

MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S HOUSEHOLD

THE Church of Christ is an aggregation of individuals which may be viewed from different standpoints. In the "Divine Plan of the Ages" we show on a chart the Gospel Age and its various united elements. Above the line of consecration are two classes, representing the Great Company and the Little Flock. Below the line of consecration there is another class shown, the justified, who do not go on to complete their justification by consecration. Under the line or plane of justification is shown another class – hangers-on, denominated hypocrites. In the further development of the chart we show these last two classes – the justified, who do not go on to consecration, and the "tares" or hypocrites – both as falling away in this day of trouble, called the time of the harvest, being separated from the spiritual classes, the Little Flock and the Great Company.

However, during the Gospel Age, the "wheat" and the "tares" grow together, and together they represent the Kingdom of God, as the Lord Jesus shows in the parable. (Matthew 13.) In other words, God speaks of the Church as a whole, including in the appellation the baser adherents as well as the fully consecrated.

This is shown again in Revelation, where the Lord addresses the Laodicean Church, "Be zealous, therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock." (Rev. 3:19,20.) He thus indicates that from his viewpoint, which is all wisdom, he discerns in his Church what we may perhaps partially discern, but could not definitely determine and would not be allowed to specify. He sees, he determines, which are the fully consecrated, and which are not fully consecrated. We could ascertain that condition only by inquiry of the individual, and even then if he

chose to misrepresent his position and to claim that he is a consecrated believer, we should not be in a position to judge him or decide against his expression, except his fruitage betray his words; as the Lord says, "By their fruits shall ye know them" – not merely by their *professions*, but by their *fruits*. But aside from any fruits that would be injurious, we are to accept the profession of all who claim to be believers and consecrated. Hence, if there is an election in the Church, in which only the consecrated would be invited to participate – and if there are any whose outward conduct is moral and who make profession of being consecrated – it would not be within our province to sit in judgment upon them and condemn them and say that they are not of the Church. Rather we should be obligated to accept their vote the same as any other.

THOSE WHO CONSTITUTE THE CHURCH OF THE PRESENT TIME

In a complimentary sense all believers in Christ, who are approaching the Lord and who have turned from the world and have professed to have fellowship with God's consecrated people and who are giving indications of **[R4654 : page 243]** progress in that direction, and to whom the Lord is drawing near, may be considered probationary members of the Church. So the Lord says unto these, "Draw nigh unto me, and I will draw nigh unto you." (Jas. 4:8.) If they come together, then, with the Lord's people, the result may be their full consecration to the Lord and their begetting of the holy Spirit, thereby constituting them New Creatures in Christ. If they fail to go on, they fail to obtain full justification and the seal of sonship and covenant relationship with the Lord. Such will eventually be discarded entirely. The Harvest and the sifting process – the winnowing of the "chaff" from the "wheat" – will blow these away, as the Lord represented in the parable, and they will no longer even pretend to be of the true Church. The line of demarcation, before the close of the

Harvest time, will become so distinct that it will leave no question as to who are and who are not of the Church.

Coming down, then, more particularly to the difference between "the more than conquerors," the "Little Flock," and the conquerors, the "Great Company," we recognize both of these as being of the Church of Christ, both as being represented in the original and preliminary type of the Church, viz., the Passover. On that night of passing over, which typified this Gospel Age and the passing over of "the Church of the First-borns," we find that all the first-born of Israel were passed over, and that subsequently the Lord exchanged these first-borns for the tribe of Levi, including not only the first-born of every family of that tribe, but *all* the Levites; and so all of the Levite class are passed over. And the types further show us that both the Little Flock, the Royal Priesthood, and the Great Company, the antitypical Levites, are "the household of faith," both constituting the "Church of the First-born, which are written in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23); [R4654 : page 244] and, if not blotted out, their names will continue there, and they will have part in the heavenly inheritance.

THE ANTITYPICAL TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL

The share of each of the above classes in the heavenly inheritance is shown in Revelation 7, where, first, the Little Flock is spoken of as constituting Israel – the twelve tribes of Israel. Those of the Jewish nation who maintained their relationship with God were not broken off from that position, but instead, were transferred from natural Israel and became the nucleus of spiritual Israel. Inasmuch as this left many of the designed number yet to be provided for, God arranged, as had been shown through the prophets would be done, that the deficiency should be supplied from amongst the Gentiles. So, then, the work of this

Gospel Age has been to fill up those twelve tribes with Gentiles to take the places of the Jews who were broken off from that special place or plane of privilege. And we, if we make our calling and election sure, shall be of these twelve tribes, though we may not know to which tribe we shall be assigned.

To illustrate: A man enlisting here in New York for military service might be sent to one or another of the different regiments to be filled up from time to time; so with us. The Lord in his providence fills up these tribes of Israel, the whole number being stipulated to be 12,000 for each tribe, or 144,000 altogether. It might make no particular difference to us to which tribe we belong, and yet there is a bare possibility that since our Lord is "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah," there may be some special gradation suggested in this tribe; so this Royal Priesthood may be divided into twelve different classes.

