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Thanksgiving Thoughts

"My cup runneth over." - Psalm 23:5

GRATITUDE pre-eminently distinguishes the people of God. This is the lesson of the tenth leper. Sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise continually ascend to the heavenly throne as each saint responds to the divine goodness manifested in his daily experiences. The outpourings of a grateful heart have been likened to the little bird, which when drinking, constantly raises its head as if thus to thank its beneficent Provider. So also do our hearts overflow with gratitude for the matchless grace bestowed upon us by the "Giver of every good and perfect gift," who has "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies." But where shall his praise begin and what words can our "stammering, lisping tongues" utter which will adequately convey to our Father our love and adoration? Who has not felt this lack and yearned for fulness of expression?

Poetic souls have endeavored thus to do, and truly beautiful are some of the poems which have been written. But He who searcheth the heart and knoweth our every longing, and our very thoughts afar off, has wonderfully provided for even this want. In the Book of Psalms He has graciously caused to be recorded "words" expressive of the deepest emotional feeling. Luther has well said:

"Where do we find a sweeter voice of joy than in the Psalms of thanksgiving and praise? The Psalter forms a little book for all saints, in which every man, in whatever situation he may be placed, shall find psalms and sentiments which shall apply to his own case, and be the same to him as if they were for his own sake alone; so expressed as he could not express them himself, nor find, nor even wish them better than they are. Therefore, God, seeing that we know not what or how we ought to pray, as the Apostle saith, and desiring to help our infirmities, after the manner of schoolmasters who compose for children letters or short prayers, that they may send them to their parents, so prepares for us in this Book both the words and feelings with which we should address our Heavenly Father, - and pray concerning those things which in the other books he had taught us we ought to do and to copy, that so a man may not feel the want of anything which is of import to his eternal salvation. So great is the loving care and grace of our God toward us, who is blessed forevermore."

How marvelous that the Lord, in addition to all his lavish gifts, has thus also provided even the language which we may borrow to express our gratitude to him!

For this thanksgiving meditation, let us draw on these precious words, and may they reflect the heart of each one who reads them. Omitting our own comments, we shall, to accentuate the forcefulness and beauty of the Psalms, preface each separate group with verses from a beautiful poem (Joseph Addison, 1672-1719) which is the basis of one of our hymns. Thus, like a great strophe and antistrophe, each shall reflect and enhance the other; the lovely thoughts of a human heart echoed by the loftier and nobler strains of the spirit of God.

"When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise.

"O how shall words, with equal warmth,
The gratitude declare
That glows, within my inmost heart!
But Thou canst read it there."

"O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches." "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul." "I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the works of thy hands." "Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night, upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound. For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands. O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep." "I will praise thee with my whole heart; before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy Word above all thy name. In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord, when they shear the words of thy mouth. Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord." - Psa. 104:24; 94:19; 143:5; 86:15; 16:5-7; 116:12; 92:1-5; 138:1-5.

"Thy Providence my life sustained,
And all my wants redrest,
When in the silent womb I lay
And hung upon the breast.

"Unnumbered comforts to my soul
Thy tender care bestowed,
Before my infant heart conceived
From whom these comforts flowed."

"Thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right

well. My substance was not hid from thee when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." "Thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make the trust when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God since my mother -bare me." "By thee have I been holden up from the womb; thou 'hast been my benefactor from my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of thee." - Psa. 139:13-16; 22:9, 10 A.R.V.; 71:6 A.R.V.

"To all my weak complaints and cries
Thy mercy lent an ear,
Ere yet my feeble thoughts had learned
To form themselves in prayer.

"When in the slippery paths of youth
With heedless steps I ran;
Thine arm, unseen, conveyed me safe,
And led me up to man."

"Thou art my hope, O Lord God: thou art my trust from my youth." "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord." "Who will rise up for me against the evil doers? or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O Lord, held me up." "Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip." "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy Word." "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." -- Psa. 71:5; 103:13, 14; 25:7; 71:17; 94:16-18; 18:35, 36; 119:9; 37:23, 24; 40:2, 3.

"Through hidden dangers, toils, and deaths,
It gently cleared my way;
And through the pleasing snares of vice,
More to be feared than they.

"When worn with sickness, oft hast thou
With health renewed my face;
And, when in sins and sorrows sunk,
Revived my soul with grace."

"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." "When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell." "For by thee I have run through - a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall." "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee." "O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girdeth me with gladness." "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities: who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." - Psa. 34:6-8; 27:2; 18:29; 61:2; 41:4; 30:2, 3, 11; 103:1-5.

"Thy bounteous hand with earthly bliss
Hath made my cup run o'er;
And, in a kind and faithful friend,
Hath doubled all my store.

"Ten thousand thousand precious gifts
My daily thanks employ;
Nor is the least a cheerful heart,
That tastes these gifts with joy."

"Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: Thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it." "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation." "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and -it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord." "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me. O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." "Many, O Lord my 'God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and 'thy thoughts which are to usward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." - Psa. 65:9; 68:19; 128:1-4; 139:17, 18, 5, 6; 40:5.

"Through every period of my life
Thy goodness I'll proclaim;
And after death, in distant worlds,
Resume the glorious theme.

"Through all eternity to Thee
A grateful song I'll raise;
And my eternal joy shall be
To herald wide Thy praise."

"I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." "I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord." "I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore." "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For who in the heavens can be compared unto the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?" "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing." "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever:: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory: Amen, and Amen." -- Psa. 22:22; 34:1-3; 104:33,34; 86:12; 89:1,6; 107:21,22; 72:18,19.

Our hearts, lifted up by these wonderful strains of praise and gratitude for God's unending goodness, forget "the light afflictions which are but for a moment" and thrill to the future prospects,

the bliss to come, and the praise that yet awaiteth God in Zion. For our debt of praise will never end, and the attainment of victory will but begin for us an eternity of thanksgiving opened by our "casting our crowns before him, lost in wonder, love, and praise." Our fellowship with him now will continue then enhanced, forevermore.

The words of Wihtol's beautiful hymn are appropriate to our thoughts:

"My God and I, go through the fields together,
We walk and talk as good friends should and do,
We clasp our hands, our voices ring with laughter,
'My God and I, walk through the meadow's hue.

