

The Herald of Christ's Kingdom

VOL. IX. December 1, 1926 No. 23

HOW GOD SPEAKS TO THE NEW CREATION

*"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God?
Be not deceived." -- 1 Cor. 6:9, 10.*

IN THE Divine revelation God's children are richly blessed with wonderful knowledge -- knowledge which relates to His dealings with His trusting children in this Age, and of how all humanity are to be offered His favor and graciously dealt with in the dispensation. subsequent to that of the present.

While on looking around us and beholding so much of sorrow, suffering, and misery amongst our race and longing for the promised deliverance of humanity to come quickly, yet we also know that the definitely set times and seasons are all arranged by unerring wisdom. God is too wise to err and too good to be unkind. Our chief concern for the present as God's children, turns to what God is working out during the time of our sojourn on earth; that we may see our part therein and endeavor by His grace to fulfil our highest duty in a manner well pleasing in His sight.

Having traced in our study of the Divine revelation the operation of God's plan toward the world. as He instructs us it will be carried out during the Millennial Age, we are endeavoring day by day to understand more fully the operation of His will and grace toward ourselves as members of the New Creation. Why the Lord should make a difference between His dealings with the Church in this Gospel Age and the world during the Millennial Age can best be appreciated by those who accept the Scriptural declaration that during the present time God is making special selection of a special class, possessed of special characteristics and for a special service both now and hereafter. It is because of all these special features that the Church has a different experience from that which the world will have by and by.

"Think it not Strange Concerning the Fiery Trials Which Shall Try You"

To this class are given fiery trials, temptations, etc., more than justice, equity, would call for, It is required of this class in its call that they not only love righteousness and hate iniquity, but that they shall do so at the cost of the forfeiting not only of the pleasures of sin but also at the cost of many reasonable pleasures, comforts, joys, etc., which are not of themselves unrighteous. This class are called to be sacrificers, and are distinctly told that if they would come up to the requirements of their call, they must be prepared not only to resist sin and weaknesses of their own flesh and temptations from others, but additionally to suffer for their well-doing, to suffer for godliness, for righteousness -- to be evil-spoken of falsely for

the sake of the Lord's cause. They are even informed that unless they suffer chastisements, trials, persecutions, oppositions of some kind in the present time, they lack the evidences of adoption into God's family as New Creatures: "For what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? If ye be without chastisement then are ye bastards and not sons" -- not New Creatures. -- Heb. 12:8.

Now, the Lord speaks to the New Creation, saying, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived." At first we are inclined to stand amazed and say, God has, made no provision for our attaining actual perfection, all the provisions for such restitution belonging to the next age! How then can He require righteousness of us, who still have the blemished bodies, imperfect judgments, etc., resulting from the fall? After telling us that there is none righteous, no, not one, how shall we understand the declaration that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God -- not be joint-heirs with Christ in the Kingdom -- not inherit the glorious things which we have hoped for by the Lord's grace? The answer is that God has made special provision for the Church of this Gospel Age. Instead of making us perfect in the flesh, and then requiring absolute perfection in word, deed, and thought, as will be required of the world at the close of the next Age, the Lord deals with us in an **imputed** manner. To those who exercise the requisite faith He imputes righteousness, which offsets the unrighteousness or natural blemishes of their flesh. But only to those who exercise the faith is there such an imputation of Christ's righteousness; those who cannot exercise the faith are still in their sins, aliens from God until the coming of the new dispensation, when the blotting out of sins will begin in an actual way. But to those who do believe and to whom the righteousness of Christ is imputed because of faith, there is still a testing of the heart.

See That Ye Receive not the Grace of God in Vain

It would be useless for the Lord to offer the prize of joint-heirship in the Kingdom to any one perfect in the flesh when there are none such -- our Lord Jesus being the only one, and He because He was not of the Adamic stock. God's provision, therefore, is that the justified by faith shall be counted perfect, counted righteous so long as their hearts, their wills, their best endeavors, are for righteousness. How simple and yet how sublime this arrangement, how it adapts itself to all the circumstances and conditions of the Lord's people! It is respecting this justification by faith, this "righteousness of God by faith," that the Apostle says, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" -- being justified freely from all things. -- Rom. 5:1.

There is danger, however, here: some are disposed to take advantage of God's grace and kindness and mercy, and while willingly, knowingly indulging in sin, to hope for justification in sin instead of from sin. The Apostle is bringing this matter to our attention, and implies that there is great need of care. He says, "Be not deceived." God knoweth the heart; we might deceive ourselves but we cannot deceive the Lord. It behooves us, therefore, to be on our guard respecting righteousness, justice, to see that

the sentiments of our hearts are continually in opposition to unrighteousness to sin, all inequity. The Apostle proceeds to point out that faith in Christ, and the acceptance of the Divine law as our regulation principle in life, mean more than faith in the Lord Jesus. They mean our very best endeavors to speak and act and think in accord with the Divine will -- in accord with righteousness.

The "Mark" Must be Attained, Else the Prize Will Not be Ours

There is no standstill for the New Creature. He must go on and reach a certain standard of perfection else he cannot be counted in as one of the Kingdom class. The Apostle does indeed speak of the New Creatures as at first being babes in Christ, but the Kingdom will not be made up of babes in Christ but of overcomers, and the overcoming is not, as we know, a matter of age or physical stature, but a matter of spiritual development, of growth in grace and knowledge and love. We are to grow in love, and love is the principal thing, but before we can make much development in the cultivation of love, we must learn to be just, right, righteous. It is a proper presentation of the matter that is given in the proverb, that a man should be just before he is generous.

It behooves the Lord's people, therefore, the New Creation, that they study this subject of justice continually, and daily put into practise the lessons inculcated in the Divine Word. All of the saints must be the foes of sin. Wherever sin is they must wage a warfare against it, and see to it that in their hearts at least they are free from sin, that in their hearts they do not countenance sin but oppose it, that sin finds no harboring place or sympathizing weakness in their hearts. This will make them radical as respects the words of their mouths, the conduct of life, and the meditations of their hearts, that all of these shall be in absolute accord with the Divine Word and its spirit of righteousness, holiness, truth, etc. Such as get this proper foundation of character before they begin to build love will find that they are making progress properly. All love that is founded upon injustice or wrong ideas of righteousness is delusive, is not the love which the Lord will require as the test of discipleship.

"Be Not Deceived"

The Apostle's words in our text, "Be not deceived," imply just what we see all about us -- that many profess to be the Lord's people, profess to love Him, profess the golden rule as their guide in life, and yet are blind to justice (righteousness) in many of the affairs of life. They exercise too much mercy in dealing with their own shortcomings and too little when examining the faults and weaknesses of others.

The Apostle proceeds to specify some of the unrighteous, unjust things to which the Lord's people should find themselves opposed. As these are examined individually, they are all found to contain a weakness in favor of self at the expense of others; they all imply an injustice to others for the pleasure or advantage of self. Some of these unrighteous things specified are very gross, and one might suppose would be recognized as unrighteous even by worldly people; yet the Apostle intimates that some who profess

to be the Lord's people have such lax ideas of justice that they do not perceive how abominable these unrighteous matters are--fornication, adultery, theft, drunkenness, etc. Those who find themselves in any degree of sympathy with these evil qualities, these unrighteous acts, are deceived if they think themselves to be the Lord's people. "God is not mocked: he that doeth righteousness is righteous." -- Gal. 6:7.

In other words, it is in vain that we profess to be the Lord's people, profess to be the servants of righteousness and truth, and love these principles, if our conduct clearly demonstrates, that we love unrighteousness. For such persons to profess to be the Lord's people is to mock God by assuming that He cannot read the heart, and that what may be hidden to some extent from earthly beings is equally hidden from the Almighty with whom we have to do. He that doeth righteousness is not necessarily he only who is perfect, but rather he that doeth righteousness to the extent of his best ability and who is trusting in the Redeemer's merit to compensate unintentional shortcomings -- he is righteous in God's sight -- he is approved.

Varying Manifestations of Selfishness, Sin

The Apostle proceeds to specify other unrighteous conduct, not so gross as the sins already enumerated but nevertheless wholly inconsistent with membership in the Kingdom class. These are specified as covetousness, revilings, extortions, etc. Those who have made any advancement in the Christian way, we may surely trust, are far from having sympathy with the gross evils; and they may therefore have special need to examine themselves carefully in regard to these other more subtle evil qualities, deleterious to their interests as prospective heirs with Christ in the Kingdom. What is covetousness but selfishness -- the desire to have, possess, enjoy something at the expense of another? What is idolatry but selfishness, the idolizing of money or fame or influence or child or self or some other creature, exalted to and receiving the honor due to the Almighty?

What is reviling but an exhibition of selfishness again, which takes this method of doing injury to the feelings or to the reputation of another? Evil speaking is classed by the Apostle in another place as one of the works of the flesh and of the devil. It is wholly out of harmony with justice and the Golden Rule --for who would like to be reviled or evilly spoken of? -- it is therefore an injustice, unrighteousness, and cannot be the disposition of those who are in any degree begotten of the Spirit and growing in grace. What is extortion but selfishness, injustice, unrighteous dealings with others? -- accepting from them, either because of ignorance or stress of circumstances, such money or valuables as are not fully, justly, righteously due.

Sowing and Reaping -- To the Flesh or to the Spirit

The Apostle in another epistle repeats these words, "Be not deceived;" -- and adds, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap; for he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. 6:7, 8.) He is not addressing the world; it is the New Creation that is either sowing to the flesh or sowing to the Spirit, and that will either reap of the flesh or reap of the Spirit. We sow to the flesh every time we allow the fleshly, selfish, unjust, unrighteous desires of the flesh to have sway in our hearts and lives, and each sowing makes easier the additional sowing and makes more sure the end of that way which is death -- Second Death. On the contrary each sowing to the Spirit, each resistance of the desires of the flesh toward selfishness, etc., and each exercise of the new mind, of the new will, in spiritual directions toward the things that are pure, the things that are noble, the things that are good, the things that are true, is a sowing to the Spirit, which will bring forth additional fruits of the Spirit, graces of the Spirit, and which, persevered in, will ultimately bring us in accord with the Lord's gracious promises and arrangements -- everlasting life and the Kingdom.

The Apostle John has a word to say also about the danger of being deceived after we have become New Creatures in Christ. His words are, "Let no man deceive you; he, that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3:7, 8.) The Apostle is not speaking here of some one whose heart is loyal to the Lord and who is momentarily overtaken in a fault, for he declares respecting such that there is forgiveness for them because of the weakness or the ignorance which permitted them to be ensnared. He is, however, speaking most distinctly of a willingness of the heart to sin, to do unrighteousness. He indicates a great truth when he suggests that there are but two sides to the question -- that Satan is on the side of sin, and that all who love and with willingness practise sin are on his side. On the other side of the question are the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself as the Redeemer of mankind, that He might destroy Satan and all who sympathize with Satan in their opposition to God and His righteous arrangements.

"Let Us Examine Ourselves"

The Apostle continues, "Whosoever is born [begotten] of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin because he is born [begotten] of God." The thought is that those begotten of the good seed of Truth, begotten of the Holy Spirit, cannot, so long as that seed of Truth and the Spirit of the Lord is alive in them, wilfully, deliberately turn to sin to practise it. If such should turn to sin wilfully and deliberately, it would be conclusive evidence that the seed, the Holy Spirit with which they had been begotten as children of God, had perished.

The Apostle adds, "In this the children of God are manifest from the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God -- neither he who loveth not his brother." Here again the question is sharply drawn as between the children of God and the children of the devil. All who are on the side of righteousness are on God's side. These will love justice and oppose selfishness, and sin which is related to selfishness, in every sense and in every degree compatible with their opportunities and commission. But this is not enough; they must do more than love to do what is right; they must have such a love for the truth as would lead them to sacrifice their rights on behalf of the Lord or any of His "brethren." If we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, is good, we have tasted also that He is just, and in that sense of the word, severe. Let us then, while rejoicing in Divine favor, see to it that we walk circumspectly, and that our walk in life is not after the flesh, which leads more or less directly to death, but after the Spirit, after righteousness, after Truth, all of which lead, under the Lord's blessing and guidance, to everlasting life and the Kingdom honors and glories with our dear Redeemer.

A SWEET SAVOR OF CHRIST

"For we are unto God a sweet .savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life until life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the Word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ." -- 2 Cor. 2:15-17.

THE ministry in Divine things which all the consecrated, as ambassadors for Christ, have received, is one of tremendous import. It greatly influences the final destiny of those to whom we preach this Gospel of the Kingdom, the tendency being either to life or to death. The Apostle's language here is another of the solemn warnings of the inspired Word against the danger of the Second Death, and should awaken to a sense of their danger any who have been deluded into the idea that there is no such possibility, and are permitting the great Adversary thus to deceive them.. There is an equal responsibility on the part both of those who undertake to preach the Gospel and of those who hear it. The truth is God's truth, .and the responsibility of speaking as well as of hearing it is very great.

The Apostle's words show that many in his day, as in ours, failed to realize this responsibility, and, to answer their own selfish ends, corrupted the Word of God. To wilfully or recklessly corrupt the Word of God -- to vitiate its pure and holy doctrines; to add to it the vain philosophies of ambitious men and seek to support their theories by perverting its truths; to underrate its exceeding great and precious promises and mystify the conditions upon which they may be realized; or to minimize or make void the .solemn warnings of the Word of God -- is indeed dangerous business, in which the faithful saints will never engage, bait in which those who fall away from the faith are usually most active-deceiving and being deceived.

To be faithful ambassadors for Christ -- faithful representatives of the Truth and faithful proclaimers of it requires great humility and simplicity of heart. It necessitates the complete ignoring of all worldly ambitions and aims and the cultivation of a brave spirit of endurance which will not shrink from any reproach which fidelity to the Truth may bring. And such service, the Apostle here shows, is acceptable to God as sweet incense, no matter what may be the effect upon those to whom we minister, whether they accept or reject the message of Divine grace. What God is looking for in us is loyalty to Him and devotion to His cause; and this condition of heart He appreciates, regardless of our success or failure to secure large results. What a comfort it is amidst all discouragements to know that under all circumstances the spirit of Christ in us is as sweet incense to God. And the reward of His constant approval is richer than all the unwholesome sweets of ambition gained by corrupting the Word of God.