There is no revelation on this subject, and it behooves us "not to be wise above that which is written"; but since these tribes had different standings, as shown in the prophecies made respecting them, so there is seemingly quite a possibility that there will be twelve different stations or ranks among the saints.

THE GREAT COMPANY

Aside from the special class of overcomers, the "more than conquerors," as the Apostle calls them, those who voluntarily and willingly lay down their lives, presenting their bodies living sacrifices, and carrying out that consecration to sacrifice – aside from these, there is a large number of consecrated people of God. We do not know their number, which has not been predestinated, as is shown in Revelation – "Whose number no man knoweth." All are called to the Priesthood; all consecrate to be priests, but failing to make their calling and election sure as Priests, many of these fall back into this Great Company class, who not only made a consecration, but were begotten of the holy Spirit, and are,

therefore, the Lord's, his children on the spirit plane. These are such as did not draw back in the sense in which the Apostle speaks when he says, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." We understand the Apostle here to mean a drawing back unto perdition – the words, "draw back," signifying to do despite to all the favors of God, to lose all relationship with the Lord, to turn back to wallowing in the mire of sin and to take pleasure in the works of the flesh and the devil – anger, malice, hatred, envy, strife.

This Great Company, however, while failing to go forward voluntarily and gladly to perform their sacrifices, as they had covenanted to do, will not be cast away, because they are still at heart faithful to the Lord; but they will be dealt with in a special manner by the great Redeemer, the Head of the Church. His dealing with them will be, as Scripturally shown, to send them away "into the wilderness," into a great "time of trouble," where they will have special and severe testings, which will demonstrate their character definitely; and where they must give up their lives. Either they will renounce the things of the Lord and forsake him, or they will desire to be faithful to the Lord and to hold fast to him. If they thus hold fast they will be counted of that Great Company of whom the Revelator says (Rev. 7), "After this I beheld and, lo, a Great Company out of all nations and peoples and kindreds and tongues, stood before the throne. And the angel said unto me, Who are these? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest; and he said, These are they which have come up out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple"; and palm branches were given unto them.

Here we see a wide distinction between this Great Company of spirit-begotten ones, ultimately overcomers, who will be "before the throne" and have palm branches, palms of victory,

and who will have washed their robes and made them white during the time of trouble, and the Little Flock who will sit with the Lord *in* his throne and who, instead of bearing palm branches of victory, will have the *crowns* of glory; and, instead of serving in the Temple, will be the Temple itself. As it is written of the "more than conquerors," "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God." – Rev. 3:12.

The differentiation, or separation, between these two classes in the "Church of the First-born" is marked, as indicated by the Lord's parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins – a parable which, by the description, we see is applicable in the end of this Age. According to this parable certain tests will come and some will be found "watching" with their lamps trimmed and burning, and will be listening to hear the Bridegroom's call, and will go forth, braving opposition and hostility and darkness of the night through which they must pass, to go with their beloved Bridegroom to his home and enter in. When the last one of these Wise Virgins shall have gone in, we are told that the door will be shut, by which we understand that the door of privilege to enter that class will be closed to all the rest of mankind. But we are to remember that the entire ten virgins represent the Kingdom of Heaven, or, in other words, the Church. Hence a part of that Church is shut out when the door is closed. Not merely is the world shut out, but the Foolish Virgins also, who, however, are not to be counted with the world, because they are "Virgins." They are Virgins who have been associated with the *Wise* Virgins, and for a time without any distinction being apparent, but who in the testing time are not found worthy to be of the Bride class.

THOSE WHO WILL HAVE THEIR PORTION WITH THE HYPOCRITES

These Foolish Virgins, the parable shows us, will finally learn the way. They will get the oil and will trim their lamps. In

other words, they will receive a larger measure of the holy Spirit, represented by the oil, and will have clearer enlightenment from the Word of God, represented by the lamp. They will trim their lamps and go forth then, that they, *also*, may enter into the Marriage; but they will find that the Wise Virgins have all gone in and that the door is shut. Then they will stand [R4654 : page 245] without and knock, saying, "Lord, Lord, open unto us" (Matt. 25:11); we desire also to be of the Bride class; we desire also to enter the heavenly glory. The Lord will answer them, however, and say, "I know you not." I do not recognize you. I recognize only one "Bride." My Bride class has already entered in, and I cannot recognize others as the Bride. These shall then go away into the time of trouble to wash their soiled robes and make them white.

This time of trouble, we understand, is the great "time of trouble" that is coming upon the world. It will also be upon this Great Company class, which will not "be accounted worthy to escape those things coming upon the earth." The Lord admonishes us prophetically that there would be some such; and he warns us saying, "Pray that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:36.) The Little Flock watches and escapes and will stand before the Son of Man approved and will be received as the Bride of Christ. But this Great Company, although they are consecrated and spirit-begotten, and have never denied the Lord, have not, nevertheless, the proper zeal and spirit of *self-sacrifice* and will not be permitted to enter in with the Bride class, [R4655 : page 245] but will be thrust out and "have their portion with the hypocrites."

