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“ABIDE WITH US” - THE UNKNOWN GUEST

Luke 24:28,29: And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and He made as though He would have gone further. But 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.

Two interesting characters come before us as we consider one of the most inspiring lessons of the New Testament. The sacred narrative is of two men who journeyed from Jerusalem to a little suburban village on the day of the Saviour's resurrection, and were overtaken by Jesus on the way. These two men, who are they? The name of one of them is Cleopas. Of his history we know nothing further. The name of the other is not given, nor anything more by which we can certainly identify him. Apparently neither of them belonged to the college of the Apostles; for when they returned to Jerusalem "they found the eleven gathered together." They were therefore not of the eleven.

During the days which parallel the days following our Saviour's resurrection, it is eminently fitting that we dwell much on those lessons coming from the various revelations of our risen Lord. One of the most thrilling and soul stirring impressive manifestations is noted in the sacred narrative of Jesus joining the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. There is but a single record of it in the Scriptures, but it is a blessed and comforting record, filled with deep interest, pathos and spiritual instruction. Though it has been much expounded, it is ever fresh; and the variety of topics which it suggests is almost inexhaustible. Much of Christian life and Christian doctrine seem to cluster around it. Faith with all its trials, and hope with all its fears and triumphs; discipleship in its burdens of soul and heart-questionings and its illuminating converse and glad experiences; the feebleness of earthly nature, and the heavenly strength which accompanies it - all are beautifully introduced in connection with this evening walk from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

Unquestionably, devout men were these two Jews. It is of course a reasonable supposition that they had been in the Holy City observing the Passover as commanded by Moses. They had remained in quietness during the Sabbath, as devout keepers of the law; and they were disciples of Jesus. They had been taught to look for the coming of the Messiah, and they *did look and they saw*. How they first came in contact with the Saviour, we know not. It was perhaps, with them, as with many others. They had heard John the Baptist preach, and had had their attention directed to Jesus by *his* testimony. Hearing the Master's instructions and witnessing His miracles, they believed in Him as the promised Messiah. But now they were in great perplexity and trouble of heart. Their faith had received a blow under which it greatly staggered. He whom they had taken as their Lord had been crucified and slain. That Prophet, mighty in word and deed before God and all the people, and in whom they had fondly trusted as the Redeemer of Israel, had fallen a victim to the malice of His foes, and been ignominiously put to death. All their hopes had been thrown into confusion, and their souls were filled with gloomy doubts.

UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS

Most interesting must have been the conversation of these two men; but reason was too weak an instrument to give them relief. Merely *earthly* reason, when it comes to matters of faith and salvation, can do very little for us. It may serve to set us in controversy with each other, and bring on all sorts of disturbing debate, as in this instance; but it can give us no satisfactory light, and no peace of mind.

They were moving through one of the most interesting and beautiful districts. Their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus lay by the tombs of ancient Judges, by the old dwelling-place of Samuel, and through mountainous scenery as attractive as any in the Holy Land. But no charms of nature, however intermingled with sacred story, could soothe the trouble that was upon their souls. Those scenes of blood and murder that had been enacted at Jerusalem, and the sore disappointment which those scenes had entailed upon their most precious

hopes, followed them, and clung to them, in spite of all the things around them. *Nature in all its loveliness, cannot supply the place of Christ*, or give comfort to the soul that has lost Him. They had heard of the resurrection of Christ, but even those precious tidings only added to their astonishment, and bewildered their minds the more. They had been told of the angels the women saw at the tomb, and the words they uttered, that the crucified Jesus was alive again. But they had not yet come to faith in that fact, nor into a *right* comprehension of its meaning; and it only made their perplexities the worse.

How alike this are the experiences of the Christian, in connection with one upheaval or another in life's pathway, and *sometimes amongst professing brethren!* Strange, unheard of and unexpected developments take place; and many important matters close to our hearts are thrown into chaos; hopes seem shattered and expectations vanish. Then we struggle to assemble faith and courage to journey on in the shadowy way. Or the case may be one in which our own relationship to the Lord, and the hope of joint-heirship with Him may be rudely called in question; disturbing elements enter in rapid succession; doubts and grievous fears may seem to overwhelm us, And those very things in which the only relief and comfort can be found, are of such an extraordinary character, that faith is afraid to accept them. We *hesitate and are afraid* to believe; and *we go walking in sorrow*, with loads of unsolved questions burdening down our souls.