To the hearer of this Gospel, the Message must prove either a savor of life unto (or tending to) life, or a savor of death unto (or tending to) death. His responsibility is great: there is no neutral ground; he either receives it or rejects it. But observe that the statement is not that the rejection of any item of truth inevitably doom's the rejector to death, and vice versa, but that the tendency of such a course is to death, and of the opposite course to life, unless interrupted -- changed.

Thus, for instance, the Lord, in reproving the Scribes and Pharisees, who rejected the Gospel and yet claimed to be the children of God and leaders and examples of godliness to others, significantly inquired, "How can ye escape the condemnation of Gehenna?" -- the everlasting destruction, the Second Death. (Matt. 23:33.) In rejecting the Truth so plainly brought to their attention, and in pursuing the hypocritical course of claiming to be faithful and devoted children of God, they were forming and establishing such characters that repentance would, ere long, be impossible to them. Few, perhaps, clearly realize how serious a thing it is to be making character, and that every act and every thought leaves its impress upon the soul. Every right thought and act tends to establish the character in righteousness, while every wrong thought and act, and every self-deception tends to confirm and establish an unrighteous character. And when a wrong course is adopted and persistently followed -- when conscience is stifled, and when reason and Scripture are perverted to selfish ends, until the heart is deceived and the judgment is overcome -- who can predict the repentance of such?

Such construct characters or wills so out of harmony with God and righteousness as to be fit only for destruction. (Heb. 6:4-6.) How can such "escape the condemnation of Gehenna"? for God will not permit any one to live whose will is confirmed in unrighteousness. How responsible then is the position of those who are building character in themselves and in others! Remember that our characters are manifested by our habits of life; and each act, even the smallest, tends to form some new habit, or to confirm one already established. How important, then, that our thoughts and actions should not be aimless, but with a purpose (1 Cor. 10:31); and, above all, that our lives should be "transformed [reformed] by the

renewing of our minds"; that putting aside the evil, and all influences which tend toward evil, we should receive of the Lord, through His Word, the "spirit of a sound mind," the "mind of Christ." In this view of the case, it is indeed a solemn thing to live, a solemn thing to think, and to act; and it behooves us to guard well our words, our thoughts and our actions, and ever to bear in mind our responsibility to God, both for ourselves and for others as ambassadors for Christ.

"And who is sufficient for these things?" Surely none of us in our own strength. We need first of all to give ourselves to the Lord without reserve, and then daily to drink in more and more of His spirit by communion with Him through His Word and in prayer; and constantly to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation.

Let all the consecrated endeavor more and more to realize their responsibility, both in the matter of their own character-building and also in that of building up others in the most holy faith and in the character which is the legitimate result of that faith. The issues of eternal life and eternal death are before us, and before those to whom we present this Gospel; and therefore it behooves us carefully and prayerfully to present the pure Truth of God in all sincerity and in the spirit of Christ before God, ever bearing in mind that it is a savor either of life unto life or of death unto death.

"Grant skill each sacred theme to trace,
With loving voice and glowing tongue,
As when upon Thy words of grace
The wondering crowds enraptured hung.

"Give strength, blest Savior, in Thy might;
Illuminate our hearts, and we,
Transformed into Throe image bright,
Shall teach and love and live, like Thee."

A SACRIFICE, A PRIEST, AND A PLACE OF WORSHIP

"It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figures of the trace; but into heaven itself; now to appear in the presence of God for us" -- Heb. 9:23, 24.

IN THE perfect state with ability on the part of mankind to render perfect obedience, service and worship, it is not to be supposed that God would require anything in the nature of an oblation or sacrifice from any member of the race. Amongst the heavenly host we hear nothing of such proceedings; no mention whatever of the holy angels coming to God and offering worship on the basis of any kind of sacrifice. The logic of the matter would be that all creatures in their perfect state have in themselves and in the perfect service and obedience they render that which meets the

requirements of the Divine law, and are therefore entirely satisfactory to God.

It is not until we enter upon the story of the fall and the entrance of sin that there is revealed at the same time the call for sacrifice in connection with all approach to the great Jehovah. As the Bible deals mostly with man's condition and history under the condition of the condemned, sinful state, it is therefore a continual record of his separation, his need and his dependence upon some redemptive price, sacrifice in some form if he would have contact with his Maker.

Why Sacrifice is Necessary

The doctrine of Atonement lies at the foundation of the entire Christian system, and the whole redemptive purpose rests upon this great rock truth. It is because of the unchangeableness and immutability of God's justice that the processes of Atonement are made necessary. God does not change; neither in respect to His law, nor in any of His attributes. Every disobedience to the Divine law means an offense of justice; and in the case of original sin the penalty inflicted by justice was death -- that the sinner should cease to live. The plan of Atonement purposes to undo the effects and results of original sin through the provision of a Ransom sacrifice, which would be a corresponding price or equivalent to the life of the first sinner, and thus meet the demands of justice in permitting the culprit, man, to go free from the first sentence imposed. It is this plan of Atonement for man's return to favor with his Creator, to that state of complete justification before Him, where he can render obedience, service and worship that are acceptable to Him, that particularly characterizes the Christian religion.

Sacrifices That Never Took Away Sin

As is well known by students of the Bible, this redemptive purpose was worked out in miniature and type long in advance of the great sacrifice of "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Back in the days of God's dealings with His ancient people, He repeatedly impressed the lesson of His holiness and, man's sinfulness; and the need for sacrifice on the part of those who would offer acceptable worship. As another has remarked: "Moses said unto Aaron on the solemn occasion of the sin of Nadab and Abihu, 'This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me, and before all the people I will be glorified.' The Lord alone could give directions as to how the people were to draw nigh unto Him; this is the great subject of the Book of Leviticus. It was on the ground of offered and accepted sacrifice that the children of Israel were constituted the worshiping people of God. It is on the same ground, namely offered and accepted sacrifice, that believers in Jesus are constituted the worshiping people of God now. (Lev. 16; Heb. 9:10.) They have taken Israel's place, but after a much higher order, whether we look at the sacrifice, the priest or the place of worship. The contrast between them is great; and strongly marked in Scripture, especially in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Jewish sacrifices never reached the conscience 'of the

offerer, and the Jewish priest never could pronounce him 'clean every whit.' The gifts and sacrifices which were offered under the Law, as the Apostle tells us, 'could not make him that did the service, perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.' The conscience, observe, always being the reflection of the sacrifice, it could not be perfect, seeing the sacrifice was not perfect; 'for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.' Hence Jewish worship was connected with inefficient sacrifices, a burdensome ritual, and an unpurged conscience, which gendered in the worshiper a spirit of bondage and fear."

Most obvious it is that the way of, life, the way back into God's presence and to the privileges of the true worship were not really opened up till the real sacrifice for sin came. Jesus Himself made reference to this when He said, "The hour cometh and now is when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." These remarks of the Master imply much more than appears on the surface. He was evidently calling attention to the fact that with His advent and with the offering of the great sacrifice, the way back to God and the privileges of true worship, would be opened up.

No More Conscience of Sin

Through the illumination of the Spirit since the days of Pentecost, we are permitted to see the great contrast between the typical services, worship and sacrifices of old and "the once offered and accepted sacrifice of Christ," and the privileges of service and worship that it brings. He "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Everything that Justice could call for was done by Him; "having by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

"When the worshiper comes before God on the ground of this sacrifice, he finds that he has nothing to do save, ás a priest, to show forth the praises of Him 'who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.' Even Christ has nothing more to do as regards our justification and acceptance, 'for by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.' The Jew, by his sacrifice, was merely ceremonially clean, and that only for a moment, as it were; but the Christian, through the **sacrifice** of Christ, is **really** so, and that forever. Oh, that sweet word, 'Forever'! By the work of Christ for us, our sins were all put away ; and now, by faith in God's Word, we know they are all forgiven and forgotten. Hence, we can draw near to God, and stand in His holy presence, in the happy assurance that there is neither sin nor stain upon us. Our Great High Priest has pronounced us 'clean every whit.' (John 13.) Believing this, the sense of guilt is taken away -- we have 'no more conscience of sins.'

"This deeply precious truth, observe, does not mean that there is no more consciousness of sins. Far from it. Or that we may not get a bad conscience through failure; or that we need not be exercised 'to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man.' Not at all. It simply means that Christ, by the one, perfect, finished sacrifice of Himself, has forever put away all our sins -- root and branch; [in the sense

that all the claims of Justice have been fully met so far as Adamic 'sin is concerned, and "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."] And having been led to know and believe this, how can there be sins on the conscience? Christ has put them all away. The precious blood of our onceoffered and accepted sacrifice has cleansed us from every spot and stain of sin. There may be the deepest sense of indwelling sin, [in the sense of weakness and imperfection] and of many sins and shortcomings in our everyday life, and the painful confession of them all to God; still there is the full assurance that Christ died for our sins, put them all away, and that [if they are confessed and renounced] not one of them can ever be laid to our charge. This is indeed a most wonderful truth; but it is the great, the needful truth for the worshiper. How could we stand in God's presence, where all is perfection, if we were not as clean as He would have us to be? We must be clean enough for the eye of Infinite Holiness 'For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an. heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.'" -- 1 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 9:13, 14.

In the Presence of God for Us

In behalf of the true worshipers, Christ's work is thus seen to be comprehensive and extensive, "in the presence of God for us," He ministers on our behalf. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us," that all our obedience, our service and worship may be acceptable to God. It is to this all pre-service that the Apostle alludes when he says, "We have such an High Priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty of the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man:" -- Heb: 8:1, 2.

Further, it is on the basis of this priestly service in the presence of God that the Apostle John encouraged the brethren, saying, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2:1.) Far be it from the Apostle to be giving license to any one to, sin, as if one could feel free whenever it was convenient to the old nature, to indulge in sin with the thought of being immediately forgiven by applying to the High Priest. The language rather is intended to be of consolation to all the followers of Christ struggling in their daily life to measure up to those high ideals represented in the teaching and example of their Divine Lord. There would surely be times when through weakness, infirmity and temptation there would come the consciousness of sin and the need of cleansing, and of being made right with the Lord. Herein they would realize the office of the High Priest as Advocate to cleanse away all sin and to preserve the standing of the consecrated believer holy and perfect before the Lord. "As our great High Priest, He represents us in the sanctuary above. And, oh, what a Representative! God's beloved Son, whose name is above every name! 'For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God **for us.**' (Heb. 9:24.) Oh, what

dignity! what nearness to God is ours ! Oh, that our hearts appreciated it more! When Aaron appeared before the Lord in his garments of glory and beauty, he represented' the children of Israel. Their names were engraven in precious stones in the beautiful breastplate. Blessed type of our real and everlasting place in the heart of Christ, who appears, not **annually**, like Aaron of old, but **continually** in the presence of God **for us**. The name of each believer is kept continually before the eye of God, in all the glory and beauty of Christ, His well beloved Son. We stand in His righteousness, we possess His life, enjoy His peace, are filled with His joy, and radiate His glory. Although without right, title or privilege in ourselves, we have all in Him. He is there for us and as us. His name be forever praised.

'He stands in heaven their Great High Priest,
And bears their names upon His breast.'

"By Him Let Us Offer"

"As our Great High Priest, He presents to God the gifts and sacrifices of His worshiping people. Under the law, the worshiper brought his offering to the priest, and by him it was presented to the Lord, on His own altar. Everything was arranged by the priest, according to the Word of the Lord. How perfectly all this is done for the worshiper now by his High Priest in heaven! Our prayers, praises and thanksgiving, all pass through His hands before they reach the throne of God. What a wonderful mercy this is, when we of our confused and mixed services! So much that is of the flesh mingles with that which is of the Spirit. But the blessed Lord knows how to divide and separate between them. That which is of the flesh must be rejected, and consumed as wood, hay, and stubble, while that which is of the Spirit is precious, preserved, and presented to God in the value and sweet savor of His own perfect sacrifice. 'By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks unto His name.' (Heb. 8:15.) The kindness of the Philippians to Paul was 'an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.' Hence the importance of the exhortation, 'Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.'" -- Col. 3:17.

In Heavenly Places in Christ Jesus

In consideration of the fact that it is within the veil, of the Most Holy, that our "Forerunner is for us entered," it must be that the Christian's place of worship is really there; not that the experience of the consecrated in their present state, the begotten state, is represented by the Most Holy, but that by faith they are represented as having a standard with Christ in heaven, as the Apostle says that we have been quickened together with Christ "and hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2 ;5, 6.) It is then outside the camp that the Christian is in his place as a witness, and within the veil in his place as a worshiper. "In both positions Christ is surely with him. 'Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His approach.' 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.' (Heb. 13; 10:19.)

To know these two positions in communion with Christ Himself, through the teaching of the Spirit, is unspeakable blessedness. The Church has no divinely consecrated place of worship on earth. Our place is in heaven, in virtue of the sacrifice and of the priestly ministry of Christ there for us. Whatever may be the character of the building in which Christians are gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus, their true and only sphere of worship is the heavenly sanctuary. Through faith in God's Word, and by the power of His Holy Spirit, they worship Him in 'the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man.'"

All Stand on Common Ground

Let this truth be clearly appreciated concerning the marvelous and sacred privilege of all of these who thus become related to Christ and are worshipers together with Him before God. All are equally near to their Master, and all have equal liberty, all are equally acceptable, through the presence and intervention of the Great High Priest of His people. "The same precious blood that cleansed us from all sin, has brought us near to God as children, and as worshiping priests. And if we really know the wonderful efficacy and power of that blood in the heavenly places, we shall be at home and happy there in all the liberty and dignity of sonship, and in all the official nearness and standing of once-purged worshipers, in the most holy place."

