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In Evening Shadows

*"They constrained him, saying, Abide with us, for, it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.
And he went in to tarry with them." - Luke 24:26*

LIKE ALL other of the stirring events associated with our Lord's few manifestations after his resurrection, the experience of two of his disciples on the way to Emmaus abounds with lessons of interest to us. Their story in all its features is but a pattern of our own usual reactions in times of perplexity and disappointment. How very often we go on our way, rehearsing our troubles and bemoaning the temporary shadows across our pathway. We too walk, with sad and heavy heart, entertaining no expectation of Jesus' joining us to lift the burden from our spirits. Do we not act at times as these disciples did, and register surprise over a seeming ignorance on our Lord's part concerning the cause of our disquietude? If others near us have experienced a sorrow similar to our own, and to them the Lord has appeared in reassuring forms, are we not slow to accept their testimony, and like these disciples, rise no higher than just being "astonished thereby? How many have been the occasions when we too have merited the loving rebuke: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe!"

Let us, for our own guidance under similar circumstances, make special note of the Master's way with these two loving and grieving hearts. Let us recall the story of that evening hour, filled with the sublimest of consolations for us in the time in which we now live. If Jesus could say to one or all of the eleven who walked with him in that day, "Have I been so long time with you, and halt thou not known me," we need not feel that we are better than they. If they were "slow of heart to believe" all the stored up, inspired testimony, and thereby slow to surmount a temporary trial, we more than they are deserving of rebuke, for how much more unfolding of that inspired Word has been placed within our reach.

When the Apostle Paul desired to make a special appeal to brethren he wanted much to help, how beautifully he addressed them: "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." (2 Cor. 10:1.) In making this appeal, surely he was following the example set by Jesus in his way of helping 'these two disciples on the Emmaus road. We should not overlook his

gentleness in correcting their misconceptions, and the method he used in doing this. How very often we hinder rather - than help those who, labor under misconceptions by failing to follow the I example of Jesus and Paul, "in meekness instructing] those that oppose themselves; if God's peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth." - 2 Tim. 2:25.

And what was the method employed by Jesus? It was that of directing attention to the real character and work of the Messiah they looked for. They needed to have him *reconcile* the humiliations and sufferings of the cross with his ultimate power and glory; and so, spending no time in upbraiding them for their lack of understanding, he immediately "expounded, to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. And while he thus unfolded, as no one else could have done, the true meaning of prophecies concerning his prior sufferings and his future triumphs, his words and manner cleared away the clouds of fear and doubt, and ere long their hearts were aflame with new hopes; and when that wonderful sermon on Messianic prophecies had ended, it is no marvel that's they said, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24:32.) Strange indeed, if after so blessed a walk, all too short to them we may be sure, there had been no urgent invitation such as they expressed in the words of our text: "Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day, is far spent." What a world of significance we may properly attach to the results to them; yes, and, to us when we too plead with Jesus to become our intimate companion. Their hearts had already known the burning sense of joy that an unfolding of the prophetic Word can, bring. But it was not until after they had entreated him to abide with them that it could be said, "their eyes were opened, and they knew him." So it continues to be.

Though we should comprehend all prophecy, understand all mysteries, possess all knowledge, and have all faith, and yet have no all-consuming yearning to have Christ completely fill our heart, there could be no real vision of his "altogether" loveliness. Such is the knowledge of Christ we urgently need *as* individuals, and truly it has been said: "The teacher with the keys in our day, is the man who is in *personal* touch with reality, and who is interpreting life in the light of a living experience in Christ."

Christian life has its morning awakenings and its evening shadows, its opening invigorating visions of ends to be gained and work to be done, and its evening retrospections and sober stocktaking. The armor is put on with confident expectation, perhaps with a too great self-assurance; and therefore the need of the inspired warning: "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." (1 Kings 20:11.) The first stages of Christian life are often characterized by much of impulsive activity for the Lord; while with those who reach, the, evening time of retrospection it becomes more and more habitual to confess themselves "unprofitable servants," and in humility to look up to Christ and say, "Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to thy cross I cling." How easily and unconsciously the spirit displayed in those earlier stages seems to say, *How much the Lord has need of us; but* when the evening hour of our day of toil draws near, a maturing saint becomes more and more humbled with the realization of how much "mending and patchwork combined" appears in what he has attempted to do. Yes, and how' easy it is in earlier years of Christian life *to* conclude that with *a* general understanding of the Scriptures attained, there is really little more to be known of God's Word. But "when grace has well refined the heart," and the sacred pages are kept open for deeper study, ah, then it is that advancing years reveal how at best we now see through a glass darkly, and knowledge is as yet only in part.

The mature vision brings rest, too. It brings the rest *so* beautifully suggested in the words: "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." As the fever of strife subsides, the thoughts incline away from the arena of controversy and slip into the restful atmosphere of the disciples'

prayer, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." As the cooling dews fall on leaf and flower, bringing refreshment after the heat of the day, so it is intended to be in God's bestowment of the dews of heavenly grace. The Christian who learns to place his hope in Christ alone, and whose spirit enters more and more into fellowship with him, is the one on whom these heavenly dews will fall; and such are they who will be found most ardently beseeching the Lord in the words of the well known hymn:

"Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me!

"I *need* Thy presence every passing hour,
What but by grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through, cloud and sunshine, oh, abide with me."

And how will he abide with us? What will be the token of his presence with us in the closing hours of life? His ways are unlimited. In many ways his spirit may bear witness with ours, and assure us of his abiding presence with us. But the dew will fall to earth only when all is still. So it is with the peace of Christ. We must learn to say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee," and then to be quiet and rest in his love.

That Jesus meant us to understand that his presence with us would be much more than a theoretical thing, is evident from his clearly stated promise: "I will love him, and *will manifest* myself to him." (John 14:21.) He wants us to believe that when we entreat him to "abide with us," he will surely thus come to abide, and in so doing give us those experimental assurances of the reality of his presence. What vain worship *we* offer him when praying, "Lord Jesus, make thyself to me a living bright reality," if there be no faith in the possibility of such a "bright reality" within the practical realm of experience. It were but mockery to plead, "No tender voice like thine can peace afford," if there be no "yea and amen" promise one which to firmly believe that that voice *may be heard* speaking peace. And *so* through his Word, by his spirit 'bearing witness with ours, he does truly come to abide with us. We may here consider but a few among- the various ways in which we may know that he so abides.

When, the thought of his wonderful love for *us* and the degree of his sufferings on our behalf comes with power to our hearts, causing them to "burn within us" with gratitude, then we may know that he is near. When "the Scriptures concerning himself" and his sacrificial love for *a* sinner race are made to speak clearly to our hearts, he is near, and manifesting himself to us. When the wounds, and stripes he bore for us seem to come before the vision with a freshness that leaves us saying, "My Lord and my God," we can know we are within the circle of his abiding presence.

