death passed upon all men because all had sinned—not all individually, but as represented in Adam, in whose loins we all were. "Therefore," he adds, verse 18, "as by the offense of *one* [Adam] sentence came upon all men to condemnation; *even so* [by the same law of heredity] by the righteousness of *one* [of the one who gave his life a ransom] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life: for as by *one man's* disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of *one* shall many [all of the race who will accept it] be made righteous." In other words, Adam, the head or progenitor of the entire human race, could only bequeath to his posterity the remainder of the ever-declining inheritance which he himself possessed, viz., a spark of life under condemnation to death; but our Lord Jesus, by the payment of the penalty upon Adam, thereby gained the legal right to restore him to life, and in so doing gained the right also to restore all his posterity. And when

the "appointed time" for thus restoring life to all the race has come, he instead of Adam, will be the father, life-giver, or head of the new race, as it is written, "He shall be called . . . the everlasting Father." (Isa. 9:6) And the birthright of the race under this head, Christ, unlike that under the first head, Adam, will be *life* instead of *death*. And that birthright can never be taken away unless forfeited by individual wilful transgression against the known righteous law of God, with full ability to keep it.

Thus we see that the gist of the Apostle's argument is to prove that by the law of legal heredity the race which, by the working of this law, inherited death from its first head, Adam, will, by the same law inherit life from its second head or re-generator, Christ, and that the remedy is co-extensive with the curse. This being the substance of his argument, it is, of course, presumable that his parenthetical remarks are not in opposition to, but in harmony with it. Thus we read—

Verse 13—"For until [previous to] the law [of Moses and the Law Covenant with Israel] sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law." Consequently there must have been a law, and a covenant based upon that law, previous to the law of Moses. What law was that? It was the law of God originally inscribed, not upon tables of stone, but upon the heart of the first perfect man, and which was gradually more or less effaced in his posterity, because they did not like to retain a knowledge of it. (Rom. 1:28) That law, whether ignored or recognized, has always been in the world, and sin against that law has always been imputed to men.

Verse 14. "Nevertheless [although the Mosaic law had not yet come, to revive in the Jews the knowledge of God], death reigned from Adam to Moses [just the same], even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgres-

sion [i. e., wilfully; for it reigned over infants as well as over those capable of personal sin], who is the figure [type] of him that was to come [of Christ, the second head of the race].” Thus it is manifest that all mankind were born under the original law, the authority of which was never annulled, and under which all were condemned representatively in Adam, the first head of the race, but who, thank God, in this office of headship was a type of a second head, through which our deliverance should come.

Verse 15. “But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. [The results of the offense and the free gift are entirely different.] For if through the offense of one [Adam, the] many be *dead* [under the condemnation to death], much more the grace [favor] of God, and the gift [of life] by grace [by the divine favor], hath abounded unto many.” From the one head we inherit death: from the other, the *re-generator*, we shall inherit life.

Verse 16. “And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the sentence was by *one* [offense] to condemnation, but the free gift is [the forgiveness] of *many* offenses unto justification.” Note the contrast of the *one* and the *many* here, the object of which is to increase our estimation of the value of the free gift.

Verse 17. “For if by one man’s offense *death* reigned by [that] one [Adam], much more they which receive abundance of grace [of divine favor] and of the gift of [imputed] righteousness [the righteousness of Christ imputed to us by faith] shall reign in *life* by one, Jesus Christ [who has not only purchased us and covered us with the robe of his own

imputed righteousness, but who will also completely eliminate sin from our nature so that men shall have an actual righteousness of their own, entitling them to reign in life as kings of the earthly dominion which God at first gave to Adam].”

Thus by these parenthetic remarks, which are seen to be in perfect harmony with the main argument, the Jews were shown that their Law Covenant did not in the least interfere with the original sentence to death of the *entire race* (all in Adam), nor with the *consequent gracious provision of life for all mankind*, through Christ, and not for the Jews alone.

Verse 20. After clearly announcing that the remedy for sin was co-extensive with the penalty (verses 18, 19), the Apostle—reading the inquiry in the Jewish mind as to the object of the Mosaic law, if it were not intended to give life—further adds, “Moreover the law [the Mosaic law] entered that the offense might abound. [It brought with it a clearer knowledge of the will of God, and therefore an increased sense of sin, and an increased responsibility which made transgressions even more blameworthy. But what of it? Did God mean only to afflict Israel more heavily than the rest of the world? By no means.] But where sin abounded [where the clearer knowledge of the law of God was given, which enabled them also the more fully to see their shortcomings and brought upon them the greater responsibility], grace did much more abound [Israel had many special favors, as well as chastisements, from God]: that as sin hath reigned unto death [both in Israel and in the world], even so [both in Israel and in the world] might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