THE SAVIOUR SPEAKS

The Saviour was with these sorrowing pilgrims, *unknown to themselves*. As they were conversing together, and discussing these beclouded and beclouding events, "Jesus Himself drew near, and journeyed with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him." In the form of a common traveller, journeying the same way, and after the same manner with themselves, He overtook them, and made one in their little company. *There are many ways in which He comes to His people*. He comes to them sometimes in the form of a plain gardener, or a servant. He comes sometimes in the form of a fellow-traveller. He comes sometimes in the form of a poor beggar. Yea, it may be that He will overtake us in some distinct act of providence, entailing some deep humiliation or afflictive sorrow. But, in some shape or other, *He is never far from those who are in spiritual earnest*, and devoutly struggling for the light.

In our earthly way of looking at things, we do not always recognise the presence of our Saviour, and our eyes are holden that we do not know Him. *How often He comes to us in disguise!* When that friend, brother or sister spoke to us words which uncovered and dealt with some indiscretion, or spiritual defection, and made us see ourselves, our want, and our Saviour, as we never saw them before, we thought we were listening to a mere fellow-human. We did not once suspect that it was Jesus who was thus addressing us. That stranger who accidentally crossed our path, or whom we met in one of our journeys, who told us things of God, unfolding before us His Plan of the Ages, and imparting illuminating truths, we may have taken to be an erring fellow-mortal. Never once did we suspect that it was *Jesus Himself conducting the conversation*. That poor child of suffering at whose side in the sick-chamber we sat, and looked, and wondered, till our hearts softened, and our thoughts were warmly drawn out on topics which we never realised till then, we took to be only a frail human being, laboring with the disease and death. We did not even dream that it was Jesus addressing Himself to us for better instruction, and our improvement in saving wisdom. We never thought that it was the dear Saviour endeavouring to bring us blessed communion with Himself. *But, in all such varied forms, does the crucified but risen Lord appear now to His tried disciples*, to draw them out, and exercise their hearts, and build up their faith, and gain entry for His heavenly consolations into their troubled and anxious souls.

It is the fault of our feeble faith, that we only think of Christ as far away - as hidden in the grave - or in some remote world to which the grave is the mysterious doorway. Hence so much of our trouble and doubtfulness. But it is an erroneous way of thinking of Him. He is not in the grave. He is not far off in some realm which separates Him forever from all connection with this present world. He is risen! *He is not far from every one of us*. Wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is! By His almightiness, and by His command of unnamed forces and agencies, He can cause His presence to be felt in the city, in the country; yea, in the remotest locality. He is in our assemblies for devotion, and He journeys with us in our travels. *Often is He with us, and speaking to us*, even when we do not at all suspect that it is He!

"Not in the grave, not in the grave, O man,
Believe thy Saviour now to be;
But in the lonely hour,
And in the evening walk,
Think that He companies thy solitude."

He "drew near, and went with them." It is the Will of our gracious Saviour to be near us, and to have us near Him. Two things particularly seem to have drawn Him into the company of these disciples. They were

filled with real soul-trouble. They were earnest, honest, and devout men, sincere in their faith, but now in distress and confusion of mind from which they could not extricate themselves. This attracted interest.

JESUS SHARES SORROWS

“We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” (Heb 4:15.) When grief and trouble are upon His disciples, He takes it to heart, and is drawn toward them in loving sympathy. Likewise when great gloom and sorrow come over us, we may be sure that He is not far off. In the ongoing of His great plan it cannot be but that clouds and pains *will often come upon the most earnest and devout* of God’s children. But when those clouds and trials come, He also draws near, and walks with us. *Affliction never enters our circles, but He enters with it, or follows close upon it.* And when we are most hopelessly overwhelmed, then He is the nearest. We may not *know* Him, in the *forms* in which He comes, but *we may be sure that He is at hand*, that our sorrows are considered, and that what our necessities require He will supply.