No truth is more clearly established in the New Testament than that of the oneness and common standing of all the consecrated. There was no intimation of grades, or classes in the Church when it was instituted by our Lord and the Apostles. "There is no mention in the New Testament of any peculiar class or order of Christians who hold the office of priests, as distinct from other Christians. Christ is the Great High Priest over the house of God, and all His people are, in virtue of their connection with Him, priests, and privileged to enter, as once-purged worshipers, into the holiest of all. Even the Apostles never took the place of priests, as distinct from or superior to the humblest child of God. They might know their privileges better than many, and enjoy them more. Their gifts and callings as to the ministry of the Word were distinct and special, but as worshipers, they stood on the same ground as all others, and, together with them, worshiped God through Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest of all His people."

Kings and Priests Unto God

The favor of entering into relationship with God as one of the true worshipers of the priestly class carries with it most exalted privileges. Amongst these is that of final admission into the Royal Priesthood itself and of entering with Christ into that blessed ministry and mission in behalf of all humanity when in due time the offerings of this Gospel Age are complete and the Kingdom ushered in. Even at the present time the Apostle addresses all these who are in prospect to attain this high station in the future, saying, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices, acceptable to God by

Jesus Christ." And the beloved John expresses the viewpoint of all of these triumphant ones in the words "unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father."

Distinguished from all other of our race will be this royal company who through the one all-prevailing sacrifice of God's well beloved Son, have in this dispensation entered, into those blessed privileges as the true spiritual worshipers, and have come to know God. Because of this acquaintance with Him and the development of character which they will have acquired under His polishing, discipline and guidance they shall be entrusted with the important and weighty matters of the world to come. "Kings and priests unto God": Their mission will be that of establishing a righteous and holy rulership over mankind with a view to their uplift and restoration to Divine favor. And it will be through the same great sacrifice of the Son of God that all the willing and obedient of mankind shall be returned to their Father's home, and to the privileges -of fellowship with Him as the true worshipers, and will need "go no more out" from His presence forever.

IF THE LIGHT BECOME DARKNESS

"If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.

*If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness,
how great is that darkness." -- Matt. 6:22, 23.*

IN THE Scriptures the "outer darkness," the darkness of the world, is frequently mentioned in contrast with the inner light, the light of truth, as divinely revealed. Thus our Lord said, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear." And the Apostle reminds us that we were translated out of darkness into God's marvelous light. Humanity in general is represented as lying in darkness, as being unable to see the light of Truth. Thus again we are told that the light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not. Figuratively speaking the world is asleep, and hence see not the light, though soiree are very much awake to, worldly aims and worldly ambitions and schemes, but thoroughly blind to the Divine purposes.

To a special class who have certain qualities of mind, God is pleased to reveal the light, and to guide them by that light in the right pathway. Such as see and improve the opportunity and walk in the way are called "the children of the light," while others who go contrary are called the "children of darkness." Addressing some of these children of the light, our Lord said, To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but to outsiders all of these things are spoken in parables and dark sayings, that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. -- Luke 8:10.

.While it is true that this power to understand is "given," yet it is not given indiscriminately; it is given only to those of certain character. To these alone the light is profitable; to others it would be more or less injurious at the present time. We may well thank God, as Jesus did, that for the time being the Divine purposes are hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed only to the "babes." For others to have the light would mean injury to themselves, if not a disordering of the Divine purposes and arrangements. As, for instance, St. Peter tells us that those who crucified the Lord did so in ignorance, in blindness, in darkness, "for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory"; even though their hearts might have been no better, they could have regulated their conduct by the greater knowledge and thus the Divine purpose, that Christ should be crucified by them, the just for the unjust, would have been defeated.

Lessons Concerning Spiritual Insight

In Matthew 6:22, 23, our Lord gives us a suggestion respecting the condition of heart and what it has to do with our ability to see or not to see Divine truths. He says, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." And then He adds, "If the light that is in thee be [become] darkness, how great is that darkness!" Evidently our Lord is using the natural eye and the natural body as an illustration. to draw our attention to , the higher eyes of understanding and their power to bless and to guide and to control the interests of the body.

A single eye would seem to signify singleness of purpose, or of heart intention toward God, because in the succeeding verse our Lord calls attention to the fact that there are but the two masters -- good and evil, righteousness and sin, God and Satan. Those who are under the power of Satan completely are blinded; as St. Paul tells us, The god of this world hath blinded the minds of all those who believe not, lest the glorious light of Divine goodness should shine into their hearts. (2 Cor. 4:4.) The only ones who are not blinded are those who are the servants of God, and the degree of their clearness of vision depends upon the singleness of their eye, their singleness of heart, their singleness of purpose, their loyalty to the one Master, to the principles of His government, etc.

All who have really seen the light of spiritual truth have therefore reason to be specially congratulated on having passed from darkness to light, on having been delivered from the kingdom of darkness into the 'Kingdom of God's dear Son, from the dominion of Satan as his servants to be disciples of Christ and servants of God. St. Peter speaks of our translation out of the darkness into His marvelous light. St. Paul says, We are not of the night, nor of the darkness. St. John says, In Him is no darkness at all. Again, Darkness -is past, and the true light now shineth, but he that hateth his brother is in darkness.

The Single Eye of Love

The point to be carefully observed is, that as our natural bodies are edified by good eyesight, so as New Creatures we have clearness of spiritual vision in proportion as we have loyalty to the Lord and the enlightening influence of His spirit of holiness, the spirit of love.

The question arises, Is it possible for any of us, after passing from darkness into the Lord's marvelous light, to again get into the dark, to go out of the light? The Scriptures answer that it is possible. They tell us that in certain instances God will force people out of the light into the "outer darkness" common to the world in general; that disloyalty to the Lord and to the principles of His teaching tends in this direction.

We might suppose that those who should thus be cast into "outer darkness," either suddenly or gradually, would be greatly distressed, but, on the contrary, we have every reason to believe that the world in "outer darkness" is not greatly distressed by its darkness, but rather, as our Lord suggests, "loves darkness rather than light"; because it is in an evil condition; because it has not the Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of love. The inference, therefore, is plain that those who go out of the light into darkness will feel as contented as those who have never come into the light of spiritual truth -- who even are boastful in respect to the darkness and very unkind in their criticisms of the light -- hating the light.

How Great is That Darkness

In the Scripture quoted above, under the figure of a single eye, the Lord pictures the singleness of purpose and of heart which must characterize all who become His disciples indeed, or children of light. He even intimates that those who lose this singleness of heart, singleness of eye, singleness of purpose, and then go into darkness, are in some respects in a grosser darkness than are others who have never seen the light. He says, "If the light that is in thee become darkness, how great is that darkness!" Our observation fully corroborates this. Those who have once been in the light of the Lord's countenance, and in the light of the Divine Word, and who lose this, seem to be in a condition much more to be regretted than that of the world in general who have never had their eyes of understanding opened. The difference is found in the fact that the unbelieving world never having known the Lord and never having had a keen appreciation of the high ideals of truth and righteousness--the influence of spiritual light--are not as responsible and cannot be held as culpable. Hence the contrast is not so great as in the case of one who has once renounced the hidden things of darkness, and has entered into the light of God, and then through unfaithfulness, has lost the appreciation of the light and returned to the darkness of unbelief and sin. "How great is that darkness," in the unbelief sense of how great is the contrast between the holy condition of light once enjoyed and the state of outer darkness such as one goes into in wilfully returning to the things of unbelief and sin.

Looking Unto and Copying Jesus

When true conversion to the Lord takes place, when the eyes of understanding become opened, new standards appear. The Master's word is heard, saying, "Be ye like unto your Father which is in heaven," and "Be ye followers of Me," and "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me." Some see cross-eyed, endeavoring to serve two masters, and to walk according to two standards -- to be pleasing to the Lord, and also to walk according to the earthly standards as formerly. But this is found to be a very unsatisfactory course; it has neither Divine approval nor the approval of worldly friends. Those of single eye, of single purpose, say within themselves to the contrary,

"To my Lord I must be true
Who bought me with His blood."

These soon learn that the world is in darkness, and that to walk with the world, and according to worldly standards, would mean to fail to progress from grace to grace, from knowledge to knowledge, and from glory to glory, under the leadings of the Master, who instructed us to walk in His steps. Hence these of the single eye cut loose entirely from the worldly standards which formerly were their guides; and they look to the Lord, and, so looking, have the very best of guidance, the very highest standard imaginable. Looking unto Him, copying Jesus, they come more and more to appreciate the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of Divine love and justice, and seek more and more to be transformed in all their words and thoughts and doings into harmony with the glorious Pattern which their single eye entitles and enables them to clearly see. How blessed is their condition! Instructed by the example of the Lord and by His Word of Grace and Truth they are rising daily to newness of life in the character-likeness of their Redeemer, and becoming fit for the Heavenly Kingdom and for the glorious resurrection change.

The Lord Will Judge His People

The Divine purpose is not only to call out the single-hearted, the single-eyed, and to instruct and guide them, but also to test and to prove them. Thus we read, The Lord your God doth prove you to know whether ye do love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deut. 10:12.) The test of obedience is the Divine law -- supreme love for God and absolute justice to our neighbor to love him as ourself. Additionally, the consecrated have the New Commandment to love one another as the Redeemer loved them -- to the extent of sacrificing, laying down anything and everything on behalf of each other, for each other's welfare and assistance: If this test be faithfully endured, it means that the individual has not only reached the mark of perfect love, but has stood tests thereat and has demonstrated, his worthiness of eternal life under Divine terms and conditions. But if these tests be not endured, it means the rejection of the individual from the light, and that he will go from the light, so that the things which were once light to him will appear dark, and the things of darkness will appear right, just, proper.

It is not for us to complain, therefore, of these trials and testings which the Lord declares to be necessary; it is not for us to insist that those whom we love must be maintained in the light and ultimately be accepted to the Kingdom. It is rather for us to show our obedience to the Lord, to demonstrate our love for Him with all our heart and mind and soul and strength by acquiescing in the Divine arrangements and judgments. The Lord is selecting the members of the Bride class. He has given us the privilege of being co-laborers with Him in this work, but merely along the lines of His instruction. With Him is the decision. If they do not maintain the single eye, the singleness of heart, the singleness of purpose, loyalty to God, to the principles of righteousness, justice, and love, they cannot continue to be His disciples; they cannot continue in the light; they must go into "outer darkness."

If any fail to go on in the development of the spirit of love, the spirit of holiness, the Spirit of God, they will surely retrograde; and the light that is in them will become darkness-great darkness. Instead of the spirit of love exemplified by our Lord, who laid down His life for us, a spirit of hatred, envy, and malice frequently comes in; a spirit of murder which, although hesitating to do outward violence and come under the ban of the law, will not hesitate to assassinate character and to say all manner of evil against those toward whom they become embittered. By such fruits ye shall know them. Such thorns do not grow on the grapevine, nor on the fig tree.

The philosophy would appear to be that when they lose the Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of justice and of love, of kindness, and mercy, and truth, they lose the Lord's supervision, direction, and control; they lose the holy influences of the light of truth. And having previously discarded the rules and influences which control the world in general they seem without any guidance or restraint in respect to their course of life. And some who have fallen into this very unhappy state not only act contrary to the Divine standards, but violate the principles of justice and decency, in word and conduct, that assist and guide the world in general.

Walk as Children of the Light

What holy incentive there is for all who have been once enlightened, and been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, who have tasted of the good Word of God, and the powers of the Age to come, to be alert and zealous to maintain the standing to which they have already attained! All such are admonished to be conformed to the character-likeness of God's dear Son; that they be perfected in love, that they put off all of these: anger, malice, hatred, envy, strife; for if any of these be retained, they will tend to blindness and "outer darkness." More than this all such are urged to put on all of these graces of the Lord's Spirit: Meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, love. These will strengthen and develop the character-likeness of the Redeemer, which God has predestinated must be attained by every one who will be accepted as a member of the Bride of Christ. And then the Apostle suggests, If we do these things we shall never fail, but an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

THE SECOND PRESENCE OF OUR LORD

CHRONOLOGICAL AND PROPHETIC SIGNS (Continued)

PART V.

"Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shalt not pass away. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." -- Luke 21:33, 36.

AS AMONG the signs of the end of the Age and of His Second Presence the Savior made reference to a special work that would then be instituted within the ranks of His professing people: "And He shall send His angels with a great trumpet and He shall gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Sinaitic MS. omits "sound" -- Matt. 24:31.) This language regarding the gathering of the Elect harmonizes well with another description that Jesus gave respecting the end of the Age, which He said would be a harvest time. It is recalled that our Lord at His First Advent fulfilled an important part in a harvest work that was then in operation. It was the consummation of the Jewish Age and it was therefore a time when the summing up or the gathering of the ripe fruitage of the Age took place; all the true Israelites indeed responding to the message were gathered into the Gospel fold, forming the nucleus of the Church of the Firstborn.

The Harvest Sign

The truth concerning the present Age and the manner in which it is to end is very pointedly set forth in the parable given by Jesus in which He declared that the Kingdom of Heaven (His professing Church) was like unto a field sown with wheat and tares, and He said, "Let both grow together until the harvest." When the harvest time would come in the end of the Age He would instruct the reapers "the angels" -- messengers, saying, "Gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into My barn."

This language of our Lord reveals clearly that while He purposed that both should grow together throughout the Age and be generally recognized as members of His professed Church, He also designed that there should come a time of separation between the various elements, when those who are found to be spiritual Israelites indeed and owned as His true Church, the saints, should be revealed as such. -- Matt. 13:39.

As the harvest of the Jewish Age was instituted by the Lord Jesus Himself, as the Chief Reaper, so again the harvest or gathering in the end of the Gospel Age, would come about as a result of the presence of the same Master and Chief Reaper. As the gathering and exaltation of the Church must take place before there can be any establishment of the Kingdom, logically this harvest work must precede everything else at the time of our Lord's Second Presence. And so He declares that He will "gather out of [or

from] His Kingdom [true Church and bind in bundles] all things that offend acrd them which do iniquity, and cast them into a furnace of fire [trouble destructive to the various systems of false profession." This trouble coming upon the people would be understood to be a time of severe testing and trial occasioned largely by the growth of many forms of unbelief and infidelity -- by a general state of apostasy and departure from the faith in Christendom. This harvest work of separation having been accomplished, the result the Master says will be that "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father."

