

OUR HOPE—"AN ANCHOR TO THE SOUL"

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised."—Hebrews 10:23.

Nearly all that God has given us as new creatures is by faith or hope. When we become followers of Jesus and take up our cross to follow him, a sacrifice is involved, if the step be taken intelligently—along the lines of divine instruction and invitation. No one would voluntarily undertake to sacrifice unless he had a hope or a conviction of some blessing that would result or of some reward that would come to him as the outcome of that sacrifice. In every proper action there must be a motive or object. The fact that the church has been invited to follow Jesus indicates that there was something in his course which brought the blessing and favor of God—some special reward; and that if we will follow him, we shall share that same blessing and reward—glory, honor and immortality.

So when we take up our cross to walk in our Master's footsteps, it implies that we are inspired with the hope of thus sharing in the glory and honor conferred upon him. The character of our God assures us that any offer coming to us from him with rigid conditions attached, must be infinitely worthy of our acceptance; and the "exceeding great and precious promises" accompanying this offer assure us of his assistance and sustaining power. So by availing ourselves of his strength and of his aid, we shall be able to meet all the conditions and to attain the glorious reward set before us. Hence our faith has a strong and sure foundation upon which to rest; "faith can surely trust him, come what may."

INWARD FAITH—OUTWARD CONFESSION

We exercise faith in the heart before we make an outward profession—before we confess the Lord with our mouth. And we have no right to confess him with our mouth until we have believed "unto righteousness"; for "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:10) So we have the declaration of the Lord that he will not consider that we have a proper faith or hope unless we confess it. He has declared that if we refuse or fail to confess him before men, he will account us unworthy to be confessed before the Father and the holy angels. There is, then, no salvation without a confession of the Lord; the two are inseparable.

It is in vain that any entertain a hope of being accepted of the Lord and of winning his final approval who hides his light under a bushel and shrinks from the reproach of the cross. "No cross, no crown," is the Lord's inflexible decision. All who have received the truth in the love of it will be glad to let their light shine to the glory of God and the blessing of others. If the glorious message of the Lord has filled our own hearts and blessed our lives, we shall rejoice to carry the living water to other thirsty souls. If the good seed has found our hearts fruitful soil, it will surely germinate and bring forth fruitage to the glory of our God.

In harmony with the terms of our consecration, we confess to men that we have a faith that reaches beyond the present life, a hope that "entereth into that within the veil," whither Christ, our Forerunner, has entered for us. We confess our hope that we shall have a part in his resurrection; that "we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," and like him be spirit beings, see him as he is and share his glory on the divine plane. We confess that we hope with him to be instruments in the Father's hands, bringing life and joy and blessing to all the world of mankind, the living and the dead; that we hope to uplift them from death, to raise them from all the sin and blight and sorrow and tears that have oppressed them for these six thousand years. Truly ours is a wonderful hope! Who would not rejoice to tell it!

If, then, we have this faith, this hope, and are properly confessing it before men, let us "hold fast." Tests of our loyalty will continually come. The flesh will be inclined to rebel strongly at times. The questions will present themselves: Are you willing to confess Christ? Are you ashamed to own his name before the world, or do you esteem this your chiefest honor? There will be temptations to become discouraged. Our weaknesses will rise up before us, and the adversary will take advantage of these circumstances to further dishearten us. And not only will there come these temptations along the line of our faith and hope, but there will come certain reproaches and persecutions, permitted for the purpose of proving our loyalty. Ours is a marvelous calling, and only heroic souls are wanted to fill the places in this elect class—only those who have the spirit of the Master.

DANGER OF WITHHOLDING THE LIGHT

If any are disloyal or weak, and fail to take a firm stand for the Lord and the truth, for fear that they will be dis-

esteemed amongst their fellow-men, or for any other reason, it will prove that they are not worthy to share with Christ the glories of his throne as members of his body. All who hope to be of this number have professed his name; and they must be steadfast, must hold fast their confidence and the profession of their faith even unto the end.

The flesh needs to be dealt with rigorously, and be brought into subjection and held there. According to the inclinations of the flesh, the Lord's children would wish to refrain from what would bring contumely and adverse criticism. The flesh would prefer to keep quiet, where the speaking forth of the truth might bring reproach or persecution or ostracism. But the new creature would feel "a burning fire shut up in his bones" if he were to withhold the message of truth when a suitable opportunity was granted, and he would find that he must be faithful and let his light shine. Otherwise, the light would grow feeble and would finally die out altogether, and he would be in utter darkness. And "if the light that is in thee become darkness, how great is that darkness!"

Let us not grieve the holy Spirit of God which is within us. The Lord gives us a solid basis for our hope, for our faith. It is a hope which he has himself inspired. This hope is backed by all his sure promises and by his oath; and he reminds us that "he is faithful that promised." (Hebrews 10:23) It is as yet a promise only; it is all of faith. We have now but the begetting of the holy Spirit to this new nature, and the sealing of the same Spirit, "the earnest of our inheritance." (Ephesians 1:13, 14) But we have learned to know our God and to trust his faithful Word. We have proven his gracious promises in many a time of stress and danger, and we know that he will not fail us. And "he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

OUR ANCHOR SURE AND STEADFAST

If we were to let go this hope, this anchor to our souls, we should be adrift upon a shoreless sea, whose mighty billows would sweep us down to eternal death. A great time of trouble is now about to break upon the whole world, and any of the Lord's people whose faith and hope are not firmly anchored to the Rock of Ages, any who are fearful to trust his promises, will be overwhelmed in the storm. Shall this be our experience?

"The time of trouble nears, 'it hasteth greatly,'

E'en now its ripples span the world-wide sea;

Oh, when its waves are swoll'n to mountains stately,

Will the resistless billows sweep o'er me?"

Some of the Lord's real children will have their part in this great trouble-time; yet none who are faithful, who are obedient, will suffer thus. These will be kept in perfect safety to the end of their course, and will, we believe, be gathered "within the veil" before the great storm breaks in its fury. Because of our faith in the Master, because of our strong confidence in him, our knowledge that he has been an overcomer, and that the Father has rewarded him and that he is now our Advocate, our great High Priest, who "ever liveth to make intercession for us," therefore our hearts have good courage. We know that he will shortly "stand up" in power and great authority to establish his kingdom and to exalt all his faithful to reign with him in that kingdom; therefore our hope is firm; it is indeed an anchor to our souls. We are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."—Ephesians 6:10.

We shall never lose our courage if we keep our eyes continually fixed on him, and our hand closely clasped in his. God's eternal promises are the foundation upon which all that we hope, either of character, or of coming glory, is built. And what a strong foundation! Let us be faithful to him who hath called us. Let us hold the glorious truth not only in the letter, but also in the spirit. Let us hold it in the love of it, because it is the truth, as well as because of its matchless beauty and grandeur.

Let us ever remember the importance of patient endurance, constancy, that we may develop the fruits of the holy Spirit, that we may take joyfully every trial, every persecution, every difficulty, which our God in his infinite wisdom and love may permit to come upon us for our testing and the ripening of that character which is of paramount importance, and without which we can never hope to see our Father's face, nor partake of the glory to which we have been called with Christ. Let us indeed "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful who hath promised." Let us "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end." Yea, "we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope" unto death.—Hebrews 3:6; 10:23; 6:11.

“Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
When the clouds unfurl their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
Will your anchor drift, or firm remain?”

“We have an anchor that keeps the soul
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll;
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love!”

HOW AND WHERE SHALL I SERVE?

“Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.”—1 Corinthians 7:24.

