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## Reflectors of Christ

*"Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a way of plainness, because of those which observe me." - Psalm 27:11, margin.*

OUR INFLUENCE upon others for good or ill is a great responsibility. To realize this fact, as we should, must cause the prayer of this text to be much on our hearts. In the Psalmist's case he seems deeply concerned over his responsibility in this matter, and realizing he is being watched by others, perhaps particularly by his enemies, he pleads for a clear understanding of God's way. There must be no occasion given to his foes to scoff, nor wrong example to become a cause for stumbling any sincere of heart.

So it should be with us also. By those friendly or unfriendly toward us our words and actions are constantly observed. Our prayer for a clearly-marked pathway should therefore be as fervent as the Psalmist has expressed his concern. Rather than assuming that all the perfect way of the Lord is known by us, and that we are sure of everything, better far to "fear to touch things that involve so much" at times, and so wait before the Lord for plainly given guidance. When thus led in the right way, we may hope to be such as Paul desired Timothy to be-"An example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." - 1 Tim. 4:12.

By precept and example we are either helpers or hinderers of others. To exert an influence for good and toward righteousness is such a commendable thing. To glorify God and bless His people is to accomplish a great end in life. But how fearful are the results when the influence is toward evil and apart from God's way. How sad and deplorable it is when because of misconduct on the part of one claiming to be a follower of Christ, "the way of truth is evil spoken of." Sad too, when a brother is stumbled or made weak through the unwise or unloving ways of one looked up to as helper and friend. It is well to keep ever in mind the warning uttered by Jesus in this same connection: "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." (Mark 9:42.) In contrast to the results of such influence in a wrong direction how desirable is this commendation, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." - Heb. 6:10.

To be a reflector of Christ we must live near to Him. In both precept and example He is the perfect Teacher. None can teach like Him. His words and methods are ever the perfect criterion for us to follow. In all our relationships to Jesus, what a depth of meaning there is in His statement, "It is written in the Prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, *cometh unto Me*. (John 6:45.) God Himself has given witness to this in saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, *hear ye Him*." (Matt. 17:5.) Thus we are shown that a careful study of the words and methods of Jesus' ministry is a very important thing if we want, to faithfully represent and reflect Him. For lessons, let us note a few of the outstanding features of His brief years of perfect method and message.

He came to a people burdened to the breaking point with innovations of men, and He denounced these traditional shackles because they took away the key of knowledge, and shut out the vision of God. For publicans and sinners He had words of mercy and forgiveness, but for those who claimed to sit in Moses' seat He had little but stern rebuke. He claimed that He had come to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. How revolutionary therefore His methods were to those who made rites more important than love. A poor despised publican smiting his breast in confessed unworthiness is used to teach the proper approach to God in prayer. A despised Samaritan on the Jericho road is used to sweep away all the chilling ceremonials of priest and Levite, and to have the whole law epitomized in his kindly act. The Master Teacher invites Himself into the home of another despised publican, a tax gatherer, and by His condescending kindness transforms a life. He travels, weary and hungry, into despised Samaria, and forgets His weariness and hunger in changing a woman of wanton character into an effective witness to His Messiahship. He finds a place in acceptable service for one casting out devils, though walking not, with His little band of followers. He rebukes the readiness of His disciples to call down fire from heaven on those unfriendly to His ministry. And in the midst of "fields white and ready to harvest" He calls a halt to laboring therein, in order that needed instruction may be given to men who doubtless believed themselves already well equipped for that service. All these lessons are still greatly needed. Added to these let us not forget that this unexcelled Teacher gathered up the whole round of duty to God and man in profound, yet simple terms understandable by all. Harken to these words again: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy- soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." - Matt. 22:37-40.

### **REFLECTIONS OF THE LIGHT OF CHRIST**

In following the example of Jesus as we have noted His walk and message, we are privileged to be of those of whom He said, "Ye are the light of the world." This is truly a wonderful identification with Himself, remembering that, He said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12.) But in calling us "the light of the world" Jesus meant this to be more than a mere figure of speech. As the light of the world He meant us to be plainly seen, as "a city set on an hill cannot be hid." He, admonished us to "let our light so *shine before men* that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven." "By this, *He* said, "*shall all men know* that ye are My disciples, if, *ye have love* one to another." And to the same end *He* prayed, "That they all may be one, even *as we are one*, . . . *that the world may believe* that Thou halt sent Me." (Matt. 5:14, 16; John 13:35; 17:21.) Such is the place Jesus gives us in the world about us. Yet to be these witnesses to the fact that His light can be so reflected in us, it becomes the more apparent that in all things we must walk *as He walked among men*, and among His own immediate brethren. In ourselves we have no light, but are much like the moon without the light of the sun. All the light which seems to flow from itself is but a reflected light, since it is a dead, lightless planet. But in order to thus reflect

that light the moon must move in an orbit of precise alignment with the sun, its fountain of light. So with us. There is as fixed an orbit in which we must live and have our spiritual existence, an alignment with Christ in and by which we may, catch the beams of His light, and so become its reflectors.

Something very suggestive of this power to reflect the light we receive from Christ, has been given us by the Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 3:18, and beautifully translated by Rotherham, as follows, "And we all with unveiled face receiving and reflecting the glory of the Lord into the same image are being transformed, from glory into glory." In so receiving and reflecting the, light of Christ we fill the place given us in Phil. 2:13: "'That ye may be blameless and sincere, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.'": This must therefore be our constant aspiration. Is it not what we mean in saying, "So let the Christian graces shine, that all may know the power divine"? When this aspiration 'becomes the inspirational thing it should always be with us, the light within can be most wonderfully reflected in the outward life. In some lives which have touched ours we have seen this truth verified -beyond question. Some one has expressed it very nicely' in these lines,

"Not merely in the words you say,  
Not only in your deeds: confessed,  
But in the most unconscious way  
Is Christ expressed.

"For me 'twas not the truth you taught,  
To you so clear;' to me so dim,  
But when you came you brought'  
A sense of Him.

"And from your eyes He beckons me,  
'And from your heart His love is shed,  
Till I lose sight of you--and see'  
The Christ instead."

To have the words of Jesus thus verified in the life is an end greatly to be desired. Surely. it is a, practical end toward which we may look with fervent hopes. To the several statements of Jesus so far used. we add two further texts from the sayings of Solomon and the Psalmist -- Eccl. 8:1 and Psalm 34:5: "A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed." "They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed." In a preference for Moffatt's translation, of these texts we quote his better expressions, "Man's wisdom lights his face up, it transfigures a rough countenance. "Look to Him, and ye shall beam with joy." When we speak of walking in the light of God's countenance, we are thinking, not of His face, but of His personal glory and holiness. In this sense, how many "a rough countenance" has been literally transfigured by the inward joy of Christ filling the heart. If true of man's higher realms of wisdom, and it is true, then' how much more true when 'the heart and life are filled and moved by the wisdom from above. In the light of such Scriptures surely if we live daily in the light of Christ's countenance, beholding "the glory of God in the face of Jesus' Christ." we may hope to radiate His light, brightening the corner where we, are, by thus walking "acceptable to God, and approved of men." - Rom. 14:18.