"He tells me of the years that went before me,
When heav'nly plans were made for me to be,
When all was but a dream of dim conception,
To come to life, earth's verdant glory see.

"My God and I will go for aye together,
We'll walk and talk and laugh as good friends do,
This world will pass and with it common trifles,
But God and I, will go unendingly."

We long for that day when the rapt strains of the new song which fell on the entranced ears of John in Patmos shall be heard everywhere, for then, as he wrote: "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honor, and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Then shall be heard the great Hallelujah, that mighty burst of gladness which is the last Psalm, like the very summit and climax of the praise that can ascend to God, the loftiest wave of the many waters that break at the foot of his throne:

"Praise ye the Lord.
Praise God in His sanctuary:
Praise Him in the firmament of His power.
Praise Him for, His mighty acts:
Praise Him according to His excellent greatness.
Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet.
Praise Him with the psaltery and harp.
Praise Him with the timbrel and dance:
Praise Him with stringed instruments and organs.
Praise Him upon the loud cymbals:
Praise Him upon the high sounding cymbals.
Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord."

- *W. J. Siekman.*

The Glorious Proclamation

"For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." - Luke 2:1-20.

THE MESSAGE of the angels to the shepherds on Bethlehem's plains sounds more and more precious to each child of God in proportion as he grows in grace and knowledge. As his eyes and ears of understanding open more widely to the lengths and breadths of God's great Plan of the Ages, that prophetic message is the more highly esteemed as an epitome of the entire Gospel. Nor can our attention be too frequently called to the great event which lies at the foundation of that message our Savior's birth.

It matters not that December 25th is not the real anniversary of the Savior's birth, but probably the anniversary of the annunciation by the angel Gabriel, the anniversary of the Virgin Mary's conception, our Lord being born nine months later on the calendar, or about October 1. One so great, whose birth, death, and resurrection from the dead means so much to the human family, may be remembered and celebrated any day, every day, by all who appreciate what he has done for our race. Since, then, the majority of Christian people have become habituated to the celebration of December 25th as our Lord's birthday, we need make no protest, but join with all in celebrating that day with rejoicing of heart, giving gifts and remembrances one to another, thus copying divine favor, which gave to mankind the Son of God as a gift of mercy and love for our redemption.

For four thousand years and more the promises of God, clothed in more or less obscurity, had been given to mankind, intimating that ultimately the great curse of sin and death which had come upon the world through Father Adam's disobedience in Eden would be rolled away, and instead of a curse, a blight, would come a blessing of the Lord with life-giving refreshment. In various types, figures, and shadowy promises this lesson had come down through the ages to the time of our Lord's birth, especially amongst the Jews, who were the divinely favored and covenanted people. And since the Jews were of a commercial spirit, many of them were to be found in all parts of the civilized world; and thus amongst every people the faith in the one God and the hope of Israel through a Messiah were more or less made known, so that at the time of our Lord's birth we read, "All men were in expectation" of a soon-coming Messiah. Doubtless this expectation was built upon the interpretation of Daniel's prophecy, which we now see clearly marked the year of our Lord's majority, when he was thirty years of age and made his consecration to his work and received the begetting of the holy spirit, his anointing as the great antitypical high priest and as the great antitypical king over Israel and the world.

FROM BETHLEHEM TO NAZARETH

In olden times there were honorable cities and mean cities. Nazareth was generally recognized as one of the latter, while Bethlehem was distinctly one of the former—the City of David, Israel's beloved king. The Scriptures explain to us that Mary, our Lord's mother, and Joseph, her husband, were both of the lineage of David, and that in a seemingly accidental manner the prophecy was fulfilled which foretold that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

The Roman empire at that time bore rule over the whole world, the Jews being subject to it, but waiting expectantly, restlessly, for the coming Messiah, who would deliver them from being subject people and make of them the ruling caste in his Kingdom, the dominion of the world. Rome's great emperor, Caesar Augustus, was in power at this time, and had sent forth his decree

for a polling or census of the whole world for purposes of taxation, etc. Luke informs us that it was in response to this royal decree that Joseph and Mary went up to their native city to be enrolled, and that thus it was that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and on account of the great concourse of people at the same time and for the same purpose, accommodations being scarce, the stable of the inn, or khan, was used by some as a lodging. Joseph and Mary, being of the late comers, were forced to occupy these humble quarters, and thus it was that the King of Glory, whose Kingdom is by and by to rule the world, was in the time of his flesh born in a stable and cradled in a manger.

Noble shepherds those must have been to whom the Almighty sent the angelic message respecting the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, which has rung down the ages and reached our ears—the message which thrills us the more in proportion as we are able to grasp its meaning. First a single angel appeared to the shepherds and allayed their fears, saying, "Fear not; behold I bring you good tidings." It would appear that fear is one of the dominating impulses of the human mind, especially in conjunction with any revelations from the Lord. Men realize -- even the best of the race -- that they are imperfect and that the Almighty and his laws are perfect. Instinctively the world seems to realize that a curse or condemnation of the Almighty rests upon it, and instinctively it fears a further curse and further condemnation, realizing its continual and increasing sinfulness. The same is true today with all except the comparatively few who are well informed respecting the divine character and plan. Thus the subject of religion is generally obnoxious to the world in general -- a subject which they prefer to avoid, because of a feeling of guilt and a dread of further knowledge and condemnation.

It is for the true children of God today, as it was for the angels at that time, to assure the world that God is better than all their fears -- that God so loved the world as to redeem them from the just sentence of death, the curse that came upon all as inheritors of Adam's imperfection and sentence.

"Good tidings" is another translation of our word "gospel." How beautiful the thought that the Gospel is really and truly good tidings. Alas, for the misrepresentations of God's plan, under which so many of his professed people misrepresent his character and his Word, and apply the term "gospel" to their various messages from the dark ages, teaching purgatory and eternal torment as the portion of the race. Let us get away from this false thought and get the truth that the Gospel is good tidings. The angel elaborated, saying that his message was good tidings of great joy, which should be unto all people. Ah, thank God, his plan is wider and deeper and higher and grander than anything we have ever conceived. The Gospel message is not merely to be good tidings to the comparatively few that now have ears to hear and *eyes* to see its beauties, but in God's due time it is to be good tidings of great joy to all people.