In the context, the Apostle has been discussing marriage and its responsibilities. He has also been discussing slaves and their state. He asks, “Art thou called being a slave? Then seek not to be free.” Nevertheless, he added that if freedom were to come to the slave, he should be glad to avail himself of the opportunity of having a wider field of service as a free man. But the slave should not say to his master: I have become a child of God, and therefore your regulations are nothing to me; you cannot longer hold me as a slave.

The Apostle gives the thought that the Lord's people are not to want an immediate change from the condition in which they were called. His thought is, You are not necessarily to think that you are to leave what you are now doing. Your business may be that of a servant, or a slave; therein abide—in the sense of having your mind at rest. If the Lord opens the door, then you are to look about. If your condition is one of great severity, it is right to ask the Lord that in his own due time he will make it less so, if it please him. He has promised us that with every temptation he will provide a way of escape or direct the issue, that we may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13) This would apply to our business relationships—to everything.

If one were single, he should consider very carefully the matter of taking on added responsibilities. He should think: “I was called when single. Does the Lord wish me to marry?” And if he comes to the conclusion that the Lord so desires, he should remember the Apostle's injunction, “Only in the Lord.” If he were married when called, he should not say, “I wish I were not married. I could do so much more, so much better, if not married.” He was married when called, and therefore there is a mortgage upon his time. He has this mortgage or contract to consider.

ENTER OPEN DOORS, BUT DO NOT FORCE THEM

Nevertheless, the Apostle, in previous verses of this same chapter points out that if the unbelieving husband or wife should depart, let them do so. Do not seek to oppose their going if they desire to go. The Lord is able to provide for your affairs. And if that is the Lord's providence for you, so accept it. As for the thought of our leaving our business to go into the colporteur work, or the pilgrim work, or the class extension work, or whatever it might be, the proper thing for us to consider would be, Is this an opening of the Lord? If we find that a better opportunity for service comes to us in this way, a wider opportunity for work in the harvest field, and that there is an open door, then we should rejoice and should enter the door.

But if we find that there is no open door and we would have to force one open, to violate some right principle to enter

such work, that would alter the case. We must stand for principle. We shall never have to oppose any right principle to engage in the Lord's service; there is always some way to serve. The Apostle is here addressing brethren, and his words could not refer to any who were then engaged in a dishonorable avocation.

NO BROTHER IN DISREPUTABLE BUSINESS

But suppose that a man, before receiving the truth, had been the keeper of a gambling house, or were in some other disreputable business. Suppose he had been a saloon-keeper (several brethren have come from this business). After he had accepted the truth, he would say, Here! What am I doing? Am I dispensing to human beings that which is to their injury? I must quit this. And so he would have to get out of the saloon business before he could become a child of God at all; he would have to get out of the unprincipled condition of mind before he could become a child of God. The Apostle's words were addressed to the brethren: “Brethren, let every man so abide.” He would not be a brother in Christ while in a business repugnant to his conscience and injurious to his fellow-creatures.

The whole matter was, of course, forceful to servants in the Apostle's day. In that time and in every time the humble classes, the servant classes, the slave classes, seem to have been ready to receive the message. Our Lord said unto the rich, as a class, “Woe unto you rich!” And to the poor he said, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden.” And we see that not many wise, not many rich, not many noble, come into the light.

BRETHREN IN PENAL INSTITUTIONS

A prisoner in a penal institution would do well to say to himself, “Well, in God's providence this message has reached me here in prison. Perhaps I should never have had it if I had not been here.” If we were such a person, instead of hastening to try to pry open the doors by sending a paper to petition release, we would consider well before we started such a paper. We would think, “Perhaps I may have opportunities for serving the Lord amongst these fellow-prisoners. Perhaps I may have an opportunity of preaching to them.” Or if there were an application made for release, and if the application resulted in refusal, we should bow to that refusal as being the Lord's word in the matter. We would try to be thoroughly content and thoroughly happy, and would say, “I will strive to show forth the praises of God, who has called me out of darkness into his marvelous light.” We could not know but that a man would have just as good opportunity for service there as anywhere else. The Lord will give what is best to all his faithful ones.

ANointed—ESTABLISHED—SEALED

“Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us.”—2 Cor. 1:21, 22.

The Apostle is here addressing the church at Corinth, recognizing that this congregation are co-laborers with him—accepted of God as members of Christ, the Anointed. Christ is the great One foretold prophetically as the antitypical Prophet, the antitypical Priest, the antitypical King, who is to bless the world by his work of healing, instructing, helping, uplifting. The Apostle says that the one who has brought us into the body of the Anointed, and has set, or established us, is God. This implies that God does the calling of those who come to him. It implies that there was a previous invitation—the Apostle says that no man taketh this honor to himself. Even Jesus could not have taken to himself the honor of being a priest and king; He could not say, I will be a Priest—I will be a King!

As God called Jesus to be the great Head over this ecclesia, or body, so through Jesus he has invited us to become its members. And as we conform to the terms and are made acceptable through our great Advocate, we are then set in the body—anointed. It is not a happen-so, but we are set. And we shall continue in this position unless, because of some unfaithfulness, we shall be blotted out and the crown appropriated to us be taken away.

He who sets us, establishes us, and has anointed us of the holy Spirit, and thus made us members of this holy company,

is God, the heavenly Father. It is not the province of even our Redeemer to set us and anoint us. As the Apostle says, “God hath set every member in the body as it hath pleased him.” All things are of the Father, and all things are by the Son; hence this anointing that we receive comes from the Father. Nevertheless, the Channel is the Lord Jesus. This holy Spirit which the Father has given to Jesus, he has shed forth upon us. The Father authorizes it, the Son sheds it forth.

SEALED IN THE MASTER'S LIKENESS

And God “hath also sealed us.” It is not only important that we be begotten of the holy Spirit, and set in the body, but it is another precious thought that we are to be sealed, or impressed; we are to receive a stamp. As we would set a seal into wax to mould the wax into its likeness, so with us who are desirous of knowing and doing God's will; we are impressed by his holy Spirit into the image of our dear Master; and the channel through which we are sealed is the truth.

So those who are sealed by the holy Spirit have a considerable measure of appreciation of the truth. All the promises come through God's Word; it is a power that is now at work, so that all of God's people in all parts of the world are being impressed through the promises of God. God works in us to will and to do his good pleasure. This sealing is of the Father,

because it is through his promises; it is under the direction and care of the Head of the church, our Lord Jesus, that he may in due time present us blameless and unreprouvable before the Father.

THE PURPOSE OF OUR TRIALS

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."—James 1:12.

The word blessed in this text may be understood to signify the condition of one in the favor of God. The state of such will be a happy one, a desirable one. The word blessed does not, of course, always suggest a happy condition as relates to the feelings, or emotions, but rather as relates to the outcome. It is used here in connection with the results of trial to the Christian. The child of God who wins the crown of life will be very highly favored or blessed of God; then whatever conduces to this end is a very great blessing, even though it cause much pain to the flesh.

Who will gain this crown of life? Of what character will he be? The Scriptures declare that it will be that man or that woman who endures temptation, trial. What is signified by enduring temptation? Evidently the thought is not the enduring of one temptation for one time or for many times. Even the world must endure trials. The reference is to the retaining permanently of the attitude of patient endurance and faithfulness when tempted, of remaining true to God under temptation and stress. Temptations come from a variety of sources. They may come from friends, who may tempt us to live a life of more or less self-indulgence, to relax in a measure our fidelity to the Lord. The enticements of wealth or worldly society, a natural love of ease and disinclination of the flesh to endure hardness—any or all of these may prove strong and subtle temptations to the Christian.