## **DIFFUSING THE FRAGRANCE OF CHRIST**

We turn now to another feature of our privilege of reflecting Christ. In the Diaglott translation of 2 Cor. 2:14, we read, "Now, thanks be to that God, who always leads us forth to triumph in the Anointed One, and who diffuses by us the fragrance of the knowledge of Him, in every place. This fragrance was primarily in the message of Christ that Paul carried with him. But in the life of such as Paul the fragrance of the message is surely imparted to the vessel bearing the knowledge of Christ to others. This, in its meaning to us, represents a like fragrance we may hope to carry with us as we mingle among men. An illustration of this may be taken from the oils and perfumes used in anointing Israel's priests for office. The oils used were made of aromatic spices; hence an aroma would be diffused from the garments of the priest as he came forth from the anointing. The anointing we have received should mean much the same to us. If we are "the salt of the earth," "the light of the world," in the sense Jesus meant, then we must also be "a sweet savor of Christ" as Paul means we can be. In a forecast of our Lord's character it was written, "All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." So it has been said, "The Christian may carry in his garments the fragrance of the sanctuary, of the holy oil, of the sweet spices of the garden of Christ, of the flowers of grace, the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley." Mary's opened alabaster box filled the house with its pleasant odor. So should it be with us. Just to the degree of our nearness to Christ will this be so. He will impart it as we are prepared to receive it. Though from the standpoint of natural character we were of a "rough countenance, yet the fragrance of Christ can be ours none the less. Let us remind ourselves of this fact again by recalling some lines from the poem -- legend of the lump of clay perfumed by contact with the rose:

"How once upon a time, one day, a sage picked up, we're told,

A lump of common clay, so redolent with perfume rare,  
He marveled, and the question wondering asked, 'Whence dost thou bear  
Such fragrance, O, thou lump of clay?' In tones of deep repose  
There came the sweet reply, 'I have been dwelling with the rose.'

"Thou lovely *Rose of Sharon*, may I ever dwell with Thee,  
So closely that the fragrance 'of Thy love shall cling to me!  
Oh, fill me with the spirit of Thy sweet humility,  
Then all shall see and know, dear Lord, that I have learned of Thee;  
And let mine earthly pilgrimage, until its blessed close,  
Each day and hour bear witness, *'I've been dwelling with the Rose.'*"

### **SPREADING 'THE, COMFORT OF CHRIST**

Though applying primarily to our Lord Jesus, yet it is evident that the wonderful commission of Isaiah 61:1-3 is likewise applicable to all who faithfully go forth with Christ's 'message. How, complete it is! "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord,' that He might be glorified." (R. V.) Here we have ten features of a divinely arranged ministry of comfort, with only one feature pertaining to declaring judgment. Does it not suggest that nine-tenths - of our message today should be comforting the saints, and speaking consolation to the multitudes whose sorrows are accumulating daily? Here, surely, is a test by which the Lord's messengers may be distinguished from all others. This same strain we find in Psalms 84:5, 6, R. V. "Blessed is the mart whose strength; is in Thee: in whose

heart are the highways to Zion. Passing through the valley of weeping they make it a place of springs." Who could fail' to covet being found ministering in harmony with these two Scriptures just quoted? This is following the example of Jesus, for of Him it was said, "They wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth," as "He went about doing good." - Luke 4:22 Acts 10:38.

In 2 Cor. 1:3, 4, we read, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who, comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

Rotherham substitutes "encouragement for "comfort" in verse three, making it, "the God' of all encouragement." Knowing that such He is, what "comforters of the brethren" we should seek to be in times like the present. Barnabas characters are greatly needed today. For many the struggle grows harder, making the true word in season particularly one of encouragement and good cheer. If we fail in this part of our mission, it is possible that some one we might have helped may become disheartened, and give expression to this lament:

"Had I but heard  
One breath of applause, one cheering word,  
One cry of 'courage' amid the strife  
So weighted for me with death or life,  
How it would have nerved my soul to strain  
Thro' the whirl of the coming surge again."

Here again we must keep' looking to our example in Jesus, looking to Him for guidance through these days of exceptional opportunity. As we saw in Psalms 84, the man of blessedness is he "in whose heart are the high ways to Zion," and whose ministry turns "the valley of weeping" into "a place of springs." What, then, are these high ways leading to Zion and which may be in the heart? The plural term suggests there is more than one such way. This may be said to be true, but they all converge in the one Way, in Him who said "I am the Way." In Him there is the way of love, the way of peace, the way of joy, and the way of the unity of the Spirit. All *are high ways* Zion ward. But Christ Himself is our great High Way to the heavenly Zion; and in Him we must constantly abide if we are to spread His comfort where most needed. We must know *Him intimately* and have a true perspective of our life in Him. Philip lived *with* a revelation of God for most of three and a half years, yet missed the vision notwithstanding. He had seen the Father in the daily walk and ministry of Jesus, yet failed to interpret Him correctly. Thus he was asked to go back in memory over those years and think of *how his Master had spoken and acted*, and thereby see the character of the Father. By doing as he did, we too get the true conception of the Lord we follow. The God of all comfort comforts us by pointing us to all the excellencies in the life and ministry of Jesus, and how He may live in us and we in Him. It is out of this experience that we are fitted to reflect the true comfort of Christ.

Out of this life the fulfillment of the great commission of Isaiah 61:1-3 will come. Then indeed will garlands of hope and joy be given where discouragement had seemed to turn all to ashes. Blessed service this, by which valleys of weeping become, a place of springs, and hearts set singing over the high ways to Zion. This is sharing one another's burdens and fulfilling the law of Christ. This is reflecting the life of Christ, diffusing the fragrance of Christ, and spreading the comfort of Christ. Then of a truth it can be said, "Christ liveth in me."

- J. J. Blackburn.



## I Would See Thy Face

I would see Thy face, O Jesus,  
Lying fair, and sweet, and mild,  
Against the bosom of dear Mary  
On Thy natal night. Thou Child  
Son of God's transcendent grace,  
I would look upon Thy face  
And be like Thee.

I would see Thy face, O Jesus,  
Man of truth, and life, and power,  
Lifting burdens, healing, helping,  
Breaking bread in hunger's hour.  
Let me now Thy footsteps trace,  
Just to look upon Thy face  
And be like Thee.

I would see Thy face, O Jesus,  
As *Thou* spent Thy dying breath;  
Know the deeper, fuller meaning  
Of Thy sacrificial death.  
In the sacred "secret place,"  
Lord, to meet Thee face to face  
And be like Thee.

- Nellie Florence Jolly.

## **"Take Your Profits From Defeat"**

Some time ago, The Forum, under the above heading, contained the following quotation by William Moulton Marston:

"If there is any single factor that makes for success in living, it is the ability to draw dividends from defeat. Every success I know, has been reached because the person was able to analyze defeat and actually profit by it in his next undertaking. If you confuse defeat with failure, then you are doomed indeed to failure. For it isn't defeat that makes you fail; it is your own refusal to see in defeat the guide and incentive to success."

Christians should be able to profit in a spiritual sense by the wisdom contained in this quotation, for it sets forth clearly a great truth which we sometimes fail to grasp in our complex experiences.

