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The First Christmas

"And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." - Luke 2:7.

THUS came into the world He who was destined to revolutionize the entire order of human affairs, and upon whose shoulders should rest, in due time, the government of all nations. And though all men were in expectation of Him, none recognized the great significance of the event. It was just one more, born to a Jewish mother, into a race where each mother hoped, without hope, that her male child should be the long looked for Deliverer of His people.

So "hope springs eternal in the human breast," and this is as it should be. "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord". "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His Word do I hope." - Psa. 130.1, 5.

Who would have believed that here came into the world that night the Word of Life in whom the Psalmist placed his hope? But God was not without His witnesses here as elsewhere, for "there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior which is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:8-11, 13, 14.) And again, did Simeon witness to the salvation of the Lord, "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." The prophetess "gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

Of Lowly Birth

The fact that our Lord was born under these circumstances was doubtless of divine arrangement, for God, in the development of His plan of salvation has from the beginning chosen the humble of the earth to portray its features and to proclaim its truths to them of the hearing ear.

It was no unusual thing for a traveler in the Orient of that day or even in the present, to find quarters in the outbuildings when the inn proper might be filled to its capacity. Luke is the only one of the Evangelists who mentions this fact, and because of this, its truth was disputed by many scholars, but we are no longer dependent upon Luke's Gospel alone, although the story as told by him is convincing and needs no confirmation to the heart which has come face to face with his Savior and has enjoyed the rest which Christ has given, based upon a perfect reconciliation with God. He has shared this experience with the poet, who has said:

"I hear the low voice call that bids me come, Me, even me, with all my grief opprest, With **sins** that burden my unquiet breast, And in my heart the longing that is dumb, Yet beats forever, like a muffled drum, For all delights whereof I, dispossessed, Pine and repine and find nor peace nor rest This side the haven where He bids me come.

"He bids, m come and lay my sorrows down,
And have my sin washed white by His dear grace;
He smiles -- what matter, then, though all men frown?
Naught can assail me, held in His embrace;
And if His welcome home the end may crown,
Shall I not hasten to that heavenly place?"

The pomp and ceremonies of the life of the great are not conducive to the growth of Christian character, to that purity of heart which shall see God. Separation from the world becomes a necessity -- hence it was fitting that our blessed Lord should be excluded from the inn because there was no room for Him. Men of God have long found consolation in walking much alone. Forty years in the desert where he could commune with God was needed to prepare Moses for his work. There was no room in the courts of Pharaoh to develop the needed character. Abraham was called out of Chaldea for the same reason. Men must separate themselves from the world if they would see God.

Still No Room in the Inn

There was no room in the inn for Him then, and neither has there been room for Him among men since He came into the world. As a man among men He desired fellowship. He drew after Him a few of somewhat like mind, in whom He saw material for the continuance of some phases of His work after He had fulfilled the purpose of His coming. But one of them betrayed Him, another deserted Him, and the rest forsook Him. Nazareth thrust Him out. Gadara besought Him to depart from their coasts. Samaria would not receive Him. "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." - Scourged, persecuted, crucified, naked, forsaken, despised, bruised for our iniquities.

At His birth they offered a stable; during His life He was an outcast from His people. He came to them and they refused to receive Him.

What does the world offer Him today? After the passing of nineteen centuries the world offers Him only those things which seem of value to it, that is the material things and the things of pomp

and ceremony, fine cathedrals, elaborate rituals and ornate creeds, while He desires to dwell in the innermost chambers of the heart. And in place of this He is offered the manger of stone, of ritualism and of man-devised creed. And so in the world today there is "no room in the inn."

The World Comprehendeth Him Not

This anniversary of His birth, which will be celebrated wherever His name is spoken, brings afresh to the minds of all who have heard it, the beautiful story of the nativity as set forth in the language of Luke, a most touching and wonderful narrative of an event like unto which there is no other since the world began. Truly a turning point in history, recognized by a large portion of the nations of the earth as the dividing line in the reckoning of time; but how deep into the being of men and of nations does the influence of the Christ penetrate? To what extent has the nature of man been changed in the passing of the years since His birth, since that evening when they found there was no room for them at the inn?

The nature of man, both as nation and individual, has remained the same, inspired by self interests, and paying homage to the prince of this world, instead of to the Prince of Peace, instead of to Him who came to save and to restore that which was lost. That this was His mission is a truth well attested by the Word of God from the time the first sin was committed by man, down to the full consummation of His Plan "in the fulness of time" as recorded in the closing chapters of His Word -- the full restoration of man to the favor of God, when man shall again become a pleasure to Him, for which purpose He created him, when "the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

The Eternal Purpose of God

This was the purpose of His birth, this was the beginning in the development of that Plan which was devised back yonder in the distance, before time began, before "the foundations of the earth were laid" or the "morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

Might it not be helpful to the sincere believer to permit his mind to go back more often to the eternities and think more deeply of the love of God toward His creation, in that He planned for his redemption even before He created him, and to consider too the love of the Logos for the Father in that He was willing to enter into the plan for man's redemption, in order that He might glorify God first and always. With Mary, the mother of Jesus, we can truly say, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Savior. For He that is mighty hath done great things; and holy is His name. He has filled the hungry with good things." - Luke 1:46, 47, 49, 53.

Tragedy forms a large part in the life of man, even since the beginning of the race. In the wisdom of God, because man has sinned, the highest human attainments are reached through effort, much of which lies in the direction of suffering, either physical or mental or both. And because man sinned and fell from the favor of God, it became necessary that a sinless One should come into the world to redeem the race.

It was fitting to the occasion of the birth of such a One that the hosts of heaven should be deeply interested and that one of them should be chosen to announce the important event. It was fitting too, that this should be made to a group of shepherds, in view of the fact that the Savior's work in some respects was to be similar to theirs. In fact we recall that He likened Himself to a shepherd in the care of his flock, and as the sheep know the voice of their shepherd so do His sheep know His voice, and another will they not follow.