But if we love the Lord supremely, that love will become the chief impulse of our lives. Our one aim will be that we may glorify God in our spirit and in our body. We know that there are things which are displeasing to God, and if we love him we will seek to keep his commandments. The child of God might fail once, or he might fail repeatedly along the same line, until in deep humiliation and anguish of soul because of his continued manifestation of the same weakness, he would be led to cry out with strong crying and tears to the Lord; and his pain and distress of heart might so impress upon him his need of greater watchfulness along that line that he would become strengthened for further attacks of the same nature, and thus be enabled to gain the victory over his besetment, his special weakness.

THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

While we shall never reach the point of perfection in the flesh, nevertheless this power to endure temptation should become more marked day by day, as the new creature remains loyal, still resisting and striving still harder to resist and be true to the Lord in thought and word and deed. Blessed is the man who shall endure—time after time, day after day—thus proving his faithfulness and obedience to God. For when that man is tried, when the trial time is over, when God has seen that he has demonstrated fully his loyalty, then when God's "due time" has come, that tried and proven one shall receive the crown of life.

The expression, "the crown of life," is another way of saying the reward of life; and this life is on the highest plane. The Apostle Paul speaks of this same crown as the "crown of righteousness." The Apostle Peter calls it the "crown of glory." It is the crown of righteousness because it is the reward that comes as the result of righteousness, of obedience to God and the principles of his government, of faithfulness to our covenant. It is the crown of glory because it is the reward which brings glory, honor, immortality.

In the Grecian games certain rewards were given to those who endured successfully the trial of their skill, of their prowess and of their physical endurance. The reward given was usually a crown or wreath of laurel. That crown was valuable, not so much in itself, but especially as an outward token of appreciation of superior merit. The fact that it was evergreen would suggest to the Christian that our reward as "overcomers" will be a lasting reward, an eternal reward.

The Lord is to give us life in fullest measure. The penalty that came upon our race because of sin was death; but now there is an opportunity to regain life—life in perfection, untainted, unending. This life is in the Son of God. At the present time life can be gained only by being begotten to the spirit nature. The crown of life, to be given to the "more than conquerors," is a very special kind of life—immortality, the

"If I in thy likeness, O Lord, may awake,
And shine a pure image of thee,
Then I shall be satisfied when I can break
The fetters of flesh and be free."

highest form of life possible, the crown, or pinnacle, of all life. This is to be the reward of the class called in Scripture the bride of Christ, when they shall have demonstrated their faithfulness, when they shall have been proven worthy to be members of that exalted class.

There will be a crown of life in the next age—perfect human life—as the result of obedience to the tests and trials of that time. These tests will differ in many respects from the trials and difficulties of the church at the present time. They will be much less crucial; for then temptations to sin from without will be removed, and bodily and mental uplifting and assistance granted, which will make their trial a more favorable one. Righteousness, too, will immediately be rewarded in that day, and sin and disobedience of every kind will be promptly punished. But now righteousness often brings suffering, reproach, pain and loss, from the human standpoint; while sin often brings present advantage, popularity and pleasure to the flesh.

THE PROPER VIEW OF OUR TRIALS

There is a special love required by God of the Gospel church—this peculiar class now called of him. They are to have a love that is so unselfish that it will be willing, yea, glad, to lay down the earthly life in the service of God, that they may bring blessings to others. To these God has promised the special crown of life—immortality, his own nature. These are to be the blessers of their brethren, those of the nature formerly their own. As Isaac was the blesser of Ishmael and of the sons of Keturah, and as the first-born of Israel were the blessers of their brethren, so these will bless all the peoples of the earth, from among whom they were chosen. How thankful we should be for an honor so great!

If these favored children of the heavenly King could always keep in mind the fact that every trial and testing, every persecution and difficulty, permitted to come upon those who have made the covenant of sacrifice with the Lord, is designed to develop them, to prove and test their love, to demonstrate whether or not their characters are fixed, rooted and grounded in righteousness, it would set all their painful experiences and temptations in a new light, and would be a great assistance to them in fighting the good fight of faith successfully. For if by these trials and tribulations the Lord is proving our love and devotion to him, then whatever they may be, whether great or small, we should diligently use them as opportunities to demonstrate to our God the fulness of our love for him and his cause, and as means by which we may rise day by day to greater heights of spiritual attainment, being changed into the likeness of our Master.

Thus viewed and thus met, every trial and affliction would prove a blessing, a heavenly messenger, bearing us on wings of faith "Nearer, our God, to thee, nearer to thee." Then, beloved, "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations [trials, testings], knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience [patient endurance]. But let patience perfect her work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Herein we "greatly rejoice—though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations [testings provings], that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold, which perisheth, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls!"—James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6, 8.

Truly, "these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things that are seen [the things of the present order] are temporal, but the things which are not seen [the glories to come] are eternal."—2 Corinthians 4:17, 18.

"WILL YE ALSO GO AWAY?"

Thus we are assured in the infallible Word of God that those who love the Lord, and who are to receive the kingdom, will have their love tested by trials and temptations on the

way to that kingdom. Those who do not love the Lord with all their hearts, in whom self or some other idol has first place, will be seduced by the world, the flesh or the devil into some form of rebellion against the divine Word or the divine providences. They will have schemes and theories which they will prefer to the Lord's plan and the Lord's way; and their schemes when analyzed will usually be found to be based either upon selfishness or ambition or upon an evil spirit of envy, hatred, jealousy, etc.

The Lord's leading and the Lord's words lose their attraction to such, and they lose their interest correspondingly; and like those who turned away from the Master at his first advent, and said, "This is a hard saying," so these also go away and "walk no more with him." But some will continue to walk with the Lord; some will not be driven away nor decoyed from him by the arts and wiles of the evil one and his hosts. These are such as are at heart fully the Lord's, not their own; they will follow the Lamb of God, whithersoever he may lead, because they have no will except his will. They will follow him through all the narrow way of discipline and trial in this life; and by and by, as he has assured them, "They shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy."—Revelation 3:4.

OUR UNFAILING SHELTER

Nor will this choice company lack in number by reason of the falling away of some. It will be of the predestinated number which God arranged to constitute the bride, the Lamb's wife. The Father's foreknowledge made full allowance for all who would turn back, and he knew that the requisite number would follow on, to make their calling and election sure. These have learned that the call of the world, the promptings of the flesh, and the arts of the adversary, are all snares and traps and pitfalls to drag them down to death. They have learned the sound of the true Shepherd's voice, and cannot be enticed by the voice of strangers.

Precious children of the Lord, blessed are ye! Sheltered in the "secret place of the Most High" no evil shall befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." How safe and secure are these! Though a thousand fall at their side, and ten thousand at their right hand, yet the plague shall not come nigh them. They have "made the Most High their habitation," and he will keep them from all harm.

"Under his wings I am safely abiding,
Though the night deepens and tempests are wild;
Still I can trust him, I know he will keep me;
He has redeemed me, and I am his child.

"Under his wings! What a refuge in sorrow!
How the heart yearningly turns to his rest!

Often when earth has no balm for my healing,
Here I find comfort, and here I am blest.

"Under his wings! Oh, what precious enfolding!
Here will I hide till life's trials are o'er;
Sheltered, protected, no evil can harm me,
Resting in Jesus, I'm safe evermore!"

As the faithful disciples of the Master in the first harvest realized a meaning in his teachings which others of the professed children of God could not appreciate, so now, at the second advent of the Lord, his words have a precious significance to those who are in heart-harmony with him which none others can realize. And we see now, as at the first advent, that some are stumbling and going back, while others are being drawn more closely to the Lord than ever, by means of the knowledge of his plan which he is supplying.