And if he is really and certainly abiding with *us*, we shall know it by a sense of oneness with him, in delight in the Bather's will. His presence *in* our hearts will give us more and more of the joy that was his in drinking the cup poured for his lips; and then we can affirm of a truth, "Gladly *will* I toil and suffer; only let me walk with thee." When we contemplate his spirit of devotion which flowed so deep that just to be reinstated in his former glory was all he asked; and contemplating such sublime dedication, such unselfish devotion, such delight in the will of God, the are drawn into a nearness to him that makes it true for us to say, "Just to be there, and to look on his face, that will be glory for me," -- we have a sure evidence that we are walking in sweet

companionship with Jesus. When "God first in all our thoughts" characterizes our present and future outlook, and the privilege of abiding in his presence is the acme of our joy, it will be ours to know that the Companion who walks with us, -opening up the Word concerning himself to us, has indeed accepted our fervent invitation: "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent."

Moreover, -when we experience a special *joy* in meditating on the walk of him who "went about doing good," and the boundaries of our sympathy grow wider, and it becomes more and more habitual to be "moved with compassion" toward suffering humanity, it betokens fellowship with Jesus. When we can gladly think of other hands besides our *own* holding cups of cold water to the lips of some who suffer, and think with pleasure of others casting out devils though they follow not with us, and find ourselves thanking God from the depths of our heart that the Jericho roads of today have their tenderhearted Samaritans, and "publicans and sinners" still have those who remind them of the loving Jesus of Galilee; ah, then, he has been abiding with us and imparting his benevolent spirit to us.

When we find an increasing joy filling our hearts as we ponder over the possibilities of his indwelling power, and experience a consuming desire to approximate all that divine love and grace make thus possible to us, it is the spirit's witness of our abiding in Christ. If the eyes of our understanding are being opened still more to the verities of that life that the branches may receive from the Father's Vine, and being opened to a clearer comprehension of all the inflow of eternal life promised to those who feed on Christ, the Bread from heaven, this, *too*, gives evidence that Jesus has hearkened to our prayer, and that he has come in to abide with us. When we meditate on the holiness of his character, and find ourselves being made better; by such contemplation, developing a greater admiration for the lofty aims he sets before us, and captivated increasingly with the hope he imparts to *us* of likeness to himself, we will then know that in these very things we have the evidence of his presence with us. By such ways Jesus *will* reveal that where there is this longing for his indwelling in the heart, it must follow that he *will* manifest himself. The reality *of* the rich blessing he imparts will testify to the fulfillment of his *promise* to come in and sup with us, and, we with him.

And now with the coming of lengthened shadows, by which we may certainly conclude that our day is far spent, and that ere long the Church will be completed, what greater joys, ought we to covet than these several evidences that Jesus has indeed been abiding with us? Important it is that we have the proof written into our experience that we have not received his favor in vain. And all that God intends shall constitute this witness of his spirit with our spirit, may be ours. But however much we may have known of his presence all along the way, as evening shadows grow deeper, it should increase the fervency of our entreaty, as with his two companions of the Emmaus road, we urge him to abide with us, since the day is so far spent.

Who but Jesus can so wonderfully help us to improve our remaining days? Where can we be so safe in these perilous times, where kept as quiet in spirit and confident in God's faithful overruling, as *in* the close fellowship of Jesus? In the natural law, the evening has such marked mellowing effect. The harsh discordant sounds that fill the air during the busy hours *of* day gradually diminish as evening advances, until stillness settles down over all. So should *we* find it in the closing moments of our little life day. And where can we find the peaceful influences of *a* spiritual eventide except it be in an ever-increasing sense of nearness to him who is our peace, and who imparts to us his own sweet peace?

How greatly we need this intimate walk with Jesus! We need it in order that all the harshness of our natures may be displaced by the gentleness of Christ. We need it in order that the mind of

Christ shall be ours also, and all our emptied nature filled with his fulness. We need to walk with him that for us, as for those two earlier disciples, he may correct all our misconceptions of himself, and by such corrections open our eyes; as he did theirs, so that "they knew him."

Shall we, not, then, rejoice his heart now with the same request that drew him into the abode of these two brethren long ago? "The night cometh wherein *no* man can work." On the one hand we have the powers of darkness making special effort to cause us to be castaways, and on the other, the glorious possibility of soon being gathered Home. Both of these things should increase our desire for the Lord's very intimate abiding with *us*. Both will surely lead us to pray with the sincerest of faith and love, "Abide with *us*, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.

If he thus continues to abide with us, what maturing *he* will do in our characters. Evil passions will die away. A clearer knowledge of the great principles of righteousness will be imparted to us. He will give us a larger spirit of generosity toward all men, and increase the warmth of our love toward all his children. And he who so loved the outcasts will by his indwelling compassion make us sharers with himself in pity", for the sunken and degraded. He will lift us above ourselves, for his love shed abroad in our hearts', will cause us to love according to the pattern of his', own all-embracing *love*. Thus in these closing hours, in these times when "to be living 'is sublime, there shall come to us the inward assurance that he has indeed been pleased to "abide with us," and that ere long it will be his time for inviting us "to enter the abode he has prepared for us, that where he is we may be also, forever. Prepare us, dear Savior, for that consummation, that we may gladden thine heart by abiding with thee there, as thou hast rejoiced us by coming in to abide with us here!

- J. J. Blackburn.

The Everlasting People

PART II

"The gifts and the calling of God are without-repentance." - Romans 11:29, R. V.

FOR a brief time we will consider the three pairs of contrasts -- for such they are prophesied by Hosea the Prophet, which were mentioned in our previous study:

- (1) Without a king, and without a prince.
- (2) Without a sacrifice, and without an image.
- (3) Without an ephod, and without teraphim.

(1) "WITHOUT A KING, AND WITHOUT A PRINCE."

It needs to be remembered that God's intention for the nation of Israel was that it should be a theocracy, that is, a nation under the direct government of God, who would be their King and Ruler. That this is to be the ultimate constitution of Israel's government is indicated by the Prophet Isaiah, for *in* chapter 33, verse 22 (Isa. 33:22), Jehovah is acclaimed as their Ruler and King: "Yahweh is our judge, Yahweh is our lawgiver, -- Yahweh is our king, he will save *us!*"-
Rotherham.

During the earlier years of Israel's history, Jehovah had been their King, but there came a time when they became envious of the nations about them. Of Samuel they demanded that he should appoint them a king. The record of their request in 1 Samuel 8:5 is: "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations." It is recorded that this thing displeased Samuel, "and he prayed unto the Lord." (1 Samuel 8:6.) "And the Lord said unto -Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that, they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but *they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.*" (1 Samuel 8:7.) So they lost their true King, and in the place of Jehovah was appointed one of their own choice, a human king or prince like unto the surrounding nations.

The first 'king, Saul, proved to be a failure, and although David, his successor, was "a man after God's own heart," the monarchies of Israel and Judah fulfilled the forecast of verses 11-18. The position was even worse than this, for the comparatively good kings were the exception, and the monarchy steadily deteriorated until the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, was reached. In Ezekiel he is described as "a prince" -- "a prince of Israel." "And thou, profane wicked *prince of Israel*, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown; *this* shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." (Ezek. 21:25-27.) Those words were spoken and fulfilled more than 2,500 years ago when Zedekiah was taken prisoner *by* the army of Nebuchadnezzar. "And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon." (2 Kings 25:7.) Since that time Israel has been "without a king, and without a prince."

Centuries later the Lord Jesus presented himself to them as their divinely appointed King: "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a *colt* the foal of an ass." (Matt. 21:5.), "And Jesus stood, before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, *Art* thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest." (Matt. 27:11.) But his citizens hated him, and sent *a* message after him, saying, "*We will not have this man to reign over us.*" (Luke 19:14.) Thus the "many days"; of Israel "without a king, and without a prince have been prolonged until they shall cry, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." - Psa. 118:26.