"Glory to God in the Highest"

Picture these shepherds with their flocks on those Judean hills in the cool of the autumn night, watchful lest harm should come to their charges. And on what might their minds be dwelling, and what might be the topic of conversation? They were devout men, and to such the quiet of the night leads to a contemplation of holy things, if the mind be acquainted with God. Many of the chosen of Israel found their occupations in the isolation of the field or pasture. Then were they free to commune with Him undisturbed by the activities of life around them. The shepherd has had a notable place as the messenger of God to men.

Suddenly as these sat together, "the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." No wonder they were sore afraid. And as he unfolded to them the good tidings of great joy, the multitude of the heavenly hosts could no longer restrain themselves, but burst forth in praise to God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace good will toward men."

These were the things which they told to Mary and which she kept and pondered in her heart. These were the things that sustained her in the days of sorrow which followed fast and faster after His baptism in Jordan which baptism symbolized His consecration to death and marked the beginning of His Messiahship.

This was the babe who was to "grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." "Despised and rejected of man, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He was to bear our grief and carry our sorrows, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities.

"Worthy is the Lamb that was Slain"

From the human viewpoint this Man was a sad failure, and His birth gave little cause for rejoicing to any except those immediately concerned. From the viewpoint of the consecrated mind, the mind which has been renewed to the point of transformation, all is changed and one gets a glimpse of the workings of the mind of God, the great Master Mind whose ways seem so strange at times and past finding out.

But might we not by a closer walk with Christ come to a better understanding of His Word and a deeper sense of appreciation of our relationship to Him, might we not know a deeper joy in our hope and be led to glorify God as Jesus glorified Him. Might we not have a deeper understanding of God's grace as expressed by the Apostle to the Church at Ephesus: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all."

Can one wonder that when the Plan of God was made known, "the four and twenty elders fell down before Him that sat on the throne, and worshiped Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit we can also rejoice with the heavenly host and thank our heavenly Father for the measure of understanding which is ours concerning His Plan for the restoration of man, that man may again be for the pleasure of Him who created all things. And again can we rejoice for the covenant of grace which provides for those who are joint-heirs with Jesus Christ and who shall reign with Him as kings and priests during the coming Age, which seems so close upon us. Knowing these things, what manner of persons ought we to be, for looking beyond His birth we see that it was His death which cancelled the debt of sin, and removed the curse of eternal death from the race, with a grand opportunity for the world of mankind to come into harmony with His righteous principles. These promises of God are assured because His resurrection was a guarantee of the resurrection of all men.

Thus seen we can understand why He found it a joy to do the Father's will and why He possessed that peace of soul which He has passed on to His fellow-sacrificers who must here and now develop that same love which inspired our heavenly Father and our blessed Lord in developing the Plan of the Ages, the eternal purpose of God. "What I say unto you, I say unto all, *Watch*.

The History of the Church

[Contributed]

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." - John 3:16.

IN FIELDS not far outside the sleeping town, shepherds are guarding their flocks. The chill of the October night is in the air and the watchers draw their garments closer about them. The sheep lie huddled together with little movement save the occasional stretching to ease cramped limbs. From their vaulted dome the stars shine down and in their cool light the houses, clustered solidly together on the hillside, gleam whitely through the softened shadows. Stilled is the beating pulse of Bethlehem after the bustling crowds of the day; all is dark save where some fitful gleam behind closed doors proclaims a lonely vigil.

In the low-stretched field the shepherds, tired now of the eagerly exchanged thoughts of the hour, sit silent, gazing into the jeweled expanse above them, voicing again within their own hearts the immortal paean of David as he guarded his father's flock in pastures not far distant, perhaps in this selfsame place. Shine on, stars, and let your fingers of light touch with an added gentleness the long fleece of the sleeping flocks. Shine as you have never shone before, bathing with a holier light the quiet roofs of the darkened town. Show tonight, ye heavens, all the wealth of your profound knowledge, for He who hung you faultlessly in the sky, bidding you swing eternally through space to the rhythm of a perfect law, soon shall utter a babe's first cry on earth. Greater are you tonight, oh Bethlehem, than all of earth's proud cities! Amid your humblest surroundings, your poorest travelers, the tired beasts of the day's journey, He who was once so rich, for man's sake becomes poor, and the loving glance and the tender smile to bend over Him adorns but the face of Mary, wife of the peasant Joseph, yet blessed above all women! Sing now, oh angel chorus, your, "Glory to God in the Highest," and chant o'er the hills of Judea that promise of peace to earth's weary.

The World that God so Loved

At the time that Christianity was born, the human race, old and numerous and separated by religion, language, color, and culture, occupied in its civilized aspect a strip of land some twenty degrees in width, lying on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean and extending east to the Pacific Ocean. Outside this strip the rest of the world was barbarous or savage with no settled life, written language, art, architecture, or culture, and so it is impossible to estimate at this time the earth's population. In the eastern half of this civilized strip lay China, India, and Japan; in the western half were the Semites, Greeks and Romans. These two parts influenced each other but little and it was in the middle of the western half that Christianity had its beginning and where its activities were confined for five long centuries. Let us turn then from the Jewish cradle of this new gospel, from the lowly babe in swaddling clothes, and gaze at mighty Rome.

Gross Darkness Covers the People

No denser darkness, no heavier fog of moral corruption, can be found in all history than that of the land of the Caesars at the time the new religion-new, yet with its roots planted deeply in the past, began to dawn. We find Rome a land of white slaves whose new recruits came constantly, brought in chains from her many wars, with bored ears and prices chalked on their bare feet; and to these were added also, from time to time, those men who could not pay their debts. It was not at all uncommon for a household to have as many as a thousand of these slaves, indeed, some senators owned as many as 20,000, most of them idle, uneducated and corrupt. Some of higher mentality, however, were trained to serve as schoolmasters, secretaries, actors, musicians, physicians, in short, in those branches which we today are pleased to term the "professions," and often some refined and cultivated Greek was made to obey the most offensive orders of a vulgar and illiterate Roman. Treated often with great cruelty by masters who possessed over them the power of life and death, looked upon as little better than brute beasts, it was inevitable that such should lose much of the dignity of men. With slaves so much more numerous than owners and hatred from harsh treatment so deeply instilled into their hearts, many were the masters who lived in constant fear, and, indeed, all Rome lived in constant dread of servile insurrections. Even female slaves were lashed and roughly handled for the most trifling offense-a brooch missing, a lock of hair not neatly arranged, and the offender might face death itself.