But in addition to their mental troubles, these pilgrims on the way to Emmaus, were earnestly engaged with each other, trying to solve and master them. They were talking together about things which had happened, and were communing and reasoning with each other over them. Earnestness of spirit is never unnoticed by our heavenly Guide. Mutual consultation and honest effort to solve the problems which hinder and obscure our comfort and our faith, are never without divine aid. *People who do not have concern enough to talk about their spiritual interests are not likely to have the Master come very near them.* But where there is solemn concern about Him, and earnest exchange of thoughts and views to come to a right conclusion respecting Him, and warm communing one with another as to *what is to be thought and done*, thither Jesus is attracted, and there we may be sure that He is near. If we come together with hearts anxious to know the truth, and solemnly purposed to learn of each other all we can, and moved in spirit to ascertain the true and saving faith, *we shall never fail to find Jesus in the company*, although we may not *know Him at the time*. In some form or other He will be near, and visible, and ready to help us to the solution of our doubts.

WHY ARE YE SAD?

He questioned them as to their troubles and sadness. “He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk? and why are ye sad?” His inquiries are put in the character of a stranger; but, in substance, they convey an expression of the Lord. It was a call to review the character of their trouble, as the basis for the formation of a better judgement. They had not looked at matters rightly. They had not estimated them in their proper light. They had not gone deep enough into the facts for the proper conclusions. The cure for their disturbance was in the very things that disturbed them, if they would only learn to see them in their true respects and relations. Poor human nature worries itself with many things which ought to be its highest comfort; and *is troubled with what should give it peace*; and is sad and perplexed with what is *freighted with the sublimest consolation*. Jesus dies, and their confidence dies with Him. Jesus rises from the dead, and their staggered hope transmutes the glorious tidings into an instrument of still greater stumbling. Let disturbed and desponding souls go back and consider what it is that distresses and disheartens them. Let them look again, and *see whether there is really reason* for all this perturbed feeling and this leaden sadness.

Did troubled brethren but view their anxieties aright, they would find in them cause for joy rather than discomfiture. In the worst that ever happens to them, they will yet have to pronounce against themselves as “fools and slow of heart”, to have allowed themselves to regard any of it as other than blessed, necessary, and good. Be their situation what it may, let them fairly answer the Saviour’s question, *why* they are so sad? and they will already be far on the way to have that sadness banished forever. Desponding soul, Jesus asks *thee*, Why art thou sad? *Canst thou give Him a reason* for thy disheartenment at what has happened? Review thy ground, and come to a better mind.

HE OPENED THE SCRIPTURES

Having drawn out their story, He directed them to the Divine Word, “Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” After all, there is nothing that can so settle, satisfy, and comfort our troubled hearts and anxious doubts, as the records of the holy Apostles and Prophets. *There the portrait of the Christ is fully drawn*, and all that concerneth Him is amply disclosed. There we will find the basis for understanding many mysteries of great import to us. From the Hebrew Prophets these disciples might have fortified themselves against all such sorrowful perplexities over their Master’s death. The very first promise that was made of Him, told of a suffering as well as a triumphing Saviour. He was to be bruised, as well as to bruise. All the appointments of the law pointed to death and bloodshedding, as the only possible way of remission of sins, or recovery from condemnation. All the types which prefigured Him, showed that He was to be a bearer of sin and shame. Isaiah had spoken of chastisements, stripes, smiting, and the making of His soul an offering for sin. The Psalmist had prophesied of reproach, of smiting, of spitting, of betrayal by His familiar friend, and of His being compassed about by all the power of

darkness. And from one end of the Scriptures to the other, suffering, shame, and death *were inseparably linked* with the Messianic work. To all these the stranger pointed, and put it to the consciences of these perplexed pilgrims whether it could be otherwise than that the Christ should suffer these things, and through them enter into His glory. Oh, it was a fruitful text, a sublime Preacher, and a mighty sermon! We know not what words were used, but we do know they made the hearts of the hearers burn within them, and threw a light and power into their souls which charmed away their gloom and doubt beyond all that they supposed to be possible.

READY TO FALTER?