The narrow path leading unto the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, is paved with memories of defeats which are humiliatingly painful, but which prove to be stepping-stones to those who eventually overcome. There is no success or reward in any sphere of life to those who permit discouragement to take possession of their minds and wills. In worldly pursuits, such men are called "quitters," and at best they are regarded with pity. In militarism, they are despised.

There are also quitters in the ranks of those fighting under the banner of Christ-those who turn back after having put their hand to the plow -- those who permit their affections to slip from heavenly things and become fixed on earthly gain-those who return' to their former sinful lusts and pleasures like the swine that returns' to its wallowing in the mire. It is not when the world, and the flesh prove temporarily overpowering, that the sin unto death has been committed; -- but when the new mind ceases to struggle with its enemies and permits them to hold unhindered sway.

Then there is also the parallel of those who start with the high goal in mind but fail to put their whole effort into the fight because they lack the fortitude and patience necessary to success. In the world, such constitute a majority of men, and we are not surprised when we learn, that the same is true in the heavenly calling, for many who build on the true foundation compromise with inferior work.

Let us, dear fellow servants, no matter how far short we feel we come, keep the high ideal of our heavenly - calling always before us and never, *never* give up the fight. Let us profit by our defeats and mistakes, and, in -our experiences learn; obedience that thereby we may not fight unwisely but victoriously as did our Captain before us. "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in' the sight of many witnesses." - 1 Tim. 6:12.

John T. Read.



## "As Always, So Now"

### PART II - "FIXING THE CHARACTER"

*"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, at always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." - Phil. 1:20.*

CONTINUING OUR meditation upon these four brief words, we desire to trace out in the life of the Apostle those influences and experiences which operated in him and' enabled him to utter such remarkable words. It is not every follower of the Lord who can look back along life's thorny road, at some later crisis in his life and say he hopes he may be able now to do as he had always done before, and in doing over again what he had done so many times, merit the Lord's smile and approval. It requires a consistent life of singular constancy and devotion, actuated by the loftiest motives, undeviatingly followed, to be able to say these words truthfully. Who has not at some time parleyed with the Tempter, and stained his hands (and heart) as a result? Who has not let the strain of some difficult situation wring from his lips regretted words, which he would have given much to recall? Who has not been weak and cowardly, where he should have been firm and strong? All such things may by us have been confessed, and freely forgiven by our gracious Father, but who, more grown in grace and knowledge would care to say today, "As I did then, so would I do today"?

These words show a heart like the magnetic needle swinging truly and freely to the "pole" of a Savior's guidance. They tell of a life, as of a journey plotted and charted before, which leads straight on to its destination, following no by paths or detours -- determined only on "getting there." There is a positiveness about the attitude indicated by such a statement which eliminates all doubts and vacillation; an applied concentration which precludes all misuse of energy; a purposeful conservation which prevents the frittering of resources; and a depth of understanding which sees the necessity of "keeping on" because the reward of past achievement is made sure only by continuing firmly to the end. Whatever the achievements made, there is no half-way house of rest or retiring. The reward is to be received only at the end of the way. No matter how often another victory can be added to the "as always," the "so now" will keep on moving forward to the emergencies which lie ahead, until in due time, the last "so now" will bring us right up to "the veil," and we shall pass into the presence of the King with our "as always" resolutions untarnished and unbroken.

### UNTIRING ZEAL OF MANHOOD RIPENS INTO ARDENT LONGING FOR HIS LORD

At the time Paul wrote these words he had grown old in his Master's service. Indeed, we may say he had grown old prematurely, for the intensity of his labors and the severity of his sufferings had aged him beyond his years. He speaks of himself as "Paul the aged" (Philemon 9) at a time when by all the evidences we have available, he could not have been much beyond his threescore years. For more than twenty years he had served his Master, during *which* the untiring zeal of his fuller manhood had ripened and matured into a holy fire of ardent longing for his Lord, and an all-consuming passion in his watch care over the spiritual-sons whom the Lord had given him. They were years of hard, unremitting labor, during which he had lived so utterly and entirely to his Master as to identify himself with his Master, and his Master with himself insomuch that he could truly say, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," (Gal. 2:20.) The sufferings he endured were to him, a bearing "about in his body of the dying of the

Lord Jesus." He had come to look upon his diminutive little body, not only as belonging to the Lord Jesus (as the slave belongs to his master) but also as being tenanted and indwelt by the Lord Jesus, in order that he might learn to know and experience all -that Jesus had experienced in the day of His rejection.

Twenty years of such strenuous experience had so crystallized and fixed his character, that he responded to the dangers and deliverances of his Apostolic calling almost with the unvarying precision of absolute law. According to a law of natural science, iron contracts under cold, and expands under heat, without variation. Almost as invariably Paul responded, to the chilling influences of this wicked world in one very precise and definite manner, while to the warming, cheering influences of heaven, he responded in an entirely different way. He had become so developed that he was drawn as by the forces of attraction to all righteous and holy things; he was driven, as by the forces of repulsion, from all unrighteous and unholy things.

### **A HOLY INDIFFERENCE IN FACE OF DANGER**

Like his Lord and Master, he now loved righteousness and hated iniquity. Unlike his Master, he had had to learn this responsiveness to good and evil at a tremendous cost. Such was now his state of development that the ultimate goal of character fixation was almost reached. We say, almost reached, because later in this letter he says he had not yet apprehended that for which he had been apprehended. But he was earnestly pressing on to that apprehension. He was applying himself to that end with a diligence and singleness which allowed distracting influences no hold or power over him. Though the goal had not yet been reached, he had the firm intention not to dishonor his Lord, but rather to magnify Him, either, by life or death. And that intention stated in such words, and at such a time, shows that he was very near the point where his needle was all but at rest, pointing dead true to the pole of His Master's will. It was still uncertain whether or not the outcome of this ordeal would bring him down to death. But what matter if it did, so long as he could remain constant and true?

He had looked death in the face too many, times already to be afraid of its icy clutch. It had no terrors for him now. Even death itself should bring him "gain"! So why fear it, whensoever or wheresoever it came? His Lord and Master had carried him through so many phases of development both by observation and experience that what at first may have been merely human zealotry became at last a holy indifference in face of danger. Not only had the Lord redeemed Paul as He redeemed other men, but the Lord had given the price of another life purposely to win to his service this "chosen vessel." -Many years prior to this imprisonment in Rome, while Paul stood sponsor for the executioners and warden for their clothing, he had watched one faithful Christian martyr pass into the valley of the shadows with a prayer of victory and charity on his lips, and a look of radiant triumph on his face. His schooling and preparation for reaching the later heights of selfless submission had begun right there even before he knew the Lord. Paul never forgot that scene, as Stephen, crushed to earth by the stones, sank to his death. He saw in that martyr's noble bearing those sublime characteristics -- that excellence of moral fiber -- which his own ardent soul, in its best and noblest moments longed to possess. In spite of his own meticulous observation of the law, the dying man had attained to something he wanted but which hitherto had eluded his grasp.

