

OUR CONVENTION TOUR – NO. 1

HAVING reached Denver on our westward journey, we must give an account of the Lord's blessings and favors and our experiences; for we well know that the prayers and thoughts of many are with us. Although the blessing of the service keeps us busy continually, our thoughts and prayers go out to the Lord's dear flock collectively, and individually in many cases. "We share our mutual woes, our mutual burdens bear, and often for each other flows the sympathizing tear."

Our first stop was at Cleveland, Ohio, where a meeting had been arranged by the Bible Students in the interest of the Jews. The topic was, "Zionism the Hope of the World." We will not even outline the discourse, because the interested will have the report from our San Francisco meeting.

The meeting was successful in one sense of the word, in that the Lord always blesses those who seek to serve and praise Him; but it was not a success in respect to the number of Jews present. Two reasons contributed: (1) It was Friday night, the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath, the worst night in the week, as we subsequently learned; for the Orthodox Jews hold the Sabbath very sacred, and many of them would not even ride upon a street car on that day. (2) The prejudice awakened amongst the Jews by one or two of their journals calling us a "missionary" has not yet worn out. The audience altogether was probably a little over a thousand, and of these less than half, probably only three hundred, were Jews. The dear friends of the Cleveland Class felt a little disappointed that their efforts had not brought larger success. We encouraged them, however, with the thought that having done our best the results were entirely in the Lord's hands, and the credit that He would give them would be just as great as though five thousand had heard.

THE INDIANAPOLIS CONVENTION

The night train carried us to Indianapolis, where a Convention was already in progress and continued also after our leaving. The attendance was excellent – about six hundred (three or four hundred from the surrounding district). The attendance at the public service to hear about the "Hereafter" was about a thousand. Excellent [R4853 : page 211] attention was given, but how much "wheat" was ripened we, of course, know not. By some oversight this three-days' Convention at Indianapolis was not properly announced in THE WATCH TOWER – merely our special services were mentioned. But it was a success and a blessing evidently to many in attendance.

THE ST. LOUIS CONVENTION

A night ride brought us to St. Louis early on Sunday, June 11th, where we were met by the Convention Party, organized by Brother L. W. Jones, M.D., of Chicago. On the route its number has varied from one hundred and fifty to two hundred, some joining and some leaving at one place and another. It was a very happy company, amongst whom the Spirit of the Lord is quite manifest. The train consists of eight cars, including one for baggage. They are sleeping cars, and are not only comfortable but economical in that they save hotel expenses and transfers. In the party are five doctors. Chicago is, of course, better represented than any other city. All have the spirit of helpfulness, the spirit of love for the brethren, and a desire to spend and be spent in the Master's service. The presence of so goodly a company in the various Conventions of this trip certainly adds, not only to the singing, but also to the general interest of the meetings. The brethren take part in the testimony meetings and symposiums, and in giving addresses. Our own time being fully occupied, except when on the platform, has hindered us from enjoying these and making a report of them.

The Sunday afternoon meeting for the public on the topic of "Hereafter" was well attended, the audience numbering about fifteen hundred. The evening talk on "Zionism the Hope of the World" was

not extensively advertised. The audience was estimated at about a thousand. Only a small proportion was Jewish – about one-third. On Monday our afternoon address to the interested and also our evening service (a Question Meeting) were well attended. The St. Louis Class seem to be in good spiritual condition so far as we can judge, earnestly pressing forward in love and devotion. Here, as elsewhere, we saw good evidence of the zeal of the friends in the circulation of the public announcements, and other necessary and expensive arrangements for the Convention services.

THE KANSAS CITY CONVENTION

Tuesday and Wednesday, June 13th and 14th, were devoted to Kansas City. There is quite a good sized class of Bible Students there, and their loving zeal was everywhere manifested. The meetings were all good. Brothers Ritchie, Swingle, Senor, Edgar, Jones and Wise participated in addresses on this occasion. "Convention Hall" had been secured for the public services, the first evening [R4853 : page 212] on "Hereafter," the following one on "Zionism the Hope of the World." The attendance was estimated at three thousand and one thousand respectively.