Precious, indeed, are these blessed Scriptures! Herein is light which giveth understanding to the simple and which maketh wise unto salvation. Herein is balm for the troubled heart more than Gilead can furnish. Are we shaken in faith, and disturbed in our hopes because many walk with us no more? Jesus directs us to the Prophetic Word which has long ago *portrayed the days in which we live*, and has unmistakably outlined the apostasies and departures from the faith that are to be seen all about us. Are we oppressed with doubts which reason cannot solve, or ready to falter in our discipleship? Jesus bids us *look to what the Prophets of God have spoken*. Are we perplexed, befogged, and ready to let go our confidence because, in these days, the very atmosphere is charged with the smoke and dust of subterfuge, of deception, confusion and conflicting opinion? The risen Lord points out the remedy in the Holy Oracles of heaven. Earnestly searching these, we recognise that, true to our Master's promise, our hearts have been flooded with the light emanating from that dispensation of truth for the last days. Have we, in the depths of our hearts, absorbed the truth and the spirit of this great message? If so, then let it direct our conclusions and our course by what it reveals; and whatever is dark, will soon grow plain, and what is doubtful will become settled, luminous, and sure.

And having set these pilgrims to Emmaus right in their reading of the Scriptures, the Saviour yielded to their entreaties, entered with them into their home, and made Himself known to them in the breaking of bread. They supposed that they were conversing with a stranger; but they had been so profited and comforted by His words, that they desired more of His company, and insisted that He should accept of their hospitality. *Those who love truth will be kindly disposed toward those who teach it*; and those who admit Christ into their hearts, *will be anxious also to have Him abide in their homes*. And those who in grateful consideration of His kindness, receive Him into their places of abode, though they should not yet know with whom they are dealing, will soon have Him disclosed to them in all the certainties of an unmistakable faith; for HE IS STILL KNOWN BY THE BREAKING OF BREAD - the spiritual food He serves.

Ah, yes, *it is a great thing to have Christ fall in with us by the way! It is a great thing to tell Him our troubles, and to listen to His heart-warming words. But it is a greater thing to entreat Him to abide with us in our dwellings, and to sit down with us at our meals. Where He is earnestly invited, there He will go; and there He will give His blessing to our bread, and show Himself our true and ever-living Lord. Walking with Christ and listening to Christ, we are on the way to dwell with Christ and to have our eyes opened to see and know Him as our Almighty Saviour and our glorified Redeemer-King.*

EVENING SHADOWS

Friends and Brethren, how is it then with us? *We are all on our journey home*. Many also are the sorrows and anxieties that weigh upon our hearts. Often are we perplexed, and full of disappointment and sadness. Our faith is frequently sorely tried, and the questionings of our souls abound with anguish and unwilling misgivings. *There is but One who is able to help us!* Unknown to many others, He has long been following after us, and come to our side in loving sympathy with our sad estate. Often, and much, and in many forms, has He spoken to us, and inquired of our griefs, and proposed to us the remedy.

It is beyond all doubt that the pilgrimage of the Church is nearly at an end. The evening, yea, the night-time of the Age, "wherein no man can work," is enfolding us. But aside from that solemn viewpoint of the matter, *to many of us, our day of life is far spent*, and the evening thereof is drawing on. The shadows for some have already begun to fall, and the night is fast approaching. The question shall soon be settled whether our final abode is to be *with Jesus*, and of His glorious Bride, or *apart* from them. And what if that night should come upon us without His smile and blessed approval? And what if He should pass us by and we be at last excluded from all those untold riches and glories? But is such a sorrowful conclusion to our struggles possible to us? Indeed it is! - for, declares the Master, to many who shall be expecting entrance into the state of the glorified, He will say, "I recognise you not - [as members of My Bride]." And, as *such*, at *that* time, see themselves as from the standpoint of Him "Who hath eyes as a flame of fire," they will realise the bitterest disappointment. - Luke 13:24-28.

But, blessed and happy thought, His dear voice still is sounding in our ears! Praise be to His name, He is yet within our each! *He may now be entreated by our supplications, to come still closer to us, and to abide with us, as the night enfolds us*. Have we then given Him that place in our hearts and in our dwellings that He deserves? Have we asked Him to abide with us over the approaching night, which can never know a morning without Him? Has He not said and done enough for us already to deserve this at our hands? O thou weary and

distressed pilgrim to the tomb, thou hast professed to be fulfilling thy covenant of sacrifice with Him; thy way is lonely, thy cross bears thee down; thou art in heaviness through manifold trials; constrain thy Master then to abide with thee! Suffer not such a friend and comforter to pass thee by. Ask Him into thy sorrowing heart, and thy humble abode. He will leave thee if thou entreat Him not to stay. Let thy earnest prayer go up to Him unceasingly, *that He may abide as thy guest*. Constrain Him, and His presence *will* go with thee, and thou shalt *know* Him, and thy dwelling shall glow with His blessing, and thy soul shall see thy risen Lord.