History relates that one evening the Emperor Augustus was dining at the house of a friend when one of the slaves, carrying a crystal goblet, stumbled and fell, breaking it into many fragments. Angered, the host ordered that the slave be taken at once to the fish-pond and thrown in alive as food for the lampreys, a repulsive fish that rasps away flesh with its sucker-like mouth and its tongue. The terrified boy, escaping from the hands of his fellow-slaves, ran and threw himself at Caesar's feet, imploring that he might die a less horrible death than that of being eaten 'by the fishes. Customary as it was to torture slaves and put them to death, Augustus, horrified it seems, by such cruelty, ordered that the boy be set free, that every crystal goblet in the house of Vedius Pollio be 'broken in his presence and that the fish-pond be at once filled up.

Great Luxury - Great Mystery

In Rome's empire the two great extremes, enormous wealth and the most abject poverty, walked side by side. Around her fine palaces wandered hundreds of beggars, often horribly mutilated, and with small children maimed; the better to ply their sordid profession and move the fortunate, if possible, to greater interest and compassion; beggars, whose numbers were constantly increased by the Roman custom of exposing infants. In a Greek or Roman household the birth of a child was not always a time for rejoicing. If, when the child was first shown to the father, he stooped down and took it up in his arms, it was received by that act as a member of the family and was then taken to the apartments of the women where it rarely, if ever, saw its father's face. If, however, he turned away with no sign of interest, the helpless being was doomed, probably to death, left exposed in some lonely or barren place to the mercy of the wild beasts or first passerby.

Hand in hand with great luxury usually goes great gluttony, and the philosophy of the Epicureans, "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die," had much force. Sometimes a single banquet cost the price of an entire estate. Far lands and seas were searched for food whose value depended

on its cost and rarity rather than on its real good. The 'brains of peacocks, the tongues of nightingales, shell-fish from almost unknown shores, rare wines, all served in dishes of crystal and gold and silver, "embossed," says the poet, "with gems and studs of pearls." "They eat," says the great philosopher, Seneca, "they eat and then they vomit; they vomit, and then they eat." The women supped at silver tables; precious stones ornamented their sandals; their necks gleamed with priceless pearls, diamonds, and rubies; a certain Paulina wore a single pearl said to have cost in our money some \$250,000, and her second-best dress, fashioned of emeralds and pearls, cost the equivalent of \$160,000. Apicus dissolved pearls in the wine which he drank—a supposed cure for epilepsy—and outside it all were the poor and the aged, the sick and miserable, dying unheeded and unrelieved. Benevolence and charity were all but dead in effete Rome; a man was thought a fool if he gave to the poor: "Give only to him who is rich and can return favors"—and so they lolled in the baths, often open from sunrise to sunset, and even all night. An army of slaves attended them there, rogues and thieves amongst them, and the health and cleanliness of the body were but of secondary consideration, the main object was but idle, voluptuous pleasure.

Cruel was that Roman world as the Gospel morning dawned; gladiators fought to the death in the magnificent amphitheatres, that one of Titus alone seated 80,000 spectators on cushioned and canopied benches of marble. According to rank they were seated from the Emperor down to the lowest populace. Back of the Emperor sat the senators, back of these the generals, then the patricians, then the ordinary citizens, and, last of all, the people fed at the public expense and to whom free entertainment also was given—all this to keep them quiet and submissive—the modern "dole" of today having so historical a precedent. Supported by contributions exacted from conquered provinces, the idle rich and the idle poor, alike, could give themselves up to pleasure, and so the Roman people sat around the arenas where wild beasts tore at each other, where men and wild beasts engaged in conflict, where capital punishments were often meted out, where martyrs burned in shirts of pitchy fire, and where gladiators fought to the death as the populace, wildly cheering, waved handkerchiefs if they desired clemency for a fallen combatant, turned thumbs downward if the popular whim of the crowd called for his death, and showered money into the arena upon the victors. The games of Tragan in celebration of a victory lasted 120 days when 10,000 gladiators fought and 10,000 beasts were slain.

And so money became prized above all things and the only test of social position; the nobility gladly wedding with the most vulgar plebians if to their monetary advantage. Women, regarded with no reverence and little esteem, asked only for diamonds and chariots. All worshiped at the shrine of Mammon, and the pursuit of wealth became a national obsession, for prosperity and success, no matter how obtained, secured position and influence. By this time about 2,000 persons alone owned the world.

The Religion of Rome

Man is innately religious, there is in him a hunger that has ever caused him to look out and beyond himself to some greater Power, the created calling for his Creator in whose image he was made; that image marred, weakened, and, in some cases, almost obliterated, it is true, but still bearing within him a longing that, alienated from God, finds no satisfaction. And the masses of Rome **were** religious, but with a religion that was national rather than personal or universal, and dwelt only with the affairs of present life. What belief they had in a future life was shadowy and uncertain and today was of vaster importance. And so they prayed the gods to turn away their anger and keep them in good health and to grant good crops and to give them victory and safety in their constant wars. The Emperor, standing far removed from even his noblest senators,

sometimes cruel and corrupt if not half-mad, was actually deified while living, and took to himself the high title of Pontifex Maximus - Chief Priest-he was, at once, as the historian Gibbon so aptly puts it, "a priest, an atheist, and a god." Though the people in general sneered now at the legends of the gods and goddesses whom their father's worshiped, the rulers thought it expedient to hold the most elaborate rituals that a firmer grasp might be kept on the crowd, for a people devoted to religious rites either then or today, is bound securely to those in charge of those rites. And so a hollow, public display was made of a creed in which its defenders themselves no more believed, for in its stead they were entirely atheistic and superstitious, 'giving credence to sorcerers and astrologers, and to all kinds of imposters. "I perceive," says Paul later at Athens, "that in all things ye are too superstitious."