FEASTING IN THE BANQUET HALL

As we draw nearer to the close of the harvest, we shall not be surprised if the way become still narrower, still more difficult, and if the temptations to stumble and to fall become still more frequent. Let us then, dear brethren, be more and more on our guard against the wiles of the great enemy of our souls, and against the deceptions of our own fallen nature. Let the perfect love of God rule in your hearts, driving out self-love and world-love, with their pride, ambition and folly. Let entire devotion to God bring into your hearts the promised fullness of joy and rest and peace. Be fruitful branches in the vine, abiding even in him, responding to all the prunings of the great Husbandman with more abundant fruitage.

If beguilement come to us, let us say with the apostles of old: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." There is life nowhere else, and we wish to go nowhere else. We are feasting in the banquet hall of our Father's house, "and his banner over us is love!" We have an abundant supply; our table is richly laden. So we eat and go on our way rejoicing. We are nearing home. We shall soon reach the last mile-stone in our journey! Then, with a song on our lips, let us press on!

"Tempted and tried, whatever betide,
In his secret pavilion his children shall hide.
'Neath the shadowing wing of eternity's King,
His children may trust, yea, his children may sing.

"Tempted and tried, yet the Lord will abide
Thy faithful Redeemer and Keeper and Guide,
Thy shield and thy sword, thine exceeding reward;
Then enough for the servant to be as his Lord.

"Tempter and tried, the Savior who died
Hath called thee to suffer—then reign by his side.
If his cross thou wilt bear, his crown thou shalt wear,
And forever and ever his glory shalt share."

"THE LORD THY GOD IS A FAITHFUL GOD"

"O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard; which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved."—Psalm 66:8, 9.

In this Psalm the Prophet David calls upon all the world to praise the Lord. In prophetic language he exclaims: "All the earth shall worship thee; they shall sing to thy name!" Then he recounts the wonderful manifestation of the power of God in his dealings with Israel; he calls upon the people to bless the Lord and sound his praises abroad. Taking a retrospective view of the dealings of Jehovah with his people, he continues: "For thou, O God, hast proved us, thou hast tried us as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place!"—vs. 10-12.

The Psalmist then declared that he would enter into the house of the Lord, and would pay unto the Lord the vows which he had made in the time of his trouble. He recounts the goodness of God to himself. He tells that he had cried unto the Lord and extolled his praises, that his prayers had been answered, and that he had been lifted up and blessed and delivered. He calls upon Israel to remember all the leadings of the Lord in their past history and all his goodness to them as a people, and exhorts them to sound forth the praises of his great name. God had brought the people of Israel up out of bondage to Egypt; he had protected them through all their wilderness journeyings and ever since.

King David reminds them that they had been kept alive,

that God had not permitted them to be exterminated—he had "suffered not their feet to be moved." They were not vanquished by their enemies, so long as they had trusted and obeyed. Subsequently, because of their disobedience and perversity, God caused them to be carried away into captivity in Babylon. But this was for their good, that he might prove them, and afterwards bring them—all worthy ones—back into their own land.

LET SPIRITUAL ISRAEL SOUND HIS PRAISES!

But although this Psalm has a primary significance as relates to natural Israel, our thought is, in harmony with the applications made by our Lord and the apostles, that these words are even more appropriate in their application to spiritual Israel. The Lord has brought us up out of the world. He has delivered us from the great taskmaster, Satan. He has guided us through the wilderness journey; He has fed us with the manna from heaven; He has brought us forth the water of life from the great Rock of Ages smitten for us, that we might drink and live. He has washed our feet from the dust of our wilderness way. He has faithfully disciplined and chastened us as his sons; he has gone before us through all the toilsome march, and has been our rearward as well, to protect us from all danger and harm. If natural Israel had great cause for thankfulness and praise, what should be our attitude, for all the marvelous manifestations of his love and care for us, his spiritual Israel! Truly, as no other people on

earth, past or present, can we praise our God! With the poet we can say:

"He was better to me than all my hopes,
He was better than all my fears;
He made a bridge of my broken works,
And a rainbow of my tears!
The billows that guarded my sea-girt path
Carried my Lord on their crest;
When I dwell on the days of my wilderness march,
I can lean on his love for the rest.

"He emptied my hands of their treasured store,
And his covenant love revealed;
There was not a wound in my aching heart,
But the balm of his breath has healed.
Oh, tender and true was the chastening sore
In wisdom that taught and tried,
Till the soul he loved was trusting in him,
And in nothing on earth beside!

"He guided my steps where I could not see,
By ways that I had not known;
The crooked was straight and the rough made plain,
As I followed the Lord alone.
I praise him still for the pleasant palms,
For the water-springs by the way;
For the glowing pillar of flame by night,
And the guiding cloud by day.

"There is never a watch in the dreariest halt
But some promise of love endears;
I read from the past that the future shall be
Far better than all my fears.
Like the golden pot of the wilderness bread,
Laid up with the blossoming rod,
All safe in the Ark with the law of the Lord,
In the covenant care of my God!"

SOME FAITHFUL THROUGHOUT THE DARK AGES

Our God never fails his children: his name is Faithfulness! He has never permitted his church to be exterminated, notwithstanding all the assaults of error and of the powers of darkness. There are still true people of God in the world, and ever have been. Throughout the dark ages, the great fact of our Redeemer's sacrifice for sin was still held by some of the true saints of the Lord. This precious truth was never completely lost during those years of darkness and obscurity, and in God's due time his church emerged from the wilderness, "leaning upon the arm of her Beloved." The light has since grown brighter and brighter to the faithful, watching ones. And what a flood of glory now shines upon the path of the saints!

"Looking back, we praise the way
God has led us day by day!"

The saints of God during the past centuries did not need these additional blessings which are supplied to the faithful of today, but their every need was supplied. We are living in the days of the "cleansed sanctuary." More truth is now due than at any time in the history of the church. Truly, our Lord has "brought us into his banqueting house, and his banner over us is love!" (Cant. 2:4) Truly, "he holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved," despite all the thousand snares laid for our feet by the great adversary and his servants—many of them unwittingly serving him. We can see that long ago we might have been overcome by the adversary's attack had not our God been a wall of protection round about us.

HIS SAINTS SHALL NEVER BE MOVED

"Our lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places!" (Psalm 16:6) But it is only the faithful who are thus kept. We are not to understand that the Lord keeps any who do not themselves make the proper effort to know the will of God that they may do it; it is those who are following in the footsteps of Jesus, doing all in their power to please the Lord as they are able to discern the way wherein he would have them walk. These are today causing the voice of his praise to be heard, and grace sufficient is their portion. If the trials of faith, submission and trust shall be greater in the near future than they have yet been, these faithful ones will not fall. Their feet shall not be moved, even though a host encamped against them, and thousands fall at their side. "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." These will be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, even though they be required for a time to follow where they cannot see.

Let us therefore go forward with good courage, knowing that he who hath led us thus far will continue to lead. He who favored us first will favor us last; and "he that is on our side is greater than all they that be against us." Thanks be to God that his grace has preserved us, that he has kept us from falling, that so many of us are still of one heart and one mind to go forward unflinchingly, whatever the coming days may bring! If they shall bring hardship and persecution, pain and trial, his grace will uphold us still. If they shall bring us tests of faith and endurance, his promises will not fail. Let our entire trust be centered in God. Let us continue to rejoice in him. "Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exerciseth loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth; for in these things do I delight, saith the Lord." (Jeremiah 9:24) Testings will be permitted to come upon the people of God for the very purpose of sifting out all who are not truly his. Then let us stand fast, knowing that he is faithful.