Jesus, Master,
Abide with me. Fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide;
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!

“As They Were Eating”

Once more, this year, the Lord’s consecrated people in many parts of the earth will commemorate the death of Jesus as their Redeemer and Saviour. The true followers of the Master should ever keep before them the noble example of Jesus’ suffering and death on their behalf. But in addition to their precious heart memories of Jesus as their Redeemer, the Lord’s people will use the emblems Jesus used when he instituted a formal calling to mind of the important fact of his death, and of what it means to those who have covenanted to lay down their lives with him as invited so to do by Jesus.

This formal commemoration of Jesus’ death was outlined by him on the night before he was crucified. He was assembled with his disciples to partake of the typical passover supper, which followed the slaying of the passover lamb and the sprinkling of its blood upon the doorposts and lintels of the Hebrews’ houses. This lamb pointed forward to the true “Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) Associated with the death of the passover lamb was the deliverance of Israel’s firstborn from death and the deliverance of all Israel from their bondage in Egypt.

But still greater is the result of Jesus’ death. In this case, as the Bible shows, comes the deliverance of “the church of the firstborn,” (Heb. 12:23) and later the deliverance of the whole world from its bondage to sin and death. It was while Jesus and his disciples were partaking of the typical passover supper that he took some of the bread and wine used at the passover supper and instituted the only ritual, besides baptism, enjoined upon his followers. The account reads, “As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take eat: this is my body. And he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.” - Matt. 26:26, 27.

This method of commemorating the death of Jesus was not a new form of the passover supper. It was, rather, designed to commemorate the death of Jesus as the antitype of the passover lamb. It is a simple observance of the death of our dear Redeemer. He said “this do in remembrance of me”. The broken bread represents his flesh, his humanity, of which he previously had said, “My flesh...I will give for the life of the world.” (John 6:51) Jesus died as a substitute for the life of the perfect human, Adam, and this called for the death of his humanity.

The wine, or “cup”, represented Jesus’ blood, his life, so the two together symbolize the fact that Jesus gave up his human life that Adam and his race might be redeemed from death. And this of course includes our redemption, so when we partake of these emblems, we are being reminded afresh, and with emphasis, that it was the death of Jesus which made possible our reconciliation with God, and, upon the basis of faith now, and in reality in the resurrection, our passing from death unto life.

Zealous consecrated followers of Jesus will remember his death on their behalf every day. The “memorial” should be a continuous experience. But it is more particularly emphasised in our hearts and minds once a year as we partake of the Memorial Supper - as we eat that morsel of unleavened bread and sip the “cup”. May our observance this year be a blessed occasion indeed!

In 1 Corinthians 10:16 the Apostle Paul gives us a further thought concerning the meaning of the Memorial Supper. We read, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?” Here we are reminded that we have the privilege of suffering and dying with Jesus - that we take up our cross and follow him; that we are baptized in the likeness of his death. This, too, we should remember as we partake of the Passover Supper, and resolve that we will indeed continue to be faithful followers of the Master regardless of the cost.

Jesus’ death was for the whole world of mankind, and we rejoice in this wonderful provision God’s love has made for the world as we partake of the bread and the wine. We rejoice also in the blessed service so many of our dear brothers and sisters in Christ will be sharing in again this year throughout the world. May our dear Lord bless each one.

“THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE”

“Neither pray I for these alone; but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.” John 17:20,21.

When will the world believe that the Father sent the Son? From the language here employed in this prayer of our Master it is very evident that, in His view, before the world would believe on Him, a state of oneness must needs be attained by His followers. Belief by the world is thus seen to be made contingent on unity or oneness on the part of his followers.

How tenderly solicitous is the prayer of our Lord for those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren; and of what stupendous import to the world are His words, for it is evident that the enlightenment and blessing of the world are dependent upon the oneness of His followers. Let us draw near with bated breath and listen, for it is the Master who is praying; “Father - that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.”