(2) "WITHOUT A SACRIFICE, AND WITHOUT AN IMAGE"

One cannot read the Scriptures which speak so much of *sacrifice* without also thinking of a priesthood from the time of the Passover in Egypt, through all the "wilderness journey of forty years, and through the periods of the judges and the Kings, a priesthood and sacrifice occupied the most prominent place in Jewish ritual. These were instituted by God to be *a* continual reminder to Israel of their need *for* atonement and reconciliation *with* God, from whom they were estranged by sin. Of course these things were types and shadows of the "better sacrifices," but were intended to impress upon every Israelite the fact that atonement was made possible only by a sacrificed life.

Leviticus 17:11 explains the meaning of the sacrifices which occupy so prominent a place in the Jewish Scriptures! -- our Old Testament -- "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to *you* upon the altar, *to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.*" So the writer to the Hebrews states: "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; *and without shedding of blood is no remission.*" (Heb. 9:22.) But frequently Israel substituted "an image" for the "sacrifice"; forsaking the true God, they turned to idols -- they set *up* groves and offered "strange fire" to gods of wood and *stone*. When judgment came upon them, they repented and returned to the altar of the Lord and the sacrifices

commanded by God, but it was not long before they again turned to the worship of idols. Thus it was either the one *or* the other-either a "sacrifice" *or* "an image."

At last came the terrible judgment of the Babylonian captivity, and from that time until this present day -- "for many days" -- Israel has been "without an image." Never again did Israel revert to idolatry and the worship of graven images; in fact, so great has been her hatred of anything resembling idol worship, that much of the Jews' rejection of the Christian religion has been due to the prominent place which idols and images have occupied in so-called Christian worship. But the children of Israel have been not only "without an image," they have been also "without a sacrifice" for "many days." True it is that a second temple was built after their return from the captivity of Babylon, and the sacrifices were to a limited extent resumed, but a few years after their rejection of the great antitypical Sacrifice, when Jerusalem was overthrown and the Temple destroyed in A.D. 70, the "sacrifice" entirely ceased.

The following is an extract from a prayer which for many years was uttered by millions of Jews in Russia and throughout Eastern Europe: "Lord of the Universe, thou hast commanded us to offer a continual sacrifice in its appointed season, and that the priests should stand in their service, and the Levites in their ministry, and Israel in their appointed place. But now, through our iniquity, the Temple is destroyed, *and the continual sacrifice has ceased*, and we have neither priest in his service or Levite in his ministry." How truly the prophecy has been fulfilled, "The children of Israel shall abide many days . . . without a sacrifice, and without an image."

(3) "WITHOUT AN EPHOD, AND WITHOUT SERAPHIM

The ephod was a priestly garment, it was worn by the priests of Israel, and by a comparison of the various Scriptures where its use is referred to, it suggests another phase of the priesthood which was very important. In Exodus 28 is given a detailed description of the ephod which was to be worn by the high priest, and the breastplate of judgment which was bound to it. In this was set the Urim and Thummim, by means of which God made known his will to Israel. An illustration of its use is given in Numbers 27:21. In 1 Samuel two instances are recorded-where David sought to know the mind of the Lord and called for the priest to "bring forth the ephod" that through it he might inquire. See 1 Samuel 23:9-12 and 1 Sam. 30:7, 8. Thus is portrayed the *prophetic office* of the priesthood. Frequently, however, because of unfaithfulness, the voice of prophecy was silent. Such an experience came to King Saul, as a result of which he went to inquire of the witch at Endor. "And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. And *when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by urim, nor by prophets.*" (1 Sam. 28:5, 6.) At last God's favor was finally withdrawn from Israel, since which time -- "for many days" -- they have been "without an ephod," for God's voice has been silent toward them.

The prophecy also states that they would be "without teraphim." This was a particular kind of idol used by the idolatrous nations in the same way as, the ephod was used by Israel's priests. Of them the Prophet Zechariah says, "The idols [literally, "teraphim"] have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams, they comfort in vain." (Zech. 10:2.) It will therefore be seen that these "teraphim" were oracles that conveyed messages which claimed to be from the gods, and which Israel frequently consulted when they turned from Jehovah their God. The Babylonian captivity ended all that, and so Israel has been "without an ephod, and without teraphim."

Prophet, priest, and king -- these three offices are brought to our notice in this prophecy of Hosea, and all are combined in the great Messiah, who, after "many days" will be acknowledged and

acclaimed by the nation of Israel. Surely our faith is strengthened as we are reminded how literally and in detail the Word of God spoken through his Prophets so many years before, has been fulfilled. If so much has already been fulfilled, we can have full confidence that the prophecies concerning God's returning favor to Israel will not fail. And shall we not be encouraged with the assurance that the God of Israel -- our Father -- will be no less faithful in fulfilling his "exceeding great and precious promises" to those who are his children.

In our previous brief review of the history of God's chosen people -- Israel -- it was noted that because of her spiritual adultery with the gods of the surrounding Gentile nations, Jehovah, in accordance with his Word, brought severe judgments upon that people, and finally, as a result of their persistent *idolatry*, caused them to cease their sovereign existence as a nation when Zedekiah, the last king of God's chosen race, was overthrown, the Temple of Solomon destroyed, and the people were carried into the Babylonian captivity, away from their own beloved land. Those events marked the beginning of "the times of the Gentiles," a period of "many days," during which they were to be "without a king, without a sacrifice, and without an ephod." These represented the three great offices in Israel's constitution of prophet, priest, and, king. For more than 2,500 years God's face has, been turned away from that people and "Jerusalem has been trodden down of the Gentiles." During this same long period of time since the Babylonian captivity, Israel, as we *have* seen, has also been "without a prince . . . without an image . . . and without teraphim." These represented the three counterfeit offices of the surrounding nations to which Israel gave her allegiance when she turned away from the true God. The terrible judgment of that final overthrow by Nebuchadnezzar, the "head of gold," had such an effect upon the nation that never again from that time to this have they reverted to the worship of other gods and graven images.

All this was foretold by God through the Prophet Hosea in whose actual experiences were pictured the relationship of Jehovah toward his chosen people and his dealings with them. In spite of her many grievous sins-in spite of her unfaithfulness, the Prophet never ceased to love his wife Gomer, and so it has been with Jehovah God-Israel is the "beloved of his soul" (Jer. 12:7), and in spite of the waywardness and wickedness of this stiff-necked nation, God has never ceased to watch over this chosen people and to direct the course of nations to the end that his design's for Israel might be accomplished.

ISRAEL AT PRESENT

It is now our endeavor in this consideration of "-the Everlasting People to see where Israel stands today on the stream of time. Those "many days" foretold through the Prophet Hosea have continued through the centuries for more than 2,500 years, and the sincere prophetic student, interested in the outworking of God's wondrous Plan, yearns to know whether this long period of "many days" is almost ended. There is a very vital reason why the true follower of Christ should be interested in this matter, for it has to do not only with the future prospects of Israel, not only with the future destiny of mankind, but with something which is of more urgent importance to every true Christian-it has to do with the final deliverance and glorification of the Church. *The Jewish nation is not the least of God's sign posts to those who are faithful watchers.* We recall the words of our Lord in Matthew 24:32-34 "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 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." Luke's account is even more explicit, for in Luke 21:29-32 we read: "And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they 'now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these-things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at

hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till All be fulfilled." The "fig tree" is a figure of the Jewish nation, and when the signs of life and vigorous growth appear, in common with "all the trees as seen in the efforts of the small oppressed nations toward national independence and sovereignty-we have one of the clearest and most definite evidences of the nearness of the Kingdom of God.