As every member of Adam's race shared in his fall and in the curse of death which came upon him as a result, so every member of the race was included in the great redemptive sacrifice which our Lord Jesus offered and which was finished at Calvary. God's plan in Christ, as it is being worked out and shall ultimately be accomplished, will mean great joy for all people, and the tidings of this were given at the very moment of our Lord's birth, because he was the one through whom all the glorious things of the divine purpose and plan shall ultimately be accomplished.

THE CAUSE, THE LOGIC, OF THE MESSAGE

The message took cognizance of the fact that it was to reasonable people, who would want to know why the unchangeable God, who had once pronounced a curse, should at any time so amend and alter matters as to supplant the curse with a blessing. The messenger states the

philosophy of the divine plan, "Unto you is born this day, a Savior, which is Christ [Messiah] the Lord." There we have the key to the entire Gospel statement of how God could be just and yet be the justifier of sinners who accept Jesus. The word "Savior" here signifies life-giver, and how beautiful is the thought that as death is the wage of sin, the curse upon the race, this Messiah who was born is to be the one who will rescue the race from the sentence by giving them life again. The explanation of how he would give life was not given, nor was it necessary at that time; but now, in the light of developments, and with the explanations furnished through the spirit in the New Testament, we see how that our Lord's voluntary sacrifice of his life, dying the just for the unjust, settled the claims of divine justice against Adam and thus incidentally against all who shared his sentence.

Truly the more we see of the divine plan for our salvation, which began to take shape in the birth of Jesus, the more we feel like shouting with the angelic choir praises to the God of heaven, thankfulness for his mercy to the children of men. It mattered not that the babe born in Bethlehem was the Savior only in prospect, that he could not even be anointed to do his work until he reached manhood's estate thirty years later; it mattered not that even then it would be necessary for him to lay down his life gradually through three and a half years of his earthly ministry, to be finished at Calvary; it mattered not either that the resurrection was still three days after that, and his ascension forty days later, and that the blessing in general would be deferred for nearly nineteen centuries thereafter. As the angels could sing and rejoice at the first budding of the divine plan of salvation, so also can all who have faith in the ultimate outcome rejoice with joy unspeakable and give praise to God in the highest and to his Son our Lord.

Although nearly nineteen centuries have rolled away since that angelic message was delivered, it has not yet been fulfilled except in a limited measure by faith to those who have the eye of faith and the ears of faith, in all a "little flock." But the tidings of great misery for- nearly all people have been spread abroad in the name of Christ, much to the discredit of the divine plan and to the dishonor of the divine character. Instead of carrying joy the message has very generally carried grief and sorrow, especially to the kindhearted and more generously disposed. Indeed we may say that no message of the Lord Jesus, either true or false, has ever reached all people. Even today, after nineteen centuries of propaganda, only a comparatively small portion of the human family have ever heard of the only name given under heaven and amongst men whereby we must be saved -- "nor is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4:12).

What, then, shall we say of the salvation which is come to those who have truly accepted Christ as their Savior, and who are today rejoicing in him as such, and who by faith are seeing the salvation of God begun in their own hearts and yet to be fully accomplished under the whole heavens? This the Apostle calls the salvation by hope. His words are, "We are saved by hope" (Romans 8:24). We are not saved actually; we are still surrounded by sin, pain, sighing, crying, and dying; the curse is not yet rolled away. All that the best of the Lord's people have received is salvation by hope, by faith. Yet this anticipation of the future salvation, of the resurrection from the dead, of a participation in the glory, honor, and immortality of the divine nature promised to the faithful, is so strong, so clear, that those who possess it are enabled to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, even in the midst of trials and difficulties and weaknesses and unfavorable conditions incident to the curse which still rests upon the race.

A PROPHECY OF GOOD THINGS

Yes, the angelic message was a prophecy of good things to be accomplished for the Church of the world during the Millennial Age. The Church is to have the first blessing. The first resurrection is to be composed only of the blessed and holy who shall live and reign with Christ during the Millennium, the thousand years in which Satan shall be bound,, and when the good influences of truth and righteousness shall enlighten the whole earth. The declaration of the Scriptures is that the deliverance of the Church will come early in the morning of that Millennial day, as the Prophet declares, "God will help her early in the morning" (Psalm 46:5).

But much as we rejoice in the glorious hopes of the Gospel set before us who now see, who now believe, who now rejoice with joy unspeakable, we are glad that the divine mercy and love are of such lengths and breadths and heights and depths as to encompass the whole world of mankind, and to provide a blessing for every member of Adam's race through him who loved us and bought us with his precious blood.

It will be during the Millennial Age that this prophecy of the angel will have its fulfillment, and the great Savior who has already redeemed us by his sacrifice will stand forth as the King, the glorified Messiah, and establish his dominion of righteousness in the world for the blessing and uplifting of every member of the race. In harmony with the words of the Apostle, those will be times of refreshing, "times of restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21). If the Lord had based the hope of the world upon some works of merit or righteousness of the world's doing, then indeed we might have feared -- indeed the more we know of the world, the less hope we would have. But, on the contrary, the Lord has based the entire proposition for the future blessing, not upon our worthiness, but upon the worthiness and sacrifice of his Son -- to you is born a life-giver, which is Messiah the Lord.

How it adds to our enjoyment of the coming age blessings to know that the trials and difficulties of this present Gospel age are subject to the divine supervision in the interest of the little flock that is now being gathered in advance from amongst men-the "elect," the Church. We see how the present trials and difficulties are the chiselings and polishings necessary to our development in the fruits and graces of the holy spirit in the character-likeness of God's dear Son, our Lord, our Hope, our Bridegroom. How joyful the thought that soon the elect number called from the world to be the Bride, the Lamb's wife, will be completed and enter into her glory. How precious the thought that then they shall be privileged with their Lord and Master to extend the divine favor of blessing and uplift to the world. What higher honor or privilege or blessing could possibly come to any?