Surely he who does not feel the pathos, the yearning, tender emotion, of the Master’s supplication, has not the spirit of Christ - “he is none of his.” “Father - that they all may be one....that the world may believe.” What a challenge, too, is this prayer of Jesus, to the love and affection of His followers. Would we hasten the day when the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the mighty deep; when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His beams; when Jesus shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied? - that day *cannot* come until first there come the spirit of unity to his followers, until they find themselves possessed of the spirit of harmony, of brotherly kindness, of love.

A LOVE THAT BRINGS PEACE

Today, perhaps as never before, the world awaits, doubting, in the darkness of unbelief, *not having received the convincing proof for which Jesus prayed* – the oneness of Christ’s followers not yet being apparent. For the proof of our faith does not lie in learning but in living; not in a well-developed argument, but in a holy life. It will not be found in logic, however masterly, but in love; in a love that is strong enough to over-come indifference, to conquer antipathy - a love that knows how to be blind to unkindness, that can not only forgive but forget, that can melt prejudice and pride of opinion; that knows not only how to live and let live, but knows also how to think and let think; a love that brings with it an atmosphere of peace.

When the Gospel first began to be preached by our Lord and the Apostles, what a oneness was manifest in the Church, as the little band of followers sought to walk in the footsteps of the Master. They were only a humble folk, without wealth or scholarly attainment, or social standing, but they seemed to catch the spirit of the Master, and after Pentecost such a spirit of joy and love and faith and hope possessed them, and such a fervor of missionary zeal – such a oneness of heart and action, that it almost seemed that the prayer of Jesus would find speedy fulfilment, and that the whole world would soon believe on Him.

In the early centuries the Gospel message spread like wildfire. In the language of the Revelator – “It went forth conquering, and to conquer” (Rev. 6:2). Just to read the story of those early days is enough to make one’s heart beat faster. Well might the powers that were in those days be astonished, as they witnessed the power of the Gospel in the lives of those who received it, giving its believers such a vision of our glorious hope as enabled them to stand undaunted in the face of cruel deaths, to meet the furious hate of their persecutors undismayed; nay more, to meet that hate with a gentleness, a love, a compassion, which only close followers of Christ can display.

COMPROMISE BETWEEN CHURCH AND WORLD

Alas, the rider on the white horse, which seems to symbolize that period of the Church’s history, was followed by other horsemen, as those of us who are familiar with our Lord’s Revelation are aware, and ere long, as history shows, a great compromise was effected between the Church and the world. Since then, the story of the Church has often enough been a history of hatred, of narrowness and stupidity, of inconceivable bigotry and brutality. What crime against God and man has the Church not committed! How appalling is the record! As we read the pages of history, the outrages there revealed fill our minds with horror, especially as we bear in mind that they were perpetrated in the holy name of Jesus.

Yet through all the centuries, amid the wrangling bigots and proud tyrants, the true faith was kept alive. Though the Church as a whole was not Christian – indeed became Antichristian, some few were found at all times who had not defiled their garments. These have been the salt of the earth, the light of the world. As another has said:

“If one seeks an apostolic succession, here it is, unbroken and uninterrupted – a shining tradition of vision and service. It is in their gentle lives silhouetted against dark backgrounds, that we trace the history of the hid-

den Church – the little flock.”

Though not inspired as were the Apostles, they were entrusted by God and by Jesus with the Gospel, and they guarded it for us of today at the cost of their lives. They kept watch over it as of a sacred treasure, as keepers of a holy fire which must never be stamped out. They yielded their lives to the sweet, mellowing influence of the Holy Spirit of love and truth, though it meant for them certain privation, loss and hardship beyond our experience. They enjoyed withal a fellowship of spirit which not even the curse of sectarianism could destroy.

And if these with their feeble light were enabled to preserve a fellowship of spirit even in the midst of sectarian bondage and in the darkness of the Dark Ages, will not the Lord expect at least as much from us as we face the issues which confront us today? With the advancing light the old sectarianism is seen to be not only sinful but absurd; and yet all of us must be aware that *this spirit of sectarianism is as active in our midst today as it was in the centuries that are past*. It is the height of folly – it does not even indicate the wisdom of this world, much less that which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entrusted, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, or wrangling, and without hypocrisy.