## HIS VEILED ANGELS GUARD THEE

*“The angel of the Lord encampeth round them that fear him, and delivereth them.”—Psa. 34:7. “He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways.”—Psa. 91:11. “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto them that shall be heirs of salvation?”—Heb. 1:14.*

Often when thou’rt faint and weary in the struggle and the strife,  
And thy heart nigh sinks within thee, ’neath the strain and stress of life:  
When thou’rt tempted, tried and fearful, and thou can’st not see the way,  
And each night looms black with shadows from thy sorrows in the day;  
I would ask thee still to trust him, him who sees all in the light,  
For he guards thee by his angels, though they’re veiled from thy sight.  
Yea, he guards thee by his angels though they’re veiled from thy sight.

Oh, be watchful, oh, be sober, for the adversary tries,  
To allure us to destruction by his subtly fashioned lies.  
He would sift us, he would tempt us, he would claim us for his prey,  
And his legions ever watch us as we tread the narrow way:  
But we know of his devices, and we trust Jehovah’s might,  
For he guards us by his angels, though they’re veiled from our sight,  
Yea, he guards us by his angels though they’re veiled from our sight.

There is One who knows thy weakness, and thy failings, and thy tears,

Thy burdens and thy sorrows, and thy tremblings and thy fears,  
And thy heart-cries always reach him, and are answered in his way,  
Though thou can’st not see his workings as they shape thy path each day.  
Sad disaster had o’erwhelmed thee had he not put forth his might,  
Through his angels that surround thee, but are veiled from thy sight.  
Guardian angels that surround thee, but are veiled from thy sight.

Ah, believe me, when the Day breaks, and we know as we are known,  
In the sunlight of the glory that surrounds our Father’s throne,  
He will tell us how he led us: we shall see the pathway clear,  
The way we trod that led to God through failing, fault and fear.  
And we’ll see those guardian angels who were veiled from our sight,  
We shall understand the workings of the power put forth in might:  
Yea, and with those guardian angels who were veiled from our sight,  
We shall see our Savior, and our God, in heaven’s eternal light.  
—Sidney Smith.

## FROM GLORY TO GLORY

*“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.”—2 Cor. 3:18.*

A full transformation into a likeness of character to our heavenly Father should be the constant effort of every true child of God. It is not enough that we gain a knowledge of his plan and a pleasurable realization of his mercy and grace toward our unworthy race, but that we joyfully tell the good news to others; and it is not enough that we exert ourselves with uncommon zeal to bless others with those good tidings of great joy for all people; for we may do all of these things and more, and yet, if we do not let our heavenly Father’s goodness and grace have its due effect upon our own hearts, our knowledge, and even our good works, will profit us but little.

Our main object, therefore, in studying God’s Word and his character as therein revealed, should always be to bring

our own hearts and minds into closer sympathy and likeness and co-operation with his. As the Apostle says (1 The. 4:3), “This is the will of God, even your sanctification”—our full setting apart, or consecration of mind and heart entirely to the Lord, that he may complete the good work of transforming us into his own glorious likeness, by the operations of his spirit through his Word, and thus fit us for the enjoyment of his abounding grace in the ages to come.

In the above words of the Apostle we notice particularly that the statement is made of *all* the church—we *all* are being changed from glory to glory. And the inference is consequently a strong one, that those who are not being so changed are not of the class addressed. This is a solemn thought, and one that claims the most careful consideration of

all the consecrated. The question with us is not, Have we made a full consecration of ourselves to the Lord? but, having made such consecration, are we, in accordance with that consecration, fully submitting ourselves to the transforming influences of the spirit of God to be changed daily more and more fully to the glorious likeness of our God?

Like the Apostle, then, addressing all the consecrated and faithful, we also of today may say, We all are being changed from glory to glory under the molding, fashioning influences of the spirit of God. We can see it in each other, thank God! and we glory in it. Yesterday the mallet of divine providence struck a blow upon that member of the body of Christ, and an unsightly excrescence of pride fell off, and he looks so much more beautiful today, because he did not resist the blow, but gracefully submitted to it. The day before, we saw another under the wearing, painful, polishing process, to which he patiently submitted, and oh, how he shines today! And from day to day we see each other studiously contemplating the divine pattern and striving to copy it; and how we can note the softening, refining and beautifying effect upon all such! So the spirit of God is at work upon all who fully submit themselves to his will.