What a remarkable contrast that scene afforded. The condemned, execrated and, dying man, put by his own act outside the pale of the Covenant (as Paul thought), was there facing the supreme issue, not for this life only, but-if tradition were true-for the life to come also, not stoically, not callously, but compassionately and forgivingly, possessed of peace and power, and of a holy calm, while he, Paul, whose exertions had successfully procured the warrant for the martyr's

death was a conflicting maze of disappointed and unsatisfying emotions. It left on Paul's mind an indelible and ineffaceable picture, which remained with him to the end of his days. But the Lord knew His man. He knew that in surrendering Stephen, He was in the way for winning Saul. From that moment on, the memory of that happy, triumphant face was the sting in his conscience, "the goad" that continually pricked his distraught heart which the watching and waiting Jesus kept at work there, till the "chosen vessel" laid himself down at His feet in full and complete surrender.

The very ferocity of his madness against the followers of Jesus, as he sought them out in every synagogue, only shows the intensity of the strain which this persecution was intended to relieve in his tense and tortured heart. Saul came of a noble race, whose sons and daughters, inspired by a glorious hope, had given themselves heroically to torture and death time and again when their nation's welfare was in danger. A glorious roll-of-honor of all this martyr-blood was kept laid up in every loyal heart. But, illustrious though it all was, the best of all that long roll was the thin line of Prophets who had sealed their testimony for righteousness with their blood. They bore witness, not against the enemy -and the alien hit against their own kith and kin, as they strove kith mighty energy to arrest that inward corruption Which had defiled and polluted their fathers. And it was by their own people's hands they were slain and imprisoned. The same thing was happening over again. Disguise it as he would, Saul saw that the death of "Thy martyr Stephen" and the sufferings of numerous others were in the direct line of succession to the Prophets. It was for their testimony to their own' people that they died. even though their testimony was regarding the despised and crucified Nazarene, whom Paul,, and his fellows accounted to have been "smitten and afflicted of God." Yet, outcast -- though they accounted Jesus and His humble followers to be, out of all this experience there came that exhibition of a sublime and chastened indifference to pain, anguish, and death, which could not but impress a' mind which revered the like thing in the "Prophets" and "Fathers." Thus in the very madness- of his persecution, Paul was given his first lesson in that Christian constancy which carried him, at last, to his own martyr death.

As a first-hand agent, he saw that these despised followers of the still more despised Nazarene, were possessed of that moral greatness which shed such it lustrous splendor upon the names and lives, of their most distinguished ancestors. And Paul desired' this deep, moral power with all his zealous but misguided heart!

### **THE LESSONS BY EXPERIENCE**

From the day when Paul met and capitulated to the Heavenly Master, until he now stood face to face with the "great' issue," who can say how many times he had looked death in the face? Some slight idea of these occasions may be gathered from his own arresting phrase in 2 Cor. 2:23: In deaths oft." Not once, nor twice, but "oft" had the menace appeared. Again in 2 Cor. 1:10, he, thanks God "who had delivered us from so great a death" even when he had in himself "the sentence of death." It was one long unbroken sequence of experiences, beginning in that very city of Damascus whither he had gone seeking his prey, by which he was now learning through intense personal participation, the lesson of Christian, constancy and devotion to his Master. The Master allowed the fires to be kindled and stoked to white heat, and then, into the fiery furnace He went to walk and talk with His chosen disciple. And in those moments when no arm of flesh could comfort and succor, Paul learned to "know Him" whose servant and messenger he had become. He tells us briefly in 2 Cor. 2, of perils on the highway, perils on the deep; perils from hunger, thirst, and nakedness, perils from malignant enemies and false friends. In the narrative, it is but a brief recital, but it was the experience of years, with death lurking round the corner at every turn of the road. In this autobiography in 2 Cor. 2:23-27 Paul outlines quite a few experiences of which, from the record in Acts we know nothing at all: "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes, save one." We have no record of that. "Three times was I beaten with rods" by the Romans. Of only one such beating have we any reference in Acts. "Thrice was I shipwrecked; a night and a day have I been in the deep." Of all these marine experiences we know nothing at all, for

all these preceded the shipwreck when on the journey to Rome, under escort. The Lord withheld not the perils, nor the dangers, but allowed them in abundance, so that He might find opportunity to grapple and draw that intrepid heart to His own by hooks stronger than steel.

Again let us permit Paul to be his own biographer, and interpret for us exactly what he means by his all embracing words "as always." In 2 Cor. 4:8-11, he says: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed; *always* bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus; . . . For we which live are *always* delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." "Always" -- without variation or cessation facing the fire and the flames enkindled by men, but *always* without variation or cessation finding the Lord with him in the midst of the flames. It requires the heat of the furnace fires, and the skill of the metal-worker in mixing his compounds, together with the right force and distribution of his blows, to temper the steel, and make it a product of higher worth. Thus by observation of the early believers, and the crucial nature of his experiences, the Lord had produced in Paul the qualities and characteristics which would remain constant under great strain and difficulty.

One other factor was needed to make Paul feel and realize his dependence upon his Lord and Master: After one blessed season when the Lord had given him deep understanding by visions and revelations, there was given to him "a thorn in the flesh" - "a messenger of Satan to buffet him." We cannot be sure what this handicap was, but it is quite possible that it was something that affected his bodily presence. At times his enemies spoke slightly about his appearance, describing him somewhat as an "under-sized oddity." Paul felt this keenly, whatever its cause. He besought the Lord to remove it, in order that this offensiveness give no opportunity for his enemies' sarcasm and wit.

Thrice did he approach the Lord about it, and thrice did the Lord decline to take away the objectionable thing; at the same time remarking, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Here Paul, sensitive to his infirmity, susceptible additionally to sarcasm and scorn, is taught to know that the favor and approval of his Master, is of more importance to him than all the favors of friend or enemy. The Lord thus shut Paul up to Himself, making Paul's peace of heart dependent entirely upon His own grace and approval. When the lesson had been learned, Paul said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power' of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, inn distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak; then am I strong." - 2 Cor. 12:9, 10.

This was a wonderful experience. When the scoffer and scorner would taunt Paul, he turned his heart inward to the Lord, and in this isolation, he became insulated from their attack. But the scoffing tongue was permitted all the time to abound, that the messenger of the Lord should all the time, have need to live under the shadow of His Wing. Thus Paul became Jesus' "special man" a "chosen vessel unto" Him; and thus were the characteristics developed and fixed which enabled Paul to speak as he did as he contemplated his appearance before Rome's supreme tribunal to "magnify Christ" there. The Lord had prepared His man for that hour, and in preparing him for that He was preparing him for all eternity.

Our meditation has followed in brief outline the outstanding aspects of the later life of the Apostle Paul, but the basic principles of that character development and, fixation, are as true of others as of Paul. Paul was chosen for a special work, at a special time; hence his development was on the colossal scale. But every follower of the Lord may apply the lessons to himself or herself. The need is just the same though the scale be less: "Without holiness shall no man see the Lord." Holiness implies "wholeness unto the Lord" -- as wholly devoted to His purposes as is the Lord God Himself. Let every brother and sister ponder deeply these experiences of the Apostle and within his or her own little sphere, put themselves in the Apostle's place. Then will the lesson be fully appreciated and well *learned*. - *Contributed*.