It was after the giving of the message of good tidings and great joy by the heavenly one that a host of angels appeared to the shepherds, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." This, too, is a prophecy. It is not yet true, but will be fulfilled in every particular in God's due time, which we believe is now nigh, even at the door. Not yet does God receive glory in the highest, not yet is there peace amongst men. Quite to the contrary. God's name is blasphemed, not only by those who vulgarly and in ribald jest take the divine name in vain, and not merely by the heathen who worship devils and think they are gods, but even by Christian people God's name is blasphemed every day. For be it known that blasphemy is any dishonorable misrepresentation of another. God be merciful to us, for at some time or other every one of us doubtless has blasphemed the holy name in this manner -- by misrepresenting the divine character and divine plan, by picturing the God of love and mercy and justice and truth as the originator, the planner, the perpetuator of the eternal torment of the great mass of his creatures, born in sin and shapen in iniquity, born to sin as the sparks to fly upward.

But the Lord had mercy upon us because we did it ignorantly. And we also should have compassion upon others who still ignorantly misrepresent our God, and our energies should be continually bent to

their assistance, that the eyes of their understanding might open more widely to perceive the lengths and breadths and heights and depths and know the love of God which passeth understanding.

Noting that peace on earth and good will to men have not followed the Savior's birth thus far, and discerning that this is a prophecy of what is to be accomplished during the Millennium, many have been inclined to change the translation of this verse so as to have it read, "On earth peace amongst men, in whom he is well pleased." However, by thus changing it the statement would not be true, for even the Lord's people have no peace on earth. Whatever peace they have is in their hearts, and based upon their faith in the Lord and in the glorious things which he has promised. Our Lord himself and the Apostles testified to this, assuring us that whosoever in this present time would live godly should suffer persecution, that a man's foes would be they of his own household, etc. (2 Tim. 3:12; Matt. 10:26). Let us not confuse ourselves, nor abridge the testimony of the Word, but with the eye of faith look forward to the day of Christ in which all these glorious things shall have their fulfillment, in which peace shall indeed fill the whole earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, bringing divine favor and rolling away the curse from the entire groaning creation, as pointed out by the Apostle.

Not even with the inauguration of the Millennium will this prophecy be fulfilled: not until its close, when the human family shall have been lifted by the Kingdom regulations out of sin, sickness, pain, sorrow, and death, up, up to all that was lost in Adam - not until then will there indeed be glory to God in the highest, not until then will there be peace amongst men. Nor are we to understand that the entire race will be appreciative of the divine love and favor even after they have fully seen the righteousness of God in Christ manifested. On the contrary, the Scriptures seem to clearly teach that there will be a class who will then prove unfit for life eternal, unappreciative of the divine favor, and it is with pleasure that we learn that all such shall be utterly destroyed from amongst the people in the Second Death. Thus eventually, by the close of the Millennium, Satan and all wilful wrongdoers having been destroyed, the time will come as declared in the Scriptures when all voices in heaven and in earth and under the earth shall be heard praising God, him that sitteth upon the throne, and the Lamb forever and ever. Hosanna! Glory to God in the highest! Peace and good will to men! will be the final shout of a redeemed race when the great plan of salvation shall have been fully outworked according to the divine plan set forth in the Scriptures.

- *C. T. Russell*

"Silent night! holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and Child!
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

"Silent night! holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light;
Radiant beams Thy holy face,

With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth."

"Silent night! holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight!
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ, the Savior is born,
Christ, the Savior, is born.

The Church of Today

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." - 2 Cor. 13:5.

THERE is nothing in the history of the world hitherto, and especially nothing in the present status of its affairs, to favor the doctrine of our modern millennialists, or to make us think it likely, if at all possible, that the Church in this dispensation, by any human activities or improvements, will ever be able to bring about a condition of universal conversion, righteousness, and peace, such as some say will and must come "before" Christ comes. As no preaching of the Gospel, or efforts of evangelical workers, the holiest and most efficient in all these many centuries, have succeeded in making converts and saints of the entire population of any city or locality on this earth, it would seem to be sheer folly to expect these agencies and endeavors to do for the whole earth what they have never done for any part of it, however small. In all the ages ... whithersoever it has come it has taken out a people for the Lord, who will live and shine with him in immortal glory, ... whilst . . . the majority have everywhere been on the outside ... and how can we suppose that it will ever be different in the present order of things? And when we examine the condition in which nearly two thousand years of the Gospel have left the most favored nations, not to speak of the regions beyond, we look in vain for solid evidences that another two thousand years of the same would bring the world any nearer the fancied millennial state [before Christ comes] than Christendom is at present. . . . Some hold up their hands in holy horror at the idea that "Christendom," as it now exists -- "this chaos of intermingled divisions, antagonistic communions and interminable contentions, jealousies and strifes" -- is to remain. They cannot think that the Greek Church, the Papal Church, the disagreeing Protestant churches, together with the many sects and heretical coteries which "disgrace" the Christian profession, are to continue to the end of time.

But this state of things is exactly what has developed under "nineteen hundred years of the Gospel proclamations," and what has been is that which shall be, unless radical changes come, by the intervention of some new power and method of administration, such as the coming again of the Lord Jesus to judge and rectify will bring. . . .

When we look at the evils and the tares that have all the while been growing, at the sad estate into which "Christendom has been brought" by the spirit of sect, human ambition, self-seeking hypocrisy, unbelief, misbelief and the super-exaltation of humanitarian goodishness, which makes nought of doctrine, it seems next thing to absurdity to say that "this" is the instrument and agency to convert "the world" to truth and genuine godliness.

People say, "Oh, yes; but only set the Church aright. Put it to work to do as it should; bring it up to what it 'ought to be' in enterprise and liberality, and there can be no question that it will soon conquer and sway the world to Christ and salvation." Be it so; but who is to convert Christendom and put it in condition to convert the world? Reform, Reform! That is the watchword. The whole Church and the whole earth are full of reformers laboring at reforms. But the sad fact remains: "That which is crooked, cannot be made straight; and that which is wanting cannot be numbered," while the doctoring is often worse than the disease. . . . To convert the world there must first be a conversion of the Church, and that can never be until Christ the Judge shall come.