But while the mallet and chisel and the polishing sand of divine providence do a very necessary part of the transforming work, by way of relieving us of many of the old and stubborn infirmities of the flesh, which cannot be so promptly and so fully eradicated by the gentler influences of the spirit, the Apostle points us to the specially appointed means for our transformation in the careful and constant contemplation of the glory of God as revealed in his Word, and also in his blessed Ambassador, Jesus Christ, saying, "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory."

"With open face" would signify without any intervening veil of prejudice or fear or superstition, but with simplicity of heart and mind. So we behold the glory (the glorious character) of the Lord—not with actual vision, but as in a glass, as reflected in the mirror of his Word and as exemplified also in his living Word, Jesus Christ. And to aid us in this study we are promised the blessed influences of the spirit of the Lord, who will guide us into all truth and show us things to come.

As we look into the mirror what a glorious vision we have of the divine justice, which we promptly recognize as the very foundation of God's throne (Psa. 97:2), as well as the foundation of all our present and future security. If we could not recognize the justice of God we could have no assurance that his gracious promises would ever be fulfilled; for we would say, Perhaps he will change his mind. But, on the contrary, we can say, He changeth not, and whatsoever he saith shall surely come to pass. See with what inflexible justice the sentence upon our sinful race has been executed! Generation after generation, for over sixty centuries, has witnessed it; and no power in heaven or earth could revoke that sentence until the claims of justice had been fully met by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Justice, says the Word of God, must be maintained inviolate at any cost. And herein we read not only our rightful condemnation as a race of sinners, but also our final, complete and glorious deliverance, because "God is just to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9), since the precious blood of Christ redeemed us from the curse of death.

And while we thus read justice in the character of God, and mark with what scrupulous care he regards and respects

this principle in all his dealings with his creatures, we see how he would have us respect the same principle in all our dealings. Thus we are led to consider what is the exact line of justice in this and that and the other transaction; and to remember also that this must be the underlying principle in all our conduct: or, in other words, that we must be just before we can be generous. This principle should, therefore, be very marked in the character of every Christian.

Next we mark the love and mercy of God. The death sentence upon our fallen race was a most merciful sentence. It was equivalent to saying: See, I have of my own free favor granted you life and all its blessings to be enjoyed forever on condition of its proper use; but now, since you have abused my favor, I take it away and you shall return to the dust from whence you came.

True, in the process of dying and of bringing forth a dying race to share the penalty, the mercy of God is not so manifest to the unthinking; but those who see the plan of God, discover in all this, not the decree of a merciless tyrant, but a merciful wisdom, but faintly disclosed in the promise that the seed of the woman shall in due time crush evil effectually—bruise the serpent's head—and deliver the entire race once generated in sin, by afterward regenerating all who will to life and all its blessed privileges. And in this mercy, in all its multiplied forms, we see the verification of the statement that "God is love." Thus we learn to be loving and merciful and kind both to the thankful and also to the unthankful.

We mark also our heavenly Father's bountiful providence and his tender care for all his creatures; for even the sparrows are clothed and fed, and the unconscious lilies are arrayed in glory. Here we learn precious lessons of divine benevolence and grace. And thus, through all the catalogue of the moral and intellectual graces which go to make up a glorious character, we see in the mirror of the divine Word the model for our imitation; and in contemplation of all that is lovely, as embodied in him, and of all that is pure and holy and beautiful, we are changed little by little in the course of years to the same blessed likeness—from glory to glory. So be it: let the good work go on until every grace adorns the spotless robe of our imputed righteousness, received by faith in the blessed Son of God, whose earthly life was a perfect illustration of the Father's character, so that he could say—"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Let us, therefore, mark well the love of Christ, the gentleness, the patience, the faithfulness, the zeal, the personal integrity and the self-sacrificing spirit. Mark well, then imitate his example and shine in his likeness.

The Apostle adds (2 Cor. 4:7) that the fact that we thus hold this treasure of a transformed mind in these defective earthen vessels proves the excellency of the power of God, and not of us. And so, by constant yielding to the influences of the spirit of God, we may show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Pet. 2:9) Oh, let our efforts and prayers continually be that these poor earthen vessels may more and more show forth the praises of our God! Let them be clean in body and mind; let no evil communications proceed out of the mouth; and let no actions unworthy of the sons of God dishonor these living temples of the holy Spirit. True, on account of our deformities we may very imperfectly perform good works; but, by the grace of God, let us at least refrain from known evil.

## JEWS PROVIDENTIALLY DELIVERED

ESTHER 4:10-5:3.—NOVEMBER 5.

GOLDEN TEXT:—"The Lord preserveth all them that love him."—Psalm 145:20.