In His Hand a Sharp Sickle

The lesson to be drawn is, that those selected to be glorified with Christ in His Kingdom are to be of very choice character and hence only those who have built their faith structure of the gold, silver, and precious stones of truth and by holy living consistent therewith, will be prepared to meet the tests that would come in the harvest or gathering time of this Age.

There is another reference, we believe, to this same matter in the visions of St. John as recorded in chapter 14 of the Revelation, where we read: "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle." (Rev. 14:14.) This would appear to be a clear declaration respecting the harvest in the end of this Age and of the fact that Christ would then be present as the Chief Reaper. The context goes on to show the fulfillment of His mission as the great Reaper, and immediately thereafter the time of fiery trouble upon the earth preparatory to the new and larger sowing in the Millennial Age.

Brother Russell briefly summing up the significance and import of the harvest which would evidence the presence of our Lord in the end of the Age, has left us the following interesting statement: "This work will be in progress in the interim, the 'harvest.' The angels (messengers of the new King of earth) will do a separating work, not between the Church and the world, but a separating work in the nominal church-among nominal professors, the present 'heavens.' This work [the harvest] is represented under various symbolic descriptions -- it is the gathering of the wheat from the bales into the barn (Matt. 13:30); it is the gathering of the good fish into baskets and the casting of the unsuitable fish caught in the Gospel net back into the sea (Matt. 13:47-49); it is the gathering of His jewels (Mal. 3:17); it is the calling of 'My people' out of Babylon (Rev. 18:4); **it is the midnight cry to the virgins**, which separates the wise from the foolish (Matt. 25:6) ; and in this prophecy it is the gathering of the 'elect' from all the non-elect, of Christendom, from the four winds -- from every quarter.

"We are not to expect spirit-angels to appear with wings and to fly through the air blowing a great trumpet, and here and there catching away some of the saints -- no more than we are to expect to become literal fish and to be put into literal baskets, or literal grains of wheat to be put into a literal barn. The angels or messengers used by our Lord in this harvest gathering will, we believe, be such messengers as He has used in His service

throughout this Age -- earthly servants, begotten of His Holy Spirit 'new creatures in Christ Jesus.'" -- "Studies," Vol. IV, pp. 600, 601.

Christendom and the Harvest

Having this outline foregoing describing proceedings in the end of this Age, we have only to ask, Is there anything in these last times in the Church and the world, or we may say in Christendom in general, that corresponds to a harvest time, which we can consider as the "sign" of the Master's presence and the end of the Age?

During the past fifty years more or less; a considerable number of devout Bible students have answered the above question in the affirmative; have recognized that the state of affairs in Christendom at present corresponds well with the Master's description of the harvest time of His presence. Looking back now over the Age, we see that the Parable of the wheat and the tares has been largely fulfilled. There has been a growing together of the true and false professors. Great and many systems, sects, and parties have become well organized, each claiming to be the true Church and all are made up of both genuine and counterfeit Christians. But along with other signs of the end of the Age and of the Master's presence have come new and startling conditions not to be observed in any other part of the Age. Within these recent years a great shaking time has come to Christendom. The predicted falling time is here. (2 Tim. 3:1-13; Psa. 91:3-7.) Agnosticism and infidelity in many forms have been sweeping the world, with the result that there is comparatively little of the true faith held to by the masses of professing Christians. However, the true faith still exists and is to be observed in some individuals here and there in the various Christian branches.

The Gathering of the Faithful

In this same connection we have been noting how through these years a harvest work has been progressing throughout the various Christian circles. The message of Truth concerning the true Gospel and the Divine program in general has been set forth in clearer form than ever before, and widely disseminated throughout the world. This message which has also called attention to the fulfillment of the Bible prophecies has had the effect, as many will agree, of awakening and arousing consecrated followers of the Lord the world over, and has enabled these to recognize many errors in the faith that they have professed, and to discern the bondage to human creeds and systems in which they have been laboring. Indeed, the sum of this message has been a call to come out of Babylonish confusion and to become disentangled from every kind of bondage and fellowship that is not in full accord with the will of God. It is this coming out of human systems and separation from the tare element that has constituted the fulfillment of the Master's picture of the harvest. Jesus did not say that the faithful, who were represented by the wheat, would be gathered into a new sect or organization here upon the earth, but a gathering out of these various conditions of bondage into a state of heart nearness to the Lord, in which they can the more readily experience the

ripening effects of the truth and the development of that rich Christian character that will fit them for the great change (the "Garner") that is promised the faithful Church in connection with the harvest time.

Though we have no positive information as to the **exact** date when this harvest period began, or when it will end, we may more or less approximate the matter from the well known facts in modern times. Looking over the last fifty years and especially the last forty, there are unmistakable evidences of a harvest work in progress. There have been shakings, siftings, and testings throughout all the ranks of Christendom. And through these years the voice of the Lord has been obeyed by a goodly number who have been enabled to draw near to Him and to enjoy a closer fellowship with Him and with one another than heretofore. Nor has this sifting and testing time ceased. Such work is still going on all about us. Many forms of deception are to be noted throughout the world which play an important part in increasing the severity of the trial of this time. And Malachi's great and solemn question rings in the ears of all of God's people today: "Who shall be able to stand?" In the foregoing testimony then concerning the gathering of the faithful class of watchers, there appears to be all the earmarks of the Master's harvest sign; of the gathering of "His elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other."

The Sign of Things New and Old From the Storehouse

Closely related to the sign of the harvest is another line of testimony which the Master indicated might be regarded as an evidence of His Second Presence: "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." (Luke 12:37.) Here is the Master's promise of a special dispensation of truth at the time of His Second Presence. As the last days of the Age were to, be days of fiery trial upon the Church, special assistance was promised whereby she should be enabled to endure and to stand under these tests. The Master Himself being present would perform the part of the servant in that He would dispense things new and old that would be for the strengthening, comforting, and supporting of the faithful. And who of us is there that will for a moment dispute that there has been a pronounced fulfillment of the Savior's promise? For more than a century past there has been a remarkable clarification of the Truth and there have been raised up among God's people a considerable number of humble, devout servants whose earnest labors and patient investigation of the Word have been richly rewarded in removing much of the rubbish of error and in bringing to light many truths that have been covered, or whose meaning has not been clearly recognized since the Apostolic period. All of this cleansing of the sanctuary has been by way of preparation for this special revelation and dispensing of the truth of God in these more recent times.

Fulfilled as Foretold

Brother Russell has repeatedly called our attention to this as one of the signs that we were living in the time of the parousia, or presence of the

Lord. And he asked, "Is there anything to corroborate" our conviction respecting this being the time of the harvest and the Master's presence? His answer was, "Yes. In the first place, we look for the Lord's dealing with His people, the Church. We should expect that at the time of our Lord's Coming His people would hear His 'knock' -- the knock of the prophecies, and whoever would open his heart and receive the things in a consecrated attitude of mind the Lord would gird Himself as a servant and would come forth and serve him. -- Rev. 3 :20.

"All of the special blessings that we, as a company of Bible students, have received during the past forty years have been the result of the Lord's presence. He has been our servant and has been bringing forth things new and old out of His storehouse. These old things have been coming forth in a new way -- not because of human ability or skill, but because it is the Lord's due time for these things to become clear -- the doctrine of Redemption, the Ransom, the meaning of the term Body of Christ, the explanation of how the death of Christ is justification for our sins, the imputation of His merit for the Church, the giving of the merit to the world, what the sanctification of the Church really means, the begetting of the Holy Spirit, the begotten ones becoming New Creatures in Christ; and what this term, a New Creature, signifies, how the New Creature differs from the old nature, how the First Resurrection is to bring to this New Creation glorious privileges and Divine blessings -- glory, honor, and immortality.

"Our Lord, present, but invisible, has brought us light along every feature of the Divine Plan, not only respecting those things that were old -- justification, sanctification, and redemption -- but also respecting the philosophy of God's dealings how our Lord became flesh and dwelt among us, how He was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and yet was born of an earthly mother. All these things which were once confusing to us, but which are now brought to light, are evidences that the Lord is here serving His people. We **know** that we have **received** these things. We do not believe that we have received them from any human tongue or pen, but from the Lord, who is giving us, 'meat in due season.' The result of receiving this spiritual food is that many people have been sanctified have experienced a transformation of mind. that leads them to rejoice in laying down their lives for the brethren and in walking in the footsteps of Jesus."

The Sign of the Fig Tree

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." (Matt. 24:32, 33.) Expositors in general have conceded that the fig tree is used as a symbol of the Jewish nation. Regarding it in this light, we see how the Jewish race have been passing through the long winter time of disfavor, and the fig tree has been barren, without leaves or fruit. But Jesus said that in due time there would be the "putting forth" of leaves and fruit buds, which would be an indication that summer is drawing nigh. So. the return of favor to the Jews should be regarded as a sign that the Kingdom of

heaven is at the door. For about two centuries now there have been manifestations of the turning away of disfavor from Israel and gradually through these years they have been rising out of the ashes of humiliation and coming forth from the downtrodden state. Brother Russell's comment is noted with interest here:

"The sprouting of the fig tree may have been but a casual remark, but we incline to think that it was not. The peculiar circumstances narrated of our Lord's curse upon a fig tree which bore no fruit, and which withered away directly (Matt. 21:19, 20) inclines us to believe that the fig tree in this prophecy may be understood to signify the Jewish nation. If so, it is being signally fulfilled; for not only are thousands of Israelites returning to Palestine, but the Zionist movement, as all know, has now assumed such proportions as to justify conventions of representatives from all parts of the world to meet year by year to put in practical shape the proposal for the reorganization of a Jewish state in Palestine."

It is the more recent and pronounced manifestations of returning favor to the Jews that may reasonably be regarded as the "sign" of the Lord's presence. Amongst these is the complete breaking of the Mohammedan yoke that has for so many centuries held dominion over the Holy Land and has prevented the Jews from returning thither. This great hindrance being now removed, we are witnessing the return of thousands of Jews to their homeland yearly, and in a general way the hopes of the Jewish race are being revived to a considerable extent. The land is being recovered and their cities rebuilt, thus offering encouragement for still other thousands to espouse the cause of Zionism. Surely this is sufficient evidence to be regarded as the "putting forth leaves" and that the Kingdom of God is "even at the doors."

Not Supernatural or Spectacular Signs

In what we have been examining and reviewing of the signs of our Lord's Second Presence, we are impressed in recognizing that none of these signs noted are of the spectacular or supernatural character, nor such as the natural man would regard as signs or proofs of Christ's presence. Some who have placed an altogether too literal interpretation upon the symbolisms of Revelation and some other prophecies have their eyes more or less upon natural or physical signs and hence are not disposed to see so much significance in what are the real signs of the times. Again we note the importance of Christ's words: "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of [in the presence of] the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives until the day that Noah entered the ark." And the Apostle Paul's prophecy is of similar character; he states that the attitude of the world at the time, of the Lord's Second Presence will be that of "peace and safety."

A Parable and Its Lesson

"If monstrous, unheard of, supernatural, portentous events were to transpire," asks Mr. Guinness, "would they, not be telegraphed the same day all over a startled world, and produce such a sense of alarm and expectation

that buying and selling, and planting, and building, and marrying and giving in marriage, would all be arrested together, and 'peace and safety' would be far from any one's lips or thoughts? And if **one** of the apocalyptic prodigies is to be thus [literally] fulfilled, **all** of course must be so. Conceive a succession of such supernatural prodigies, and a world asleep in fancied security, and overtaken by sudden destruction! No; there was nothing special to alarm the antediluvians before the day that Noah entered into the ark; nothing special to startle the men of Sodom ere the fire from heaven fell: and **like as it was in those days**, so will it be in **these**. All going on just as usual, no stupendous sign to attract the world's attention. 'None of the wicked shall understand' the true state of affairs, only the 'wise,' enlightened by the word of prophecy.

"It will be objected perhaps, But if the signs of the times which we are expected to recognize are neither ordinary natural events, nor extraordinary unnatural ones, what are they? Scripture abundantly answers this inquiry. **They are special, but perfectly natural events, occurring in a predicted order, and at a predicted time**, and of various and widely differing events occurring in combination. They are not sudden, startling, supernatural phenomena, **but definite stages in long progressing natural movements**, whose history was written twenty-five centuries ago by Daniel.

Mr. Guinness, by means of a striking parable, has summed up in a forceful manner the true viewpoint and the proper outlook for all the faithful watching class in these momentous times; let the reader carefully weigh the various points of similarity, in, this parable

"Hear a parable! A man, wholly ignorant of the actual length of human life, is told that his existence will consist of four stages, infancy childhood, youth, and full age, and that this fourth stage will have two sections, maturity and decay. Certain general particulars of the three earlier divisions are given to him, and much fuller particulars as to the characteristics and events of the fourth. He is told that its first portion will be marked, by a certain perfection of strength and intelligence, by the ability to do great things physical and intellectual, by a power of self-multiplication and of ruling others, by the acquisition of wealth and influence, respect and honor; and that after a time a change will come, there will be manifested a loss of vigor, a failure of power, a gradually increasing feebleness, necessitating a gradually decreasing sphere of action; and moreover that in this second stage of adult life disease of a fatal character will be slowly developed in his system, having certain very definite symptoms, which will arise in a given order. He is told that the last symptoms which will usher in the great change will be a loss of sight, a difficulty in breathing, paralysis of the nervous system, and lastly failure of the heart's action. He is told that when all these things come to pass he may know that a rapid and momentary passage will take him into a better stage of things. All this falls out in due order. His feeble infancy merges into a merry childhood, and that again into brilliant, glowing youth; in his early maturity the world rings with his achievements, but later years bring, as foretold, infirmity, disease, and gradual decay.

