

And the house when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.

1. Kings (vii). 7.

c. 7. v. 7

In the Sacred Scriptures it is the invariable rule that a house is the symbol of the human soul. We are familiar with the truth that King Solomon is typical of the man who desires to make that house a fit and worthy temple of the Living God.

Of course, it is beyond all doubt that the man, ~~RE~~ King Solomon, did actually build a temple long centuries ago. But as the story is recorded in the Bible it stands as Divine Parable. King Solomon is the typical wise man who loves the Lord and builds his character in accordance with the exact directions provided in the Divine Word. What is recorded in the Sacred Scriptures, spiritually interpreted, is ample and sufficient to enable every wise-hearted man so to form his character that it may become the beautiful dwelling of the Most High; a soul in which sublimest worship may be offered; in which prayer and praise have their daily exercise; in which inspiration and enlightenment from the Lord are constantly received.

No precise pattern of such a soul can be conceived because each soul must build upon the broad, general principles and truths as he personally receives and understands them. Just as it is impossible to ~~conceive~~ imagine one rigid, narrow type of Christian, so is ~~it~~ it impossible to conceive of the exact shape of the temple.

We have the One Living Form, the matchless Humanity of our

Saviour, whom we all should aspire and pray to follow; but there were twelve disciples who followed Him; and the twelve are representative of all kinds and classes of Christianity. Hence, while we have definite and particular instructions for the building of the Temple each wise-hearted man must build his own structure; each character must be complete and beautiful in its own way. There is no outward uniformity; there is no proud supremacy for any one special type of Christianity. The exact form and architecture of the Temple are not known in all the details: but the principles and directions given provide for the perfection of ~~all~~ each soul according to the ability and peculiar characteristics of each.

So that the indefiniteness of Scripture is, indeed, a striking feature of its universal application and wisdom; illustrated by the passage above quoted as our text.

There is a suggestive question offered through the prophet Isaiah in the 66th chapter: "Thus saith the LORD, Where is the house that ye build unto me?"; followed by these impressive words: "to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at ^{my} Word". ~~And~~ If you will read carefully the story of Solomon's life, and how he built the temple, you will not fail to recognize that he was humble and of a contrite spirit, that is, poor in self-reliance and self-intelligence, trembling lest he should break the Law of the Lord and assert his own self-will and vain thought. His humble prayer for guidance throughout his life and respecting all his duties is the grandest

testimony to his wisdom. His prayer received full response and satisfaction; for Solomon not only built the notable temple but he extended the Kingdom of Israel and attained to great renown.

Now, the building of the temple, the Lord's House, was the beginning of Solomon's greatness. The building up of character, the making of the soul into the House of the Lord is the first essential step towards a life of far-reaching use and honourable repute. And unless we are prepared to give our best labours and energy, to give all our wealth and skill and life to the formation of our characters after the Divine Pattern; unless we seek to make those characters enduring and strong and lovely according to Divine Plan, you may be sure there is no expansion possible, the Lord's Kingdom will not gain either influence or power in one's life, and the world will not gather around one for help and advice as it ~~did~~ gather^{ed} around King Solomon.

I sometimes think the present insignificance of religious people; the apathy and neglect, the scorn and contempt with which so-called Christians are treated, largely arise from their lack of distinctive character. Christian people in these days, have no great reputation for possessing wisdom: their influence does not extend itself into the outlying regions of the world's life. By tacit consent Christianity is ruled out of politics and commerce and civil affairs ^{wherever} there is important work to be done "practical" men are called for; Christianity is

dubbed idealistic, not realistic and therefore utterly impracticable. And I cannot but feel that the reason is that too many Christian people lack definite, firm character; lack loyalty to the truths they possess; have failed to build up their souls as a House of the Lord on the plan of the Great Architect of the Universe; but have chipped away the truths they have received to make them conform to their own designs and plans: whereas they should take the truths as the Lord gives them and build according to the Divine instructions, as Solomon built for Israel.