While the more faithful of the Jews had gone back to Palestine to repair its wastes and, as seen in our last lesson, were rebuilding the Temple, the Lord was not negligent of the remainder of the people who had not been sufficiently zealous to return to "the land of promise" under the decree of Cyrus granting them the privilege. Hundreds of thousands of Jews resided in all parts of the Persian empire, which then included Babylonia and Persia and nearly all Asia, including India. While special lessons and peculiar trials were given to those rebuilding the Temple, the Lord's favor was upon the remainder of the chosen people to the extent that he permitted to come upon them a great trial, severe testing, which undoubtedly taught them a valuable lesson in their far-off homes.

A record of this great testing is furnished us in the Book of Esther. The king of Persia at this time, about forty years after the completion of the Temple, was Ahasuerus, otherwise

known as Xerxes, who chose for his queen the beautiful and accomplished Esther, a Jewess—apparently without particular thought or knowledge respecting her nationality, and without knowing that Mordecai, one of his faithful attendants, a keeper of the palace gate, was her uncle. The story of Esther is a most remarkable one, and confirms the proverb that "Truth is stranger than fiction."

Haman, one of the nobles of the land and a favorite with the king, became incensed against Mordecai because the latter would not show him as much respect as others of the people. His pride excited his animosity to such an extent that he secured the king's decree against all Jews everywhere throughout the civilized world under the control of the Persian government. The edict was sweepingly broad, and directed the people in every quarter of the Persian empire to destroy, to kill, to cause to perish, all Jews both young and old, both



little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month. This commandment of the king was written out in various languages of the various peoples of the realm, signed with the king's seal and sent out by special messengers, a year being allowed to give ample time for the information to reach even the most distant quarters of the realm; and as an incitement to the doing of the work thoroughly, those who killed the Jews were given the privilege of taking all their possessions. Haman felt that he now had accomplished a great revenge against the Jew who stood at the gate. Mordecai and all the Jews, on learning of the edict, were of course greatly troubled. They had but a year to live. We may safely assume that such an experience as this would do more to draw the hearts of the Jews to the Lord in reverence and supplication than anything else that could have occurred to them. They fasted and prayed, in sackcloth and ashes.

Our lesson touches upon the matter at this point. The proclamation and edict had been in force for more than a month. Queen Esther had heard of her uncle's mourning in sackcloth, and its cause, and felt a special interest in him, as she had been an orphan and had been his special protege. Mordecai assured her that it was not only for him she should mourn, but that this edict included herself as well as all Jews, and that she should bestir herself to bring the matter before the king, and if possible, to have another edict issued which would counteract this in some measure. But there lay the difficulty: the laws of the Medes and Persians altered not, could not be changed, must stand as though they were unalterable. Nevertheless, something must be done, and the queen was the only one in position to make any approach to the king. For others to have done so would have cost their own lives.

#### NOTING OPPORTUNITIES AS DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Mordecai, evidently trusting in the Lord that the decree could never be accomplished, called the queen's attention to the fact that quite possibly she had come into her present position of honor and privilege for the very purpose of staying this evil against her people. His suggestion was that quite likely God's providence had brought her to that place to be the divine agency for preserving the Jews from the evil malignity of their enemies in power. But he added that if she failed to respond to these opportunities, to manifest loyalty to the Lord's people, failed to risk something on their behalf, it would mean her own loss anyway shortly; and that he believed that God would provide some means for the deliverance of the people in general. It was her opportunity, it was her duty to act, and the responsibility he cast upon her.

There is a beautiful lesson of faith here that should appeal to all of the Spiritual Israelites. Whatever we have, whatever positions we occupy of influence or power or wealth or confidence in the esteem of others, is so much of a stewardship granted to us by the Lord and respecting which we should expect to give an account; and if the account would be rendered with joy, we must be faithful even to the risking of our lives in the interests of the Lord's people, the Lord's cause. Let us lay this feature of Esther's experience to heart, that we may draw valuable lessons therefrom, helpful to us in the spiritual way. The suggestion that she had not come to a place of honor and privilege by accident, but that the Lord had overruled in the matter, is one that should appeal to all Israelites indeed. Whatever we have is of the Lord's providence; let us use it faithfully and as wisely as possible for him and his; thus our own blessings and joys will be increased as well as our favor with the Lord.