Yet another thing to be noted in connection with our subject is the character of the times in which we live. The Scriptures abound in allusions to the moral aspect of the world in its "last" period -- the period bordering on the time when Christ shall come with power and great glory, and everywhere those times are represented as full of unbelief, lawlessness, outbreaking sin, rampant

lust, blasphemous mockery, and reviling of sacred things -- a very carnival of bad passions and God-defiant crimes.

The question, therefore, arises, whether our times are not of the character thus divinely described and fore-intimated.... Have "we" not withal fallen upon a time of extraordinary degeneracy and wickedness? Has there not come a grievous falling away from the faith, a giving of heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies? Have not people become lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to law and rightful authority, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, "holding certain forms of godliness," but failing to show the power of godliness in their lives? Have "we" not plentiful examples of those mockers who were to come, walking after their own lusts and likes, and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming?" [Parousia, presence, *Diaglott* translation.]

Think of the startling multiplication of divorces, the breaking down of the sacredness of marriage, the shameless prevalence of licentiousness, and the commonness of infanticide, and secret blood guiltiness of which physicians tell. Note the growing indifference to the solemnity of oaths, to sacred promises, to moral obligations, to the laws of God, and to all holy things. Observe the rapid accumulations of colossal robberies, swindles, defalcations, embezzlements, rascalities and false dealings, which disgrace our civilization, much of it also in high places, by people of social rank, education and refinement. Estimate the increasing killings, murders, incendiaryisms and lawless and malicious misdoings of men and women, and the trampling under foot of right and justice in political, commercial and banking circles.

Observe the awful increase of suicides, which, within the past few years, have exceeded the number of *200,000* per annum! Lusts and crimes and fiendish passions seem to have reached flood tide, blossoming like trees in springtime, filling our "daily journals with their stench," and, yet, treated and familiarly talked of as ordinary and trivial things! And when we consider that all this is within the realm of so-called Christendom, we may well wonder that we should have Christian people singing over it, and telling us that we are on the march to a glorious Millennium [before Christ comes]. What this state of things betokens is not millennial glory, but "the day of Judgment, on the margin of which the world of today is treading." . . .

The question whether there is to be a glorious Millennium on this earth before the return of Christ is not to be decided by what is most agreeable to our reason and fancy, nor yet by what we imagine the most effective to stir zeal in effort to benefit the world lying in sin, but by what the Word of God says. What does not accord with that Word must go under, without regard to human likes, reasonings or opinions... . That many good and sensible people have need to examine the question with more thoroughness than they yet have done is abundantly evident; and that what we have thus written may help some to right conclusions is our earnest wish.... Nor can we leave the subject without solemnly laying it on the consciences of all whom we can reach, not to rest satisfied with notions which flatter and please a rationalistic fancy, but which they have never critically examined; and to beware of giving sanction to a modern popular persuasion, which they may find without just foundation in Scripture. . . .

It is indeed a fact for all to consider, that the side which we take on the question will and must make serious difference in the whole system of our theological thinking. There is scarcely a doctrine which is not more or less affected by the ground we take upon this question. Our decision will and must affect our views of the Resurrection of the Kingdom of God -- of the

Second Coming itself -of the nature and purpose of the Present Dispensation -- particularly of the judgment, and what is to come after it, and the whole condition and life of the finally redeemed.. .

And it will and must make or unmake to us many most pregnant passages of Holy Writ, rendering them grandly luminous, or sealing them as meaningless and uncertain-mere riddles for interpreters to guess at, without agreement as to their clear and certain import.

A decision so far-reaching and momentous in its consequences and effects cannot safely be treated with indifference, and certainly demands a very serious, candid and thorough examination, that the conclusion may be one solidly founded in the revelations given us in the sacred Scriptures.

For our part we are deeply convinced and satisfied that the doctrine of a glorious Millennium of Christianity triumphant throughout all the world before Christ comes is "groundless" and damaging to the cause it would promote.

- *J. A. Seiss*

"This Thing Is From Me"

1 Kings 12:24

Have you ever thought that everything concerning you concerns me too? For "he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye" (Zech. 2:8).

"You are very precious in my sight" (Isa. 43:4). Therefore it is my special delight to educate you.

I would have you learn that when temptations assail you, and "the enemy comes in like a flood" that "*This thing is from me,*" that your weakness needs my might, and your safety lies in letting me fight for you.

Are you in difficult circumstances, surrounded by people who do not understand you, who never consult your taste, who put you in the background? *This thing is from me.* I am the God of circumstances. Thou tamest not to thy place by accident; it is the very place I meant for thee.

Have you asked to be made humble? See then, I have put you in the very place where this lesson is taught; your surroundings and companions are only working out my will.

Are you passing through a night of sorrow? *This thing is from me.* Jesus was the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. I have let earthly comforters fail you that by turning to me you may obtain everlasting consolation (2 Thess. 2:16, 17).

Has some friend disappointed you? One to whom you opened your heart? *This thing is from me.* I have allowed this disappointment to come, that you may learn that

"The best Friend to have is Jesus,
He will keep you lest you fall,
He will hear you when you call,
The best Friend to have is Jesus."

I want to be your confidant. Has some one repeated things about you that are untrue? Leave them to me and draw closer unto me, thy shelter, out of reach of the strife of tongues, for, I will "bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday" (Psa. 37: 6).

Have your plans been all upset? Are you bowed down and weary? *This thing is from me.* You made your plans and then came asking me to bless them, but I would have you let me plan for you, and then take the responsibility for this thing is too heavy for thee. Thou art not able to perform it thyself alone (Exodus 18:18). You are only an instrument.

Have you longed to do some great work for me, and instead been laid aside on a bed of pain and weakness? *This thing is from me.* I could not get your attention in your busy days, and I want to teach you some of my deepest lessons. They also serve who only stand and wait. I want you to learn to sing:

"I am not eager, bold and strong;
All that is past.
I am ready, not to do,
At last-at last!"

Some of my greatest workers are those shut out from active service, that they may learn to wield the weapon of allprayer.