Such was imperial Rome. What a sad and repellent picture! The wickedly wealthy, the rest of her citizens fed on a miserable pittance, wasted in the games and crime of the day, dying of pestilence and starvation. The loftiest emotions of life all missing, and in their place depraved tastes and enjoyments, wrecking what might have been left in man of the original divine image. Suicide became so common that it was scarcely noticed, and those whose minds were better and more meditative fled to caves and solitude to escape it all. Despotism! debased and illiterate people! cruel slavery! lowered womankind!-is this then the glory of Rome to which Gibbon refers? There were, indeed, its miles of broad paved roads, its 17,000 palaces, its 9,000 'baths, its theatres and its amphitheatres, the gilded roof of its capitol, costing \$15,000,000 of our money. There was that great empire, so vast that the Mediterranean Sea which it enclosed, became a small inland lake, edged with banks, adorned with temples and palaces of superb beauty. There were the white ships flecking this sea, and on land the glory of fruit and harvest. But what of the heart and soul of it all? The Apostle Paul touches that soul with a brief pen-picture in Romans, a glimpse into a dark abyss from which we shrink appalled.

Herein then lies the Christian's deep interest in far-off Pagan Rome -- these were the conditions that Christianity found on that world stage as she entered and, having found, attempting no public reforms, began her impassioned appeal on individual hearts alone. And the action and reaction of Christianity upon the world and the world upon Christianity forms the subject matter of that which we are pleased to term Church History-that History a steady and unbroken chain of events from then until now.

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides 'upon the storm.

"Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work-in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

Next of this series

"SEEKERS AFTER GOD"

" . . . meaning them (men) to seek for God on the chance of finding Him in their groping for Him." - Moffatt's Translation.

Signs of the Master's Presence

"What will be the sign of Thy presence, and of the consummation of the Age?" - Matt. 24:3, Diaglott.

IN THE four previous installments of this series we have expressed the following convictions:

1. The object of Messiah's second advent is a glorious one; not the destruction or enslavement of our race, but the salvation of both Church and remainder of mankind. - John 14:2, 3; 1 Chron. 16:31, 34.
2. Since the Millennial Age is to be a time of restoration, and since the retention of Jesus in heaven is to be only until that time, it follows that His second advent must take place before, not after, the Millennium. - Acts 3:21; Rev. 20:4,
3. Antichrist must first come--and has; the predictions concerning him having been abundantly fulfilled in the Papal system. - Dan. 7:26; 2 Thess. 2:1-12.
4. Christ's second advent is to synchronize with the end of the Age: any sign, therefore, which denotes the end of the Age must also constitute evidence of His presence. - Matt. 24:3; Mark 13:4; Luke 21:7.
5. The year 1914 was not the date for the glorification of the Church. The date for this event is not to be ascertained from the parallels of the Jewish and Gospel Ages, a fact realized by Brother Russell before he died, who admitted his "inference" on this subject was "unjustified." (Watch Tower Reprints, Volume VII, page R5950.) Some, failing to profit from Brother Russell's experience, have attempted to recalculate the time features of those "parallels," not realizing that his mistake was not one of arithmetic but of Scripture interpretation. Their repeated failures to determine the date for the glorification of the Church should not be permitted to becloud our vision, so as to prevent us (from, recognizing such signs as there may- be which denote the end of the Age and the presence of the Lord.
6. The word "parousia" is correctly translated "presence"; it does not have the thought of "being on the way," nor does it refer to a "moment" of arrival. Its meaning is established in Phil. 2:12 where the "period" of the Apostle's "presence" is contrasted with the "period" of his "absence."
7. At our Lord's first advent many failed to learn from the signs which attested Him that Messiah was in their midst. Even the disciples had been slow to recognize Him, and had needed a revelation from the Father to enable them to do so. (Matt. 16:16, 17.) The possibility that at His Second advent they might experience a similar difficulty was probably back of their question: What will be the sign of Thy presence? If the indications of His presence were to be so plain that none could fail to recognize Him, there would seem to be no point to their question; no sign or signs would be necessary. On the other hand, if there was a possibility of His being present unrecognized, the same as had proved to be the case at His first advent, then a sign which would reveal His presence to them would be most desirable. What, Lord, will that sign be?

8. Our Lord's reply is seen to be divided into two main sections, namely (1) a description of the long interval which must elapse before the end of the Age and the period of His presence would be reached and (2) a description of the end of the Age and period of His presence.

9. The long interval between the first and second advents, known as the Gospel Age, was to be a time of tribulation. In the world it would be marked by wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes. The world would also hate His true disciples, and in many cases they would undergo martyrdom. In the Church a great falling away would take place. False teachers would arise, deceiving many; and because iniquity (opposition to God's laws of truth, righteousness, justice, and love) would everywhere prevail, the love of many (**the many, the** great majority) of Christ's professed followers would wax cold. Notwithstanding all this, God's "good news" would be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations. - Matt. 24:3-14.

The Time of the End

"Immediately "after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." - Matt. 24:29.

To what tribulation do these words of our Master refer? Is it the tribulation with which the Jewish Age closed in A. D. 70? If so, we should look for the events symbolized by the darkening of the sun and moon, etc., to follow immediately after that date. Those expositors who find the complete and final fulfillment of nearly every feature of our Lord's great prophecy to have occurred in connection with the overthrow of the Jewish polity do thus interpret. By the darkening of the sun and moon, the falling of the stars, and shaking of the powers of heaven these understand "the passing away of the Jewish Church and nation, or the Old Testament order of things, with all the lights, privileges, powers, and dignities belonging to it."

Others, again, expect these words of our Lord to have their fulfillment in the future. They have noted that this Gospel Age is to close in a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation, and believe it will be after the tribulation of those days, those days in the close of the Gospel Age that the darkening of the sun and moon, etc., will take place.

Neither of these views appeals to us as correct. "The correct interpretation, we think, is that presented by Brother Russell, in Scripture Studies, Vol. IV, pages 583, 584. There he observes: "The tribulation 'of those days' should be clearly distinguished from the tribulation at the end of those days, in which this Age and harvest will close." Then, after pointing out that "the entire Gospel Age has been a period of tribulation," he proceeds to identify the tribulation of our text with the persecutions of Papal Rome which ended "practically in 1776 and actually in 1799 when the Pope anti his authority were humiliated before the world."

