

SPRING-CLEANING in the house of God
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(JOHN 2:13-16)

The cleansing of the temple was undoubtedly the realization of an ambition of Jesus. His Father's house had become a den of thieves, and was one of the most disappointing sights in the city. The rows of tables behind which sat the evil moneychangers; their constant endeavours to swindle foreign visitors by giving an exceedingly low rate of exchange for their currency; the stable-like courtyards where the tethered offerings constituted another source of robbery; all added to the horror of the place. The Lord could not interfere until His hour had come," but immediately He had commenced His public ministry, He made His way to the temple to see again the people who marred the sanctity of God's house. Then stooping to lift some cords, he dexterously made a whip and with purposeful strides advanced on the money-changers. Surely this was an inauspicious beginning to His ministry; but nothing could have been more prophetic in character.

The Cleansing Which Suggested Conversion

"And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." His action clearly demonstrated His desire to restore sanctity to the house of God. It also leaves us with a very important question. What is the true temple of God? The Old Testament Scriptures reveal God's desire to live with His people. It would appear that Adam was created to meet a need in the divine heart. God desired fellowship, and it was not surprising when He came down in the cool of the evening to walk and talk with man. God's plans were hindered when sin defiled man's soul; but the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and Solomon's Temple, emphasized what had been already revealed. Human hearts were far more important than any building, and ultimately Paul was able to say, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God" (1 Cor. 3:16). The defilement of the temple was indicative of the tragedy of the soul. Sin had entered both places, and the action of the Saviour indicated that true conversion takes place only when He is able to cleanse away the filth of the soul, and to fill the house with the sense of His presence.

The Cleansing Which Suggested Restoration.

After the initial cleansing of the temple, calm reigned supreme within the sacred house. Sin had been expelled, and in its place a simple dignity suggested that the Lord had returned to His house. The weeks passed by, and then a wizened old moneychanger suddenly appeared at the door, and after a moment's hesitation, set up his table. The priests permitted his return to business, and as the news spread through the city, all his colleagues returned to their places. When the animals were brought back, "the last state of that house was worse than the first." The ancient picture seems to be very modern. Many

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people whose hearts were once made clean by the Saviour,
have permitted the return of the old sins. Their back-
slidden state can always be traced to their compromise,
when the evil moneychangers first reappeared on the
threshold of their inmost being. Once Satan gains a foot-
hold in the life of a Christian, it becomes increasingly
difficult to expel him. Compromise leads to defeat; and
there is no more disappointing sight than that of a
backslidden believer. Then Jesus came again to Jeru-
salem. "And Jesus went into the temple of God, and
cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and
overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats
of them that sold doves . . . And the blind and the lame
came to Him in the temple; and He healed them" (Matt.
21:12-14). And thus Christ cleansed the temple the
second time. God said, "Return unto me . . . and I will
heal thy backsliding." Nothing is too difficult for the
Saviour when the hearts of His people are true sanctuaries.
We may confidently expect healing when nothing of evil
has been permitted to linger within the temple of God.

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