Our text explains what I mean: "The house when it was in building, was built of stone made ready at the quarry; and there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building".

Solomon, the wise man, brought the stone from the quarry where it was cut and prepared for use; and as it was brought away so was it built into the noble structure.

The wise disciple of the Lord should come to the quarry of the Divine Word and receive from the Quarry Master clear-cut specific truths; Words of distinctive value; Doctrines all squared and polished for ~~the~~ immediate use in the building of character. The wise disciple should take those stones and patiently, earnestly, intelligently seek the proper places for them; he should put them in position intact, entire, untouched by "hammer, axe, or any tool of iron" that would ~~change~~ change ~~their~~ their form or figure or function; diminish ~~their~~ their magnitude or

importance, and thus spoil ~~the~~ real purpose and use; and to prevent the building from being erected according to the Divine Plan.

The way of most of us is not that of the wise Solomon. We acquire truths from the Word: the Lord reveals specific commandments; He makes known to us truths of great beauty and strength, and we carry them away to our homes and look at ~~them~~ and think about them and proudly show them to others. But we do not always at once see how they fit in with what we are doing at that particular time; with the aspirations, desires, purposes we are intent upon: and so, too often, we straightway take some natural argument, some worldly consideration, some self-intelligent qualification and we modify ^a ~~the~~ truth; we make it fit in with our idea; we make it smaller; we knock off this corner or that; we change its possibility of service: whereas we ought to have carefully, prayerfully sought to find out the specific position for that truth just as it is: for thus only can we build the character or soul on the grand scale and pattern ^{to the} the Lord has in view: ~~we~~ spoil the truth: we attain to a building that is mean and feeble, poor and commonplace.

I appeal to you, friends: Is that not the way with most of us? We come to the Divine Word; we receive a great truth ^{that we} which delights us, we are enthusiastic about it; we realize, ^{it} firmly and truly set in our hearts or minds or conduct we should be larger-minded, nobler-spirited, ^{strong} and trusty,

as we would strive to be. The truth concerning forgiving until seventy times seven, for example; or, confessing when we have done wrong; ~~and~~ the truth about not injuring another soul by thought or word; or being absolutely truthful and unselfish; or any other of the many doctrines drawn from the Word. We treasure the stone obtained at the Quarry.

But when we return to the ordinary sphere of daily life, we find other feelings and thoughts arise; we have other interests and reflections; and it is not clear how, if we use this stone just as it is, we can ~~maintain~~ our worldly prestige, how we can get that financial success we so long for, how we can enjoy that advantage or pleasure we expected to enjoy: so we qualify the truth, we cut off a word or two and twist it round, we put it into some place where it does not quite fit, we try to square it as we wish it to be; and when we have done, it is 'nt recognizable as the stone we brought away from the Lord. And men knowing what we have done, perceiving our folly, realizing our disloyalty to the truths we have professed, have no confidence in us, hold us in contempt, and rule such paltry religion as quite worthless. And this needs ~~changing~~.

We each may do something by being more diligent and resourceful in fixing in ourselves the truths we learn as they are given to us at the Quarry. The wise man is he who raises "neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron"; who allows no worldly thought, no natural principle, no selfish interest to mar or abuse truths revealed by the Lord.

When it is known ^{that} Christian people have an ideal in life, a Divine Ideal, and are ready to ~~to~~ dedicate themselves to building to that ideal, strictly and faithfully according to the Divine Directions, they will be respected; for they will attain to great strength and dignity of character, and their influence and service will be great and widely acknowledged; even as Solomon's domains and wisdom became proverbial.

It took Solomon some twenty years to complete his Temple. It takes a lifetime to build the soul as a house of the Lord; and too ~~too~~ much haste and impatience are undesirable. Steady search for the right and true way to use the stones that the Master distributes must be made; the stones must be used as they are made ready at the Quarry. Otherwise no progress can be made in erecting that which the Lord plans; ~~for~~ unless "the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it" (Psalm cxxvii.)