If this understanding be correct, it would mean that the predictions concerning the darkening of the sun and moon, the falling stars and the shaking of the heavens, would have their fulfillment in the period immediately following the closing years of the eighteenth century, that period spoken of by Daniel the Prophet as "the time of the end." - Dan. 8:17; 11:35, 40; 12:4, 9.

This viewpoint finds confirmation in Brother Streeter's exposition of the parallel passage recorded in the Book of Revelation. In Rev. 6:12-14 St. John writes: "And I beheld when He had

opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together." Under the previous seal, the fifth, St. John heard the martyr cry, "How long." In interpreting this martyr cry, Brother Streeter expressed his belief that "it terminated with the Papacy's dominion over the saints at the end of the eighteenth century," and then goes on to say, "we would expect that the events described under the sixth seal would **begin** to meet their fulfillment **about that time.**"

The French Revolution

The great earthquake- seen under the sixth seal (which should not be confounded with the mighty earthquake, seen under the seventh seal, the seventh trumpet and the seventh vial, Rev. 16:18) is not mentioned in the great prophecy of our Lord (Matt. 24) we are now considering. However its identification in history will be valuable as an additional confirmation of the correctness of the view presented foregoing, that the "time of the end" is the period in which we should look for the occurrences in the sun, moon, stars, and heavens. We may profitably, therefore, digress to that extent.

"In a literal earthquake," comments Brother Streeter, "the surface of the earth in a great section of country is violently disturbed -- mountains, hills, valleys, forests, and rocks being removed out of their places. The fulfillment can be found only in violent civil, political, and religious agitations and changes. The inevitable conclusion is that the French Revolution, beginning in 1789, is referred to. It was the French government that more than any other for centuries upheld and carried out the Papal decrees of persecution of the saints, and as in the visions [of the Revelation] we now reach the end of Papacy's power in this direction, we would look for momentous disturbances in the French Government." - *Rev. Exp. Vol. 1, page 329.*

To quote from Brother Russell in this connection: "In the symbolic language of Revelation, the French Revolution was indeed a 'great earthquake' -a social shock so great that all 'Christendom' trembled until it was over; and that terrible and sudden outburst of a single nation's wrath, only a century ago [from 1897, the date he wrote these words], may give some idea of the fury of the coming storm, when the wrath of all the angry nations will burst the 'bands of law and order and cause a reign of universal anarchy. . . . A nation intoxicated with Babylon's wine of false doctrines in church and state, and long bound by priestcraft and superstition, there vomited forth its pollution and spent the force of its maddened rage. In fact the French Revolution seems referred to by our Lord in His revelation to John on Patmos as a prelude to, and an illustration of, the great crisis now approaching. It should be observed, also, that the same causes which operated to bring about that great calamity, are now operating to produce a similar, but far more extensive revolution, a revolution which will be world-wide."

"That times have not so changed as to make such a calamity either impossible or improbable in our day is too manifest to require proof. . . . Some have the erroneous idea that the world has-outgrown the barbarities of earlier days, and they rest in fancied security and assume that such calamities as have occurred in the past could not befall the world again; but the fact is that our nineteenth (and twentieth) century refinement is a very thin veneer, easily peeled off; sound judgment and an acquaintance with the facts of even recent history and with the present feverish pulse of humanity are sufficient to guarantee the possibility of a duplication of the past, even

without the sure word of prophecy, which foretells a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation."

Literal Darkening of Sun and Moon and Falling of Stars

Coming now to the darkening of the sun and moon and the falling of the stars, the question arises: "Are these signs to be regarded as literal or as symbolic? and have they yet been fulfilled?" The answer is: "They have had a literal fulfillment and are now having a symbolic fulfillment much more momentous. On May 19, 1780 (still in those days, the 1260 years of Papal power, but after that power had begun to wane and the brunt of the tribulation had passed) a phenomenal-darkening of the sun occurred, for which scientists of that time and since have never been able to account." "The darkening of the moon at its full the night following seems to have been little less remarkable than the darkening of the sun." That these were no ordinary occurrences is well established. Amongst the formidable array of competent testimony which Brother Russell has assembled on pages 585-590 of "Scripture Studies," Vol. IV, we note that of Herschel and Webster. "The noted astronomer Herschel, says: 'The dark day in Northern America was one of those wonderful phenomena of nature which will always be read of with interest, but which philosophy is at a loss to explain.'" "Noah Webster, LL.D., wrote in 1843, in the 'New Haven Herald,' concerning this dark day, and said: 'I stood and viewed the phenomenon. No satisfactory cause has yet been assigned.'"

"Half a century passed before the next sign appeared, the falling of the stars from heaven, as when a fig tree casteth her unripe fruit when shaken of a mighty wind. Our Lord's words found a fulfillment (though not their complete and only fulfillment, as we shall see later) in the wonderful meteoric showers of the early morning of Nov. 13, 1833." Amongst other testimonies to this occurrence we quote the following, as given by Brother Russell, "Scripture Studies," Vol. IV, page 589: "Mr. Henry Dana Ward, at the time a New York merchant, later an author and Episcopalian minister, wrote: 'No philosopher or scholar has told or recorded an event, I suppose, like that of yesterday morning. A Prophet eighteen hundred years ago foretold it exactly, if we will be at the trouble to understand falling stars to mean falling stars... . Truly the stars of heaven fell unto the earth as in the Apocalypse. The language of the Prophet has always been received as metaphorical; yesterday it was literally fulfilled.' - Journal of Commerce, Nov. 14, 1833."

Symbolic Fulfillments

"While these literal signs served their designed purpose in drawing general attention to the Time of the End, we believe," continues Brother Russell, "that the symbolic fulfillments are no less striking and even more interesting to those whose mental and spiritual perceptives are awakened so as to enable them to appreciate them.