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY BASED ON PRINCIPLE

We must never forget that our authorization to meet as brethren is the Master's Word: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20) As this is our charter-right for meeting as the Lord's people, we must concede an equal right under it to all of God's people who may choose to meet in his name at any place and at any time. We should remember the Bible illustration of this principle: On one occasion the twelve disciples had returned from a preaching tour, and St. John said to Jesus, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us." (Luke 9:49, 50) This one forbidden by John would correspond well with some now holding meetings other than those which we attend. What did Jesus say? "Forbid him not; for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me."—Mark 9:38-40.

Here is a general principle which will serve to guide, to instruct God's people of today respecting his will in similar matters. We, of course, think our arrangements most pleasing to the Lord, or we would not have them so. If others think differently, the responsibility is with them and with the Lord. It is not for us to forbid them, but it is for the Lord to bless them or not to bless them, according to his wisdom in the management of his work.

Some one may suggest, Would not this thought, acted upon, break up the meetings of the Lord's people into very small classes? We reply that this must depend upon the brethren themselves. They have the right to meet in twos and threes or in larger numbers. If they can find it to their advantage

to meet in larger groups, no doubt they will be glad to do so. This means a great deal of liberty in the church within the lines of the word and spirit of Jesus' teaching, directly and through his apostles.

Brethren meeting as a class should understand that in so doing they properly waive, or make void, some of their personal liberties and privileges. Individual preferences are to be more or less subjected to class preferences. Even the majority of the class should be considerate of the wishes of the minority, and if possible, should moderate the arrangements, so that all can be accommodated and pleased in respect to speakers, and in respect to place and character of meetings. No one should selfishly consider merely his own preferences and welfare. The spirit of co-operation, the Golden Rule, the spirit of love, should prevail. And as this is true, all those filled with the spirit of the Master and living close to him will find fellowship one with another in yielding personal preferences in the interest of the whole number.

CONSCIENCE TO BE RESPECTED

The only things that may not be yielded to the will of the majority are matters of conscience. No one is to do what he believes to be sin, injustice, wrong, even though all the remainder of the brethren think it right. And no one is to leave undone what his conscience dictates, even though so directed by all the remainder of the brethren of the class.

Conscience is always to be respected—never to be throttled or violated. Nor is any one who stands faithful to his conscience to be disesteemed therefor by his brethren, even if their consciences view the matter differently. On the contrary, his

courage in standing by his convictions is to be considered estimable.

On these principles liberty may be maintained in the body of Christ; and we shall find blessing in proportion as those of one mind can fellowship with each other. Where fellowship is not maintained, the assembling is neither desirable nor in harmony with the divine arrangement. But where the brethren find it advantageous to meet in different classes, it will usually be found, we believe, that originally too great restraint of

personal liberty was exercised, and that the majority were too careless of the sentiments of the brethren constituting the minority.

But even where it may be found necessary or desirable to have more than one gathering of the Lord's people in one city, it certainly still is true that they should have one heart and one mind, and be of one brotherhood under the anointed Head. They should consider each other's interests, and do all in their power "to provoke one another to love and to good works."

THREE GRAND CONVENTIONS

This year's arrangement of having our conventions early and in three central locations at the same time seems to have had the Lord's blessing. The Asbury Park, N. J., Convention was a convenient one for the friends residing in the East. Columbus, Ohio, was best of all as respects auditorium; but Clinton, Iowa, excelled in several respects. In each case our Association were the guests of the city by invitation of the local government. In each case the Photo-Drama of Creation was shown to appreciative thousands. In each case the attendance aggregated two thousand, some coming at the beginning of the convention and remaining a few days, and others coming toward the close, and some remaining the entire time.

We had many evidences of the Lord's favor and blessing. The total number attending was thus six thousand; the total number of baptisms three hundred and fifty-six; the total number of States represented thirty-six, besides four Canadian Provinces and one from Fiji Islands, and British representatives. Best of all, the Lord was with us by his holy Spirit, which was manifested in the faces, the words, the conduct—not only of the convention, but also of the audience. It was good to be there. As usual, the dear friends at the various conventions declared these the very best ever.

No doubt personal growth in grace and in knowledge and the spirit of the Lord has much to do with this greater appreciation of our opportunities as they are coming to us year by year and day by day. To the impure nothing is pure. To the discontented nothing is happyfying. To those who have come into personal relationship with the Lord and who are resting in his promises there is a blessing, a refreshment, a strength, an encouragement, every time the precious things are touched, handled, mentioned. We thank God as we notice the various manifestations of growth in grace amongst his people. "What manner of persons ought we to be," in view of our glorious relationship, our grand hopes, our precious fellowship with the Lord and with his brethren!

Only one thing did the Editor fear in respect to the influences mentioned and the able addresses of the speakers. He fears that the dear friends in several instances were overstimulated by too positive assurance that the present year will witness the "change" of the church, establishment of the kingdom, etc. With all due respect for the opinions of the brethren, we believe that the present is a time for great soberness of mind, avoidance of speculation and waiting for whatever the Lord may be pleased to bring to pass. We greatly fear that some of the dear friends will experience sharp disappointments, if some of the confident statements made on the

convention platform miscarry. At no time has the Editor ever spoken or written as positively as some of these dear brethren are speaking now. In the books, *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES*, as well as in *THE WATCH TOWER*, we have set forth the chronology, not as infallible, but nevertheless declared our confidence in it. However, we have always encouraged the friends to examine for themselves, to use their own judgment. To assist them in this we have given in detail the references, etc. In recent numbers of *THE WATCH TOWER* we have plainly stated that fulfillments of the prophecies, although marked and manifest, are not as far developed for the time as we had expected.

The Editor at all three of these conventions took occasion to reiterate the views already presented in *THE WATCH TOWER*:

(1) That the chronology and prophecies interwoven with it still seem as strong as ever—still seem to teach that Gentile times will end next October.

(2) He pointed out, however, that the ending of the Gentile times might not usher in the great time of trouble so quickly as has been expected. He pointed out that the lease expiring might not mean an instantaneous dispossession, but, possibly, might mean a gradual dispossession, or perhaps a sharp notice to quit, followed by eviction a little later on.

(3) He reminded the conventioners of his utterance in a recent number of *THE WATCH TOWER*, to the effect that it is possible that the Gentile times might close without world-wide trouble immediately, and that the church might be completed with some of the members this side the veil participating for a little season in the "judgments written."

(4) He especially sought to impress upon all that our consecration was unto death, and that if the Lord permits us to continue here awhile longer than we expected, our love and loyalty should be manifest in our joyful submission to his arrangements; and furthermore, that if the privileges and blessings of the present year be continued, our cup of joy will run over every way.

A beautiful spirit seemed to pervade the conventions, reminding us of the Scripture which declares, "By one spirit we were all baptized into one body." That one spirit is the holy Spirit of God—the spirit of love and loyalty to him, to his Word, to our brethren—the spirit of sympathy, love, helpfulness, which would do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially unto the household of faith. Invitations for a September convention were received from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Mountain Lake Park, Md., and Saratoga Springs, N. Y., but nothing has yet been determined in respect to any of them.

THE DRAMA IN EUROPE

In furtherance of plans for introducing the Photo-Drama in Europe, the Editor, accompanied by three trained operators, left New York on the S. S. Lusitania, May 19th, in several friends joining the party. Our arrival in London was good season for the London Convention at Whitsuntide. The three days at the convention proved very interesting and profitable. All the sessions were held in the London Opera House, the largest attendance being two thousand. The various features of God's great plan were set forth by seventeen speakers. The convention adjourned with a love feast, in which nearly two thousand participated. This was freely declared to be the most enjoyable convention ever held in Europe. The Lord was with his people, blessing, refreshing, strengthening us. One hundred and twenty-four witnessed by water immersion their full consecration to the Lord even unto death.