But let us note our Lord's words in verse 28 of Luke 21: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for *your redemption* [deliverance] *draweth nigh*." The fulfillment of these signs was to be *a certain evidence* to the Lord's followers that *their* deliverance was nigh at hand. But note the words again -- "When ye see these things *begin* to come to pass." What then shall we say if the beginning of this fulfillment can be traced back over a period of years? What if we are able to see marked *beginnings* in the year 1914 -- nearly forty years ago -- or even earlier than that? Then how near must be the deliverance and glorification of the Christ!

WHAT MANNER OF PERSONS!

It is the writers view that there is very little more of prophecy to be fulfilled prior to the ingathering of the last member of the true Church. If that is so, then "what manner of persons ought we to be"? -- *what are we doing with our short remaining time?* How are we using our talents? *Is it "this one thing I do" with us, or* are other comparative trifles engaging the greater portion of our time and energy? If so, then let us, "gird up the loins of our minds" -- let us look closer, at the "signs of the times" and see how near we are to the consummation of the Church's Hope.

Referring again to Hosea's prophecy, Hos. 3:4, 5 reads: "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a "king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." Our earlier consideration of Hos. 3:4 has already shown that this long ritual period of "many days" was to extend over the same period indicated by the great image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream as recorded in Daniel, chapter 2. Now Hos. 3:5 goes on to prophesy: "*Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.*" History records that after the seventy years of exile in Babylon the Jews were permitted to return to their native land of Palestine, and for more than 500 years after that they remained a subject people under the control of the Persian Empire, then Greece, and finally Rome. Obviously, this was not the fulfillment of Hosea's prophecy, for he, speaks of "the latter days" and indicates that their" return would be followed by a change of heart in that they would, as a nation, "seek the Lord their God, and David their king:" It was because of 'the hardness of their hearts and their cruel rejection of "David their king" that the Jewish State was brought to a complete end by Titus in the year 70 A.D., when Jerusalem was sacked and destroyed and the people of Palestine were scattered to the four winds of the earth.

A PERSECUTED PEOPLE

What a terrible lot has been theirs during the past nineteen centuries of their history! How great has been the punishment which they called down upon their own heads when at the rejection of their Messiah they cried out, "His blood be upon us and on our children"! Yet in spite of all, they have not been obliterated; in spite of the fact that they have been broken up and scattered among all the Rations of the earth, yet they have remained a people separate and distinct from all others. How vividly the experiences of Israel were foretold and described by the Psalmist in the 80th

Psalm: "O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? Thou hast fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in large measure. Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbors: and our enemies laugh among themselves." - Psa. 80:4-6, R. V.

Still further back, in the beginning of their national existence, Moses had warned them of the consequences which would ensue if they forsook their God: "It shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other . . . and among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, . . . and sorrow of mind [Var., "pining of soul"]: and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: in the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were evening! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see." (Deut. 28:63-67.) Yet there are those who would tell us that the Bible is not the inspired Word of God!

A Jewish historian at the beginning of the sixteenth century, when writing concerning the misery and suffering of his people said: "To which part of: the world shall I turn to find healing for my wound, forgetfulness for my pain; and comfort for my heavy, unbearable sufferings? Among the riches and enjoyments of happy Asia I find myself a heavy laden pilgrim. In sun-burnt Africa, rich with gold, I am a wretched starving exile. And thou Europe, my hell upon earth! What shall I say about thee? How shall I praise three vicious, warring Italy? Like a hungry lion hast thou fed on the torn flesh of my lambs! Ye corrupted French meadows, poisoned grass did my lambs eat on you! Proud, barbaric, mountainous Germany, thou hast thrown down and broken to pieces my young men from the top of thine Alps! Ye sweet and fresh waters of England, bitter and salt draughts did my flock drink of you! Hypocritical, cruel, and bloodthirsty Spain, ravenous hungry wolves have devoured and are still devouring my flock in thy midst. . . . It is the lot of every creature to experience change; but with Israel it is not so: his misfortune never changes, his sorrows never end." Four centuries almost have passed since those words were written, yet how unchanging have been the sufferings of the Jews!

It is sad to recall that the worst persecutors of Israel 'have been the so-called "Christian" nations. Perhaps it is not generally known why it is that the Christian festival of Easter has been observed through centuries past on a date which is entirely independent of the Jewish calendar. It had its origin in a hatred of: the Jews. At the Council of Nicea the first Christian Council recorded in history-in the year 315 A.D., it was decreed that from henceforth "Easter" 'was to be universally observed on a date independent of the Jewish calendar. The Emperor Constantine addressed the assembled bishops with the following words: "It seems unworthy of us to celebrate this holy festival after the custom-of the Jews.' We desire to have nothing in common with this so hated people, for the Redeemer has marked out another path for us. To this we will keep, and be free from disgraceful association with this people." What a manifestation of "Christian (?) love"! Thus it has been throughout the Age to the present time -- the "wandering Jew has been despised and persecuted in every country of the earth.

What of the land -- that land which Moses described as "a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land, of wheat, and barley; and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat 'bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass" (Deut. 8:7-9.) For many long centuries "Jerusalem, has

'been trodden down of the' Gentiles" and the land has been desolate and barren, and as foretold by Moses, the Lord did "shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit." - Deut. 11:17.

As one considers these matters, the sincere Bible student is led to ask, "*Where are we now in the stream of time*"? But this we leave for our next study when we hope to review the more recent history as it concerns the Jew and the land from which he was cast out so many centuries ago.

- *Edwin Allbon*,. Eng.

The Letters of Jesus

"Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus write: These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who, walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know I thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars; and thou art borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake thou hast labored, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." - Rev. 2:1-4.

THIS IS from the first in a series of seven Letters sent by our blessed Savior by the hand of the Apostle John to the seven Churches of Asia Minor. These Letters constitute a unique section of sacred literature. Like the Parables, they consist exclusively of Christ's own words; but, unlike the Parables, they were dictated from heaven after he was risen and glorified. They are perhaps the only unabridged records of his addresses that we possess. They are also so impressively introduced, and so particularly addressed to the Churches, as to imply that there is something in them of unusual solemnity and importance. They come to us with a seven-times-repeated admonition to hear them, and lay them to heart. As we have ears to hear, we are commanded to hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.

It is therefore a little strange that there is not another part of Holy Scripture, of equal prominence, to which the Church has paid less attention. The Parables of Christ are continually being brought before us: the discussions of them are endless. But it is rarely that God's people are called to consider these *letters of Jesus*, though bearing his own sign-manual, and so particularly urged upon the attention of every one. Is this right? Should we not be as anxious to know what Jesus has dictated from heaven, and has commanded us to read, hear, and keep before us, as to know what he said in his discourses while on the earth? Is not the subject-matter in these Epistles as important, practical, and full of instruction as any other part of the New Testament? Why, then, has there been such a common neglect of what our Lord has pronounced so blessed for us to hear, ponder, and, digest? . .