"The sun as a symbol represents the Gospel light, the truth-and thus Christ Jesus. The moon as a symbol represents the light of the Mosaic Law. As the moon is a reflection of the light of the sun, so the Law was the shadow or reflection beforehand of the Gospel. The stars as symbols represent the inspired teachers of the Church-the Apostles. The heavens . . . represent Christendom. A combination of these symbols is found in Revelation (12:1) where the 'woman' symbolizing the early Church is represented as clothed with the sun, that is, resplendent in the full, clear light of the unclouded Gospel. The moon under her feet represents that the Law which supports her is

nevertheless not the source of her light. The twelve stars about her head as a crown represent her divinely appointed and inspired teachers -- the twelve Apostles.

"With this outline of the meaning of these symbols 'before our minds, let us examine afresh this feature of our Lord's great prophecy of the signs which are to indicate the end of this Age.

"Wherever we look we can recognize the fact that while God's consecrated people are being specially fed and enlightened at the present time, yet with the nominal church it is not so. Its sun is being darkened; its moon is being turned into blood; and its stars are falling. The center of the gospel light has from the first been the cross of Christ, the ransom; and however boldly Papacy set up the competitive sacrifice of the Mass, the saints of God have always held fast to this blessed center of all God's promises and of all His people's hopes. They have held to it, even though its philosophy has been almost entirely hidden from their view.

"True, there have been a few all along who, not understanding the ransom, and unable to harmonize it with other truths, and especially with their errors, rejected it. These, however, were rare exceptions to the rule. But . . . today only a small minority of the professed ministers of the cross recognize its value or preach it. On the contrary, much of the teaching now aims to disclaim and disprove that we were 'bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ,' and substitutes for this the theory of Evolution . . . which denies the Scriptural doctrine of a primal fall and of a ransom from it."

"As the sunlight of the ransom becomes obscured, so the moonlight of the Mosaic Law, which in its sacrifices foreshadowed the ransom, must of necessity become obscured also. It is no longer uncommon for public teachers to refer -to the bloody sacrifices of Israel, required by their Law, as barbaric. Once, when they saw by the true light of the Word of God, they appreciated the Apostle's statement that Israel's sacrifices were foreshadowings of 'better sacrifices' for sin; but now, refusing the antitype, the ransom, and denying original sin, and all need therefore of sacrifices for it, the typical sacrifices are repudiated also and esteemed barbaric. Thus the darkening of the Gospel sunlight results in the darkening of the moonlight. 'The moon shall be turned into blood.' And Joel (Joel 2:10) adds that 'the stars shall withdraw their shining,' which signifies that when the Gospel light is obscured, and the Law comes to be regarded as a meaningless and barbaric ceremony of blood, then the teachings of the God ordained twelve stars of the Church (the Apostles) will also fade from view cease to be recognized guides or lights. . . .

"In our Lord's prophecy these true star-lights are reckoned in as part of the Gospel sunlight, darkened, withdrawn from shining; while the false stars, the worldly-wise, man-ordained lights of the present heavens are represented as making a great display in coming down to earthly conditions; -- abandoning their once somewhat spiritual eminence, and in their teachings coming down to the level of earthly moralists and philosophers-to the Christian-citizenship-politics level. . . .

"Who cannot see these signs fulfilling on every hand today! But the sun and moon and twelve stars are only partly obscured as yet; and comparatively few of the false stars have fallen from every pretense of Gospel shining to the level of the comprehension of the masses to whom they shine."

Upon the Earth Distress of Nations

"Coincidentally, Luke (Luke 21:25, 26) adds other signs of this time: 'Upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves [the restless and lawless elements] roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth [society] for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.'

"The roaring sea and waves symbolize the restless masses of humanity, curbed, but not fully restrained, by the laws and regulations of society. Every one has heard some of this 'roaring' for the past twenty years [sixty years now], with occasional stormy outbreaks dashing like tidal-waves against the earth (social order) and seeking to swallow it up. Restrained for a time, these waves are gathering weight and force; and, as prophetically shown, it is only a question of a few years until all the mountains (kingdoms) are 'removed and carried into the midst of the sea,' in anarchy. (Psalm 46:1, 2.) Every newspaper, not under the control of wealth, voices the roar of the restless 'sea' class; ' and the others, though unwillingly, must give the echo of the roaring as matters of news, This it is, that in a period of comparative peace, is causing 'distress of nations with perplexity.'"

"And it is as men begin to realize that the sea roar and unrest is due largely to the wane of superstition and of ecclesiastical influence. and as they more and more see the powers of heaven (sectarian creeds and systems) shaken, that their hearts are failing them for fear, -- in apprehension of the things which are coming on the earth [society]: for strenuous efforts now being made to re-establish and unify sectarian power and influence, will be in great measure successful only for a short time; for it will surely disintegrate completely."

"Our Father, while our hearts unlearn
The creeds that wrong Thy Name,
Still let our hallowed altars burn
With faith's undying flame.

"If 'mid the gathering storms of doubt
Our hearts grow faint and cold,
The strength we cannot live without
Thy love will not withhold.

"Our prayers accept; our sins forgive;
Our youthful zeal renew;
Shape us for holier lives to live,
And nobler work to do."

Imitators of God

[Contributed]

"Become therefore imitators of God, as dear children; and walk in love, even as the Anointed One loved us." - Eph. 5:1, 2.

THESE WORDS may be regarded as indicating the great purpose of our lives. God's purpose concerning us is that we be conformed to the image of His own dear Son. (Rom. 8:29.) Our purpose concerning ourselves in our walk and conversation should be to become "imitators of God as dear children." In choosing this similitude the Apostle has selected one which we can fully understand and appreciate, for it is one we may see illustrated before our eyes quite frequently. It is in the very nature of things for a child to imitate its parents. The child of a carpenter will probably be happiest when he can get a hammer and a few nails and play at imitating his father. The child of a soldier will as naturally do his imitating with tin soldiers, and the child of a merchant will arrange his make-believe store. It is a fact we are all familiar with, and the beauty of it is in that the child will be doing all this imitating, not because it is urged to do so by some compulsion contrary to its own will, but because it finds a pleasure in doing so, just because it **loves to imitate** its father. If therefore we desire this true imitation of God, let us see to it that we imitate Him as children, and as **dear** children.