## The Letter to the Colossians

*"In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the, faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses." - Col. 2:11-13.*

IN THE verses previous to those now under discussion, there has been in the Apostle's mind the contrast between that fulness which is the precious lot of those who are in Christ Jesus, those *who* have the mind of Christ, and two will-o'-the-wisps prevailing in Colosse-the empty philosophies resulting from the reasonings, so called, of human minds; and the religion of vain formalism. Always there have been the two corrupting tendencies to influence religious thought, that of the intellect, and that of the senses -- the danger that the cultured few will place their trust in the superior workings of their mind, while the great mass will make the equally serious mistake of depending on feelings. With the one, speculation runs riot, and with the other religion becomes a mere display of feelings. Apparently both these false hopes held sway in the Colossian group, for Paul assailed both.

In the verses now before us, the Apostle is answering that company of formalists who would impose the Jewish circumcision on Gentile converts. This that was the seal of the Covenant with Abraham's seed (Gen. 17:9-14) and which must be maintained in order to retain their right, to the blessings promised to the Jews, either in that day or in this, could be of no avail to a Christian, whose seal is not the letter but - the spirit. (Rom. 2:29; 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:6; Matt. 23:23; Gal. 4:10; Col. 2:20; 2 Tim. 3:5; Rom. 14:17.) "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 5:6; 6:15.) But there is a circumcision for Christians-the circumcision of the heart, their seal of acceptance with God. For those who have this circumcision the ancient Jewish rite manifestly is obsolete.

### CHRISTIAN CIRCUMCISION DEFINED

This true circumcision has three characteristics: It is "not made with hands"; it consists in "putting off the body of the flesh"; and above all it must be "of Christ."

Since it is "not made with hands," it is a God-given reality and not the work of the flesh. The Jewish circumcision was a ceremonial cleansing faintly suggestive of the Christian's purity of heart. Even the Old Testament points to this deeper meaning of circumcision, as in Deuteronomy 30:6: "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart . . . to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart." See also Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4.

The Christian circumcision is no such small matter as the Jewish symbol, for it is the "putting off the body of the flesh." The words, "the sins of," are evidently an interpolation, as indicated by the more reliable manuscripts; and we suspect Satan's hand in this addition. He would very much like to convince every saint that all there is to his circumcision is the putting off sins, whereas its real import is the "putting off *the body* of the flesh" -- the "making *no* provision for the flesh to satisfy the desires thereof." - Rom. 13:14.

The Apostle's expression is a strong one, for, the "putting off " is more literally a complete *stripping* off, as of the laying aside of *one's* clothing. How evident it is that this is not made with

hands, even though it is a gradual work and embarrassingly partial for a time. Only our Heavenly Father can effect and complete *so* great a change as this circumcision" of the heart. This must be circumcision "*in* the spirit." If it were only "in the letter," an obedience to the letter of the law, man might *work* that in a measure satisfactory to the human mind. "Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born *of* water and *of* the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." (John 3:5.) "Not by works, of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing *of* the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:5.)

Even though there were an absence of allusions *in* Col. 2:11 to anything beyond the mere *putting* aside of sin, that would not indicate that higher attainments are not part of the work of the divine Spirit in us. Every one should know "this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin," but "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." - Rom. 6:6; Heb. 12:28; 13:16; Psa. 34:14.

The Law required the circumcision of the flesh. Just as positively the Spirit dispensation requires the circumcision of the heart; and this is manifestly necessary that there may be the "new creature in Christ Jesus [for whom] old things have passed away [by heart circumcision]." (2 Cor. 5:17.) That individual has ceased to live after the flesh, though' *still in* the flesh. In another sense the' Apostle says: "Ye are not in the flesh, but ]In the spirit, if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you." (Rom. 8:9.) He can speak thus truly because of his stronger expression just quoted above that the body of sin *is* "*destroyed*," that henceforth we should not serve sin." This destruction is of course not of the physical body but of the will that has controlled it until that time.

It is not surprising that Satan has been successful - in inducing the great mass of so-called Christians to be content because they have in a measure put off some of the sinful tendencies of the flesh, but there is no excuse for this error on the part of those who seek to do His will. One feature of the King James.

Translation that has assisted in this wrong viewpoint is the use of the word "lust" in translating a Greek word that does not necessarily mean anything stronger than the most innocent of desires. Evil desire should be implied only when the context so indicates. ("Lust" is, however, the correct translation of another word used in Col. 3:5 and Rom. 1:26.) This true thought is plainly enough taught in Paul's exhortation to live not after the flesh but after the spirit. The word translated "after" in Romans 8:13, in the construction there used, means "conforming to the standards of" the flesh. Following the least suggestion of the flesh, unsupported by the Spirit's guidance, therefore, constitutes one as living after the flesh. This is not a question of sinful lusts, but of seeking anything other than the will of God-a thing which faith can never do. When one follows his own will, he is just as definitely proving that his faith is in self as he proves his faith in God by following the divine will. It is for this reason that no Christian can pray for anything until he has first determined God's will in the matter, or in the absence of any means of knowing the Father's will, he will say, "If it be Thy will."

### **SPIRITUAL CIRCUMCISION "OF CHRIST"**

Doubtless it is this completeness of submission to the divine Spirit that is indicated when we are told that our circumcision is "of Christ." "In Him" we not only have the justification that makes us acceptable in the presence of the Father though still bearing about this body of flesh, but in a still more important sense we are "in Him" as members of His Body. Here the thoughts of the flesh cease and the "mind of Christ" begins. But we cannot be "in Him" without "circumcision of the heart." Any holding fast to the flesh and the works of the flesh marks us as carnal to that



degree. We must not, however, permit Satan to deceive us into thinking that the works of the flesh must be sinful to place us in this category.

The circumcision is "of Christ" probably both because He submitted to it and because He instituted it. There were many noble men in Israel previous to the Spirit dispensation, who knew some measure of this heart-transformed condition, but we cannot suppose that any prior to Jesus' time could actually experience a condition so drastic as the entire putting off the mind of the flesh. This work could be possible only in a Spirit dispensation. And what need can these Gentile converts have of the Jewish ceremony when the reality is theirs? Later in his argument the Apostle alludes to a series of ceremonials which are likewise outmoded by the establishing of the reality.

The ceremony has had its place in that great pedagogic work of bringing its votaries to Christ, not that they might bring to Him something that the empty reasonings of their philosophers had evolved, but that laying aside all human thought they might receive the mind of Christ, "bringing into captivity *every thought* to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. 10:5.) Never has force imposed on-any creature bondage comparable to this. They *who* are in Christ Jesus; having learned the folly of all the workings of the flesh, even at its best, gladly share with the Apostle Paul in "dying daily" that the "*life of Christ*" might be manifested in them. That life- cannot fully manifest itself while the flesh has its way about anything.

Perhaps more than anything else in the Christian life this resigning of the will of the flesh separates us from the world and its spirit. We note in connection with the Apostle's definition of a new creature that he does not say that *all* "old things have passed away," but he does say that "*all* things are become new." Much that is "old in the life of the individual continues after he has given himself unreservedly to the guidance of the Heavenly Father; but every old practice is conducted on a new basis, so that it is literally true that "all things have *become* new." It would be very strange indeed, if the world would not notice this change and condemn us for being so contrary to their aims and principles. But this only adds to the Christian's joy, as thus he can "go to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." Undoubtedly Saul of Tarsus, as his own words testify, lived on as high a moral plane as was possible for- a human being, but it was an entirely new experience that came into his life when "dying daily he shared in the "sufferings of Christ," "filling up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ," "bearing *His* reproach."