"What now is the ground of the old man's conviction that his earthly existence is all but over? What forbids him to look for recovery, or even to hope for cure? Not his own impressions or feelings; not any sudden and new pain, that may arouse him for a moment to more vivid and distressing sensation; not any freshly developed stage of his malady. None of these things, but the irresistible inference, deduced from seventy or eighty years of experience that every part of the prediction given him must be fulfilled in its season.

A Predicted Duration

"If now, in addition to its other clauses, that prediction had contained **an anagram**, which, when interpreted by the right clue, would give the chronological duration of his illness; and if by some chance the clue to the anagram came into the old man's hands; and on reading the riddle he found that it amounted to a statement that **his fatal complaint would last for rather more than twelve years**, he would have still clearer grounds for the conviction that his end was near. His illness had already endured for that time within a few weeks or days; he might and would still be ignorant of the day and the hour of his decease, because the exact date of the first incipient commencement of his fatal malady might not be discernible to memory. It had come on gradually and by stages, he cannot at present recall exactly how or when. He we'll remembers when he first sought advice about it, when he first adopted a certain mode of treatment, when it forced him to give up his business, when he was obliged to take to his bed, and when his sight began to fail; but the first beginning is not so easily fixed. Still, he knows it was about twelve years ago; and the time, taken in conjunction with all the other features of the case, settles the question. But he has yet further confirmation, for the prediction had announced that immediately before his dissolution, his first born son, a prodigal who had forsaken his father's house in the days of his youth, and who had been ever since a lost wanderer, would return to his home. Now already, after years of silence and oblivion, he has heard from that prodigal. His first letter was from New Zealand, and spoke of his return. The second arrived from Ceylon, the third from Aden; once more he wrote from Port Said, and then from Malta, and his last letter had been dated from Southampton. He had reached England, he had got so far on his way home, he might be expected at any hour. The old man says to himself, 'It has all come true; I shall breathe my last in his embrace.'

An Approaching Climax

"If now a friend said to him: 'Perhaps you are mistaken: you had often thought yourself dying before. Do you not remember how, soon after your illness began, you used to think you were very near the end, and how again and again you have formed wrong anticipations, that have been falsified by the events? Your symptoms are not much worse than they have been for year's; you may rally yet and live on -- what would be the old man's reply? 'True, I did some time since prematurely anticipate the close, but that was before I clearly deciphered that anagram which limits

this illness to twelve. years. You know I have been twelve years ill now; besides, hearken! are not those the footsteps of my long, lost son?"

"Now what are the grounds of that old man's conviction? They are deduced from the long course of bygone events, compared with present onesevents which had all been predicted to him in the order in which they had, occurred. The four stages of life had come in their turn, they had borne precisely the characteristics attributed to them. The last, as indicated beforehand, had proved to be by far the most important of the four; not only longer than all the others put together, but amazingly more influential over the then existing generation, and aver generations yet to come. The disease and decay of its latter portion had insidiously invaded his constitution as predicted. every symptom of the illness had been clearly marked and developed in the predicted succession. It had now run a course of rather more than twelve years, and every present indication presaged. an early disolution; and, lo! the prodigal, who had seemed so hopelessly lost, returns!"

Natural Events in Predicted Order

"Somewhat similar in character are the signs of these times, the signs of the fast approaching 'end of the age.' Of this nature is the evidence which compels us to conclude that we are on the eve of the great and long predicted change. There is nothing supernatural, nor will there be, nothing extraordinary, nor will there be, until the epiphany [bright shining] of the Son of Man in glory startles a sleeping world as a thief in the night. Each of the signs taken separately and singly, or occurring in any other connection, or at any other time, might argue nothing remarkable; but occurring as they do, as links in a predicted series, as the closing stages in a long movement, and at the precise periods indicated twenty-five centuries ago, they become to 'the wise' clear signs that the end of the present state of things is at hand."

Watch That Ye May be Accounted Worthy

That the prophecy of Jesus outlining the signs of His presence in the end of the Age was intended to be of comfort to. His followers at that time there can be little doubt. But it would be only as the predictions would be fulfilled and their history written that the full benefit of His sayings would. be realized. They could not be clearly understood until they were fulfilled. Hence the special object of the Master in replying to the great question, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming," etc., was to provide a message that would strengthen and sustain His faithful followers in the days of His Second Presence. So He said, "Watch ye therefore [you, who will be living at the time when these signs about which I leave told you will be in evidence, that seeing My Word fulfilled you may be comforted and upheld and] that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things coming upon the earth."

He had described the signs of His presence minutely, in order that the watching ones might not be left in doubt. The fulfilled signs would be illuminating and strengthening to faith. Yet they were of such a character

as not to be appreciated except by those who would be engaged in devout study and prayerful watching. They were to watch in the sense of carefully examining the more sure Word of Prophecy, and they were to observe the signs of these prophecies coming to pass. The days were to be of specially evil character: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." -- Luke 21:34.

Being then taken into this secret of the Master's presence, learning that their deliverance was drawing nigh, and the Kingdom of God at the doors, would have a most sanctifying influence upon the lives of these, the last members of the Christ. This knowledge would enable them to remain steadfast in the faith in the midst of surrounding apostasy and worldliness. Because they would be walking faithfully and obediently in His footsteps they should be accounted worthy to escape all those Things (the influence of strong deceptions, delusions, and illusive temptations so prevalent in this time) coming upon the earth. And standing before the Son of Man approved at death, they should be received by their Master into the eternal heavenly conditions and be given the crown of life, which is in reservation for all them that love the Lord and His appearing.

The Herald of Christ's Kingdom

VOL. IX. December 15, 1926 No. 24

THEY GO FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

*"They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion
appeareth before God." -- Psa. 84:7*

THE Christian life is set forth as one of growth and development; and this progression is one that relates to the heart, the soul, of the consecrated. David after some years of experience from which he had learned valuable lessons was made to realize that all acquaintance and favor with God, all development in those qualities of life that are pleasing to Him must begin in the heart; therefore his words, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." (Psa. 51:10.) It is the clean heart, the renewed spirit, that is all-important.

In the present dispensation it is the unspeakable privilege of all these truly converted and consecrated hearts to be operated upon by the Spirit of God, to the intent that they may be fitted as vessels unto special honor and responsibility in the future life; and so "if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also. quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." As all success in this life of sanctification depends upon the power and work of the Spirit, the Christian is admonished, "Be ye filled with the Spirit." Such language cannot apply to those who are merely empty professors, having a form of godliness only, but to those who have fully accepted the terms of God's call, who have made the full consecration

which alone brings us into the position of sons of God. These are the only ones who have the Spirit of God. These only are begotten from above. But St. Paul would have us remember that it is not sufficient that we receive the begetting of the Holy Spirit, which comes to us at the very entrance of the Narrow Way. We should see that the Holy Spirit of God abounds in us more and more as we go on in our heavenward course. The little spark of the new mind should grow stronger and brighter day by day.

If this development does not take place, if we merely stand still, we shall soon begin to lose ground; but if we progress, the natural man will gradually perish and the new man will thrive. Christian development should be steady and continuous. We are to be more and more filled with the Spirit. Sometimes the Lord's children say, "I do desire to be filled with the Lord's Spirit, but it seems as if my capacity is so small. I wish to have His Spirit in large measure, but I am unable to be what I long to be. I am not satisfied with my attainments." But if we are striving earnestly and prayerfully to become like Christ, let us not be discouraged. Let us remember that if we keep filled to our present capacity, this very infilling will enlarge our capacity. Then our earthen vessel will hold more of the Holy Spirit. This, in turn, still further enlarges our capacity; and so the expanding and filling goes on. Thus it is possible for us to be filled continually.

If it were an impossibility for us to be filled with the Spirit of God, the inspired Apostle would not have so instructed us. To the truly consecrated child of God this is possible, and not only possible, but obligatory. But as there are ebbs and flows in the ocean tides, so with our sense of the Lord's presence with us and His smile upon us. We may not always realize His presence to a large degree, but the Lord's saints must learn to walk by faith, to trust Him and His abiding love and presence with us even though physical ill health or untoward outward circumstances or conditions may at times cause a mental depression. We are to rejoice in the Lord even though there may be for a time more or less heaviness of spirit.

Daily Self-Examination Necessary

In speaking of the glorious salvation of the Church the Apostle Peter says, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations [trials], that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that 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." (1 Pet. 1:6-8.) And we can thus rejoice even in the midst of severe trials that cause pain and tears. There may be times when it will seem as though we are more filled with the Spirit, than at other times. But if we are striving earnestly to daily walk with God, this will not really be the case. It may be only a difference of surface feelings. The true child of the Lord should steadily progress.

The spirit, or disposition, of the world will seek to invade the dominion of the New Creature. But the New Creature must be on the alert to see that

his mind and body are freed from everything that would not be in fullest harmony with God's Holy Spirit*. Each one should seek to judge himself in this respect. We may not judge one another, but we should judge ourselves. We are to see to it that the Spirit of the Lord is manifest in our words, our thoughts, and our conduct. We should be able to do this more and more successfully, more and more continually, as we go on in the good way and grow in grace and knowledge. This we shall do if we are watching, praying, striving day by day.

The Spirit of the Lord dwelling in us in fulness, as it should be, will cause our entire being to be so absorbed by the principles of righteousness laid down in the Lord's Word, to be so in love with the heavenly things, heavenly hopes, heavenly prospects, that everything else will be of less value to us. And this will be more and more our blessed experience if we continue faithfully in the Narrow Way, if we "follow on to know the Lord."

Developing This Crowning Fruit

But if, on the contrary, we find ourselves making provision for the flesh, making worldly plans; if we find ourselves inclined to lay up treasures on earth instead of in Heaven, there is cause for alarm, and we should ask ourselves whether we are deficient, whether we are neglecting the means of grace -- prayer alone with God, study of His Word, meditation upon the glorious things to which we have been called, watching ourselves as to our growth in the fruits of the Spirit. If we find that we are considerably controlled by the spirit of contention, we should ask ourselves, "Are we seeking to deal justly and equitably with others -- to give them their rights and not to intrude upon them? Are we cultivating the love which is forbearing, forgiving and kind? -- 2 Tim. 2:24; Eph. 4:31, 32.

If we find after close introspection that we are in full sympathy with the spirit of love, and can see that we are gradually developing this crowning fruit of the Spirit, let us rejoice; for we should greatly deplore the matter if it were otherwise. If we find that we are controlled by this spirit of love, we may know that we are filled with the Spirit. This spirit of love will enlarge our hearts and minds, making us broader and nobler day by day.

But we need to continually watch and pray; for there is constant danger otherwise that we may be tripped up or stumbled either by our own faults or those of others. We are never safe from being side-tracked unless we go often to the Throne of Grace; we cannot be filled unless we keep very close to the great Fountain from which our infilling comes. We must daily carry our earthen pitcher to this Heavenly Fountain to be replenished; for we are leaky vessels. We are not to feel discouraged if we do not find in ourselves the rapid growth that we desire to see. Strong, sturdy trees that can withstand the fiercest storms are not developed in a day. Their growth is a slow, steady process. We should show our loyalty to the Lord by renewed effort every time we fail. He is looking at us not to see if we are perfect in the flesh for He knows that we are not and can never be -- but to see whether or not we have the spirit of earnestness and loyalty which

daily and hourly seeks to keep the body under and to cheerfully take up the cross.

Blessed Results of Spirit's Infilling

The Christian is not to be like the worldling who seeks to drown his troubles and; afflictions in drink or in pleasures, dissipations, and frivolous diversions; but in every trouble he is to fly to the only true Source of solace and comfort and strength. This will drive away all anxiety and give him rest and peace even in the midst of trouble. Like the fabled halcyon, which built its nest and brought forth its birdlings in the midst of the sea, the true child of God can be at rest even amidst the billows and storms of life, and can prosper as a New Creature and accomplish all the good pleasure of God's will.

This unwavering trust in the Lord, this abiding rest of soul, this zeal in God's service, is a matter of growth. "They go from strength to strength," the Psalmist declares of the inhabitants of Zion. "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear," said our Lord of this class. (Psa. 84:7; Mark 4:28.) Notwithstanding the difficulties of life, these can continue to make melody in their hearts unto the Lord. They rejoice no matter what may be the outward earthly conditions. They can smile even through tears, knowing that, according to His promise, all things are working together for their good. To attain this development is to be filled with the Spirit; and each consecrated disciple of Christ should reach this plane.

Some Christian writer has well said: "Wherever there has been a faithful following of the Lord in a consecrated heart, several things have, sooner or later, inevitably followed. Meekness and quietness of spirit become in time the characteristics of the daily life. A submissive acceptance of the will of God, as it comes in the hourly events of each day, is manifested; pliability in the hands of God to do or to suffer all the good pleasure of His will; sweetness under provocation; calmness in the midst of turmoil and bustle; a yielding to the wishes of others [where there is no conflicting principle involved], and an insensibility to slights and affronts; absence of worry or anxiety; deliverance from care and fear -- all these, and many other similar graces, are invariably found to be the natural outward development of that inward, life which is 'hid with Christ in God.'"

"Jesus, my Lord, Thou art my life,
My rest in labor, strength in strife;
Thy love begets my love of Thee;
Thy fullness that which filleth me.

"Mine effort vain, my weakness learned,
Weary, from self to Christ I turned,
Content to let His fulness be
An unbought fullness unto me."

BORN IN THE CITY OF DAVID, A KING

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." -- Luke 2:10.

CHRISTMAS season again calls forth the most sacred and hallowed memories -- those that relate to the birth of the Redeemer of mankind. We may well join with others in the celebration of this time even though we believe December 25th is not the true date of our Lord's birth, but more properly the annunciation day, or the time of His human begetting. (Luke 1 :18.) It is the great event or fact expressive of the all excelling love of God that fills our hearts with holy contemplation at this time.