To every one his word is, "*I know thy works*"; and neither we nor angels can tell him anything about ourselves which he does not see and know. Our sorrows which we may not tell, our trials which no other knoweth, our difficulties, our hardships, the woes and aches that he buried in our souls, *our* weaknesses and heart-struggles, our hidden fears and doubts, our honesty in things for which others blame and censure, our real motives and endeavors which others do not understand—all are known to, the loving Savior, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmity, and bids us [be of good comfort, that his grace shall be sufficient for us. There is no child of his unnoticed or on whom his loving eye does not rest, to look subduingly upon the Peters that deny him, to speak consolingly to the Marys that weep over their sins, to note the secret devotions of the Nathaniels under the fig tree, to commend the faith of the bowed *and* crippled ones who struggle amid the jostling crowd that they may but touch the hem of his garment.

Well-doing and worth, deserve acknowledgment and commendation; and the withholding of these, when due is not according to Christ. Even though all good in his people is from his grace, and none of it could be wit out him and the helping power of the holy spirit, when they thus improve under his, merciful dealings he gives them credit for it, and expresses his pleasure and approval. Bad men often flatter and praise is a lure to those whom they wish to win to their favor or influence to their own selfish ends. They know the power of praise, and they dishonestly use it. This is despicable. Good people are apt to err *on*, the other side, and are strangely cheery and

neglectful in the use of this power. Whether it be to gain the respect and affection of others, the molding of their desires, the guiding of their wills, the cure of their faults, or the strengthening of their activities in what is good, almost every other means is preferred *to* that of commendation. Argument, advice, admonition, warning, and especially rebuke, censure, and complaint, are liberally used; but words of approval and esteem are carefully withheld or grudgingly doled forth, as if some hidden danger lurked in them. The example of Christ was different. Even in this world of sin and sinners he still found some things to commend and praise; and in here speaking from heaven it is the same.

Dishonest praise is wickedness. It is base in him who gives it and evil to him to whom it is given. But candid, truthful, and liberal acknowledgment and commendation of what is right and good is a blessed inspiration both in the giver and the receiver. It draws them together. It freshens and stimulates effort. It begets mutual confidence and multiplies strength. It opens a community of feeling and interest which makes correction of faults easy, serves to correct despondency and faintness, and tends to encourage, cheer, and reinforce. To assure others of your good opinion, if they can trust your sincerity and truthfulness, animates them to increased effort to justify your favorable regard, and it helps to build up love, good-will, and virtue. It is right, and it is useful. It helps to allay the envious and bad human nature and to bring out and foster the good. It is a happiness in itself, and it gives happiness! What a comfort and inspiration was it to the Ephesians, whatever there was in them to be corrected, to be commended by the Savior for so many things! How much more courageously would they now exert themselves to repair what, was, defective, that they might stand thus approved in all things! And if we could but know what failing energies may be refreshed, what languor chased away, what hope and enthusiasm inspired, and what love and confidence begotten by our words of honest, cordial praise, we would not be so backward in our expressions of them.

But, as in all cases in this world, these people were not perfect. With all their virtues, they had their faults and failings, which honest love could not omit to mention and disapprove, that effort might be made to supply what was wanting. With all the Savior's commendations of them, he still found it necessary to say to them, *"Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee"* . . .

And it is the same with individuals as with churches and congregations. We may think that we are all right, that we are doing nobly, that we have been very watchful, prayerful, true, devoted, and prompt in every known duty; but when Jesus comes to give his judgment, even while there is much for him to commend and praise, he still in truth and justice must add, *"Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee."*

Nay, if we only look carefully into ourselves, our ways of living and doing, how we are handling ourselves, talents, possessions, hearts, and lives--how we are bearing and disposing ourselves respecting Christian duty and privilege, and what sort of progress we have been making in the divine life and usefulness -- we will be at no loss to find that Jesus, who knows and sees all, would needs have to say even of the best, *"Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee."*

The great fault Christ found with these people was the decay of their first love. They were good and earnest Christians still, but they had too much cooled in their ardor and let down in the fervency of their former zeal and devotion. There was still the outward ongoing of effort and activity, and much to be praised; but love was dying. The machinery still moved under the power of the original impulse, but the great moving spirit within was losing its force. The outside of the tree stood fair and well proportioned as ever, but mold and decay had commenced within. A pure creed and a right discipline still remained, but the heart was growing cold. The Savior saw how it was with them, and spoke accordingly.

And what, dear friends, does Christ's all-searching eye behold in us with reference to this point? Has there been no wane in our love and zeal since first we gave ourselves to Jesus? Are we as much interested in the things of God and the soul as once? Are we as prompt and earnest in our private devotions and attendance on the means of grace as aforetime? Do we have the same low opinion of the vanities, pursuits, honors, and pleasures of this world as when we first set out to serve the Lord? Are we as strict and particular in holding on to the truth or Word of God, and as confident in venturing our trust and hopes upon it, as at some other time we could mention? Are we as devoted to the Church and as anxious and earnest and prayerful to build it up and to foster the spirit of peace, harmony, and love, as once? In how many instances may awakened conscience catch the words of the loving Jesus, sadly whispering, "My child, my dear child, thou hast borne and hast patience for my name's sake, and hast labored, and hast not fainted. *Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee!*" . . .

We thus see what a frail and fickle thing human nature is -- how little dependence is to be placed upon it even at the best -- how ineffectual the highest opportunities are to guarantee stability of religious character and devotion--how liable the most distinguished attainments to decay and disappear. Most of the same people who were in this Church from the beginning were in it still, but it was now for the loving Savior to say, "I have somewhat against thee, *because thou hast left thy first love.*"

These people were not in a state of apostasy. There still was much activity, zeal for evangelic truth, earnest adherence to apostolic order, hatred of error and unrighteousness, and regard for purity of life. But all this may exist, and yet a hidden canker be eating away what no orthodoxy, no faith, no knowledge, no good works, no labor or patience in well-doing could atone for. It was still a decent, orderly, vigorous, exemplary, and efficient church. Its external presentations were all good. But there was inward weakening in that very thing which is most essential in that living love and fellowship of the soul with its Redeemer which is the life of all true piety. The body stood the same as before, but the mercury within had fallen. The machinery was still running, but the motive-power was failing. . . . Affection was cooling, zeal was abating. The inward fire of love was wasting away. A degeneration had set in which needed to be arrested and remedied....

Nor was this a peculiar or uncommon case. Too many Christians, all as know from melancholy experience what it is to sink away from the fervors of a first devotion. Many can refer to times when they knew something of the happiness of entire consecration and full communion with Heaven--when the heart was withdrawn from everything temporal and fixed in undoubting faith upon Jesus--when they felt in the very newness and wonder of their emotions and resolves a proud confidence that nothing could ever remove them from an estate so blessed. But they have since found out how that life and joy could evaporate and pass away -- how the care and love for other things insensibly, stole in upon the soul, so that the bitter waters again filtered into their old channels, the chains again tightened upon the neck, and a drag formed upon the heart, until all former liberty and confidence was undermined, the old slavery renewed, and first love diminishes; and gone. Christ himself has told us of some who hear the word, and anon with joy receive it, yet after a while lapse into their old folly and unconcern. Ah, dear friends, we know of too many such cases.. We can point out numbers of them by name among ourselves. From the beginning the Savior said it would be so. And such a frail and inconstant thing is human nature that I doubt if one of us has been without some experience of just what the Savior here alleged, against these Ephesians

WHAT IS TO BE DONE IN SUCH A CASE?