A **dear** child is surely not only a child who is an object of much affection, but a child who particularly reciprocates this feeling, and who thereby renders the parent's love all the more fervent by the warmth of its response to it. It then follows that the child that loves most truly will imitate most successfully. In the human family there are children disposed to waywardness, who do not respond to the affection lavished on them, and likewise among God's children. Thus God is represented as asking regarding Ephraim, "Is Ephraim a dear son, is he a pleasant child?" But how differently God speaks regarding Jesus, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He was a dear Son, and a pleasant Child, and such we are called to be.

"The Meekness and Gentleness of Christ"

In our text the Apostle would have us consider well the character of God's dear Son. In the last verse of the preceding chapter and in the one immediately following the scripture we are considering, Paul makes reference to Christ, and to characteristics of His which we should seek to imitate in our own daily life. Kindness to others, tenderheartedness, forgiving others even as God forgives us, these are the qualities **dear** children of God should covet.

"Be ye kind," Paul urges, "one to another, tenderhearted." It is not a negative abstaining from being unkind that is here suggested, but a positive urge to **be kind**. And there is such a volume of illustration of this active kindness in the life of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. The Master-hand which drew the picture as given in the story of the "Good Samaritan" was but leaving a portrait of Himself. How tender was Jesus when the woman who "was a sinner" came to His feet -the woman whom Simon rebuked so unkindly. The gentlest word language could supply was used by our Lord: "**Daughter**, be of good cheer, thy faith hath saved thee." When a loyal, but weak and sinning disciple had so grievously disowned Him, how compassionate He was, as evidenced in His message later "Go tell My disciples, **and Peter**." A boasting spirit must be reprov'd, and a denial with cursing must be confessed, but how kindly Jesus gave the needed rebuke and secured

the confession: "Simon, son of Jonas, lowest thou Me **more than** these?" Is it surprising to see the results of this kindness extended to Peter? Surely not! And so we might continue to examine Christ's life, beholding Him showing kindness in a multitude of similar ways, and find in these records examples sufficiently varied as to cover all the circumstances in which we ourselves should reveal this lovingkindness of spirit.

In general Christian service, and especially in that service more directly concerned with assisting one another in putting on the virtues of Christlikeness, how much of manifest failure may be attributed to a real lack of the "gentleness of Christ." Is it not saddening to think of how much actual unkindness is shown from time to time by brethren in their relations one with another? How often unfriendly gossip magnifies faults that true charity should cover, "and not turn the small 'hole in our brother's coat' into a gaping rent." Paul tells how to deal with such things, and deal with them as Jesus' example teaches us we should: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." (Gal. 6:1, 2.) But as it has been well said, "How few have the true **kindness** to tell a brother faithfully but tenderly of a fault-an unpleasant task which, however, neither Jesus nor His Apostle, St. Paul, ever shrunk from, just because they were so truly kind! Or, again, when Christians do attempt to speak the truth to each other's face instead of behind their back, how often it is done in such a harsh censorious way that those who should be helped are repelled, and a feeling of annoyance and resentment is awakened. Or peradventure the bruised reed is broken, and the smoking flax quenched. Well might the Psalmist pray that if the righteous did smite him friendly, and reprove him, their precious balms might not break his head. I am afraid there are a good many heads broken by these well-meant but clumsy ministrations." How much need there is of remembering the Scriptural admonition: "Be ye **kindly** affectioned one to another."

Forgiving One Another for Christ's Sake

The next feature of the character of God as exhibited in Christ which Paul mentions is His readiness to forgive us for Christ's sake: "Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Here indeed the obligation to imitate Christ is peculiarly strong; for we have had so much forgiven us, and stand continually in need of forgiveness for our daily trespasses. All we ourselves possess of grace and blessedness comes from the forgiving love of God through Christ. We came to know Him first in the exercise of His mercy, and we should therefore bear in mind that in exercising this same spirit toward our fellows, we are imitating the gracious ministry of Jesus Christ, in which He so beautifully exhibits the Father's character to us. In mastering a resentful and acrimonious spirit we do not merely gain a moral triumph, in overcoming our own carnal tendency, but we gain the spiritual victory of emulating in some degree the crowning grace of God's character. God reveals His wonderful character in fullest measure in the exercise of His love and mercy, and we remember that Jesus Himself has laid down the rule that in merciful compassion toward those who illtreat us, we are most like our Heavenly Father. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. . . . Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." - Matt. 5:44, 45, 48.

It must of course be conceded that there is an anger, a positive displeasure, which is not wrong in the Christian. But the true child of God must watch his reactions to ill-treatment lest a "root of

bitterness" spring up and grow into a serious spirit of resentment. Hatred of the sin, but love for the sinner is God's way, and in this we are to imitate Him in circumstances where righteous indignation may be properly exercised. God has "a righteous indignation against sin; and an anger of this sort is the only kind compatible with God's character. It is the only kind, therefore, that the children of God should cultivate or exercise. While anger in the nature of hatred, malice, strife, envy should be put away by all who are seeking to be copies of God's dear Son, anger in the sense of righteous indignation against wrong-doing, sin in its various forms, is proper; and although it should be used with great moderation, backed by love, there are circumstances and conditions in which it would be wrong not to have righteous anger and use it." But certain it is, that none but those living in the very love of God will possess the fine discernment of mind and spirit necessary to distinguish between righteous and unrighteous anger.

The Power of Stillness

In the matter of personal injury done us by others, which involves only oneself, we should follow the example of Jesus, and turn the other cheek. Referring to His suffering without retaliation, it has been said, "There is no spectacle in all the Bible so sublime as the silent Savior answering not a word to the men who were maligning Him, and whom He could have laid prostrate at His feet by one look of Divine power, or one word of fiery rebuke. But He let them say and do their worst, and He stood in the power of stillness -- God's holy silent Lamb." We may well pray for a larger measure of this spirit of God's **dear** Son, as it was revealed --

"The day when Jesus stood alone
And felt the hearts of men like stone,
And knew He came but to atone
That day 'He held His peace.'