Are you suddenly called upon to occupy a difficult and responsible position? I am trusting you with the possession of difficulties, and for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works and in all that thou putteth thy hand unto (Deut. 15:10). Remember the pot of holy oil- every interruption that would make you impatient, every word that pains you, every revelation of your own weakness, be anointed with it. Interruptions are divine instructions, the sting will go as you learn to see *me in all things*.

- *Author Unknown*

Robes, Garments, Clothing

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment." - Rev. 3:5.

THE FIRST Bible reference to clothing occurs appropriately in Eden. Our first parents disobeyed the plain instructions of the Lord God and partook of the fruit of the tree they were expressly commanded not to eat of, and then suddenly became aware of their guilt and sought to hide themselves by making aprons of fig leaves, and hiding themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the Garden. But no cover could screen them from the wrath of their Creator. Their standing of innocence; their standing of sonship; their standing of fellowship were gone at one stroke, and no efforts of Adam and his descendants have freed or could free them from the dire consequence of divine judgment or recover them their standing.

But though the Lord God excluded them from the life-giving fruits of the Garden, he himself provided them with coats of skins to cover their guilt, and thus gave a hint that only by the sacrifice of life (this supplied the skins or coats) can release from condemnation ever be effected. By the provision of the coats of skin their guilt was only covered, not removed, not cleared. And therein is. the only aspect of atonement to be found in the Old Testament -- sins covered, not pardoned, not cleared.

The primitive root of the words translated atonement, ransom, etc., in the Old Testament has the thought of covering sin, but when the primitive is developed and extended it carries the thought of sacrifice or offering for sin, but the true removal of sin and its penalty will be seen only in the atoning work of Jesus Christ, who came to *put away* sin by the sacrifice of himself. Two lessons are taught by the first occurrence of clothing in the Bible: sins covered, and standing granted; and it is said that the lesson to be learned in the first occurrence of anything in the Word of God determines the sense in which it should be interpreted in all following instances.

Man has perverted the original teaching. He conveniently disregards the truth that clothing was firstly a covering for sin, but makes much of garments being proof of standing. By color or trimmings man is able to imply to his fellowman that he has better standing. So readily does man judge clothing as a sign of rank, and even of pride, that he is liable to adopt Bible words and say, "Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler." Military dress furnishes a glaring example of this practice-the stars, the tabs, the crowns, the pips and the stripes all declare the rank, and in it all, nothing has been noted that once clothing was a cover for sin. And yet if we recall the charming meaning of the word "candidate" -- clothed in white -- we observe that man has not entirely lost the thought.

THE LORD GOD CLOTHES HIMSELF

Of the Lord God himself it is written, "Thou art clothed with honor and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment" (Psalm 104:1, 2). He clothes himself -- none have given him his standing, his honor, his character, his majesty. It is difficult for man to portray the holiness of God. The best picture is probably to say, as with the Psalmist, that he clothes himself with light; or with the Apostle John that God is light; or with James that he is the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning; or with Paul that whatsoever doth make manifest is light. This garment of light depicts the eternal character of the Lord God, but when he is revealed as taking the garments of vengeance and being clad with zeal as a cloak, we see that he has girded himself, as it were, to leave his throne and intervene directly in the affairs of

mankind in judgment. But whereas he invests *himself*, all who act for him have a robe of his providing, to indicate that whatever standing of righteousness or office they hold is given by him. For example the heavenly beings who served him on earth were shown in white garments (Matt. 17:2; 28:3; Acts 1:10). Their garments are dazzling white, the nearest copy that could be made of that light which is the Lord God's garment. These servants are reflections of him and are blessed in that.

GOD'S EARTHLY SERVANTS

His human servants may be clothed to indicate their duties. Thus Aaron,, the first and foremost of Israel's high priests, had elaborate robes of office. These official robes were for glory and for beauty, and not until he was so clothed was he anointed into office. The foundation garment was the white brodered coat of fine linen, teaching that his office was based on the righteousness credited to him as the servant of Jehovah. But though Aaron had specific garments which all Israel would respect, his brother Moses, who was more prominent in the birth of the nation of Israel, had no distinguishing robes.

Heredity offices as kingship and priesthood may be dignified by robes, but a prophet might have arisen out of any family or tribe and had only his message to attract hearers. It might be that the words he chose to clothe his message might determine whether he would be well received. If he modified his words and prophesied smooth things, the nation would hear him, but if the burden of the Lord was upon him, and his message not wrapped up, but were the very words of the Lord God who commissioned him, though he himself were garbed in camel's hair or soft raiment, the people would reject him. Here it might be remembered that a rough garment had become a mark of a prophet, even to some adopting it to deceive (Zech. 13:4).

One cannot proceed further without thinking of John the Baptist, who appeared in the wilderness of Judea clothed in camel's hair raiment (Matt. 3:4). It will be recalled that when in prison he sent to Jesus two of his own disciples to inquire of Jesus, "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" (Luke 7:19). When our Lord had sent back the messengers with wonderful evidence in answer, he asked the people what they thought of John. "What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?" (Verses 22-24). Of course not-they would not have exerted themselves to leave the cities to hear so weak a character as a reed! Our Lord repeats the question: "What went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?" A man of standing, denoted by his good clothing?

They are in palaces, not in the wilderness. Clearly they had some other reason for going out of the cities; something more than curiosity was impelling them out. It is recorded that all men were in expectation and mused in their hearts of John (Luke 3:15). Our Lord asked the question the third time: "What went ye out for to see?" And again he anticipates their answer: "A prophet?" Jesus knew that their reason for journeying out to hear John was that they regarded him as a prophet. But they had underestimated him, for he was more than a prophet. He was a herald, and his calling was itself a fulfillment of prophecy. While like previous prophets he spoke of imminent judgment, to him was given the honor of making the most momentous and most joyful of messages, for he had the joy of proclaiming that his successor and superior, the Lamb of God, was contemporary with him! To John also was the honor of baptizing the Son of God! These signal honors made him more than a prophet. Read his joyful words! "The friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled" (John 3:29). Indeed, he was more than a prophet, and in Jesus' own words, "There hath not arisen a greater."