Here again we experienced some disappointment respecting the numbers of Jews interested in hearing a subject of such vital importance to them. Incidentally we learned that the Rabbis are trying to keep the people from hearing. It was ever thus. The teachers take away the key of knowledge, and neither enter in themselves nor permit others to enter, if they can prevent it.

The spirit of Judaism is marked today, as it was in the Master's day, by a subserviency to the elders and traditions – very much the same as with Christians. How much the overseers of the religious world will be obliged to answer for respecting the ignorance of the people and their estrangement from the truth!

Prof. J. T. Read of the Chicago Class contributed greatly to the interest at all the meetings by leading the music, and also by singing solos while the audience gathered. At Kansas City Prof. Riggs and wife also assisted, adding much to the pleasure of the services. The total attendance of interested ones was about six hundred.

Following one of these meetings, by request, we had a service for the consecration of children. A number of parents formally presented their children in consecration to the Lord. We made clear to all that there is no Scriptural command governing this matter. The basis of our innovation is the fact that the Jews in general were accustomed to consecrate their male children to the Lord by circumcision, and the parents of Samuel the Prophet made consecration of him to the Divine service.

Many Protestants practise infant sprinkling, called baptism, not as a saving ordinance, nor as an induction into the church, but as an act of public consecration to the Lord. We reminded the friends also that when certain parents brought their children to Jesus, he said, "Permit little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such like is the Kingdom." That is to say, those acceptable to the Lord as joint-heirs of Messiah's Kingdom will all be child-like, simple, trustful, obedient children of God.

We suggested to the parents that such a formal offering to the Lord of the fruits of their bodies should, in after days, help them to accept whatever Divine providences might come to their children, with more loving submission.

We suggested further that as the children grow to years of discernment, it may be helpful to them to know that their parents had thus devoted them to God and His service of righteousness. We recalled our own experience, that when about seven years of age our mother told us, "Charles, I want you to know that I gave you to the Lord, as Samuel's mother gave him. It is my hope and prayer that in God's providence you may become a minister of the Gospel." We

recall the impression made upon us, and our reply at the time: "Ma, I think that when I grow up I shall prefer to be a missionary to the poor heathen. The people here have many preachers, have many churches, while the poor heathen have few."

Our mother made no remark, but as we look at the matter now, her prayer is being fulfilled in our present opportunities for ministering to the "household of faith," and our own proposition to help the heathen will also have realization in the blessed Messianic Kingdom. About fifteen children were consecrated, by prayer, laying on of the hand and the invocation of Divine blessing. We made clear that none should think of this matter as an obligation, merely as an opportunity for such as desire to avail themselves of it.

ONE DAY AT WICHITA

We had a very enjoyable experience at Wichita. A goodly number had gathered from surrounding places, and with our own party made up an audience of about four hundred for the Thursday afternoon meeting, when we talked to the interested. Of course, we had a good season of spiritual fellowship. The attendance in the evening was estimated at one thousand. We had remarkable attention, and believe that surely some grains of wheat will be found as a result. Here also, following the afternoon discourse to the interested, a number of parents presented their children in consecration to the Lord – about 12.

ONE DAY AT PUEBLO, COLO.

Another night-ride brought us to Pueblo Friday, June 16. We had two good meetings here – one for the interested in the afternoon, at which about three hundred were present, and one for the public in the evening, the attendance being about a thousand. The resident class is a very small one, and the numbers from the outside were comparatively few, but all seemed to have the spirit of the Truth. The dear friends who arranged the meeting here manifested great zeal and courage, the Lord greatly blessing their efforts. The public meeting

was attended by some very intelligent people, who seemed deeply interested in the things they heard respecting the better Hereafter – the two salvations.

SATURDAY AT COLORADO SPRINGS

We arrived here early and had a good day. In the morning a testimony meeting; in the afternoon a symposium, participated in by twelve brethren. Following this, by request, we had the service for the Consecration of children – about twenty participating. The public service in the evening was specially large for Saturday. The audience was estimated at from twelve to fifteen hundred. We had excellent attention. The close attention, the earnest faces and desire for free literature at the close of the service are hopeful indications as respects the Truth here.