Meantime, preparations for the Drama were in progress. A school was started for giving finishing instructions to brethren who had already gained a considerable knowledge of cinematograph operation—to acquaint them with the special features appertaining to the Photo-Drama of Creation. A Scottish class and two English classes were promptly started, totaling fifteen fine young men consecrated and eager for service. A lesson or two demonstrated that they will speedily be very

efficient. Meantime another class of five will be trained as soon as the work shall seem to call for their services. Delegations from France, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Finland came to London to arrange for the Drama in their several home lands and to gain information respecting its operation and the necessary steps of preparation. It is our hope that July will witness the presentation of the Drama in all those countries. The friends seem very keen and the prospects favorable.

A favorable start with the Drama was made at the Princess Theatre, London, on Sunday, June 14th, on which day about twenty-two hundred were in attendance. The Drama is to continue every afternoon and evening for a month. Further showings in London are probable, but what they will be depends considerably upon the Lord's providence and the zeal of the local friends. All seemed greatly pleased with the two parts of the Drama exhibited prior to our departure, June 20th. We believe that in Europe, as in the United States, the public will be greatly interested and profited by this, the latest method of writing the divine measurement, or plan, upon tables—the Gospel being pictured at the same time that it is explained by our very wonderful talking machine arrangements and our free Scenario.

Arrangements for various cities in Great Britain were in progress when we left. In Glasgow the Drama was to open on the very next day, June 21st, in St. Andrew's Hall, the largest auditorium of that city. We have no doubt that the Lord's blessing upon the energy of the brethren there will make the presentation a success—profitable to many.

Leaving the operators to install the Drama in Great Britain, Scandinavia, Germany, France and Switzerland, in co-operation with the Society's branches in those countries, we began our homeward journey June 20th, on the S. S. Aquitania. A remarkably quiet and pleasant journey brought us to the home

land in good season for the conventions at Asbury Park, N. J.; Columbus, Ohio, and Clinton, Iowa.

The Editor was both encouraged and continually inspired and refreshed by his contact with the brethren in and from the various parts of the world. It is helpful to note the spirit of loyalty to the Lord and his Word—the spirit of devotion continuing for months and years. The spirit manifested is the same everywhere—the spirit of love and zeal—the holy Spirit. The reason for this manifestation is explained by the Apostle's words, "We are all baptized by the one spirit into one body"—Christ.

BARREN FIG TREE—DEFILED TEMPLE

AUGUST 9.—Mark 11:12-25.

"By their fruits ye shall know them."—Matthew 7:20.

The triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was a past incident. After spending a portion of the day in the Holy City, Jesus returned to Bethany, which is merely a suburb. The next morning, going again to the city, Jesus noted a fig tree by the wayside, bearing plenty of leaves. He approached it, seeking figs, but found none. The good show of leaves was deceptive. Then Jesus put a ban, a curse, a blight, upon the tree, declaring that it should not bear fruit forever, or to a completion. What did this mean? Surely it was not an intimation that the followers of Jesus should place a curse upon every unfruitful tree or unfruitful field! There must have been some deeper lesson in it, not apparent on the surface.

Bible students believe that they now see the deeper significance of this carefully noted incident. They believe that that fig tree was used as a type, or picture, of the Jewish nation; and that that blight upon the tree because of its unfruitfulness corresponded exactly to the blight pronounced the day before upon the Jewish nation because of its unfruitfulness.

On the day previous Jesus had said to the Jewish nation, "Ye shall see me no more until that day." So he declared of this tree that it should be blighted to the end of the aion, or age. Again, when speaking to his disciples respecting the end of this age, Jesus declared, "When ye shall see the fig tree putting forth leaves, then know that summer is nigh"—that the winter time, the blight time of the nation of Israel and of the world, is at an end. In other words, one of the signs of a new dispensation would be the sprouting, or indication of life, hope, promise, amongst the Jews.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ZIONISM

These same Bible students are now pointing to the revival of hope amongst the Jewish people, as especially manifested by Zionism. It is being pointed out that this return of hope and faith to the Jews respecting their land and the divine promises of the past is opportune—exactly in line with prophecy. They point to Isaiah 40th chapter as now in process of fulfilment: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

These Bible students are telling that Ezekiel's prophecy of the valley of dry bones which came together, were clothed with flesh and finally received the breath of life, is an allegory respecting the Jews. They hold that it does not refer to a literal resurrection, but to the revival of Israel's hopes in the divine promises. This is in harmony with the Prophet's declaration, "These bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off from our parts."—Ezekiel 37:11.

The same Bible students declare that St. Paul teaches that the Jewish nation was typically represented by Ishmael, the son of Hagar. (Galatians 4:22-31) As Hagar and her son were outcast for a time only, so the Law Covenant and the Jews have been cut off from divine favor only for a time. Ishmael had almost fainted for thirst in the wilderness, and then was revived by the angel of the Lord, who pointed out a spring of water. This is typical. Jewish hopes of God's favor had almost died. Zionism is the well-spring which is reviving them—rescuing them from death as a people. Under Messiah's kingdom, soon to be established on the spirit plane, the Jews will receive a great blessing—on the earthly plane.

We know of no other interpretation which seems to fit the facts of this lesson or to show a reason why Jesus should manifest displeasure against an inanimate object, which had no personal responsibility or accountability.

CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

After the fig tree incident, Jesus and his disciples proceeded to Jerusalem and went directly to the Temple. There, contrary to anything that he had previously done, Jesus assumed authority, and began to cast out the traders without ceremony,

overturning the tables of the money-changers and the stalls where doves were sold to people who desired to offer them in sacrifice at the Temple. Another account of the same incident tells us that in this cleansing of the Temple Jesus used a scourge of small cords, and drove forth the traders. Today's lesson tells us that he would not permit even the carrying of vessels through the Temple. All this is of double significance:

- (1) Primarily, it had to do with that time;
- (2) Secondly, it was typical of a cleansing of the anti-typical temple due, we believe, in this our day.

According to the legal usages of our day, it would be quite improper for any one to enter any church edifice or temple in order to interfere with any of the rights of conscience or the procedure sanctioned by the congregation owning the edifice. If wrong were being done and he wished to rectify it, it would be his duty either to go and swear out a warrant before a magistrate or to call a policeman and have him take note of the infraction of the law and correct matters. But under the Jewish law it was different. Every Jew was privileged to enforce the divine law in respect to blasphemy or any sacrilege. Parents were even required by the law to stone their own children to death for blasphemy.

Jesus therefore did only what any Jew would have a right to do, in upsetting the trading apparatus of those who were defiling the Temple of the Lord, doing violence to its sanctity. It will be noticed that as much as their scribes and Pharisees desired to find some occasion against Jesus, they made no objection to the high-handed procedure here described. Jesus was within his rights. He was championing the cause, the honor, of God and his Temple, as he had a perfect right to do.

"MADE IT A DEN OF THIEVES"

In the declaration, "Ye have made it a den of thieves," Jesus intimated that responsibility for the prevailing condition of things rested upon those in authority—the scribes and the Pharisees. For graft and other considerations they had permitted the especially consecrated house of God to become a place of merchandise. Moreover, it is claimed by some that the Temple was frequently used as a place for barter on a larger scale. Here money-sharks found opportunity for meeting people in distress, who came to the Temple for prayer. Such were referred to by Jesus as those who robbed widows, while for pretense they made long prayers. In other words, Jesus judged that some in his day made a cloak, or pretense, of their religion in order to take advantage and to reap pecuniary benefit. Hence the Temple had become a "den of thieves."