It could be, though not likely, that Israel at first glance regarded John as a prophet because of his traditional garb, but such is deciding by looking on the outward appearance (always a doubtful basis of judgment), but having received him to the extent of being baptized of him, how many took the next step? Had they listened more intently and followed his pointing finger, all would have been well, but it is clear from Luke 7:31-35 that many stopped in their path.

A COMMON FAILING

Reverting to our opening thoughts of clothing being evidence of standing, it may be asked if Christians are prone to judge each other by dress. The quick answer may be: "Of course not!" Yet there is a tendency that way, according to James 2:2, 3. The well-dressed, wellgroomed member receives, irrespective of his standing as a new creature, little niceties of attention bestowed on him which are not afforded to the poorly clad. But if, whether by the world's standards he is well-dressed or not, he has *put on* Christ, he is dressed for every eventuality of life within and without the Church, and none of his brethren will fail to see in him a true follower of his Lord. James, after pointing out that the practice in the synagogue of looking on the outward appearance arose from partiality (2:4), continues that those they were liable to underrate were the very ones whom God has chosen, for he looks on the heart and sees the richness of faith hidden there. And so it happens that the ones having no standing in themselves are the chosen of God. Paul and James agree (1 Cor. 1:27, 28; James 2:5).

THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING GARMENT

These whom God calls (without standing) are the very ones in this parable brought in at the last moment to furnish the feast with guests (Matt. 22:1-14). It tells of a feast rather than a wedding; there is only passing reference to the son; and there is no mention of a bride; the main characters are the king and the guests. The previous chapter of Matthew closes with the parable of the wicked husbandmen, and the pointed story was not lost on the Pharisees, who perceived that Jesus pictured them, and they sought to lay hands on him. Then follows this parable of the wedding garment spoken to the same hearers, and again the Pharisees realized the story rebuked them (Matt. 22:15). This discernment of the Pharisees that the story was directed against them prompts the question as to whether it was just a story with an immediate lesson, or a prophetic parable, that is, a story which includes some statement of God's purpose which would be fulfilled at a later date.

Matt. 22:6-7 correspond to the conclusion of the previous parable of the wicked husbandmen and are clearly prophetic of judgment soon to come upon them. While the prophetic portion of the parable may not have been noted by the hearers, there was within the story a truth that the Pharisee would not allow. Matt. 22:11-12 tell of the king coming in to see the guests and of his surprise at finding a guest without a wedding garment present at the feast. It was customary for each guest, good and bad, to be given a robe to cover whatever other garments they wore, and so all guests were put on the same footing, and the only ones to stand out at that feast would be the king and his son. To be at the feast without a wedding garment would be disrespectful to the hosts; and now can be seen the Pharisees' position, and that our Lord's teaching was directed to and against them. They were not as other men, and to be called to a feast where all guests, good and bad, were treated alike, was not agreeable to them. Had the king graded the guests and given them the uppermost seats, they would have accepted the honor for thus their righteousness would be acknowledged. But this was a feast to honor the king's son, not his guests.

And now passing forward from the immediate lesson to the Pharisees, we note that the heavenly king had obviously determined a fixed number of guests to honor his Son, and that every guest,

every Christian will gladly accept that garment which gives them their right to appear at the feast and honor the King's Son. The feast is now being held; and, of course, none can in fact be present without a wedding garment provided by the King, for our Lord is in the parable supposing a case to teach the lesson, just as in the parable of the sheepfold (John 10) none can actually climb up some other way to enter his fold.

THE ROBE AND OTHER GARMENTS

What is the robe of the parable, or in other words, what is it that puts all guests on a common footing and gives them their standing? There is one robe that the Lord God alone can give, being judge of all. The Bible answers plainly: "Blessed is the man whose sin is *covered*." Justification -- the very thing that the self-righteous Pharisee did not know that he needed. Not all Pharisees were of this calibre; some were of better heart, who even if they did not join the feast would not oppose the king's son. But how blessed are they, perhaps from the highways of the parable, who know in their hearts how continually they need that grace of God that gives them standing and fits them for fellowship as they honor the Son. The longer they live, the more do they realize their need of the robe, and know that nothing they could ever do would enable them to stand *on* their own merit or dispense with this cover for sin. And being a gift from God himself it is perfect, absolutely, and needs no embroidery. It is the foundation garment of all other garments that we may wear, just as the white, brodered coat was the foundation of Aaron's official robes.

Another garment which all Christians must now wear is that mentioned by the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 61:3) "the garment of praise." This is a portion of that prophecy which Jesus at Nazareth said was at that day fulfilled (Luke 4:18-21). He offered this garment of praise to those in Israel heavy in spirit, downcast, and despondent. This comes through the Gospel message, and has been passed on to the Christian Church. This "satisfies our longings as nothing else can do" and in truth we should be *a* dejected people were we deprived of the hopes which the Gospel engenders. This heaviness of spirit *is* a worldwide malady, and the Christian will fall a victim to it if he forgets or undervalues the source of all goodness and prospect. Put the garment on! Wrap yourself in it, and note how happy you are in the Lord! Remember the two dejected disciples, who trudged to Emmaus and were given the garment by the Stranger who joined them; and back they hurried to Jerusalem to find the others similarly clothed.

Why is it referred to as a garment, while its truth deals with a condition of heart? One reason may be that it is a protective covering for the whole being; and another that it gives each a standing of praise with all the heavenly host who praise their Creator night and day. And still another reason may be that the Christian is judged by his fellowman, who looks on the outward appearance. That being so, if the garment of praise is what he sees, he will have to admit that the Gospel promotes happiness. And still another reason: the old creature is not so visible when clothed in garments supplied by heaven.

Many have had the garment of praise many years. Is it as unfaded as when received? Is it showing signs of wear? In other words, are those joys and satisfactions of the truth we received from the Lord as the alternative to the world's spirit of heaviness, as bright and unfailing? We must remember that this garment is meant for a lifetime's wear, and its warmth and protection can ever be ours. Even if one's thought of praise is limited to the singing of thanks and hymns, much comfort may be had by the wearer. And if our thoughts regard praise in its early meaning of price, valuation, or appraisal, then more satisfaction of heart, more warmth of spirit, may be ours by the right appraisal of our Father and his wonderful works for all his subjects. These gift garments from our Father will fit us all and will never really wear out; but how deplorable it would be were

we to echo in our hearts the words of Isaiah 4:1: "We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach."