CHRIST OUR ALL IN ALL

Let us thank God that our faith is not in a creed, but in a person, our blessed Lord Jesus Himself, whose personality embraces every grace, in loyalty to whom we can all find fellowship and unity. How true is the saying, “What we believe divides us – Whom we believe unites us.” That which enabled our brethren who have gone before to maintain the unity of spirit even in the midst of sectarian bondage was the realization that notwithstanding their differences Christ was their all in all, and this realization must be our salvation today.

May Jesus Christ be Praised

When morning gilds the skies,
My heart awaking cries
May Jesus Christ be praised!
Alike at work and prayer
To Jesus I repair;
May Jesus Christ be praised!
Be this while life is mine,
My canticle divine,
May Jesus Christ be praised!
Be this the eternal song
Through all the ages long;
May Jesus Christ be praised!
(Anon. tr from German)

God doesn't bless us just to make us happy. He blesses us to make us a blessing.

(Warren Wiersbe)

“I,” said Jesus, “if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.” This saying of Jesus, we know, is to have its grand fulfilment in the coming Age, when all shall have their eyes open to behold our Lord – when he shall indeed be the desire of all nations. But while we await that time with calm confidence, we must not do so passively, but with breathless eagerness. We yearn to see him take his rightful place in the hearts of all now. And if this cannot yet be in the world, it must be in the Church.

Somewhere we have read of the sin of making a Christ of one's opinions, a rather remarkable expression meaning that there are some – let us be extremely careful that we are not among them – who think that they are worshipping Christ, when all the time they are worshipping their own opinions. They follow their own prejudices – believing that what is habitual with them must be essential for everybody – and imagine that they are obeying the precepts of our Lord.

Surely there is no one amongst us so self-confident as to believe that he has the exact viewpoint of the Master on each and every problem that is before the Church in these difficult days. Even the great Apostle Paul was not ashamed to confess that he was in perplexities at times. It will not be such a very great humiliation for us then, to admit that we, too, are sometimes at a loss to know just what to do – just which way to turn. Even

when we have been very sure of our ground, and the positions that we have taken, things have not always worked out just precisely as we had expected. It would be foolish indeed for us to deify our opinions and interpretations, and demand that others accept our thought on this, that, or the other question, before we can work with them in the fellowship and service of the Master.

If Jesus were to stand in our midst today, we venture the assertion that He would identify Himself with none of us; but with what gladness, nay, in what a delirium of delight, would we identify ourselves with Him.

Jesus *does* stand in our midst today, and how manifest it is that none can claim Him exclusively as their own. No – as in the glorious vision – Jesus is walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and thrice happy are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF DIVINE FELLOWSHIP

Our differences need not - nay they must not, disturb our fellowship. Differences are unhappy only when they sharpen tempers, and occasion ill-will. Otherwise they may be profitable and result in a larger education for us in the school of Christ. Some one has said that "Identity of sentiment with difference of opinion" is requisite to happy company. These are no less requisite to Christian fellowship and to the health of the Church.

Some of us have made grave blunders in the past in this matter of fellowship, but how great will be our mistake if we fail to learn by these experiences. The footstep followers of Jesus have been given God's own Holy Spirit, and those who yield themselves to its sweet influence, find themselves possessed of a strange wisdom – a wisdom which knows how to climb over the walls of separation which others construct, and clasp in warm and loving greeting the hand of a brother spirit. "Many waters cannot quench love."

How blessed is this fellowship, this oneness in Christ which may be enjoyed by the people of God - this oneness for which the Master prayed! It is a fellowship of joy and a fellowship of suffering - of joy in a common anticipation of the future glory, as also of our present privileges in communion with our Lord; and of suffering in mutual participation of the preliminary trials to secure that end. Thus the members of the one Body are bound together in one bond of love and fellowship and confidence and sympathy and common interest. May our love abound yet more and more one toward another even as our Master prayed, that thus "the world may believe."

(From the Herald)

Keep Me, Dear Lord

Keep me in Thy secret place,
Dear Lord, I pray,
Neath the shadow of Thy wing,
From day to day.

Arm me with peace and charity,
For this I pray,
Guide me, guard me, keep me,
In Thy way.

(Elizabeth Gibson)

When you have nothing left but God, you will become aware for the first time that God is enough.

(Dag Hammarskjöld)