"They witnessed falsely to His word,
They bound Him with a cruel cord,
And mockingly proclaimed Him Lord;
'But Jesus held His peace.'

"They spat upon Him in the face,
They dragged Him on from place to place,
They heaped upon Him all disgrace;
'But Jesus held His peace.'

"My friend, have you for far much less,
'With rage, which you called righteousness,
Resented slights with great distress?
Your Savior 'held His peace.' "

What most of us need is more of the spirit of one who was seeking to follow the example of Jesus, and who said, "For thirty years I have tried to see the face of Christ in those with whom I differed." Surely it must follow that "when this spirit actuates us, we shall be preserved from a narrow bigotry and an easy-going tolerance, from passionate vindictiveness and everything that would mar or injure our testimony for Him who came not to destroy men's lives but to save them."

Love Planted in the Heart

The Apostle has now led us to the third thing in which he would have us seek to be imitators of God. We are admonished to "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor." The Apostle began this lesson with stressing kindness, but he has now advanced to the highest of all attainments-love. Kindness may lie on the surface of one's life, and have to do mainly with outward conduct; but love is something of the heart, and its domain is within, from where it drives out all our inherent selfishness. Thus is made possible the infilling of the love of God, which as we are elsewhere told, should be "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." In that beautiful treatise on love, 1 Corinthians, chapter thirteen, the Apostle shows clearly that without the warmth of love controlling the life, nothing else counts with God. If His love is not flowing into our lives and flooding our minds there can never be anything of the "dear children" character about us, for the reason that the real evidence of sonship is lacking. Of love we can say no less than John has said of its importance: "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." "God is love," therefore it is His very essence, and the one who possesses most of this quality will be the most faithful imitator of God. It may be laid down as the criterion of Christian character and progress that just so far as this love of God becomes the dominant thing in the conduct-all other motives being made subservient to it-just so far are we being conformed to the image of God.

"Walk in Love." And how may we become imitators of God in this outstanding attribute of His character? We know we cannot create this love by a mere effort of our will. "Every good and perfect gift" must come from God, and this love He must therefore plant in our hearts. Then we may cherish it and foster it by exposing ourselves to all the influences favorable to its full development. The disposition to love God, the brethren, the groaning creation, our enemies, will come to us from above, because we are begotten of God and therefore receive of His characteristics. There should also be a conscious growing in the disposition or feeling of a new love for all with whom we have to do, and thus "walk in love."

But to walk means progress, exercise. So love grows by exercise. God plants the impulses in our minds, gives us explicit instructions in His Word, and continually points us to Jesus the perfect Example, saying, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Then too we must continually exercise ourselves in connection with these agencies emanating from God. And what opportunities for this exercise of the Godlike quality of love are every day afforded us! If we will but give ourselves over to the power of God's implanted love, and follow the promptings of His Spirit and Word, growth in love there will most surely be.

If instead of checking these impulses we encourage them, and go on learning to love, not merely "in word, but in deed and in truth," our disposition to love will be strengthened by loving deeds and words. Many are the Scriptures in support of this. The strong bearing with the infirmities of the weak, are made still stronger. The one who extends kindness grows still kinder. He who forgives others because God for Christ's sake has forgiven him, becomes still more compassionate. When any of the impulses of the Spirit are followed, Godlikeness is sure to be the result.

"Think on These Things"

Among the many Scriptural exhortations made particularly important to God's people today, which should be diligently followed by all who desire to "walk in love" with their brethren and with God as His dear children, few are more appropriate than the familiar words found in Phil. 4:8, 9: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." Well may each one ask himself today, How would my habits of thought and conversation stand up under this test? Who of us can claim no special need of the rebuke these words of Paul administer? Certainly we will never grow in the love of Christ until we make these exhortations our daily rule. In this connection we quote words which may be pondered with profit by all who truly desire to walk in love

"We may help greatly in the cultivation of love by watching against that spirit of frigid reserve which is so prevalent amongst worldly people, or that spirit of reckless independence which savors of Cain, but not of Christ, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Love grows by cultivating habits of fellowship and sympathy with those with whom such relations are possible, and by cultivating habits of compassion, by putting on as St. Paul says, 'bowels of mercies' for those with whom fellowship is impossible. We may foster love negatively also by watching against the narrowing instincts of selfishness, or against anything that tends to render us self-absorbed, for charity seeketh not her own; and to seek our own is to strangle the life of love at its very birth.

"It is well, too, ever to endeavor, to look at the lovelier side of human character, for most men have a lovelier side, and in Christian men this is the divine element. Let us recognize the divine element, and love it, even while we may sometimes be pained and disappointed by the human. And when we cannot love with the love of congeniality, let us love with the love of compassion, responding to the divine instincts of pity, which are sure to make themselves felt within, by prompt efforts to benefit those over whom our hearts yearn; thus our love will grow strong by exercise, and be kept burning hot, as it has free course, and comes fresh into our nature as from the very heart of God."

Christ a Sacrifice of Sweet-smelling Savor

The final thought suggested to us in the texts we have been considering brings us to the sacrificing love of God and Christ. And in this Paul would have us imitators of God. No truth of inspiration is more wonderful than the revelation of the sacrificial love of God and His dear Son. The Atonement, of which God is the Author and Jesus the Medium of its accomplishment, is a stupendous act of self-sacrifice on the part of both.

Here we are brought face to face with a mystery we cannot hope to fully understand until all knowledge is ours. Surely it was a sacrifice on the part of God when He gave His only begotten Son. Selfishness is no part of God's character. He fulfils His will in His creatures by making them partakers of His own blessedness, and for this end all were created, and nothing less than this would satisfy the loving heart of God. This is true because "God is love." Men seek for greatness and satisfaction in self-assertion, and in seeking their own ends. But God shows us that in self-

denial and self-forgetfulness lies the true secret of happiness. The statement of Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," is profoundly true. The noblest joy one can have is found in the exercise of the benevolent sacrificing quality of heart. This is the meaning of the Master's words, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it." - Matt. 16:25.