Considering the importance of and how much is represented in the event of the birth of Christ, we logically look for some striking evidence of the validity and truthfulness of the record that claims to bring such sublime information. This we do find, for there is a frankness and a simplicity about the sacred narrative dealing with the subject that at once brings conviction. Another has beautifully touched upon this point:

"The Gospels, always truthful and! bearing on every page that simplicity which is the stamp of honest narrative, indicate this fact without comment. There is in them nothing of the exuberance of Marvel, and mystery, and miracle, which appears alike in the Jewish imaginations about their coming Messiah, and in the apocryphal narratives about the Infant Christ. There is no more decisive criterion of their absolute credibility as simple histories, than the marked and violent contrast which they offer to all the spurious gospels of the early centuries, and all the imaginative legends which have clustered about them. Had our Gospels been unauthentic, they too must inevitably have partaken of the characteristics which mark, without exception, every early fiction about the Savior's life. To the unilluminated fancy it would have seemed incredible that the most stupendous event in the world's history should have taken place without convulsions and catastrophes. In the Gospel of St. James there is a really striking chapter, describing how, at the awful moment of the nativity, the pole of the heaven stood motionless, and the birds were still, and there were workmen lying on the earth with their hands in a vessel, and those who handled did not handle it, and those who took did not lift, and those who presented it to their mouth did not present it, but the faces of all were looking up. . . . The inventions of man differ wholly from the dealings of

God. In His designs there is no haste, no rest, no weariness, no discontinuity; all things are done by Him in the majesty of silence, and they are seen under a light that shineth quietly in the darkness, showing all things in the slow history of their ripening. 'The unfathomable depths of the Divine counsels,' it has been said, 'were moved; the fountains of the great deep were broken up; the healing of the nations was issuing forth; but nothing was seen on the surface of human society but this slight rippling of the water; the course of human things went on as usual, while each was taken up with little projects of His own.'"

The more intimately we know our dear Redeemer in the light of the Scriptures, the more we shall appreciate Him, love Him, and seek to copy Him. No other life than His could bear so continual and close a scrutiny, yet always be full of fresh revelations of moral dignity and character -- any other life similarly studied and criticized would reveal its seamy side of weakness, sin, and ignobility.

In the Fulness of Time

The time of our Lord's birth was an auspicious one in several respects, and very evidently Divine wisdom had exercised itself in respect to the world's affairs by way of preparation for this important event: (1) The spirit of world-conquering that began with Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was favorable to it, in the sense that it brought the various families or nations of mankind into closer contact with each other, broadening their ideas. (2) This policy had resulted in the transplanting of peoples from one land to another, and thus had made them more cosmopolitan in their sentiments. (3) Israel and Judah, thus transplanted in their captivity to Babylon, became so attached to the new conditions that comparatively few of them availed themselves of the offer of Cyrus to return to their own land, only about fifty thousand of all the tribes, out of several millions. The Jews among the Gentiles were by no means lost and had by no means abandoned all of their hopes in the Abrahamic Covenant nor all of their faithfulness to the Mosaic Law -- although they were lax in these matters and too full of a love of gain and ease to cultivate the spirit of Israelites indeed. Nevertheless, they had their influence amongst all the nations with whom they dwelt, and were witnesses to the hopes of Israel in the one God and in a coming Messiah, the Son of God, to be the world's Deliverer. (4) The triumph for a time of the Greek Empire had brought to the civilized world a highly developed literature -- the Greek language had reached its zenith, and was the literary language of the civilized world. (5) The Roman Empire had conquered the world and was in the height of its power, and as a result there was a time of universal peace, and hence a more favorable time than any before for the announcement of the Gospel and for the safety of its representatives in passing from nation to nation. (6) Israel itself had reached probably its highest development, intellectually, morally, and religiously, and additionally we are told in the Scriptures that "All men were in expectation" of the Messiah's coming. -- Luke 3:15.

It was just at this most appropriate time, as divinely arranged for, that Caesar Augustus, the Roman Emperor, issued his decree respecting the taxing of his worldwide empire. The decree was not merely an assessment of taxes, but was rather a census, or enrolment for taxation. But instead of sending assessors to the people, according to the present custom, the arrangement then was that every male citizen must report himself at the headquarters of his own family line. This was the occasion for the coming of Joseph and his espoused wife, Mary, the mother of Jesus; to Bethlehem, their native city or family city, for they were both of the house of David (though through different lines), and Bethlehem was "the city of David." Thus in a providential manner and by a decree over which they had no control whatever, Joseph and Mary were brought to the very city in which most appropriately the great heir of David should be born, as had been foretold by the Prophet. -- Micah 5 :2.

If Thou Even Thou Hadst Known

Had the people assembled at Bethlehem realized who this was that had come to their city -- that He was from the heavenly courts, that He was the "Logos" made flesh, that He had come to "save His people from their sins" -- how gladly they would have welcomed Him into the inn and have given to His use and comfort its choicest apartments! But they knew Him not, and hence lost this great privilege of ministering to Him. Similarly, in every city and town where the Lord's people are (His true saints), there are many who would make them welcome and give them the best at their disposal, did they but recognize them as the messengers of Jesus and of the Heavenly Father; but as the Apostle says, "The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." (1 John 3 :1.) The disciple must not expect to be above his Lord. It is noteworthy that neither Joseph, nor Mary, nor Jesus, nor the disciples, nor the Evangelist who recorded the incident, offers the slightest complaint or suggestion of dissatisfaction with the arrangement provided by Divine providence. In proportion as they would have felt dissatisfied with the arrangements provided, in that proportion the Divine plans would not have worked for their good.

Shepherds Abiding in the Field

The vicinity of Bethlehem is a pastoral country, and today is covered with flocks. It was the custom at the time of the Savior's birth for the shepherds to remain with their flocks by night as a guard against thieves as well as against wild beasts. It was in this vicinity that David (afterward king); when a shepherd-boy protecting his flocks, slew on one occasion a lion and at another time a bear. The shepherds as a class were not particularly well educated people as respects schools, and yet many of them were thoughtful and thus secured, in their leisure time while watching their flocks, by reflection and by conversation, considerable knowledge, so that they might be termed an intellectual and thinking class of people -- their minds being turned more to reflection on large subjects than are the minds of some who are constantly immersed in trade and mechanics. The shepherd whom God honored in making him king of His typical kingdom,

was a great poet, and evidently much of his time while shepherding was given to the muse, and one of his most beautiful poems (Psalms 23) represents Jehovah Himself as the Shepherd of His people -- His flock, for which He cares. It was to men of this thoughtful class, and no doubt men familiar with David's psalms, and with the Messianic hopes therein set forth, that the Lord sent the first message respecting His Son made flesh.

The description of the appearance of the angel, and of the fear which the brightness of his countenance engendered, is both simple and natural. All mankind more or less feels instinctively a fear of the supernatural, a trepidation at the very thought of being in the presence of the holy angels. And this is proper as well as natural, for all realize their own imperfections through the fall, fearing more or less that the results to themselves would be unfavorable if Divine justice were laid to the line and to the plummet in respect to their affairs. All seem instinctively to realize their need of mercy at the hands of Him with whom we have to do. And so it was with these shepherds; they were affrighted as they beheld the heavenly visitor in their midst; but his message was not one of justice nor in any sense of condemnation, but of Divine mercy. He soothed them with the words, "Be not afraid; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people." Can we wonder that joy took the place of fear in their hearts as they heard the gracious words? Surely not. And so it is with all who from that day to the present time have heard this true Gospel Message, not merely with the outward ears, but truly, with the ears of their understanding -- comprehending it.

Truth Now Hidden From Wise and Prudent

Oh, if all true Christians could only get the full import of the angel's message and see the depths of its significance, it would quickly revolutionize the teachings of Christendom! But as our Lord declared, some of the deep things of the Divine Plan are hidden from many of the wise and prudent according to the course of this world, and are revealed only to the humble -- the babes. Nevertheless, the testimony of God standeth sure; and all whose eyes of understanding have been opened and who have been enabled to comprehend some of the lengths and the breadths, and the heights and the depths of God's love, may rejoice that the ignorance of the world in general on this subject and the opposition of the great Adversary who is blinding them, cannot continue forever, but must soon give place, when the Lord's due time shall come -- when He who died on Calvary for the world's redemption shall begin His glorious reign by binding that old Serpent, the Devil, Satan, that he should deceive the nations no more for the thousand years of the Millennial reign. Then all shall see out of obscurity; then shall all discern what at present is the privilege of only the favored few to see, respecting the Divine character and Plan--that the Message of the angel was true, every word of it -- that the grand results to flow from the birth of the Savior in Bethlehem justified the Message sent by the great Jehovah -- a good Message of great joy which eventually shall be to all people -- whose enlightenment and blessing shall have no hindrance, no restriction, and as a result all shall

come to a knowledge of the truth and to an opportunity of availing themselves of the grace, mercy, and peace provided for all in the great salvation secured by the ransom sacrifice of our Lord Jesus.

The Angel's Message Good Tidings

The heavenly messenger further explained his great Gospel Message, showing its basis, and declaring that all the good things mentioned should come to pass because the Savior, Messiah, had been born -- the one so long looked for in Israel, the promised seed of Abraham in whom not only Israel should be blessed and exalted to honor, dignity, and co-operation, but in whom also "all the families of the earth should be blessed." And let us here remark that the order of presentation used by the heavenly messenger, and evidently divinely ordered, is the proper presentation of this subject which should be adopted by all who seek to be used of the Lord as His ambassadors in the calling of the elect Church. First, there is the grand pronouncement of Divine favor and blessing, that it is a cause for joy, and that ultimately it shall extend to every creature; secondly, there is the specific explanation of how all this is to be accomplished through a Savior, a Deliverer, who, in order to deliver His people from the wages of sin, death, into eternal life and blessing, must first of all save them from their sins. And we see from other Scriptures that this Salvation from our sins signifies not only the payment on our behalf of the penalty for Adamic sin, but also, subsequently, man's instruction in righteousness and lifting out of sin; in which uplift each one is required to co-operate to the extent of his will and his ability.

So all teaching of the grace that is to come to mankind should be coupled with the philosophy of the salvation -- the Savior made flesh and the flesh devoted. or sacrificed for our sins, and the Savior glorified, that in due time after the selection of His Church, He might, with her, according to the Divine Plan, establish His Kingdom of righteousness for the uplifting of the world of mankind out of ignorance, superstition and general degradation into which the great Adversary has gotten them through the fall and through his subsequent blinding and misleading. In this connection it is well to remember that our Lord's name, "Jesus," signifies Savior, and that all who would be of the elect Church must have the spirit of the Bridegroom (as well as by faith be covered with the garment of His imputed righteousness); and that His Spirit is one of opposition to sin to the extent of self sacrifice. We also are to "resist unto blood [death] striving against sin." -- Heb. 12:4.

Angelic Host Proclaims Peace on Earth

Then the angels gave the shepherds an intimation of the humble conditions under which this great King of earth was born into the world -- as a babe, wrapped in swaddling bands and lying in a manger. This was necessary, not only to their identification of Jesus, but necessary also to bring down their thoughts from the great and grand results to the humble beginnings, lest they should be misled in their expectations. And as it is with every part of the Divine Plan, so also it should be in respect to all of our

proclamations of the same. We are not only to tell of the future glory and greatness and grandeur, but we are also to tell of the present humiliation -- not only of our Savior, who humbled Himself to take a low estate amongst men, and to die for our sins, but also to point out that the Elect are called to walk in His steps, under similarly humiliating circumstances -- to suffer with Him, if they would reign with Him; to die with Him, if they would live with Him. And thus also the Prophets spoke not only of the glory that should follow, but also of the sufferings of Christ (Head and Body) which must precede the glory. (1 Pet. 1:11.) The lesson to every one who has ears to hear it is, "No cross, no crown." Let us, then, humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and rejoice in every step of the humiliation, that He may exalt us in due time to share the glories of His Son our Lord, and to share with Him the grand work of blessing all the families of the earth.

It was a fitting climax that, after the one angel had told the surprised shepherds of the Good Tidings of great joy for all people and was ready to depart, he should be joined by an angelic host, proclaiming, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." This was but a reiteration of the Gospel Message already delivered. It declared that the work which should be accomplished by the babe just born, should redound to the highest glory and honor of Jehovah God, His Father. It declared also that through this work to be accomplished by Jesus should come to earth Divine good will and consequently peace, and all that these would imply in the way of blessings of restitution and privilege of attaining everlasting life.

The Light Shined in the Dark Valley

It was said at the time of Jesus' birth that, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." As our Lord declared, "The light shined in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not." He was the light of the world and was in the world and the world knew Him not. But there is a higher and deeper and broader sense in which these words are to be understood -- they apply to all peoples who have been favored with the opening of the eyes of their understanding during this Gospel Age.

The people of Galilee in the day of our Lord's personal ministry, and other parts of the earth since, with a similar humble class of people, have more or less had amongst them representatives of the true light, and in every case the light has shined: in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not, as our Lord declared to be the case. Only a few appreciate this shining now because, as the Apostle declared, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not" -- the eyes of their understanding are so darkened by false doctrines, misunderstanding, and superstition that they cannot see those glorious things which can now be seen only by the eye of faith, by those whose eyes of understanding have been opened.

That the prophecy was not confined to the people of Galilee is evident from the last clause of the second verse, "They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." The land of the shadow

of death is the whole world, for the shadow of death has been on the whole world ever since the first transgression in Eden, ever since the curse or sentence of death was pronounced upon our race. As the Prophet David describes it, the Lord's true people are. blessed even while in the present valley and under the shadow of death: he says, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me." It is to this class who walk with the Lord, who trust Him, that the true light shines -- not as the glorious Sun of Righteousness; as it will shine by and by when the Millennial Kingdom is established, but merely as the little lamp, "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet, a lantern to my footsteps."

As the shepherds having heard of God's grace, manifested their interest by visiting and paying their homage to the Savior, so each one who has heard of the grace of God with an appreciative heart can do nothing less than seek the Lord and do Him reverence and serve His cause by proclaiming the gracious Message. with which he has been favored. Let us each do so, and thus more and more increase in our hearts the joys of the Lord and our appreciation of His grand Gospel.