The robing is not yet complete. There is one more garment to be worn, and that not of God's supply. 1 Peter 5:5 urges us to be clothed with humility. Of the garments the Christian must wear, this is the most uncomfortable, but it has always -to be worn, and will fit as well as the others. Remember, the well-dressed man is not conscious of his clothing; in fact, it is to him a "habit. The Christian clothed with justification, praise, and humility is dressed for every occasion.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

For the future, the near future, we will take the precious promise made to, the Church at Sardis. "They shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (Rev. 3:4, 5). What an honor to walk with him in white; no more defilements; no, more specks of dust; no more laundry. White garments were, as previously mentioned, the normal clothing of those heavenly servants assigned special duties, representing eternal God himself. This is the standing the Church will be given in the resurrection, and according to Rev. 3:11, a crown to complete the picture: "Hold that fast which thou hast," urges John, "that no man take thy crown." According to the old alliterative couplet of, "No cross, no crown," it appeared that the Christian must retain his hold of the cross and himself bear the cross in order to receive the crown of the faithful. That has its truth, but we could also say, "Hold that fast which thou hast" -- retain the garments which give you your standing in Christ now, and in the resurrection you will be clothed in white and enduring garments, with the addition of the crown; or in other words, "clothed with your house which is from heaven."

- *B. J. Drinkwater*, Eng.

IN MY NAME

"There were only two or three of us
Who came to the place of prayer --
Came in the teeth of the driving storm;
But for that we did not care,
Since after our hymns of praise had risen,
And our earnest prayers were said,
The Master Himself was present there,
And He gave us the Living Bread.

"We noted the look in each other's face,
So loving, and glad, and free;
We felt His touch when our heads were bowed,
We heard His 'Come to Me!'
Nobody saw Him lift the latch,
And none unbarred the door;
But 'Peace' was His token in every heart,
And how could we ask for more.

"Each of us felt the relief from sin,
Christ's purchase for one and all;
Each of us dropped his load of care,
And heard the Heavenly call,
And over our spirits a blessed calm
Swept in from the jasper Sea,
And strength was ours for the toil of life
In the days that were yet to be."

The Question Box

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass." - Rev. 1:1.

Question:

The first verse of the Book of Revelation states that its purpose is to show unto his (Christ's) servants, things that were shortly to come to pass. Who are Christ's servants?

Answer:

Who were the servants of Christ at the time St. John saw the vision? There can be but one answer, namely, those who were serving him at the time; those among both Jews and Gentiles, who had become Christ's followers; that, is to say, Christians.

Some have endeavored to avoid this most natural interpretation of the words by saying that if they were addressed to Christians the passage would have read: "to show unto his [God's] sons"; in other words, because the Jews of the previous Age were called servants and not sons, therefore Jews are meant.

This reasoning we find unconvincing. In the first place, the Jews had been rejected, cast off, from favor, at the time St. John saw the vision. They were no longer *God's* servants. Not only so, but they had never been the servants of *Christ*. They could become the servants of Christ only by receiving him as their Messiah, and by yielding themselves entirely unto him. They would then become sons (of God) who would find their chief delight in the service of Christ.

In the second place, the Only-begotten Son was the Servant in whom, above all others, the Father delighted, and true Christians, following in the Master's footsteps, have always sought to prove their sonship by joyous, devoted, service. "Slave" of Christ Jesus is the term which St. Paul commonly uses to describe his own relationship to the Master. "Well done, good and faithful servant," is the joyous word which all dutiful *sons* hope will yet crown their imperfect labors.

Another very significant matter, as proving that Christians and only Christians are addressed in this prophecy, is that the ascription of praise recorded in Rev. 1:5 is none other than Christian praise, as the words, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," very plainly teach. The very next statement of the Apostle shows who are referred to in this passage. It is those who are to be made kings and priests. Are the kings and priests unto Christ's God and father to be Jews taken out from either this Gospel Age or any Age prior to, or to follow this? Surely not.

It has been well said "that Jews . . . have no more to do with this prophecy than they have to do with the Epistle to the Ephesians. They may possibly be alluded to in the one, as in the other, but it is not for them; it is not mainly concerned with them; it is for us; Christians alone were Christ's servants, in the days of Domitian, when John saw and heard these things; to Christians alone was it sent; the seven churches represent the whole Church; and they take the children's bread, to give to outsiders, who would rob the Church of this, her Lord's last gift.... Nor is it likely that the Lord Jesus in his last prophetic communication to his cherished Church, from whom, for eighteen hundred years he was to be hidden, would have nothing more pressing, nothing more personal and important to reveal to her, than the destiny of a future Jewish remnant, with which she has nothing in common.

The conclusion to which we are led, that the Revelation is a prophecy which relates to Christian rather than to Jewish experiences, is strongly confirmed by the description of its witnessing and suffering saints, who "overcame by the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 12:11), who kept "the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:11, 17), who "keep the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12), and are the "martyrs of Jesus" (Rev. 17:6) slain "for the witness of Jesus" (Rev. 20:4). Who can those be who have the testimony of Jesus, who keep the faith of Jesus, and are the martyrs of Jesus, but Christians? On every ground the conclusion is inevitable that the Revelation is a Christian, not a Jewish, prophecy; in other words, it relates to the experiences of the Christian Church, in both its militant and its triumphant stages.

- P. L. Read

RECENTLY DECEASED

Elizabeth Bradbury, Cottesloe, Aust.

Dominic Donnarummo, Buffalo, N. Y.

Marie A. Douglas, Tucson, Ariz.

Elizabeth Heilemann, Indian Rocks Beach, Fla.

Henry Kittel, Wausau, Wis.

Ruby E. Madole, San Francisco, Cal.

Wm. A. Madole, San Francisco, Cal.

Henry A. Shumaker, Paradise, Cal.

Robert W. Smith, Litchfield, Maine

Jesse H. Trask, Wausau, Wis.

Kasmir Zdeb, Abrams, Wis.