The queen's answer was that Mordecai, as well as all the people, knew that if she or anyone else should attempt to go into the king's presence uninvited it would mean their death, unless the king chanced to feel favorable to them and extended his golden sceptre. She remarked, also, that evidently the king was not feeling very gracious toward her, because he had not called her into his presence for more than a month. That her fears were not groundless is evident to those acquainted with the history of those times. For instance, it is recorded of this very king that when en route for a war he rested at Olanæ of Phrygia, where he was the guest of Pythias, who entertained him magnificently; but when the latter begged as a favor that of his five sons in the king's army the eldest might be left with him in his old age, the brutal Xerxes in a rage caused that son to be slain in the presence of his father, the body divided into two parts, the one part placed on one side the road and the other on the other side, and the whole army marched between them. Of another Persian king it is related that to show his skill in archery he shot an arrow into the heart of his young cup-bearer, the son of his greatest favorite, Prexaspes. It is re-

lated of this same Xerxes that he allowed one of his previous queens to mutilate one of her rivals most horribly. "Her breasts, nose, lips, ears, were cut off and thrown to the dogs, her tongue was torn out by the roots, and thus disfigured she was sent back to her home."

#### SEEKING DIVINE GUIDANCE

Persuaded that no other course was open than to risk her life in approaching the king, Esther sent word to her uncle and through him to all the Jews of the palace city that they should fast with her for three days, and this, of course, implied prayer. We cannot suppose that they abstained absolutely from food and drink for three days, but that they went on short allowance, avoiding anything that would be specially pleasurable and all luxuries. This prayer and fasting convinces us that not all the Jews who had faith in the Lord had returned to Palestine, that some of this kind were still scattered throughout all Asia. No doubt the exceptional trial of this time thus proved a great blessing and strengthening to the faith of Esther and her uncle and all the Jews.

At the close of the three days the queen, attired in her best royal robes to appear as attractive as possible, approached the king. Thus she used wisdom and sought to co-operate with her prayers for divine guidance and blessing. The king was very gracious to her and extended the golden sceptre, which she touched, and then perceiving that only some urgent matter of request had thus brought her into his presence he inquired what he could do for her, assuring her that it should be done even to the extent of half of his kingdom—the latter expression, however, being doubtless a mere formality indicating great interest.

The queen's plans were evidently all well thought out, although at this time she was only about fifteen years of age. Doubtless the Lord granted the wisdom necessary for the occasion. She did not communicate her request, but rather led on the king's expectancy by inviting him first to come to a banquet which she had arranged in his honor, and to which also his most trusted officer, Haman, was invited. The appointment was kept, and at that banquet the queen again parried the inquiry as to her real desire by asking that the same two should honor her by attending a banquet on the day following also, and this was agreed to. Some of the Lord's dear people of the spiritual Israel are a little inclined to go to extremes and trusting in the Lord, do nothing to forward the cause they wish to serve. We believe that Esther's course is a good example of propriety. We should both watch and pray, labor and wait, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. We should do all in our power while trusting to the Lord for the results, assured that he is able to make up all of our deficiencies, but at the same time leaving as little deficiency as possible.

Meantime the Lord worked upon the king from another standpoint, we know not how—divine providence has a thousand ways for its operation. The king passed a sleepless night, and seems to have inferred in some manner that he had been derelict to some obligation—that some one who had done him a favor had not been suitably rewarded. He called for the reading of the court records as to various incidents, and amongst these noted an occasion on which two of his trusted palace servants had conspired to take his life and had been frustrated by the exposure of their plot by Mordecai. No doubt the king was guided to this matter in some way by the Lord's providence. He inquired what recompense had been made to Mordecai, what had been done for him, how had he been rewarded for this faithfulness to the king? Finding that no special reward had been given he called for Haman to offer suggestions.

The latter had been grieving over what he considered Mordecai's insult to him in not bowing to him, and feeling very confident of his influence with the king he had already erected a gallows in the court of his own house, purposing to have Mordecai hanged thereon by the king's decree before another day. He had come to the palace for the very purpose of requesting Mordecai's life when he was inquired for by the king, and asked to suggest what would be suitable honor to be done to a man whom the king desired to honor. Thinking that he was the person to be honored he suggested the king's horse, the king's robe, the king's crown, and one of the king's chief men to lead the horse throughout the city proclaiming in a loud voice that the king was thus honoring the one who rode. To his surprise the king directed him to carry out this program with Mordecai as the honored man, and himself, the king's representative leading the horse and proclaiming the king's favor. The king's word could not be disputed or even questioned, and the matter was carried out in every detail, but Haman, covered with shame and morti-

fication, returned to his own house for consolation from his friends for his wounded pride.

In the afternoon the messenger arrived to escort him to the banquet with the king and the queen. Thither the unhappy man went, little surmising what more there was in store for him. In the midst of the banquet the king again pressed the queen to know the important thing she had to request. Her time had come, and she besought the king for her own life and the life of her people, telling him that their enemies had inveighed against them for their utter destruction. The king, evidently failing to comprehend, asked who was the wicked person who had thus plotted to kill his queen and all her family connections, and she replied, This wicked Haman, who is with us at the banquet board. The king was perturbed in mind and walked from the banquet room into the garden to mediate what course he should pursue.

