



ABIDE with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. (Luke 24:29)

This is an ancient hymn whose origin is shrouded in antiquity; however, Charles Coffin (*Hymni Sacri*) added the lyrics, which we have today, in 1736. John Chandler translated the hymn into English in 1837. The tune most often used is *ST. COLUMBA*, an ancient Irish melody. This is also the tune used in the hymn, *The King of Love*. Another, alternate and equally beautiful tune is *ST. PETER*, by Alexander R. Reinagle composed in 1836. I regret that the hymn, a Trinity Hymn, is not included in the 1940 Hymnal.

As Now the Sun's Declining Rays

*As now the sun's declining rays
At eventide descend,
So life's brief day is sinking down
To its appointed end.*

*Lord, on the cross Thine arms were stretched,
To draw Thy people nigh;
O grant us then that cross to love,
And in those arms to die.*

*All glory to the Father be,
All glory to the Son,
All glory, Holy Ghost, to Thee,
While endless ages run.*

As now the sun's declining rays At eventide descend, So life's brief day is sinking down To its appointed end. I love hymns and stories that begin with a seemingly sad and sorrowful word of melancholy. It is because each time such thoughts are expressed, or even felt, I am reminded of that which lies beyond that sadness of declining light of the sun. There is rest and a wonderful promise of the next sunrise! How sad were the two disciples on the Road to Damascus who were contemplating the end of all hope

over the events of the crucifixion the preceding Friday. What a tremendous loss they felt as they commiserated together over the loss of One whom they considered the hope and promise of Israel. Well, without a sunset, there can be no sunrise. The dwindling light of day may bring a greater glory than the mortal sun could ever provide. So, as these two walked and shared their misery, the One over whose loss they mourned joined them on the way and slowly revealed the purpose of the events of the crucifixion. At the moment of sharing of Bread, their eyes were suddenly opened to the glorious truth of a Risen Christ! This truth of the Risen Savior was of greater brilliance in light than and earthly sunrise could benefit. Though the shadows were lengthening, these two found newborn energy to rush back to Jerusalem and share the glorious news with the other disciples that evening.

I believe we have all had our Damascus evenings when hope seemed forlorn – only to realize a greater blessing near the sinking of the sun. When we have struggled and battled against some sought after prize, and find our hopes dashed on the stones of reality, we suddenly discover that God has a better plan that far exceeds the paltry hopes we so recently sought to achieve.

Lord, on the cross Thine arms were stretched, To draw Thy people nigh; O grant us then that cross to love, And in those arms to die. The Prodigal Son disappeared on the distant horizon as his Father watched every step. He was a true Son, but one who was going away from the presence of his Father to a Far Country – any place the Christian wonders out of the Will of the Father is a far country. As he walked, each step presented a smaller image to the Father. But after being so meanly treated by a stranger of that land, and experiencing such deprivation and want as the most lowly servant of his Father would have suffered, he suddenly came to himself (came to his right mind), and resolved to return to his Father in repentance. The plight of the son was constantly in the know of the Father. Now the Son appears once more on the distant horizon which was never out of the focus of the Father. He spotted his Son clothed in rags and covered in the filth of the pig sty. But now, the Son is returning in contrition and repentance. Each step brings him closer to his Father and builds his image in the Father's eye. The distance the Son is away from the Father is not important in the Mind of the Father. But the DIRECTION the Son is moving IS important! He is returning! The Father runs to him and embraces him. So does God hurry to embrace each of his Elect who have ventured away from the Father's Will, but returns. His arms are outstretched to embrace His own.

The last line of the verse, *And in those arms to die*, is not quite true to the Christian for there can be no death in the embrace of Christ – there is merely a transition from mortal life to eternal life!

All glory to the Father be, All glory to the Son, All glory, Holy Ghost, to Thee, While endless ages run. This is truly a Trinitarian hymn. How much I would rejoice if the members and ministry of the mega-churches would acknowledge that NO GLORY belongs to the worshipper or their ministers, but all GLORY belongs to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost! Those false ministers who regularly misappropriate the power of the Holy Ghost to themselves will not be as much as a stain on the memory of the saints in eternity; but they shall be feeding the fires they have built and fueled for themselves in the nether reaches of Hell. One such minister (Stanley) of Atlanta has a church of 30,000 members. He recently preached that the church should 'unhitch' from the Old Testament. The Christian cannot pick and choose which parts of God's Word to study, obey and reverence. The Whole Word is a gift from God to us.

Each of us have a day of the setting of the sun on this life. It is the treasures that we have deposited in our hearts and in Heaven that will give us a joy and courage in that day of gathering darkness. How sad if we face that day alone and bewildered. The true Christian does not fear death, but faces it as he has faced his life in Christ – head-on and with a knowing smile on his face.