### **BAPTISM, PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL**

This deeper experience is more definitely referred to by the other symbol, baptism, which the Apostle here associates with circumcision. We are told that the form of expression in the Greek, implies that the two things are "contemporaneous. In other words there can be no true spiritual baptism where there is lacking a genuine circumcision of the heart-the laying aside of the entire will of the flesh. Nor can there be any circumcision of the heart without a 'true spiritual baptism-burial into the will of Christ.

Only a ceremony which is in accord with the meaning of the word "baptizo" can have been in the Apostle's mind, and, only that can truly represent the Christian's actual experience. "All but entire unanimity prevails among commentators on this point. The burial and the resurrection spoken of point unmistakably to the primitive mode of baptism, as Bishop Lightfoot . . . puts it in his paraphrase: 'Ye were buried with, Christ to your old selves beneath the baptismal waters, and were raised with Him from these same waters, to a new and better life.'" - Manifestly the symbol cannot accomplish for us all that is ascribed to baptism in the New Testament, any more than could a physical circumcision all that is ascribed to its antitype. Our hope is not in the work of

some man who submerges and raises us again from the baptismal waters, but- "through faith in the working of God." - Col. 2:12. - R V.

Baptism is more than circumcision. It carries the picture one step further. Here, too, the death of the flesh is represented, but additionally a resurrection to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, "to walk with Him in newness of life," *even* as He walked." (Eph. 2:6; Rom. 6:4; 8:1; 1 John 2:6.) Paul, in this same letter (Col. 3:1), tells us how we may know whether this is our experience or not, for he says that such "seek those things which are above." It should be easy for each one to scrutinize his daily life and know whether treasure is being laid up on earth or laid up in heaven. "Where one's heart is, there will his treasure be also." (Matt. 6:19-21.) We may well ask ourselves, Which brings the greater distress into our life, the missing of some spiritual blessing, or the missing of some physical satisfaction? If the former, we have known the "power of His resurrection." Jesus' resurrection demonstrated the acceptableness of His sacrifice. The power of His resurrection manifest in us proves the acceptableness of our "living sacrifice." By His cross the world must be "crucified unto us [dead so far as we are concerned], and we unto the world [dead to its every allurements]."

### **"LIFE MORE ABUNDANT"**

This would be a sad state in which to find ourselves if it were not followed by the resurrected life. "There is the actual communication of a, new life when we touch Christ by faith. The Prophet of old laid himself upon the dead child, the warm lip on the pallid mouth, the throbbing heart on the still one, and the contact rekindled the extinguished spark. So Christ lays His full life on our deadness, and does more than recall a departed glow of vitality. He communicates a new life kindred with His own."

Paul's next phrase, "having forgiven us all our trespasses," as the most trustworthy manuscripts render it, gives us one of his intimate, personal touches, introducing us into the depths of the Apostle's character. While all that he had spoken of before was part of his own experience as a Christian, both the circumcision and the baptism, his sharing in them is not alluded to; but he is too widely awake to the, realization of his own unworthiness to fail to mention his association with those who must have their trespasses forgiven. The manuscripts from the earlier centuries render the passage, "having forgiven us all trespasses." It is through Christ's death that this pardon is Paul's and. ours. Satan's eagerness to becloud this truth is matched by Paul's intense hatred of anything that would veil from our sight the crucified Christ.

The ordinance of baptism into literal water was given, not only that we might recognize our privileges, but also that we might the more clearly apprehend Him who first went down into the waters symbolic of death and resurrection. "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but the' keeping of the commandments of God." (1 Cor. 7:19.) Nor is baptism into water of avail for the washing away of sins or the consecrating of the individual; but burial into His will, accompanying true circumcision' of the heart, a stage of the true baptism, is absolutely essential that we may rise to walk with Him in-newness of like the final stage of the Christian's baptism -for this walk, for those who are "faithful unto death," will lead to and beyond the "veil that but thinly intervenes." "For we are the circumcision, which worship God -in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." - Rev. 2:10; Phil. 3:3.

- P. E. Thomson



## "My Chain"

*"I am bound with this chain. - Acts 28:20.*

*"My chain." - 2 Tim. 1:16.*

It bound him close-that Roman chain!  
A pris'ner now, he had to stay!  
To strain or drag were worse than vain;  
Nor did he seek to 'scape away.

Yet chained-he did not idly fret!  
While *frame* was bound, his *heart* was free:  
As pris'ner of the Lord he yet  
A richer means of help might be.

And so it was, that, from that place  
Of fettered frame there so outflowed  
Such words of truth! such wealth of grace!  
Such messages to men from God!

Thou too, oh soul, dost know today  
The meaning of those words-"My chain"!  
Would'st thou most gladly 'scape away?  
Or, find thy fetters yielding gain?

Full many forms the "chain" may take:  
Perchance 'tis some infirmity  
That doth for thee thy fetter make;  
Or duty-call; or poverty.

Or circumstances strangely hard;  
Or life 'midst hearts untuned with thine,  
Where love's sweet pleasantries are barred,  
Is such the "chain" that makes thee pine?

Whate'er, oh soul, thy "chain" may be,  
With dragging weight-and, limit near  
Like Paul, thy *heart* hath liberty  
*To live above* the "limit" sphere,

If thou art His-then this thy rest  
If in His will disposed to be  
Thy "chain" may be a thing *most blest*,  
Though, meantime, it so fetters thee.

And at the End it may be seen,  
When things, now dark, are all made clear,  
The "chain" Gods method kind hath been  
To hold us safe - to keep us near.  
- J. Danson Smith.

## Agency--Divine and Human

*"For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." - 1. Cor. 3:9.*

THROUGH HIS Prophet (Jer. 18:1-10), in the familiar figure of the potter and the clay, God forcibly calls to our attention His absolute sovereignty over the life and being of every man. The illustration vividly represents the subjection of our nature and our personal history to the divine control. And yet the fact of our moral freedom, the prerogative that belongs to us of choosing and following our own way, would seem to make the comparison defective; for physical analogies fail to perfectly set forth the realities of moral and spiritual life. Nevertheless the figure is deeply true as suggestive of the power. God has over us to mold us as He pleases. Free as are our wills, our whole nature is as plastic material in the hands of Him who made us, the "Divinity that shapes our ends."

There is a hidden power, the mastery of which over thought, feeling, purpose and action is the deepest reality of our experience.

God exercises His agency, however, with gracious provision for the freedom of the human will. The Apostle in the words of our text thus reveals a harmonious cooperation between the saint and his God for the Lord is not content to arbitrarily work His will, but has provided for the agency of His creature" the privilege of participation in the outworkings of His glorious purposes. Divine willing and working are the source and the cause. Human willing and doing are the condition and the means. Human agency is demanded. Divine agency assures results. To, illustrate this we have selected copious Scripture references.