#### THE WICKED CAUGHT IN THEIR OWN TRAP

Meantime Haman perceived that everything was going wrong with him, that his life was in jeopardy, and that only the queen's word could spare his life; and so when the king left the apartment Haman made every appeal to the queen for her forgiveness and intercession on his behalf. In his frenzy of fear he forgot the circumstances and surroundings, and was partly stretched upon the couch upon which the queen was reclining at the banquet, when the king re-entered, and noting the situation his wrath knew no bounds. Ascertaining about the gallows, he commanded that Haman should be hanged at once upon the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Haman's estates were conferred upon the queen by the royal decree, and then the queen, explaining that Mordecai, who had once saved the king's life, was her uncle, requested the royal interposition to counteract the effects of the previous edict for the extermination of the Jews.

It was well understood that no decree or edict of the Medes and Persians could be altered, amended, withdrawn—once issued it must stand; but the king gave permission to Mordecai to arrange the matter with the wise men of the palace, so that another decree should be issued which would be equally binding, and which would, in some measure if not fully, offset the first decree. This was done by formulating a decree permitting the Jews throughout the entire realm to defend themselves, and to do to all their enemies all that their enemies were permitted by the first decree to do to them. This last decree was similarly sent by messengers under the king's seal, to all parts of the empire, and as a result, when the fateful day came which was to have meant the extermination of all the Jews, the Jews privileged by the second decree to defend themselves were prepared, armed, and had favor with the magistrates of all the lands, because the second decree was understood to be a measurable offset to the first, and it was known that Mordecai, a Jew, was now the king's chief counsellor, or, as we would say today, Secretary of State. The result was the slaying of thousands throughout the realm, not chiefly the Jews but their opponents, their enemies, some eight hundred of the Jews in the palace city being destroyed.

#### "DO GOOD TO THEM THAT HATE YOU"

We are not to look back to this record of the slaying of enemies as an illustration of what spiritual Israelites are to do. We as Israelites indeed, begotten of the holy Spirit, are to love our enemies and to do good to those who hate us and

despitefully use us and persecute us. We are to bless and injure not. We are to remember that at this time the Lord had not even revealed his own love. He had revealed his justice and his power but not his love, for the Scriptures declare, "Herein was manifested the love of God, in that he gave his only begotten Son," etc. (1 Jno. 4:9)—it was never manifested before. It is this great love which God has manifested, and which he has inculcated upon those who appreciate his love and who have been benefited by it, that appeals to us. We love him because he first loved us, and we love others because, having learned first to love the Lord, we have experienced an enlargement of heart and a broadening of sympathies. And this breadth of sympathy and love, which is a continual growth in the Christian in its relationship to the others, is proportionate to its exercise toward God. He that loveth God loveth also his brother and his neighbor.

The heart of this lesson is respecting divine providence, divine care over the Lord's people. True, God's providence has not been manifested in favor of the Jews for more than 1,800 years, because they have been cast off for a time, rejected from the Lord's favor, their house left desolate because of their rejection of Messiah. We are glad, however, that the Lord through the apostle has made clear to us that this blindness on their part and rejection of them are not to last forever—that in due time their blindness is to be turned away and the good promises of the Lord are still theirs and shall be fulfilled to them. The Apostle assures us that their casting off is merely until the fulness of the Gentiles shall have been brought in to divine favor, until the full number of the elect church to be selected from the Gentiles shall have been gathered. With the completion of the elect spiritual Israel, the Apostle assures us that divine favor will again return to natural Israel, who are still beloved for the fathers' sake—these now shall obtain mercy through your [the church's] mercy—through the mercy of the glorified Christ.—Rom. 11:25-32.

When we note the divine providential care over God's typical people it increases our faith and trust as his spiritual children, for with the Apostle we reason that if God so loved us while we were yet sinners as to give his Son for us, much more does he love us now that we are no more sinners, aliens, strangers, foreigners, but consecrated to him and seeking to walk in the footsteps of our Redeemer. Likewise we reason that if God exercised his providential care in the interests of the typical people he is both able and willing to do as much and more for his spiritual Israel—Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile—those who have entered into covenant relationship with him and are seeking to walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

Our Golden Text is in accord with this thought, "The Lord preserveth all them that love him." True, he has a sympathetic love for the world which has led him to provide a redemption for all in due time—all the redeemed ones will have a manifestation of divine love and care over their interests—but now, during the Gospel age, divine blessings are conferred upon those who will constitute the church, the body of Christ, who love him more than they love houses or lands, parents or children or self. All who can thus affirm to their own hearts their loyalty to the Lord, their faith and trust in him, may be assured that all things are supervised for their good and working out for their welfare, in matters temporal and eternal

## GATHERING AND WINNOWING

EZRA 8:21-32.—NOVEMBER 12.