The Savior prescribed for these people of Ephesus, and what he said to them applies equally to ourselves. Truth is not a thing of one century, which becomes a cipher or a falsehood in the next, or which varies with latitude and longitude. Truth is like its God -- the same yesterday, today, and for ever. What was truth in Ephesus is truth also in Philadelphia. Where the same disease exists, there the one and unchangeable remedy is requisite. And the word here spoken to the Christians of Ephesus is a leaf from the tree of life which needs to be applied in every case where love is dying.

The prescription given is made up of three items, and each of them of great importance.

The first item is, "*Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen.*" This calls for retrospection and the exercise of memory. True piety brings all our faculties into action. It is one of man's powers to 'be able to look back and to live the events and course of his life over again, by means of memory. And this power is the first thing to be set to work to cure a decay of religious life and fervor. People must think back and compare what they once were with what they now are. Memory must recall the past that it may be laid alongside of the present . . .

I do not say that the enthusiasm of first discipleship will or must always gush and spring as at the beginning. Youthful emotions naturally and necessarily sober down amid the realities of after-life, and so religious enthusiasm and ecstasies as well; but then they must settle into deeper principle. An old Christian may have less passion than at his entrance on the heavenly way, but the spring of religious character and devotion 'must still be there, all the steadier and: firmer for the growth of years, ready on occasion joyfully to make sacrifices for Christ, and as appreciative of all that belongs to the nurture and exercises of Christian life as ever. The first glow of early feeling may be sobered down, but what is lost in fervor must be regained in fixedness, depth, and strength, the energy of principle acting in the room of the enthusiasm of feeling when life was younger. Though there may be less effervescence to incite and impel, there must be settled conviction and tried purpose to move one forward all the same and with all the more steadiness. There may not be as much rampage of religious emotion and joy, but the living principle must be there to act out duty as the crisis for it comes. The leaping, dancing, and sparkling rill may lose its dash and hurry, but only to widen and deepen into the calm majesty of the river, the latter still moving steadily on to the same great ocean toward which the other bounded with so much life' Otherwise, there is unwholesome stagnation, and first love is dying out, if not already dead . . .

And the next step is equally clear. One word expresses it: they that have left their first love must "*repent.*" They trust confess the evil, be sorry for it, and set earnestly to work to retrace their steps, in order to get 'back into the true life of faith. When Peter stood convicted of having wickedly denied his Lord, he, did not, try to hide it from his soul or to apologize for it as a thing which he was betrayed into and could not help. No; he knew that he was a sinner; he felt it in his soul It wounded and distressed him that he should have made himself answerable for so great a piece of cowardice and wickedness toward his meek and suffering Lord. And he "*went out and wept bitterly.*" Broken-hearted for his terrible fall, he threw himself on the mercy of God, and with a soul aching with abhorrence of his crime, and thoroughly changed from any further fellowship with his sin, he sued for pardon. His broken heart was already a reinstatement, in so far as it carried with it an altered mind and a renewed devotion to his Lord. This was his repentance, and it was effectual. And so are we to repent of our fall from first love. We, must not apologize for it; we must not try to hide it from us; we must not begin to think that we could not help it; but must own up to ourselves and to God, with wounded and sorrowing hearts, that we, have been so faithless and untrue, humbly imploring restoration to his favor, and made up to

leave nothing undone to be cured and healed of our guilty defection, and by his good help henceforth to keep ourselves in his love

And yet there remains one other item in the prescription. Remembering whence we have fallen, and, sincerely repenting; it belongs to the proceeding for the backslider to re-begin his whole Christian life. "*Do the first works*" is the direction the blessed Savior gives. This means the setting of ourselves upon the same path and in the same way in which we came to our first love. It does not mean that we must be rebaptized, but that we must come back to our baptism, to the meaning of it -- to the consecration to Christ of which it is the mark and badge -- to the covenant and promises of which it is the divine seal. It means that we must come back again to precisely the same point of renunciation of the Devil and all his works, the vanities of the world, and, the sinful desires of the flesh -- to renewal of faith in God and in his Son our Savior, sincerely desiring to be received into the fellowship and liberty of his true children--to the unreserved surrender of ourselves, hearts, and lives to the loving obedience of faith, to live and die as the willing subjects and followers of him in whom our salvation stands. Confessing and lamenting our" past failures, grieved in soul that we could ever' slacken and sink away in our affection and devotion to so true and good a Lord, feeling and sorrowing for, our unworthiness and ill-desert, full of earnest longings and prayers for God's merciful forgiveness, and honestly desiring by his gracious help to be and do and suffer whatever his holy will may be -- so are we to come to him, as we came at the first, throwing ourselves on his compassion, and in all the depths of our nature, saying,

"Here, Lord, I give myself to Thee,
'Tis all that I can do."

By all the powers a gracious God has given us and will give we must reform from all neglects, from all dalliance with the ways of the world, from all half heartedness in religion. This is doing the first works' over again, even those which gave us those better days, the holy music of which still comes up in memory amid all the cold and wretchedness of the estrangement which has since befallen us. And nothing less than this can bring about a return of that spiritual summer-time, or repair the mischief of having left our first love. Indeed, this is what God calls for from all people, at all times, if they would enjoy his peace.

It is very significant that while the church, the congregation as a whole, is rebuked, reprimanded, encouraged, exhorted, or advised, the promise is always to the *individual* and in the singular: "To *him* that overcometh"; "He that overcometh"; "Be *thou* faithful unto death, and I will give *thee* a crown of life." And so the command in each instance is: "*He* that hath an ear, let *him* hear what the spirit saith unto the churches." What is said to the body it is made the duty of each individual person to deal with for himself and herself. We cannot go to heaven under our neighbor's cloak. We cannot shift our individual responsibilities to other people's shoulders. We cannot hide ourselves in the multitude when we come before the bar of God. Not as others view Christ, but as we individually view him--not as others hear his voice, love, honor, and obey him, but as we for ourselves do it -- not as others believe and strive and overcome, but as we personally take hold and press our own way to victory -- are we to inherit the promises. And until we learn to file out singly in these matters of grace and salvation, and individually hear, appropriate, and act, no paradise, no crown, shall we ever reach.

Let us think on these things.

-J. A. Seiss.

(To be continued)

His Holy Name to Bear

Oh! patient traveler in life's narrow way,
Tempted and tried, with hardly strength to pray,
Rejoice! thy rest is near.
Think what the Lord to those He loves will give,
To share His glory, and with Him live,
His holy name to bear.

The name which highest angels may not own,
Which, with His wafting bride He'll share alone,
She whom He loves to bless.
Upon His heavenly throne by love installed,
This is the name wherewith she shall be called,
The Lord our righteousness.

I know that steep and narrow is the way,
And shadows sometimes hide the light of day,
Till our feeble faith is tried;
But if with Him were crucified; if for His sake
We suffer loss, with Him our portion take,
We shall be satisfied.