## Human Agency

## Divine Agency

<p>Phil. 2:12: "Work out your own salvation."          Lev. 19:14: "Thou shalt fear thy God."          Isa. 1:16: "Wash you, make you clean."          Ezek. 18:31: "Make you a new heart."          Eph. 4:23: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind."          Eph. 4:22: "Put off the old man."          Rom. 6:12: "Let not sin reign in your body."          Rom. 13:14: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."</p> <p>Rom. 12:2: "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."</p> <p>Prov. 4:23: "Keep thy heart."          Prov. 3:1: "Let thy heart keep My commandments."          1 Tim. 5:22: "Keep thyself pure."          1 Pet. 1:5: "Kept through faith,          Eph. 6:10: "Be strong          Phil. 4:13: "I can do all things          Phil. 3:12: "I press on that I may apprehend that          1 Cor. 16:13: "Stand fast, quit you like men, be strong."</p> <p>2 Cor. 6:1: "Working together with Him."</p> <p>Psa. 119:32: "I will run the way of Thy commandments,          2 Pet. 1:10: "Give diligence to make          1 Pet. 1:22: "Ye have purified yourselves          Rom. 8:13: "Ye mortify the deeds of the body          2 Thess. 2:13: "Belief of the truth and Luke 13:24: "Strive to enter in by the narrow door."</p> <p>Matt. 11:28: "Come unto Me."</p> <p>Matt. 5:48: "Be perfect, as your heavenly "Father."          2 Tim. 1:14: "That good thing keep          Jude 21: "Keep yourselves in the love of God."</p> <p>John 15:4: "Abide in Me and          Heb. 2:3: "How escape if we neglect so great salvation."          Isa. 27:5: "Let him lay hold of My strength          Isa. 1:19: "If ye be willing and obedient          Isa. 55:6, 7: "Let the wicked return unto the Lord and</p>	<p>Phil. 2:13: "God worketh in you to will and to do."          Jer. 32:40: "I will, put My fear in their hearts."          1 John 1:9: "Will cleanse us from all unrighteousness."          Ezek. 36:26: "A new heart will I give you."          2 Cor. 4:16 "Our inward man is renewed day by day."          Eph. 4:24: "Put on the new."          Rom. 6:14: "Sin shall not have dominion over you."          Col. 1:27: "Christ in you."          Eph. 3:17: "Dwell in."          Rom. 8:29: "Foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son."          Col. 3:10: "Is being renewed after the image of Him."          Phil. 4:7: "Peace of God shall keep your hearts,"          Jer. 31:33: "I will write My law in their hearts."          Jude 24: "To Him that is able to keep you."          By the power of God."          In the Lord and in the strength' of His might."          Through Christ who strengtheneth me."          For which I was apprehended by Christ Jesus."          Phil. 1:6: "He who began a good work in you, will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ."          Col. 1:29: "Worketh in me."          1 Thes. 2:13: "Effectually worketh." When Thou shalt enlarge my heart." Your calling and election sure."          Through the Spirit:" By the Spirit."</p> <p>Sanctification of the Spirit."          John 10:9: "By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."          John 6:44: "No man can come to Me except the Father draw him."          Heb. 13:21: "God make you perfect."          By the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us.</p> <p>Rom. 5:5: "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit."          I in you."          Titus 2: 11: "The grace of God bringeth salvation."</p> <p>And he shall make peace with Me."          Ye shall eat the good of the land."          He will have mercy and pardon."</p>
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The intervolution or merging of the divine and the human wills is thus amply witnessed. Even the acceptance of the Gospel must be by a process in which the will has a part, and to which the heart gives determinant force.

It offers to man reasonable grounds for "decision without crushing his individuality. The prodigal remembers his Father's house, and is melted. The sinner looks to Him that ""first loved him," but is neither captured by force nor imprisoned with violence. He is saved in the exercising of that which .is most distinctive of him as an individual, the use of God's noblest gift to man, the free human will. And having come into closer relationship with his God, freed from the bondage of sin, he is yet the "bond slave of Christ." Joyfully and willingly he seeks ever the will of God, for it is now his will. The rich supplies of divine grace are returned again to the Giver in the form of heart obedience, and his prayer is ever that of the old saint: "Demand what Thou wilt, only give what Thou demandest."

- *W. J. Siekman.*

## A Difficult Text Examined

*"Jealousy is cruel as the grave."* - Song of Solomon 8:6

THAT JEALOUSY is cruel as the grave none will deny. That such a thought, however, was present to the mind of the inspired writer when he penned the words of which this phrase is a translation, no scholar will admit. As a matter of fact, in the musical and suggestive phrases of verses 6 and 7 of chapter 8 (Song of Solomon 8:6-7) of the Song of Solomon, we have a brief Hymn in praise of Love, which is the Old Testament prelude and counterpart of St. Paul's matchless Psalm in praise of Love. (1 Cor. 13.) Unfortunately for the English reader, the beauty of the Hymn, the very fact that it is a Hymn, is concealed from him by the malarrangement and mistranslations of the Authorized Version. It is the object of this brief article to bring out that fact, and to indicate the meaning and beauty of this tiny masterpiece.

The Hymn begins with the second clause of verse 6, and extends to the close of verse 7. Literally rendered, it runs as follows: *For strong as death is Love*. This is the first line of the Hymn, and our Authorized Version gives it correctly. But in the second line it mistranslates every word. The word rendered jealousy" in, "Jealousy is cruel as the grave" means not jealous," but "love." In a footnote to the Variorum, Drs. Ewald and Ginsburg are both cited as rendering the word in this connection "*ardent* love" Dr. Samuel Cox\* comments: "Love regarded in its ardor and inexorable force, the love that can neither yield nor share possession of its object.

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\* For much of the material and many of the phrases of this article we are indebted to Dr. Samuel Cox, first Editor of "The expositor."

The word rendered "cruel" indicates the tend of its ardent affection, not its cry; it implies, not that it will ill-treat or torture its object, but that it will never let it go.. The word rendered "grave" is "Sheol," the condition of death, which holds all who enter it with such a firm and unyielding grasp. "So that, as we have no such synonym for the word 'love' as the Hebrew uses here, we had better, to avoid repeating the same word, omit it from the second line altogether, and translate the whole passage thus: *Love is strong as death, tenacious as Hades itself.*" And, obviously, what the Poet intends is to set forth this master-passion of the soul as an elemental principle of being, the sole power in us which, because it is of God, is capable of coping with Death and Hades itself." And, obviously, what the Poet intends is to set forth this master passion of the soul as an elemental principle of being, the sole power in us which, because it is of God, is capable of coping with Death and Hades, and of overcoming them.

In the next two lines he proceeds to describe this passion as an all-pervading fire, kindled by God Himself, and sharing His own divine nature; for instead if "the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a Host vehement flame," we ought to read as it is given in the American Revised Version: "*The flashes thereof are flashes of fire, a very flame of Jehovah.*" That is to say, Love is divine, a flame kindled and fed by the God Who is a quickening as well as a consuming Fire." - Heb. 12:29.

The next two lines, "*Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods, or streams; drown it,*" are accurately rendered in the Authorized Version, "and resent this divine principle as triumphing, by its inherent might, over all the forces that oppose or may oppose it. *Fire is a symbol of Love; and therefore its antagonist element, water, is used to set forth the powers that are hostile to Love, but which' must, in the end, be overcome by it.*

The last two lines are also rendered with accuracy, though the final line is even more emphatic *in* the original than in our Authorized Version: -- "*I am a man would give all the substance of his house for Love, with scorn should it be scorned*"; at the same time there is so quaint and choice a touch in the Authorized rendering of, this line, that we can hardly but prefer to retain the words, "*it would be utterly contemned*" find doubtless the thought of this final passage is *the sacredness* of Love. It is not a commodity to be bought and sold' in the market; no money, no price, can purchase an affection so priceless, because so holy and divine.