In olden times, as with many at present, there was a literalness attached to the word theft which only partly covered its meaning. The loan-sharks infested the Temple, pretended sympathy for those in trouble, and loaned money on exacting terms which finally devoured the property of the widow and the orphan in a legal manner. We fear that the same is true today—that religion is still used as a cloak to cover selfishness. People who do not think of literally committing theft, robbery, often succumb to the arguments of warped consciences. The Master, who was especially indignant at such misuse of the house of God of old, holds the same sentiments today. It is in vain that any claim to be his followers, his disciples, his friends, members of the true church of Christ, who at the same time use religion hypocritically.

"THE HOUSE OF PRAYER"

While Jesus often went into the mountain to pray, or prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, while Pharisees sometimes prayed on the street corners, and while St. Peter went to the house-top to pray, nevertheless the Temple was recognized by all the Jews as especially a house of prayer. Thus we read that St. Peter and St. John went up to the Temple to pray. (Acts 3:1) It was the one place of all others in the world where the soul might feel that it could draw especially near to God.

In the Most Holy was the Mercy Seat, upon which rested the Shekinah light, representing divine presence.

The nearer to that Most Holy any one was able to draw, the more was he understood to be in communion with God. Thus the priests alone might enter the Holy and the Most Holy. The others of the nation of Israel were not permitted to come nearer than the Court. Of these courts there were three—first, the one for the Jews; second, the one for Jewish women; and third, an outer Court, where believing Gentiles might worship the true God, but separated by “a middle wall of partition,” as St. Paul declares. (Ephesians 2:14) These courts represented different degrees of approach to God’s favor. In the antitype, which is not yet complete, Christ and his church will be the temple proper; and all mankind desiring to approach God will approach through The Christ, the temple of God. And the nearer they come, the greater will be their blessing.

St. Peter and St. Paul both tell us of this antitypical temple: “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the holy Spirit?” (1 Corinthians 6:19) “The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” (1 Corinthians 3:17) The church, making increase for years in the fruits and graces of the holy Spirit, “growth unto a holy temple of the Lord.” (Ephesians 2:21) “Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house.” (1 Peter 2:5) “Ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the holy Spirit”—“built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”—Ephesians 2:20-22.

This antitypical temple may be viewed from four different standpoints. In harmony with the last text quoted, it is still under construction. The living stones are being quarried out of the world, and being shaped and polished for places in the glorious temple of which Christ is the Head. That temple will be spiritual, unseen of men, each member like unto the glorified Jesus, far above angels.

In that temple God by his holy Spirit will dwell in fullest measure. Through it all mankind, during the Millennium, will be privileged to draw near to God and to receive divine favors and uplift out of sin and death, back to the original image and likeness of God lost in Eden, redeemed for all at Calvary, and to be offered to all during Messiah’s kingdom reign of a thousand years. Then in the largest sense of the world it will be God’s holy place. Nothing defiling shall be brought into it. All merchandising and money-sharking will be far from it. It will be the house of prayer, the channel of prayer, the way of approach of mankind to draw near to God for forgiveness

of sins and for the reception of all the blessings and mercies which God has provided in Christ for whosoever will.

It was because the Temple at Jerusalem was a type of that glorious temple of perfection that all business of every kind done in it was profanation—was spoiling the beautiful perfection of the type—was misrepresenting the future, the reality—God’s intention in giving it.

“YOUR BODY IS THE TEMPLE”

But now let us take a still different view of the subject—not contradictory to the foregoing, but confirmatory. As in the future the church will be the temple of God, perfect on the heavenly plane, so each individual member of the church of Christ, who has been begotten of the holy Spirit as a new creature, has to that extent God dwelling in his mortal body. The world in general are not temples of the holy Spirit, however good or moral or kind or generous.

No one becomes a temple of the holy Spirit until begotten of the holy Spirit. That spirit-begetting constitutes him a new creature, a son of God, even though only the will, the mind, is begotten again—even though the body is still an imperfect body of flesh. The new mind, dwelling in the old body and using it, constitutes that old body thenceforth a temple of God, and gives to that body a holiness or sanctity which it did not have before.

Now, as the new creature dwells in this mortal body, it is styled a tabernacle rather than a temple, because through sin and degradation it is impaired, and not glorious. Besides, the word tabernacle signifies that which is temporary, not permanent, not eternal. Our heavenly house, our spiritual body, will be the temple, but none can enter that perfect temple condition except by a share in the first resurrection, as Jesus said: “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”—Revelation 20:6.

None can know the character of the heart, whether it be a new heart or merely that of the natural man or woman who has learned politeness, morality, etc. The only way in which we are permitted to judge each other is by the outward fruitage. If the spirit of the Lord dwell within, the fruitage must be good, helpful to others. That human being must be a blessing in his home, in his community, even as Jesus was, whether his character, his goodness, be acknowledged by others in general or not. The fruits of these people of God are the fruits of holiness, meekness, gentleness, longsuffering, brotherly-kindness, self-sacrifice in the interest of others and especially in the service of God and his truth.

WICKED VINE-DRESSERS

AUGUST 16.—Matthew 21:33-46.

“The stone that the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner.”—Matthew 21:42.

Not only did the Redeemer teach chiefly by parables, but additionally nearly all of those parables related directly or indirectly to the kingdom. The reason for this is plain. The divine plan calls for the setting up of the kingdom of righteousness by divine power for the overcoming of the prince of darkness and his reign, which for six thousand years has been a reign of sin and death. While not directly telling of the kingdom, the lesson of today points to it indirectly.

While the whole world was lying in darkness and sin and under divine sentence of unworthiness of life, God planted in the world a root of promise, a hope. This promise, made to Abraham, foretold that his seed, or posterity, would eventually become very great and powerful, and would cause the blessing of God to fill the earth, instead of the curse, which it would roll away. In due time this promise came to the nation of Israel, as the natural posterity of Abraham and the heirs of the promise. Thus God planted a vineyard in the world, the Jewish nation, a special and peculiar people bound to him, and he to them, by the Law Covenant negotiated through Moses. God set a hedge about this nation and gave them special provisions of divine favor “every way.” (Romans 3:1, 2) The divine hedge was the divine promise that as long as the Israelites would be faithful and loyal to God, they would be thoroughly protected against their enemies.

The vineyard had a watch tower, as was common in those days, that from this tower watchmen might guard against robbers. So the Lord declared himself to be Israel’s high tower. He placed watchmen, even the prophets, who cried aloud and warned the people from time to time in respect to any and every breaking down of the wall, or partition; for this protection could be broken down only by disloyalty, carelessness, sin, on the part of Israel. The statement that the Lord, after having made this arrangement with Abraham’s seed,

went into a far country implies that the arrangement was intended to stand for a long time.

THE ORIGINAL VINE-DRESSERS

While in this parable the entire nation of Israel is represented by the vineyard, the husbandmen, or caretakers of the vineyard, where the religious leaders, of whom Jesus said, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do.” (Matthew 23:2, 3) These vine-dressers became conceited, got to feel a proprietary right in the vineyard, acted as though they were the real owners, and not merely the Owner’s servants. Even in their speech they became accustomed to refer to the masses of Israel as the laity and to themselves as the clergy. They referred to the people as “our people,” “my people,” etc. In other words, they failed to glorify God properly, and therefore in thus taking honor to themselves felt themselves more than the servants of God, honored in being permitted to be vine-dressers in his vineyard.

As centuries rolled on, it was only proper to expect that the operation of the Law Covenant would produce good fruitage amongst the people—that through their inability to keep the law they would become stronger in character; that these united experiences would make them more reverential, more loyal to God, more earnestly desirous that the typical kingdom should give place to the antitypical one, when the Owner would be present, either directly or through some especially appointed representative. In due course of time, the Owner, Jehovah, sent his servants, the prophets, to Israel, sometimes with one message, sometimes with another. These servants and their messages became tests as respected the love devotion and loyalty of the vine-dressers, and tests also relative to the character-development of the people of Israel.