LOOKING FOR THAT BLESSED HOPE

Sequel to the series of articles concluded in the last issue of this journal
on the Second Presence of our Lord.

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." -- Titus 2:13.

HOW DEEP an impression was made upon the minds of the Apostles and in turn upon the minds of their immediate associates by our Lord's parting promise to "come again" and receive them unto Himself, may be determined by the records of their. life and ministry as these come down to us through the writer of the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles of Paul; Peter, James, and John, and the brief, but illuminating contribution of Jude. Applying the principle suggested by the Master, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," we have the most positive evidence that the return of their blessed Lord constituted for them the richest gem of revelation, and the pivotal point around which all the future hopes of the Church centered.

Hence we find that when special trials overtook them and afflictions multiplied about them, their minds were ever turned to that blessed hour in the future when He would "come again." Were the days filled with hardships, and were relentless persecutions their portion, their eyes were lifted up as in faith and hope they visualized His return and their eternal union with Him, and to the weight of suffering was transformed into "but light afflictions" of but momentary duration, unworthy of comparison with the glory. to be revealed. Did the world's standards and methods, unjust and inequitable, vex their minds, consolation was always found in remembering that they could patiently endure for the "coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Did the time seem long and hope grow faint, their spirits

would be revived by recalling that their salvation was measurably nearer than when they first believed, that the night was far spent and the day at hand. When the knowledge of the Divine Program seemed in danger of losing its energizing power -- of losing the quickening experienced when they first "came into the truth" -- what admonition could more effectively awaken them than a reminder of what they knew regarding His return and its attendant developments "what manner of persons ought they to be." And in that bitterest of all experiences, the lot of almost every true servant in the Church of God when labor seems lost upon an unappreciative and unresponsive church, when their prayers for Zion's peace were apparently unavailing since discord grew apace, when notwithstanding their united efforts to so thoroughly indoctrinate the Church in the fundamentals of the faith so that false teachers, yea an angel from heaven would find them so rooted and grounded that their minds would be closed to all voices except that of the Good Shepherd, then only to discover that comparatively few were established, only a few were so loyal as to hold fast "till He come" -- ah, then how they needed to remember their obligations to the Lord who had committed to them this ministry, and before whom they must some day render an account of their stewardship.

He will surely come for His Church for whom He died; she must be kept chaste, and made ready for His appearing; she must be presented faultless before Him with exceeding joy; she must be arrayed in all the adornment of character befitting her exalted station; she must realize the responsibility and privilege of co-operation with the Lord in a work, so grand and stupendous and so certain of successful completion; and she must even measurably foresee some of the unspeakable joys awaiting those who have faithfully served the Church in the days of her preparation. This meant the banishment from the mind of every discouragement. And there came as a result a renewed determination to spend and be spent in the interests of all such "as love His appearing."

Thus they lived, those beloved Apostles of the Lamb, whose names have been forever enthroned in the hearts of the saints, whose love for the Church of Christ never faltered. Faithful witnesses they were of our Lord's resurrection and ascension into heaven; and faithful servants, too, who left behind them for the Church's encouragement a message that burns into the heart's deepest affections with a power and a joy unspeakable -- a message concerning Him who came from heaven in fulfillment of the Father's promise, Him who had loved a world of sinners lost and in His own body had paid the price of deliverance for all; Him who had now been exalted far above angels, principalities, and powers and on whom the Father had bestowed the right to overthrow death and sin and deliver the race from bondage into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Each Apostle in his own particular style, traversed the sacred theme from Jordan to the cross and onward to that blessed hour for which they yearned and prayed and labored -- the time of His return.

A valuable contribution to our discussion of the subject of our Lord's Second Presence and its vital importance to the Church comes to us from the pen of some unknown writer, one who gives evidence of considerable

insight into the truth related to the purpose of the Second Advent, especially as it has to do with the change and completion of the Church. Brother Russell some years ago indicated his appreciation of the writer's treatment of the subject by retaking copious extracts therefrom and publishing for our benefit; and though no doubt some of the readers of this journal read what was published in the "Watch Tower" at that time, we are convinced that a careful review of that same matter is most fitting and will be found profitable as the concluding thoughts of this discussion of the Second Presence of our Lord.

THE HOPES OF THE EARLY CHURCH RESPECTING OUR LORD'S SECOND COMING

"No one can read the New Testament with care without discovering that the members of the early Church were men of hope as well as men of faith. Indeed, hope seems, more than faith, to have been the outstanding feature of the character. Not that they really had more of this than that; the twain were one; they formed one noble edifice, one stately ship. But faith was the foundation work; hope, raised upon it, caught the eye of the beholder. Faith lay beneath the water line; hope reared the mast and spread the sail high in the sight of men. Their faith looked back to Calvary; but, in a sense, it was an act completed. They were not always looking backward; forward they peered, with steady gaze. The attitude of expectation was their daily, hourly attitude. Something was about to happen -- someone was coming -- and they are seen to be on tip-toe, looking for and hasting unto the event. To them it clearly seemed a consummation most devoutly to be wished. They constantly referred to it as 'a lively hope,' 'that blessed hope,' 'this hope,' 'one hope,' 'our hope,' 'the hope of our calling,' 'the hope set before us.' Every reference shows that it completely filled their hearts, and was the dominating influence in their lives. It almost diverted them from ordinary work and duty, the warning being required not to stand 'gazing up into heaven.'

"The hope thus cherished was not of a private kind, attainable by this believer at a certain time, and that one at another. It was one great hope, to be fulfilled to all the Church, not even excluding them that slept, at one defined and selfsame time. 'No prophecy of Scripture is of a private interpretation,' and this hope, it is evident, was not to be fulfilled to individual believers. It was not a matter of personal and private experience; not the coming of Christ to the individual heart, nor the approach of death to each separate person; but something affecting the entire community of Christians at the same point of time.

"1. What was that hope which so controlled and cheered those early saints? None other than 'that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ.' They believed with all their hearts in Jesus Christ, in His wondrous life of miracle and grace, and in His sacrificial death on Calvary's sad tree. They believed that He had triumphed o'er the grave, and had come forth to resurrection life. Many of them had seen Him in His resurrection form, and had been witnesses of His ascension to the heavens. They remembered the words of the Lord

Jesus, how He said unto them, 'I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.' They had heard 'two men in white apparel' say, 'This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.' With simple faith they all accepted these great promises. The authority appeared to them sufficient, the meaning transparent. The Lord had gone; the Lord would come. He had disappeared from view, but only for 'a little while,' until the 'times of restitution.' When these times came, He would appear again; and each one seemed to say, 'Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.' This was to them the 'one far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves.'

It Was the Lodestar of Their Life

the goal and climax of their being, and round it their communion with each other, like their testimony to the world, continually revolved.

"Even if men try, they cannot keep this subject out of sight, so long as the New Testament is read. The late beloved evangelist, D. L. Moody, made the admission that he was originally much opposed to this doctrine, 'until,' said he, 'from constantly meeting with it in the reading of Scripture, I was constrained to become a believer in it; and now it is, to my mind, one of the most precious truths in the whole Bible.' One verse in every thirteen in the New Testament refers to it more or less directly; in the Epistles alone the proportion is much greater, being more like one in ten. In First Thessalonians it is fully one in seven, and in the Second Epistle nearly one in three.

"First Thessalonians is usually recognized as the earliest Epistle we possess. In our inquiry now it is of value, then, to note that the belief in Christ's return was a conspicuous feature of the Church to which it was addressed. In the opening chapter the Apostle testifies, 'Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His son from heaven.' The second chapter ends with a reference to the prospect of meeting 'in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming.' At the close of chapter three the prayer is offered, 'That He may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.' Chapter four finishes with the announcement, made by direct inspiration, that 'the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.' In chapter five the letter is brought to a conclusion with the prayer that they who received it may be 'preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

"In Second Thessalonians there are but forty-seven verses, yet in no fewer than fifteen reference to the Lord's return is made. The Apostle declares 'the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.' He beseeches the brethren to steadfastness 'by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him.' He speaks of 'the brightness of His coming,' and the 'consolation and good hope' it brings; also he

prays, 'The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.'

"First Corinthians is another of the older writings; and it proves that there at Corinth, as at Thessalonica, the Church had taken up the hope of which we speak. 'Ye come behind in no gift,' says the Apostle, 'waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' He tells them not to sit in judgment upon one another, but to wait 'until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart.' Above the table where they sit to celebrate the scene on Calvary, he writes the superscription,

'Till He Come'

and over all the tombs where sleep the silent saints, he carves the sentence, bringing hope and joy, 'Christ the Firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming.' Even when the Apostle has to utter the dread word 'Anathema,' he straightway softens it with 'Maranatha,' 'The Lord comes,' as though to let them know that, after all, judgment belongeth to another; men need not quickly curse their fellows.

"In the Epistle to Philippians the time of the Advent is repeatedly referred to as 'The Day of Jesus Christ,' and for it they are taught to Wait. 'He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.' 'That ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.' 'That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain.' It is clear that the Philippians shared the Apostle's hope, because he says, 'Our conversation is in heaven from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.'

"In the Epistle to Colossian saints, the same glad note is rung: 'When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.' Everything in the early Church was made to hinge upon the coming of the Lord.

"To Timothy, the Apostle Paul gives various charges, and he makes each binding 'until the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ.' In view of the same event he shows that he can hold death in contempt: 'I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.'

"To Titus, too, he makes it clear that, by this truth, not only is the fear of death removed, but life is made pure and beautiful, men 'live soberly, righteously, and godly,' 'looking for that blessed hope.'

"The Epistle to the Hebrews agrees with all the other apostolic writings. Repeatedly it speaks of the expected day.

'Unto Them That Look for Him'

shall He appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.' 'Consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works . . . and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.' 'Cast not away therefore your confidence . . . for yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.'

"The Apostle James adopts the same appeal; 'Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and bath long patience for it until He receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.'

"The Apostle Peter makes much use of Second Advent truth. It is the vermilion and the gold with which he illuminates his precious manuscripts. To saints in suffering he writes, and thus he seeks to cheer their hearts: 'Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith . . . might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.' 'Hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.' 'When His glory shall be revealed, ye shall be glad with exceeding great joy.' 'When the Chief Shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of life that fadeth not away.' 'There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation . . . But, beloved, . . . the Lord is not slack concerning His promises as some men count slackness, . . . but the day, of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.' 'What manner of persons ought ye to be, . . . looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?' 'Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless.'

"Saint John cherishes the same glad hope, and seeks by it to strengthen and to stimulate the Church. 'My little children, abide in Him, that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.' 'We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is; and every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.'

"As for the Book of the Revelation, . . . 'Behold He cometh,' is the burden of the book; and there can be no understanding of the 'words of this prophecy,' if the coming of the Lord be doubted, or be lost to view. Again and again, in the midst of its mysteries, the Master's voice is heard crying, 'Hold fast till I come!' 'Behold I come as a thief ;

Blessed is He That Watcheth.

'Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.' To this, the seer himself would have us all say, 'Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'

"It is well for us to scan the Scriptures thus, in order that, by line on line, we may convince ourselves what was the hope that cheered and edified the early Church. After a reading, such as this, there is no room for doubt

regarding it. 'the hope they had was that of Jesus Christ's return, and nothing else can be maintained as answering to the language they employed.

"It could not be a spirit blessing they were looking for—a coming of the Lord into their hearts, for quickening and enlightenment; for such sweet spiritual presence they had never lost. 'Lo, I am with you alway,' He had said, 'even to the end of the world'; and evermore 'Christ in the heart the hope of glory' was to them a living, grand reality. They did not need a coming of that kind.

"Nor could they mean the destruction of the city of Jerusalem; and passing strange it seems that this should ever have been thought to have fulfilled the prophecy. What was there in this sad event to constitute a hope? It was a hope these men possessed! What had this city's fall to do with Gentile saints? Yet they, as well as Jews, were made partakers of the Church's hope. Above all, why, if the destruction of Jerusalem fulfilled the Scriptures relative to Christ's return -- why was the coming of the Lord -- proclaimed, and eagerly desired, long after Salem's towers were in the dust? The Gospel according to John was surely written after that. So were his three Epistles, and the Book of Revelation. The testimony of 'the early Fathers is also to the effect that the hope of Christ's return remained, like a meteor in the heavens, long after Jerusalem was removed. Clement of Rome, in his first epistle, written about A. D. 95, says, 'Let us be followers of those who went about in goat skins and sheep skins, preaching the coming of Christ.' Ignatius of Antioch, about A. D. 100, wrote to Polycarp, 'Be every day better than another; consider the times, and expect Him who is above all time, eternal, invisible, though for our sakes made visible.' Polycarp, in an epistle dated about A. D. 108, said, 'that God had raised up our Lord Jesus from the dead, and that He will come to judge the world and raise the saints, when if we walk worthy of Him we shall reign together with Him. Papias of Hierapolis, the intimate friend and companion of Polycarp, taught the coming of the Lord in all the churches that he visited. Justin Martyr, about A. D. 150 spoke of those as 'destitute of just reason who did not understand that which is clear from all Scripture, that

Two Comings of Christ are Announced.'

Ireneus also, who flourished as a writer about A. D. 180, says, 'The Lord shall come from heaven in the clouds with the glory of His Father, casting the Antichrist and them that obey him into a lake of fire; but bringing to the just the times of the kingdom.' These men all, with one accord, waited for the coming of God's Son from heaven. They did nothing so ridiculous as to believe that the promises to that end were fulfilled when Jerusalem was burned.

"Nor was it death for which these early saints were waiting. Not one of them is known to have confounded that with Christ's return. In no Epistle is death set before the Christian as the object of his hope. The approach of death, the enemy, can never be the coming of the Lord -- his friend. It may

be that the time between the hour of death and the morn of resurrection shall pass even as 'the twinkling of an eye'; one moment may be heard the voices of earthly friends around the bed, and the next (as it appears) that call that wakes the sleepers in the tomb. But we must carefully distinguish between things that differ. Falling asleep is not the same as waking, though hardly an instant may appear to pass between them; nor is grim death the coming of the Lord, though no time seems to elapse between the two events. If it be otherwise, and the return of Christ means the believer's death, then is the Resurrection 'past already,' for that is always associated with the Lord's return. But against this heresy we are expressly warned.