Though now the cross is ours, and we must stay
Until we hear the summons, "Come away!
The Master calls for thee";
How blessed then, to lay the cross forever down,
And in its place receive the victor's crown,
To wear eternally.

Lord, guide our feet each step through life we pray,
Grant we never may wander from the narrow way.
That leads to life unseen.
Then let us gaze upon Thy glorious face,
Thou blest Redeemer of a ruined race,
Without a veil between.

- Mrs. A. Agens.

Some Better Thing For Us

"These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. " - Heb. 11:39, 40

IN the eleventh and twelfth chapters of Paul's letter to the Hebrews the two classes who are to constitute the two phases of the Kingdom of God (the human and the spiritual) are brought to our attention. At the time of this writing the heirs to the earthly phase had all run their course, and were awaiting their reward in the resurrection, John the Baptist having been the last and most highly honored of all that noble line of ancient worthies (Matt. 11:11); but the heirs to the heavenly phase had just entered upon their course; and, knowing that it would be a long and painful one, the worthy Apostle would have them draw a large measure of inspiration and zeal from considering the faithfulness and patient endurance of the worthy ones who shall constitute the earthly phase of the Kingdom.

His words, while addressed directly to the early Church, apply with equal force to the whole Church, to the end of the Age; and in some respects the application will be seen to have special force in the end, or harvest, of the Age. In recounting the prominent characters among those to inherit the earthly phase of the Kingdom, beginning with Abel, he shows that it was their faith in the promises of God that nerved them to such endurance and faithfulness, even unto death; and so he would have us consider and, with the same faith, rely upon the *exceeding* great and precious promises given unto us, whereby, as Peter says, we may "escape the corruption that is in the world" and be made "partakers of the divine nature." (2 Pet. 1:4.) He shows how by faith they walked with God; how they ventured upon his promises, doing his will and leaving the results with him; how they overcame great obstacles in the strength of that faith; and how they endured persecution, pain and loss, and then died in faith that what God had promised he was able also to perform, and would perform in his own good time and way. They were such men and women, says the Apostle, as the world was not worthy of. They endured as seeing him who is invisible, so strong and courageous was their faith.

Yet, though the reward of those ancient worthies will fully recompense their faithfulness, the Apostle would have us know that God hath still reserved "some better thing for us"; viz., the inheritance of the heavenly phase of the Kingdom. In so doing, however, God is not rewarding us according to our deserts; for neither our merit, nor that of the ancient worthies, could claim by *right* an inheritance in either phase of the Kingdom. Both callings are of his abounding grace. The times and seasons for the selection of these two companies, as well as the conditions of eligibility to them, were fixed by Jehovah before the foundation of the world; and within those appointed seasons those individuals who will have complied with the conditions become heirs of the promised inheritance to be realized in the time appointed. God has a right thus to do what he will with his own, and his wonderful favors will be received with thanksgiving by all his righteous heirs without respect to comparisons; and all will be satisfied when they awake in his likeness, whether it be on the human or on the spiritual plane of being.

The "better thing" reserved "for us" who are called of -God during this Gospel Age is the joint-heirship with Christ, Jehovah's only-begotten Son and heir of all things, the partaking with him in all his subsequent work for the blessing of all God's intelligent creation. Therefore it is, as the Apostle states, that the reward of the ancient worthies tarries until first the overcoming Gospel Church is exalted to the throne with Christ in the dawn of the Millennial Age, now so close at hand. As soon as the spiritual phase of the Kingdom is established in power the setting up of the

human phase will be immediately accomplished. In humble recognition, therefore, of the divine purpose and order in the superior exaltation of the Gospel Church, we repeat the Apostle's statement that "they"-those noble, loyal, righteous, faithful ancient worthies -- "without us shall not be made perfect." Their perfecting will be instantaneous with their, awakening from death, their trial having been passed successfully, as attested by the Lord's Word.

But as to whether *we* shall be numbered among the "us" depends yet upon our successful running of the, race set before us. Surely, no less faithfulness and nobility of character can be expected of us than of those who ran for the earthly prize. And since all the blessings of 'God's Plan-the exaltation of the ancient worthies, the liberation of the whole world from the bondage of sin and death and the final judgment of angels await the manifestation of the spiritual sons of God, the Gospel Church, therefore the Apostle in chapter 12, in forceful metaphor, points us back to those ancient worthies as a stimulus for faith and zeal; saying:

"Therefore also, we, being compassed about with so great a cloud of martyrs [Greek *marturon* -- *who* so nobly witnessed for God and righteousness], let us [emulate them and] lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the [higher, heavenly] race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand', of the throne of God." Jesus, our Ransomer, is also our forerunner and pattern in this race. He ran successfully, and in consequence is even now at the right hand of the throne of God, whither we also may go to him. His way to the crown was the way of the shameful cross, and he said, If any man love me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me: the servant is not above his Lord. Persecution and shame and grief and loss are our portion in this present world, and the exaltation and the glory will follow in due time, if we faint not. Therefore we are urged to consider his example and teaching lest we be weary and faint in our minds under the trials of faith, patience and endurance of this evil day.

Again referring to the ancient worthies and their faithfulness (Heb. 12:18-24), we are reminded of our, much more favored position on the stream of time; for we are not approaching, as were they, the established typical kingdom of God under the typical mediator Moses; but, in point of time, we are approaching the glorious antitype of that-the Kingdom of Christ. How inspiring is this thought of the proximity in time to the glory of the Kingdom! And if this was true of the early Church, how much more is it true of us who are living in the end, the "harvest," of the Age?

The Apostle would also lead us to a fuller appreciation of the glory to be revealed in the setting up of the real Kingdom -- the antitype -- by a reference to the glory that attended the setting up of even the typical kingdom, and the enunciation of its righteous, code of divine law. (Heb. 12:18-21; see also 2 Cor. 3:7-11; Exod. 19.) That was a scene whose majesty and glory caused all Israel to fear and tremble; and even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." But, he says, that manifestation of glory was nothing in comparison to the glory that excelleth, which shall attend the setting up of the real Kingdom. That will be the glorious New Jerusalem, the true Mount Zion, the city (government or Kingdom) of the living God, the city for which Abraham looked afar off. It will be the general assembly of the Church of the firstborn in the midst of a welcoming host, "an innumerable company of angels": It will be the gathering together of the Church unto Christ, the Mediator of the New Covenant which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel -- not vengeance, but peace, pardon and life, -- and unto God, the judge of all, and to the spirits [lives] of just men made perfect; -- first the earthly phase of the Kingdom, and finally the full number of the restitution host.

What a glorious prospect! and how full of solemn import to, us specially, who have approached to the very threshold of this blessed hope-solemn, in that the overcoming to be done before we reach the goal will tax all our fortitude and faith and test every principle of righteousness to the utmost. To do this will require the greatest humility and dependence on Christ, not only for redemption but also for grace to help in every time of *need*.

- *Reprints, p. R2035.*

"Hark! ten thousand *harps and voices*
Sound the notes of praise above;
Jesus reigns and heaven rejoices;
Jesus reigns, He rules in love.
See, He comes to take earth's throne;
Soon He'll rule the world alone:
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Amen.