But alas! the very ones who should have been glad to wel-

come the Owner's representatives, and glad to have manifested to them the fruits of holiness amongst the people, showed their own disloyalty by mistreating the servants. They reasoned that to acknowledge those servants and the reproofs which they gave would mean an acknowledgment that they themselves were merely vine-dressers, and not in any sense of the word owners of the vineyard or an especially preferred class not held responsible under the general law governing all. Therein their pride and their desire to show off before the people prompted the mistreatment of the Owner's special representatives, the prophets. As the parable shows, some of these were beaten, others killed, others stoned.

"IT BROUGHT FORTH WILD GRAPES"

Finally the Owner of the vineyard sent his Son, saying, Surely they should reverence my Son. As a matter of fact, the Bible informs us that God knew that the rulers of Israel would not reverence his Son, but would crucify him; and that he sent his Son with this foreknowledge of their intention.

But the parable is stating the matter from a different standpoint—as though the Owner had said, as he might well have said, "They will reverence my Son." Surely the rulers of the Jews should have revered the perfect one—"holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." Surely they should have recognized this one, of whom the people declared, "Never man spake like this man." Surely they should have hearkened to his message, should have repented of their sins, should have come back through him into harmony with the Father, and thus have obtained forgiveness and a blessing. Whatever reasons there might have seemed to be for their thinking that Isaiah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Malachi and others of the Prophets were deceivers, none of those arguments would hold against the Owner's Son, whose credentials were manifest in his holiness, in his miracles and mighty works, and in his mightier words of life.

However, the spirit of selfishness and self-conceit is powerful, and often leads those who possess it to monstrous acts which afterward appal even themselves. The Jewish Doctors, the clergy of that time, perceived that Jesus, the Son of God, the representative of the Owner of the vineyard, by his words and deeds was exerting a mighty influence over the people. His claim to be the Owner's Son was backed by numerous signs which the people were disposed to recognize. We read that he departed into a mountain alone, when the people would take him by force to make him a king. The clerical class reasoned that to whatever extent his cause should prevail, their power over the people, their influence, their titles, their honors of men, would diminish in importance.

"BEHOLD OPPRESSION—BEHOLD A CRY"

The rulers of the vineyard, shown by Jesus' description to be the Pharisees and the Sadducees, had become very unbelieving as respects the declaration of the prophets that the King would eventually send Messiah with great blessings and power for the glorification of that vineyard and the widening of its influence in the whole world. The Sadducees, including many of the scribes, as a class were agnostics—disbelievers in the inspiration of the promises and the prophecies. The same spirit affected the Pharisees to a considerable extent. All were self-seeking. Jesus styled them "money-lovers," and declared that they sought chiefly the honor of men rather than that honor which cometh alone from God.

In their exasperation against Jesus, in their realization that his victory meant their defeat and the defeat of all the institutions which represented their wisdom and teachings, they determined that it was necessary for him to die. By this they meant that his death was necessary for the success of their theories and plans, because his theories, his teachings, were so different from theirs. They could not endure the thought that the great institutions which they had so laboriously constructed out of human traditions which made void the Word of God should all fade away. To them it seemed that to surrender their plans to Jesus and for him to carry out the plans which he preached would mean the ruin of the vineyard, the nation. They did not realize that the course which they were taking was the very one which would lead to the destruction of that typical kingdom of God, that typical vineyard.

Jesus carried the parable up to his own time and foretold his own violent death at the hands of those wicked vine-dressers who treated the Lord's heritage as though it were their own. Then, in conclusion, Jesus asked his hearers what they would

expect the Owner of that vineyard to do with those wicked husbandmen when he should come to take possession and to redress the wrongs. The answer was that he would miserably destroy those wicked vine-dressers, and would let out his vineyard to other husbandmen who would render him the proper fruits at the proper time.

Jesus did not himself give the answer, but his silence was confirmatory of the answer of the people. And so the parable was fulfilled. God's judgments came upon the Jewish nation, with the result that it was entirely overthrown in the year 70 A. D. Speaking of this, St. Paul says, "Wrath is come upon this people to the uttermost" (1 Thessalonians 2:16), that all things written in the Law and the Prophets concerning them should be fulfilled. Their nationality was utterly overthrown and has never since been restored—nor will it be until the time foretold by the prophets, when Messiah in glory shall establish his reign of righteousness and when under his kingdom those faithful servants, the prophets, who were slain, stoned to death, etc., will be made associates and given authority and power as Messiah's representatives in the earth.—Psalm 45:16.

THE NEW VINE-DRESSERS

The Lord said that those originally appointed were wicked vine-dressers. He appointed new ones; namely, the twelve apostles, St. Paul taking the place of Judas. Moreover, he started a new vineyard, putting into it only the true vine, inspired with faith and loyalty toward God. Those faithful servants, although they long ago fell asleep, continue through their words, their teachings, to influence, to guard, to keep, the true vine of the Lord—the church, the body of Christ. Of this vineyard our Lord declares, "I am the true vine; ye are the branches." Century after century these true branches of the true vine have been planted by baptism into death with their Master and have been bringing forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Ere long, we believe, this fruitage will all be gathered and, by the resurrection "change," be transplanted to the heavenly condition.

Meantime, however, the same spirit which was manifested by the vine-dressers of the Jewish age has manifested itself again. Other vineyards have been started. In numbers, wealth and influence these quite outrank and outshine the Lord's vineyard, which alone bears the precious fruit which he desires. The two vines are spoken of in the Bible. The one is said to be "the vine of my Father's right hand planting." The other is styled "the vine of the earth." The fruitage of the one is manifested in the character-likeness of Christ, faithfulness unto death. The fruitage of the other is manifested in boastfulness, pride, show—a form of godliness without the power thereof.

There is to be a gathering of the fruitage of the vine of the earth at the second coming of the Master. We read that it is to be dealt with in the vinepress of the wrath of God in the great time of trouble with which this age will pass away, giving place to the thousand years of Messiah's kingdom for the world's uplift.

THE CHIEF CORNER-STONE

The Scriptures give us the thought that the church of Christ is represented by a pyramid, which has five corner-stones, the chief one being the top-stone—a perfect pyramid in itself, the lines of which control the entire structure. Jesus, rejected by the Jews, crucified, is the chief corner-stone of this great temple of God which is the church. Already he is glorified. During this age his footstep followers, shaped in harmony with his character-likeness, are being prepared to be united with him in heavenly glory.

Thus, as our Lord declared, the kingdom of God was taken from Israel—the natural seed of Abraham—to be given to spiritual Israel. God is thus developing or creating the new nation, a holy nation, a peculiar people, separate and distinct from all others, gathered out from Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, from every nation and denomination.

Christ Jesus, the top-stone, is indeed "a stone of stumbling" to many. By stumbling over him they injure themselves; but if he should fall on them, in the sense of condemning them, it would signify their utter destruction; their cutting off in the second death.

The chief priests and the Pharisees heard the Master's parables, and perceived that he spoke of them as the wicked vine-dressers. They sought to lay hold of him and destroy him forthwith; but they feared the multitude, who, although they did not recognize him as the Son of God, did esteem him the great Prophet, or Teacher.

I, the Lord, am with thee, be thou not afraid;
I will help and strengthen, be thou not dismayed.
Yes, I will uphold thee with my own right hand;

Thou art called and chosen in my sight to stand.
Onward, then, and fear not, children of the day;
For his word shall never, never pass away.