So that the whole little Hymn, whose meaning and beauty must by this time be in some measure apparent, runs thus:

"For Love is strong as Death,  
Tenacious as Hades itself;  
The flashes of it are flashes of fire,  
Even a flame from the Lord.  
Many waters cannot quench Love  
Neither can the streams drown it.  
Were a man to give his whole substance for Love  
Even that would be utterly contemned."

And the intention of the Poet is to sing the inherence: majesty of Love, its divine on in, its victorious victorious course, its unpurchasable sanctity. He is speaking of Love not simply, nor mainly, as it shows itself in our imperfect affections for each other, but as a universal and divine principle, the motive and supreme principle of eternal life; he is speaking of the Love which is from God, the Love which is God, and in which He dwells; the love in which if we dwell, God dwells in us and we in Him. And, taken in this sense, the Hymn is surely no unworthy precursor, no mean rival even, of St. Paul's noble and famous song: in praise of that Love which "never faileth." - 1 Cor. 13:8.

- P. L. Read.

## Atheist's Plea to a Church Member

Dear Friends:

I am enclosing a poem entitled, "Atheist's Plea." About a year after this was written, there was placed in my hands a set of "Scripture Studies," and the transcendent glory of the Plan of God has given me joy these many years. I hesitate to trouble you with this, but it seems to me that sometimes we forget what a wonderful thing the Lord did for, us when He gave us this knowledge of His Word through the "Scripture Studies" -- a burning and a shining light, a transfiguring influence in the lives of many. May we never forget, because of familiar and daily contact with it, what a glorious thing this truth of God is to us.

Sincerely, One of the Least.

### ATHEIST'S PLEA

"Always alone in life's exalted moments,  
Always alone when sorrow sears the soul,  
Always alone within the frightening vastness,  
While suns and moons and worlds above me roll.  
Alone; could I but still the crying passion  
For Truth, that glorious dream, I might believe  
As you believe, in blind, unthinking fashion,  
And find such rest as you perhaps receive.

"It cannot be, this strange and twisted vision  
That you present of God, as one in three  
And three in one, a truly heathen version,  
With Hell's dread threat the thinker's destiny.  
And teaching still, as Grecians taught of old,  
The soul lives on fore'er in good or ill,  
Although the mortal frame in death lies cold  
The searching mind before such words is faithless still

"I needs must go alone; you cannot aid me;  
The Godless way is hard but let it be  
Still said that loneliness has not dismayed me,  
That I sought Truth from fatuous dogma free.  
So will I live and seek through changing seasons,  
Such truth as I from day to day receive,  
The heart's great cry for God must wait on reason,  
Until the brain shall say: 'Thou may'st believe!'

"Some distant day when soft the snow is drifting  
Across the silent city of the dead,  
When you and I sleep, 'where the flakes are sifting  
Beneath the trees where bitter tears were shed:  
If, should the last day come and come the Judgment,  
And come the Judge, the Way, the Truth, the Light,  
And we should come and stand before His justice,  
And He should say, which soul was wrong, which right  
I wonder, would He put you on His right hand,  
Who followed thoughtlessly the doubtful light,  
And banish me to Hell's eternal darkness,  
Because I thought that Truth alone was right?

"It cannot be! Somewhere the mind has faltered,  
Too mean to grasp the Infinite in its sphere,  
And in this certainty shall I go onward,  
The God I seek is love; I will not fear."

## Encouraging Messages

Dearly beloved Brethren:

I want to speak of dear Brother Friese, whom I miss also., Although I never met him, he must have gotten my name through the "Herald" Office, and has for some time past sent me messages of Christian -love, cards with beautiful lines of good cheer and comfort in the blessed hope, and copies of his treasured possessions,. including "The Lamb's Wife." I have wondered at his interest in me, never having known me in the flesh, but in some way he may have known me in the spirit and thought of me as a "lonely heart to cherish as the days passed by." My last message to him received no reply, and I knew he must be very ill. I give this testimony concerning him to let you know how faithful he was in the "little things" which are sometimes of more value than the greater, and make me feel humble.

Sister L and I still love the "Herald" and the Christlike spirit manifested in its pages. The money is for our subscriptions, and balance for the Lo-rd's brethren who are in adversity: - James 1:27.

By His favor,  
Mrs. H. R. -- Ill.

Dear Brethren:

I am enclosing subscription for two years for the "Herald" which should bring me up to date. I am very sorry I have neglected to send this before. I kept intending to do so, but with the war coming nearer and my own young people being involved, and so, much demand made on my time, I am afraid I just let it slip. However, I am very grateful to you for continuing to send me the "Herald"; also for your letters.' It touched me very much to know that you showed that interest in my spiritual welfare, and I took it as from the Lord, as the "'Herald" has always been a: great help to me. Its articles always speak to me of that deep spirituality which is so needed these days; also I like to feel that contact in fellowship with other brethren in other parts' fair away. Truly, how blessed is that tie that binds!

Our little Class here is very small in numbers, only about twelve members altogether; and we have, gone through some very difficult times and testings, but the Lord has brought us through it all and has greatly blessed us.

Again thanking you for your kindly interest, and may God richly bless your efforts for His sake.

With sincere Christian love and very best wishes;

Yours in Him,

Mrs. G. E. H. -- W. Aus.

Dear Brethren:

Enclosed you will find \$2.00 for which I would like to have you send me four copies of the book, "Daniel the Beloved of Jehovah." I, ordered two of these a while ago, and liking them so much I told the Class about it and now they are interested to read it.

Thanking you, I remain

Your brother in Christ,

A. L. -- Conn.

## **"To Every One on Earth God. Gives a Burden"**

"To every one on earth  
God gives a burden, to be carried down  
The road that lies between the cross and crown;  
No lot is wholly free; He giveth one to thee.

"Some carry it aloft,  
Open and visible to any eyes;  
And all may see its form, and weight, and size;  
Some hide it in their breast  
And deem it thus unguessed.

"Thy burden is God's gift  
And it will make the bearer calm and strong;  
Yet, lest it press too heavily and long,  
He says, 'Cast it on Me, And it shall easy be.'

"And, those who heed' His voice,  
And seek to give it back in trustful prayer,  
Have quiet hearts that never can despair;  
And hope lights up the way Upon the darkest' day.

"Take thou thy burden thus  
Into thy hands, and lay it at His feet,  
And, whether it be sorrow or defeat,  
Or pain, or sin, or care, Oh leave it calmly there.

"It is the lonely road  
That crushes out the life and light of heaven,  
But borne with Him, the soul restored, forgiven  
Sings out through all the days  
Her joy, and 'God's high praise.

"Oh, that my life might be one ceaseless prayer,  
And every thought be sacred, Lord, to 'Thee;  
That at Thy footstool I might cast, each care,  
And pour out all my joys and sorrows there.  
Oh, keep me, near Thee everyday and hour,  
When peace surrounds and when the tempest lowers."