GOLDEN TEXT:—"The hand of our God is upon all those for good that seek him."

A previous lesson showed us how the rebuilding of the Temple had been delayed for about twenty years, with various discouragements, by the returning exiles from Babylon, but was finally finished, the people being spurred on in their zeal through the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah. With the completion of the Temple came a lull in the zeal of the people and a corresponding deadness in religious matters for about fifty years. We must sympathize with the struggles of those poor people against the unfavorable conditions surrounding them. Their city wall was still unbuilt, they were exposed to the malevolence of their neighbors, who hated the Jews, largely because of their refusal to mingle with the Samaritans, a thing which the former were not permitted to do according to the law of Moses.

Added to this unfriendly relationship to their nearest neighbor was the fact that they were continually subject to trouble, loss of life and loss of property from marauding bands. They did not connect these losses and disadvantages

properly in their minds, nor see that, rightly received, all these matters would have been working together for good to them, and that anything which would not have been for their welfare the Lord would have hindered. Instead they grew careless and indifferent to religious matters, losing considerably the zeal which first brought them from Babylon. Indeed many of them concluded that they would affiliate more with the Gentiles round about them, thus setting at naught the divine counsel—would seek worldly alliances for themselves and their children. As a result, with many of them religion reached a very low plane—their law was disesteemed and disobeyed.

God, however, still had his eye upon the nation which he had chosen, and which, according to divine purpose, must be sifted yet kept together until the coming of Messiah and the establishment through him of spiritual Israel. In harmony with this we find that at this time the Lord stirred up the love and zeal of others residing in Babylon, chiefly the child-

ren of some who had declined to participate in the first return under Zerubbabel or were too young to go or to exercise their own volitions at that time. It was nearly seventy-five years after the return of the first company of about 50,000 under the decree of Cyrus that Ezra, a young man filled with religious zeal, became the leader of a company of the Jews still residing in Babylon, and went up with them to inspire and revive those who had first returned and their children and grandchildren meantime born in Palestine. Our lesson relates to the return of this second company.

#### THE KING'S ASSISTANCE

Xerxes, the Persian king who took Esther to be his queen, and who exalted Mordecai, her uncle, to be chief minister of state in the Persian empire, had been murdered by a palace conspiracy, and his son Artaxerxes was the reigning monarch at the time Ezra undertook the expedition in question. Three things were necessary for the success of the project: First, the king's promise or decree; secondly, money not only for the expenses of the expedition but also to properly forward the work at Jerusalem and encourage those who had become discouraged there; thirdly, the interest of the Jews required to be aroused so that a sufficient number of volunteers might be found. The king furnished the money and gave the necessary authority. This might seem remarkable did we not remember that in the Lord's providence his acquaintance at his father's court as a boy would more or less associate him with Mordecai and other Jews prominent in the empire and inspire him also with a respect for the God of the Jews.

Ezra belonged to the priestly family and evidently was very sincere, not only inspiring the king with confidence in the project but also enlisting the sympathy and co-operation of many of his fellow countrymen to the number of about 1,700—probably including the families of some of them. These were volunteers—no one had a right to insist upon their going. Some may have gone with more or less of a spirit of adventure, but doubtless having knowledge of conditions at Jerusalem the majority were thoroughly enthused with a religious ardor for God and for his law, knowing what we do through the records of Ezra's thorough-going character, teaching, practices, we may be sure that no other class would be attracted to the standard raised by him in this expedition. An illustration of his spirit is furnished in the first verse of our lesson.

A certain point for the assembling of those who would return with him had been established at the river Ahava. The first condition enjoined on the assembly was a day of fasting, and we may be sure also a day of prayer to the Lord for his blessing upon the expedition—"That we might humble ourselves before our God and seek of him a straight way for us and for our little ones and for all our substance." It was a great undertaking in those days to set out upon a journey of over eight hundred miles and requiring slow travel, made necessary by the presence of women and children in the company and the absence of vehicles. The journey required about four months' time. True, there was a shorter road through the desert, but that would have been much more unfavorable in every way, and extra hazardous on account of the Bedouin tribes of the desert, who would have sought to take from them the treasures of gold and silver which they took along and which are estimated at between two and three million dollars in our money, but really equivalent to much more than this when measured by the standard of the value of labor now as compared with then.