"No; if Greek and English words have any meaning, those employed by the Apostles and the Fathers, with their equivalents in our own mother tongue, all go to show that a personal and glorious coming of the Lord was what those men of God were waiting for. No other coming ever crossed their minds.' It was not till the middle of the third century that serious opposition, or even question arose as to the doctrine of the personal coming and reign of Jesus Christ. 'Now,' says Mosheim, 'its credit began to decline, principally through the influence and authority of Origen, who opposed it with the greatest warmth, because it was incompatible with some of his favorite sentiments.'

"The English Baptist churches in their Confession of Faith, presented to Charles II in 1690, said, 'We believe . . . that the same Lord Jesus who showed Himself alive after His passion, by many infallible proofs, which was taken up from the disciples and carried into heaven, shall so come in like manner as He was seen to go into heaven, and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall also appear with Him in glory; for then shall He be King of kings and Lord of lords.' Here there is quite enough to show what was the hope within them when the early Christians spoke with one another of the coming of the Lord. It was 'the Lord Himself' -- for whom they looked and longed.

"II. The reason for such unanimity and enthusiasm in the entertainment of this hope must have been both weighty and worthy. The early Christians did not lightly hold it, and it would not be with light and careless hand they took it up. They must have had as cogent reasons for believing in, and hoping for, their Lord's return, as they possessed for trusting and rejoicing in His first appearing. Back to the first by faith, and forward to the next by hope, they looked, with as solid assurance in one case as in the other. These were the two pivots on which revolved their Christian life, the two wings on which they mounted up as eagles; neither pivot could be weakened, nor could either wing be clipped, without grave injury immediately ensuing. 'Take unto you the whole armor of God,' said the Apostles, and we may be sure they gave as good reasons why the Christian should 'take for a helmet the hope of salvation,' as for his 'putting on the breastplate of faith and love.'

"The foremost reason must have been, that Christ Himself had said He would return. The word of seers and prophets, of apostles and of angels, was of use; and these had all united to affirm that He would come again;

but, after all, the Master of the House, rather than any servant, was the One whose word was to be heard. If He said even once, He would return, that would be quite sufficient for the faithful heart. Already we have seen that many times the

Lord Had Pledged His Word

to this effect. He said distinctly, 'If I go I will come again.' 'I will come to you.' 'I go away and come again unto you.' He spoke of Himself as the 'Son of Man,' who should 'come in the glory of His Father'; as the 'Nobleman' who went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return'; as the 'Master' for whose coming the servants were to watch; the 'Bridegroom,' whose appearing the wise virgins all would hail; and as the 'Lord' who yet would come and reckon with the stewards of his house. In these, and many ways beside, the gracious Lord assured His loved ones He would come again, and they, with trustful hearts, just took Him at His word. 'To doubt would be disloyalty, to falter would be sin.' Then, as their faith laid hold, their hope was born; for they soon found, wrapped in the promises of His return, as in a garment fair, all scented with sweet lavender, things rare and beautiful,, that made those precious promises the richest heirloom of the Christian Church.

"The first thing they discovered there was this, that in the certainty of Christ's return there lay the guarantee -- the only guarantee they had -- that they would see their Lord. Some of those early saints had seen the Savior when He stood on earth; but now His words were true. 'You see Me no more.' Oh, how they longed to view Him once again. To many of them the Apostle Peter's words. were more appropriate, 'Whom having not seen, ye love; and in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice.' But all the Church most earnestly desired to look on Him whose love had won their hearts. There is evidence that at a very early date the words of Isaiah were appropriated, 'Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.'

"Apart from the Savior's coming most assuredly there is no warrant given that these anticipations shall be realized. It is then that 'every eye shall see Him.' No wonder that the early Christians 'panted for the appointed hour.' Then would be the revelation, the unveiling of the Lord; 'the day of His appearing and His kingdom;' and till it came they could not be at rest.

We Shall be 'Changed' and 'See Him as He is.'

"They also learned to say, 'when He shall appear,' and 'we shall see Him as He is,' 'we shall be like Him,' 'changed into the same image, from glory to glory'; for 'as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.' This is a marvelous announcement, and hardly could we credit it, unless it were most clearly given in God's most Holy Word. For the assistance of our faith, it is even given repeatedly, and we can only gratefully accept the truth. The early Christians certainly did this.

"They believed that this 'glad change' in them 'which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord,' would be accompanied by the awakening of

them 'which sleep in Jesus.' For their dear ones who were dead, -- as well as for themselves, their only hope lay in the Second Advent. They: did not say, 'There is no death; what seems so is transition.' No, they accepted death as a reality. 'We believe that Jesus died,' they said, 'even so,' there are 'them also which sleep in Jesus. 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.' Still, they are dead, and Resurrection is required to make them live. Not by making light of death did they attempt to comfort one another; but by making much, yea, everything, of the sure and certain hope of joyful Resurrection, to take place at the coming of the Lord. He was the mighty magnet that would yet 'descend from heaven,' and as steel is drawn to steel, so they declared 'the dead in Christ' would rise to Him.

"They believed that that would be the day of their presentation to the King. By the Apostle Paul they were distinctly so informed. In writing to Corinthian saints, he said: 'Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.' Until that day, on various grounds, they could not be presented. Christ would not even, until then, be King. So long as He was Priest within the veil, they could not go to Him. The type forbade it: 'There shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out.' The Lord Himself declared it: 'Whither I go ye cannot come.' 'I will come again and receive you unto Myself.' For that day of joyful welcome to His court they had to wait. They did not dream of 'going to heaven one by one'; they would 'be caught up together to meet the Lord.' They could not think of entering His glorious presence until they were 'presented.' They could not be presented until they were prepared and fitly robed. Not in the drab dress of this mortal body could they stand before Him. 'This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.' But they believed that when He came this necessary change in their apparel would be wrought; and then should they be brought into the presence of the King in 'raiment of needlework and clothing of wrought gold,' 'a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.'

"That would be the time, then, of their triumph and reward. Sometimes when men die, their friends affirm they have gone to their reward; but

Not So Said the Early Church

They could not; for the Lord had definitely named another time than that of death: 'Thou shalt be recompensed,' said He, 'at the resurrection of the just'; 'in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory.' 'Behold, I come . . . and My reward is with Me to give every man [them according as his work shall be.' The Apostle Peter confirms that with the word, 'When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory.' 'We must all 'appear before the judgment seat of Christ' before reward' can be distributed, and we are distinctly told it is at 'His appearing' that this seat shall be set up. 'Henceforth,' said the expiring Paul, 'there is laid tip for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing:' He had no thought of going by himself

into the presence chamber, and in some private way receiving His Lord's 'welcome' and 'well done.' No! he wanted 'all them, also,' whom he had known on earth to be beside him then; especially those whom he had led to taste redeeming love. 'For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?' It is when the nobleman returns that he will call his servants, and hold reckoning with them. No wonder, then, that faithful men kept ever in their minds that great event. The coming of the Lord was not denied, nor lost to view, until, in later days than those of which we speak, the Christian Church had lost its zeal, and in sad, wanton ways was walking with the world.

"Try kingdom come,' He had Himself instructed them to pray thus, and they believed that till He came the kingdom would not come. Not for the gradual spread of truth, and the conversion of the world, they looked. . . They knew that all the purposes of God regarding men would be fulfilled, but they appear not to have thought of that as one. The Gospel must be preached in all the world, 'tis true; but they accepted Christ's own words, that this should be but 'for a witness unto all nations'; and as James the Apostle said, 'to take out of them a people for His name.' They did not vainly hope the world would better and yet better grow; they knew that 'evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.' They never said that things would so improve that the last days of this dark age would be its brightest and its best. 'This know,' said they, 'that in the last days

Perilous Times Shall Come';

for wickedness shall be rampant even with 'a form of godliness.' With one consent these early Christians waited for the Lord. By His appearing would His kingdom be secured.

"Many members of the early Church were Jews, and for their nation's sake they wanted Christ to come. That day would be a glorious day for them, the time of Israel's repentance and recovery. Then 'the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth,' and from their eyes the veil shall be removed. 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and mourn.' 'And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad, and rejoice in His salvation.'

"The thought of Israel's salvation at the Lord's return would make glad the hearts of the Gentile saints as, well as Jews; for Israel's restoration, they were told, would girdle the whole globe with the glory of the Lord. 'If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?' Then it is that the Lord, by His Advent, shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel; then it is, and not in this the Gospel day, that 'the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.' Then 'He shall judge among the nations, and rebuke many

people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.'

"Peace shall spread through all the earth,
When the Lord doth come.
Truth and righteousness go forth,
When the Lord doth come.
God with men shall then be found,
Every place be hallowed ground,
Life and beauty shall abound,
When the Lord doth come.'

"With such results expected from the coming of the King, it is no surprise that it became the early Christian's hope. Each member of the Church seems to have held it. A Christian who had not this hope was an anomaly. Milner says, 'This constituted in the second century so decidedly an article of faith that Justin held it up as a criterion of orthodoxy.' Bishop Newton says, 'It was generally believed in the

First Three, and Purest, Ages [Centuries].'

"Bishop Russell, though an anti-Millenarian, says, 'Down to the beginning of the fourth century the belief was universal and undisputed.' While Gibbon, with no prejudice either way, says, 'It appears to have been the reigning sentiment of orthodox believers.' He also adds, 'It was productive of the most salutary effects on the faith and practice of Christians.' Of course its effects were salutary! It disposed the Church to prayerfulness and patience, to purity and peace, to sincerity and soberness, to loyalty and love, to fidelity and firmness, to watchfulness and work.. Solace it gave in suffering, and in bereavement balm; in persecution perfect peace,. and even in the martyr's fire the Master's joy." '

The Parousia First -- The Epiphania and Apokalupsis Follow

As in the distance the various peaks of the mountains are blended so as to be indiscernible, so in the distance the various features of the Second Advent of our Lord were indistinct. But now is our salvation near -- "nearer than when we first believed." and we should expect that the Holy Spirit, which we were assured would bring truth to the attention of the Lord's people as "meat in due season," would continue to "show them things to come" as they would be due to be understood. And thus we have found it, praise the Lord! God's Word is as a shining light shining more and more unto the perfect day. In its light we can now see that our Master will be present for a time, in the harvest time of this. Age -- invisibly present doing a work in His Church, before any outward sign or revealing to the world takes place. His work in His Church will be the separating of the true from the merely nominal -- the "wheat" from the "tares." His revealing will be in the "flaming fire," the great time of trouble with which this Age will close, and in which the "tares" shall cease to be "tares": but before that fire can come, as the parable was given to show, He will be present in His wheatfield gathering the wheat into the garner and bundling the tares for the burning.

Another parable also shows that before revealing Himself in any manner to the world, He calls first His own servants and reckons with them, (Luke 19:15-27.) Ah! ! dear brethren what a holy awe it brings to our hearts to know that we are now living in the presence of the Son of Man!

If this blessed hope so absorbed the thought of these faithful brethren of the early Church, knowing as they did through Paul's Epistles that the day of the Lord would not come immediately, since the "man of sin" had not yet come, as foretold by Daniel; and knowing also through Peter's reminder that they would have need of his Epistles after his decease, because as he forewarned, "damnable heresies" would eventually sweep down upon the Church -- if as suggested this hope so occupied their minds, associated as it was with the certainty of having to watch and wait indefinitely for the "appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ," what can we suppose would have been the measure of their fervency, of spirit, their rejoicing and thrilling expectancy, had they enjoyed the knowledge and assurance that we possess today! Oh, if St. Paul with his clearness of insight into the mysteries of God had been able to tell them in those wonderful days that there remained no unfulfilled prophecy to stand in the way, no developments that must precede His coming; if he could tell them with confidence that the great time-clock of the ages was already preparing, to strike the hour when His bright-shining would burst upon the world, who can imagine the bounds of their joy and love! It is not difficult for us to understand how this knowledge would have elevated their minds and sanctified their hearts and ennobled their characters since we have such clear evidence of the power of their limited knowledge to thus influence their lives in their own day and time. Can we imagine there would be any inclination amongst them now to dispute as to who should be greatest in the Kingdom? Surely not! Would there be any desire to fall asleep now when alertness and faithful watching would be particularly needful? Their example under less favorable conditions answers, No. Neither would there be any evidence of that absence of reverence for Him so much in evidence today being "wise above that which is written."

We are surely impressed with the spirit of the Apostles in their frequent discussions of this subject in their various Epistles. The absence of any human speculation regarding the times and seasons, and the great carefulness they exercised to avoid making any plans for the Lord respecting the matter of how He should come, or how He should proceed to separate His faithful Church from all others. How careful they were to hold before the eyes of the brethren those essentials of character necessary to all who would be found worthy of an abundant entrance. And they leave the matter of the personnel of the Little Flock entirely with Him. They held before the minds of the faithful the great work of their own preparation and purifying and left the Kingdom work for Kingdom days, rightly believing that qualification for kingship must necessarily precede kingdom responsibilities. They sought to fix the minds of all upon the solemnity of the hour, to see none, save Jesus only. Let us follow them as they followed Christ !

"THE MORNING COMETH"

"Lo! from his Eastern heights sublime,
I hear the herald's joyous warning;
Day's glory deepens; far upclimb
The rosy splendors of the morning;
See yon triumphant steeds of light
Chase the retreating hosts of night;
The valleys sing, the hills rejoice,
And sounds aloft one cheering voice,
'Tis coming. Yes, 'tis coming.'

"'Tis coming. Yes, our night of tears
Shall fade before Immanuel's glory,
Which now, to gild our earth, appears,
Foretold in ancient song and story;
Foretold in that seraphic strain,
With notes which haunt our world again,
For traveling through the shadowy years,
The Just, the Merciful appears.
Behold! the Lord of glory."