These are not hypocrites, however, but since the time of trouble is properly for hypocrites, they will have their portion *with* the hypocrites. The parable shows us nothing further respecting these, but we are shown elsewhere (Rev. 7) that in that

time of trouble they "will wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb." As a result they will be granted the palm branches and the place before the throne, to serve God in his Temple.

**"THE KING'S DAUGHTER – THE VIRGINS,
HER COMPANIONS, THAT FOLLOW"**

The same thought we find given us in Psalm 45, where the end of this age is pictured. There our Lord is shown as the great King in glory. The Church, the Little Flock, is pictured as the Bride, and the Great Company, as her virgin companions, that follow her. We are also told in that connection that the Bride will have special adornment, special beauty, and will have the special place of preference. Another Scripture tells us that there is but one Bride of Christ, saying, "My dove, my undefiled, is but one; she is the only one of her Mother." (Cant. 6:9.) Reverting to Psalm 45 again: We are told that after the Bride, adorned in golden raiment and fine linen, is received by the King, the Virgins, her companions, shall also be brought before the King and shall enter into the Palace. This is in perfect agreement with the custom of olden times, that when a wife was taken, the father would present with the wife, a maid-servant, who would accompany her mistress and would necessarily be associated with her. Sometimes more than one maid-servant would be presented, as pictured in this Psalm. Now, if a Bridegroom were alluding to his family, while he would speak of only the one person as his wife, he would include as a part of his family or household her maid-servants. So likewise in this family of Christ. Not only is the Bride to be the Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, and joint-heir with him, but the Virgins, her companions that follow her, will be members of his general family or household, honorable servants, but not on the plane of the Bride, who will share the glory, the honor and the nature of the Bridegroom.

NEITHER PRIESTS NOR LEVITES HAD INHERITANCE IN THE LAND

In the type of the Priesthood, and the Levites, Aaron and his sons constituted the Priesthood, and only these had to do with the offering on the Day of Atonement, and only these had special rights and privileges. Neither Priests nor Levites, however, had inheritance in the land with the others. (Num. 18:20; Deut. 18:1,2). Thus again was shown the fact that this Great Company, represented by the Levites, as well as the Little Flock, represented by the Priests, will have no inheritance in the earthly promises, in the earthly possession, in the earthly restitution. Their inheritance will be on the spirit plane, separate and distinct from all the remainder of the world, which will then come into blessing *under* the Royal Priesthood and this company of Levites or instructors. In the case of the Levites, we remember that they were set apart to serve the Tabernacle. The Great Company are said to serve in the Temple, and the Priest Class, the Little Flock, we have said before, *are* the Temple. In other words, the Great Company class will be the servant-class on the spirit plane; so it was in the type. The Lord said to Aaron that he had given all the Levites to be servants of the priests in their ministry; so the two figures correspond.

Coming down then finally to the question, we see that in the present time it is not pertinent for us to attempt too closely to decide who will be of the Bride Class and who will be of the Great Company, as all are of the *Ecclesia*; but, as the Scriptures say, to "walk humbly," lest we ourselves should not be accounted worthy of the great prize. It is for us to trust that *we* may be amongst those "more than conquerors," who by zealously laying down their lives in a sacrificial manner shall be reckoned worthy to be of the Royal Priesthood – to "sit with him in his throne, even as he also overcame and is set down with the Father in his throne."

Considering the Church, then, as those who will *ultimately* be accepted as of the Priesthood, it consists of the Bride class alone and no others; however, from another viewpoint, we may speak of the entire household of faith, including both the Great Company and the Little Flock, the real Church of the First-born, as antitypical Levites. The Apostle speaks of the Church in its *present* condition, saying, "Ye are a Royal Priesthood," referring, of course, to what is the ultimate *aim*, the ultimate *hope* set before us all, whether *we* make our "election sure" or not. Again the Apostle Paul speaks of the Church and likens it to the members of the human body, saying, "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; neither the head to the foot, I have no need of thee"; for every member is necessary. (I Cor. 12:21.) We understand the Apostle here to be speaking of all of the consecrated, and not specially differentiating between the Little Flock and the Great Company. Indeed, we are not at present competent to form such a distinction or such a classification. That is decidedly the Lord's work during this time in which we are living, the harvest time, and he will separate those who are sacrificers from those who are not sacrificers.

"Up, then, and linger not, thou saint of God,
Fling from thy shoulders each impeding load;
Be brave and wise, shake off earth's soil and sin,
That with the Bridegroom thou mayest enter in.
O watch and pray!

"Gird on thy armor; face each weaponed foe;
Deal with the sword of heaven the deadly blow;
Forward, still forward, till the prize divine
Rewards thy zeal, and victory is thine;
Win thou the crown!"

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