"King of glory reign forever!
Thine an everlasting throne.
Nothing from Thy love shall sever
Those whom Thou hast named Thine own.
Happy objects of Thy grace --
Destined to behold Thy face!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Amen."

"Is Come" or "Coming"

Question -- Some quote 1 John 4:2 and 2 John 7 as evidence that our Lord Jesus is to return in the flesh, claiming that the verb "is come" should be "coming." Is this claim well founded?

Answer -- In reply we give, by the kindness of Brother J. M. Blose, a written opinion on these two texts furnished him by J. R. Rinehart, Ph. D., Professor of languages in Waynesburg College, a thorough scholar.

After quoting the above passages in Greek, Prof. Rinehart says:

"(1) The foregoing quotations are from the *Emphatic Diaglott* of Wilson, purporting to be from the original Greek text of the New Testament. The word *eleluthota* is the accusative, singular, masculine, of the second perfect participle of the verb *erchomai*, having the same relation to this verb that any other perfect participle has to its verb. It stands with the verb *homolegei* in indirect discourse, and represents a finite, perfect, tense, according to ordinary Greek *syntax*. - *Goodwin's Greek Grammar*, 1588, 1288.

"The following translation of the first quotation is, therefore, essentially correct: 'Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is of God.'

(2) The word *erchomenon* in the second quotation is the accusative, singular, masculine, of the present participle of the verb *erchomai*, and is subject to the same rules of syntax as the word above. Its relation to *eiselthon* through *homologountes*, as well as the context, justifies its translation as of past *time*. - *Ibid*, 1289. "

"The translation of the second quotation, therefore, is properly given as follows: 'For many deceivers went forth' into the world-those who do not confess that Jesus Christ did come in the flesh.'"

In our issue of March '87, we published a report from the Professor of Greek in Rochester, N. Y., to the same effect. Indeed, we have never known a Greek *scholar* to take any' other view, and do not believe that any Professor of Greek in any creditable University would hesitate for one moment to pronounce the above and our Common Version rendering correct. Only those who have first of all formed the opinion that our Lord's second advent will be in the flesh find anything whatever in these texts over which to confuse and stumble themselves and others.

- Reprints p. R1993.

1951 Convention Memories

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." - Psalm 122:1

During the past year the Institute was privileged to serve through its speakers, various conventions, namely Cicero, Ill.; Buffalo, N. Y.; Brooklyn, N. Y.; Dayton, Ohio; Racine, Wis.; the 7-day Unity assembly at Lakeside, Ohio; Rochester, N. Y.; Atlantic City, N. J.; St. Louis, Mo.; Toronto, Ont.; Chicago, Ill.; and Boston, Mass; in addition, a goodly number of "local" gatherings where the blessings received were often in inverse proportion to, the smaller number of brethren attending. *Has* not the Lord thus always dealt with "the people of *his* pasture and the sheep of his hand"? For (whether, as of old, with thousands by the seashore or alone individual at Samaria's well) if the *Master is present*, the blessing is *sure*. We who were able to gather together and "drink of the river, of God's pleasures" are filled with deep gratitude to the Giver of all good things as we recall the blessings of spiritual instruction and fellowship received. And this the more as, with the passing of the years and the "casting down of reasonings and every high thing that exalteth itself," there is a recognizable sense of spiritual maturity which, like fragrant incense, pervades and suffuses the assemblage of saints. 'How our hearts have longed to share our feast with our brethren at home, so many of whom are now "shut-ins" because of age or illness! "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts." One thinks of Brother Barton's expressive little poem dedicated to one such dear soul at a long past convention season:

"As eagles to the food would fly,
Saints gather in Convention nigh;
Yet He who knows far more than I,
Has caged me so I cannot fly.

"Still well I know the reason's good
That locks the door to such a feast;
For while I reason of what's *good*,
He orders for the *very best*."

With such, a Divine assurance concerning the "all things," "What though 'created streams are dry,
I have the Fountain still."

"And so we walk together, My Lord and I."

In a larger sense we are all "shut-ins," or rather, "shutouts." For though he giveth us even now an overflowing cup, no matter what our individual circumstances-yes, "songs in the house of our pilgrimage,"-as the hart pants for the water brooks, so we long for that "abundant entrance, that presentation "faultless before him with exceeding joy." Though in happy anticipation we look forward to participating in presence or in spirit in the conventions of 1952, (as the Lord' permit) it is with a million-fold greater anticipation we all await our portion in that "general assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven.

May the present occasional foretaste of "fellowship divine" as we meet with one another, enkindle our hearts to a mightiness of zeal for him until that blessed hour when he shall call us to "meet him in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Happy *Zion!* What a favored *lot* is Thine!

- *W. J. Siekman.*

Encouraging Messages

My dear Brethren:

It was Jesus who first informed his disciple of their close and intimate relationship to God our Creator in a single word of profound significance and of surpassing tenderness -- *the word* "FATHER."

It was the Great Teacher's favorite expression. It was uppermost in his mind. It entered into all his discourses. It was ever on his lips. The one word which enriched his vocabulary -- "MY FATHER."

Only, the comparatively few -- a mere handful -- know God as their Father and are known of him as his children. Great is our God -- we are very small -- very frail -- a mere speck in his vast Universe. Yet he loves us very dearly, and declares we are very, precious in his sight.

How inspiring the thought that we can look up to the "*mightiest of all beings*" and address him in such familiar terms -- Abba Father -- our Father -- "MY FATHER."

Our Heavenly Father has invited us to a High Calling, a Holy Calling, a Heavenly Calling -- and has pre-determined that if we would be of the Elect Church -- the Bride of Christ -- the Family of God -- we must be copies of his dear Son in character, in heart. (Rom. 8:29.) How, beautiful, reasonable, and *Scriptural* is the doctrine of predestination as expounded by our dear Brother *Russell-contrasted with other unsustained theories*. Let us with increasing zeal seek to make our calling and election sure to membership in the *Divine Family. The time is short!*

What of the future? -- The path is unknown to us, but it is not unknown to our Heavenly Father. We are sure of an unerring Guide. . "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." If every day be lived to God, the remainder of our brief life here will be a sanctified portion. Be it ours, then, to make the most of TODAY -- in other words "Redeem the time." - Rev. 3:21.

With sincere greetings,
A. H. -- Eng.

Dear Brethren:

Christian greetings of deep love in our dear Redeemer's name! Thank you for sending me the wonderful book of present truth, "*I Will Come Again*." I have been blessed very much in reading it, and I could see for my own encourage merit' again that we are doubtless in the days of our Lord's second presence, and that our own deliverance and the salvation of all mankind is near, therefore very near indeed! The book is a good help for all brethren standing firmly in the present truth, and who are placed for the defense of the glorious Gospel. . .

May the Lord continue to bless you all and keep you in his favor is my prayer.
Yours in the blessed hope,
R. S. -- Germany.

Recently Deceased

Brother G. K. Bolger,* Waco, Texas - (December).
Brother George F. Carpenter, Chicago, Ill. - (December).
Brother John E. Clendining, West Palm Beach, Fla. - (December).
Sister Esther Graham, Saskatoon, Sask. - (December).
Brother W. J. McAllister, Philadelphia, Pa. - (December).
Sister Eliza Prough, Perris, Cal. - (December).

* Formerly Editor of the Berean Bible Student, San Francisco, Calif