#### SPIRITUAL ISRAEL'S TESTINGS

Seeking to apply this lesson to spiritual Israel, we see during this Gospel age somewhat similar siftings and tests of the Lord's people. We find today that some of the children of the most devout reformers have lapsed into measurable indifference respecting the holy things of the Lord and his law, and are disposed, like the Israelites of the first return, to not only fellowship the world but to amalgamate with it in customs, in habits, in social functions. The spirit of separateness and consecration which enthused their forefathers is dying out, leading to a mixed or churchianity condition not at all pleasing to the Lord and calling for reformation. On the other hand we see spiritual Israelites coming forward from Babylon with great zeal for the Lord and his cause, and if perhaps we wonder, we find a solution of the matter to be that some of these inherited a blessing from their parents, and we remember the word of the Lord that he would show mercy and favor to many generations of them that love and reverence him.

Ezra seems to have been led to the announcement of the fast by a realization of his own weakness and of the dangers which would beset the Israelites on the journey. Relying

upon the Lord's promises given to natural Israel, that they would be blessed in temporal things while obedient to the divine precepts, he had almost boasted of this matter to the king Artaxerxes, saying, "The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him for good, but his power and his wrath are against all them that forsake him." It had been on the strength of this faith and this testimony that the royal decree had gone forth and the moneys had been subscribed, and Ezra felt that now to ask the king for a troop of soldiers for the protection of himself and his associates would have implied at least their doubt of the favor of God toward them or of his ability to protect them.

Realizing the perils of the situation and the danger from enemies, and that he was responsible in great measure for the lives of those who would be under his direction, and that under the circumstances he could not ask for soldiers, Ezra felt all the more the necessity for going before the Lord in prayer and with fasting, and hence the fast was enjoined upon all the people. We cannot doubt this did them good, tending to direct their hearts to the Lord as the great Captain of their Salvation, awakening in them the thought that the whole expedition was based upon faith in the Lord and in his promises as respects the future and the present life.

#### FASTINGS OF SPIRITUAL ISRAELITES

That there is an advantage in fasting and prayer to the spiritual Israelite is beyond question. Our case is not exactly that of the Israelites under Ezra, and yet there is some similarity. We are not guaranteed earthly blessings or earthly protection against earthly adversaries. As spiritual Israelites, however, we have a still higher guarantee, for in our estimation our spiritual interests as new creatures are higher and grander than all of our earthly interests, beyond comparison. We have the guarantee that, whatever shall befall us, the Lord is able and willing to overrule it for good if we trust in him. It is in proportion as this gracious promise of the Lord fails to be appreciated by us that we look to the world for protection. The very experience of realizing danger and feeling timidity may prove indeed a superior blessing to us if it will but lead us nearer to the Lord—through fasting and prayer.

Fasting, as we have seen heretofore, signifies self-denial. The thought is not the weakening of the body by absolute abstinence from food, but rather a disciplining of the body by abstaining from delicacies, relishes, etc. No doubt such fastings are profitable to us in other ways than one. They not only relieve the physical system of over pressure, but with many tend to clarify the mind and make it more acute, more spiritually inclined. We all recognize this as a fact whether we can explain the philosophy of it or not. To all believers, especially to all starting upon a course of consecration, of self-devotion to the Lord and to his cause, we commend fasting in reasonable and proper ways, the denying to one's self the gratification of natural passions, and in general the living moderately, abstemiously, using this world and its comforts and blessings as not abusing them—the using of them in so far and in such a manner as will be to the highest advantage as new creatures in Christ. With the consecrated Christian this is not only the incident of a day but the course of a life. His every day is a fast day, a day of self-denial as respects any and everything sinful, and as respects any and everything that would not inure to the spiritual advantage of himself or others.

#### CONTINUOUS BAPTISM AND FASTING

Our fasting is like our baptism—it has a definite point of beginning and a definite point of ending. It begins with our baptism even unto death and it ends in death. These self-deniers, these fasters, are the self-sacrificers, the overcomers of the world, to whom the Lord has promised his special blessing of spiritual favors, peace, joy and all the fruits and graces of the spirit in the present time, and by and by the everlasting blessedness of fellowship with himself in all the joys and perfections and completeness of the kingdom condition—glory, honor and immortality.

Ezra says, "So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was entreated of us." This verse could be applied in full measure to the spiritual Israelites who under the lead of the great High Priest of our profession, are traveling to the New Jerusalem. Their fasting and prayers to the Lord for protection and help along the narrow way and for success to the journey's end are heard, and the Lord assures us in advance that all such petitions are granted. It is our Father's good pleasure to give the holy Spirit to those who ask, and to make all things work together for their good, and to bring them under the leading of the great Chief Shepherd and ultimately to the kingdom. In other words, "He is faithful who