

THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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Retrospect - Aspect - Prospect

"Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: and he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: he revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is hid ar ness, and the light dwelleth with him." -Daniel 2:20-22.

AND so we enter this new year with faith undiminished, hope enhanced, love undissimulated, and with hearts overflowing in the glorious conviction of the proximity of God's long promised and prayed for kingdom upon this sin-sick earth.

"Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered" (Ps. 40:5). And yet we would meditate upon the workings of our wonderful God who as "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 4:25). So did the mighty Nebuchadnezzar testify when, with understanding returned to him he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said: "I blessed the most High, and I praised him and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say to him, What doest thou?" - Daniel 4:34, 35.

RETROSPECT

How long indeed has been earth's "night of weeping"! Six thousand years of travail -- six thousand years during which the "groaning creation" endured the agony of sin and death! Who can measure the ocean of tears that have flowed, the anguish of human hearts as they stumbled down the "broad road" -- "having no hope and without God in the world." That first act of Adamic disobedience -- what a train of evil has followed in its wake! Alienated from his Creator, the favor of God removed, there ushered in a terrible night wherein "darkness covered the earth

and gross darkness the people." The whole panorama of subsequent human experience can be likened to a drama of horror, a "spectacle unto angels."

But what moving scenes and mighty acts and noble characters are unfolded to our view as we thus look back in the pages of sacred history! Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, the Prophets -- grand Old Testament characters -- pass before our review with precious lessons as we meditate on their relationships with the Creator. What lessons of faith, of trust, of submission, of obedience -- yes, even in their failures. A "cloud of witnesses" for us to whom a larger salvation was to be revealed. And then, after 4000 years of "night," a "light" burst forth upon this poor world, never to be extinguished; a "light" predicted in the words of Psalm 102:18-22: "This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord. For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death; to declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem; when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord."

What wondrous words these are, picturing as it were, the Almighty suddenly becoming conscious of the terrible tragedy of earth and taking measures at once to end it. Centuries had yet to pass but eventually astonished shepherds hastened to Bethlehem to see Him who would fulfill the words of the angel ringing in their ears and burning in their hearts: "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

Sweetest story ever told -- the revelation of Divine love! He -- "The Life was the Light of men" and as he gathered about him his "little flock" opening to them the Scriptures, the great Plan of God for human salvation began to unfold with "wheels within wheels, full of eyes round about." During all the dark ages of the past, when God seemed to have almost forgotten his creatures, his Plan for their eternal future blessing had been silently but grandly progressing though its mysteries had been wisely hidden from men. The very permission of experience with sin was of his overruling for "this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith" (Eccl. 1:13). The buffetings and sufferings under the dominion of evil are experiences to greatly advantage them under the righteous judgments of the restitutionary Millennial Day. The full significance of the Sacrifice on Calvary to the world at large remains yet "to be testified in due time." Only to a favored few, "as many as the Lord our God shall call," the fully dedicated followers of the Lamb in this Gospel Age, has it been "given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven."

As we continue our retrospect, we pass on into the period when the "falling away" corrupted the simple Gospel message and the light of Christ and the Apostles became obscured. Yet amidst the signal corruption of divine truth we may yet discern the restraining and chastening hand of God. In contemplating the Apostasy and the Reformation, we may well consider the words of Thomas Gill of a century ago:

"A journey through History is a walk with God -- a journey full of interest and wonder for every open eyed traveler even if unaware over whose domain and in whose company he is walking; but how beset with wonder, how steeped in solemn awe and solemn delight for each explorer cognizant of the divine region and conscious of the divine Companion! The charm of striking scenes, the awe of mighty events, is heightened and deepened by the conviction of their relation to the purposes of the All-wise Disposer, of their subserviency to the good pleasure of the Almighty and Benignant Ruler. The pain inspired by the evil and portentous personages of

history is lessened by the contemplation of them as ministrants of God's wrath and executors of His judgments, as those whose hearts he hardens and whose wickedness he overrules for the fulfillment of his purposes and the manifestation of his glory; while delight in valiant and godly souls, in true heroes and noble martyrs, rises into a loftier height when they are regarded as rejoicing fellowworkers with the Lord, as faithful servants of his will and gladsome ministers to his glory. The way is sometimes exceeding dark; the crimes and horrors of some periods in history oppress and overpower us; God seems to hide awhile his face from us. But the journey is pursued; we reach higher ground; we look back, we look around; and God shines upon us again; and we bow before the manifested might and majesty of the Moral Governor. Falsehood and Tyranny have won a crushing victory over Truth and Freedom; evil seems triumphant and supreme; the Good Old Cause, the very cause of God Himself, seems vanquished; when lo! a mighty man is raised up, a baleful power is stricken down; a terrible chastisement is inflicted; a great deliverance is wrought; we are uplifted into solemn sympathy with the Divine Avenger; we rejoice in a glorious manifestation of the Divine Deliverer; we are gladdened by a sweet visit of the Divine Consoler."

These thoughts were echoed by John Milton: "Truth, indeed, came once into the world with her Divine Master, and was a perfect shape, most glorious to look upon; but when he ascended and his Apostles after him were laid asleep, then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who ... took the virgin truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of truth, such as durst appear ... went up and down, gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not found them all as yet, Lords and Commons! Nor ever shall do till her Master's Second Coming; he shall bring together every joint and member, and mold them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection." Later he could happily write: "I do not know of anything more worthy to take up the whole passion of pity on the one side and joy on the other than first to consider the foul and sudden corruption, and then after many a tedious age the long deferred but much more wonderful and happy reformation of the Church in these latter days."

So have holy souls rejoiced in the continued gleams of divine light even in the darkest of hours. God has never left himself without witnesses who manfully and courageously testified the true Gospel. The record of the Reformation struggle remains one of the brightest pages of retrospect history.

ASPECT

Under this heading we have in mind the events of the nineteenth century up to our own day in which the work of the various Bible Societies was increased marvelously. During this period the knowledge of things divine increased proportionately culminating in the great Adventist movement of 1844. Despite disappointments due to premature expectancy of kingdom events, spiritual truth continued to grow into increased light on wonderful Bible themes long obscured by human sophistical accretions. What a wonderful table of "fat things" was set before hungry truth seekers who feasted upon the clearer truth of such diversified Bible doctrines as these which list seems endless: The Three Worlds and the Three Heavens, The Three Ways, The Permission of Evil, The Philosophy of the Ransom, The Times of Restitution, The Two Phases of the Kingdom, Adamic Death, The Second Death, Justification, Sanctification, Glorification, Joint-Heirship with Christ, Baptism, Election and Free Grace, Abraham's Seed, The Judgment Day, The Resurrection, The Ancient Worthies, Spiritism, The Soul, The Holy Spirit, The Trinity, Immortality and Eternal Life, The New Creation, The Bride of Christ, The Creative Week, The Tabernacle Types, Nature of the Logos, Natures Distinct, Chronology, The Harvest Period, The Day of Vengeance, Hell -- its true meaning, Restoration of the Jewish Nation, Prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, Symbols

and Parables, The Great Pyramid Corroboration of Scripture, The Second Advent, The Great Company, The Covenants, Mediator and Advocate, The Sin Offering.

But beyond all this precious outpouring of Scripture truth was the ever-deepening realization that all were means to one and only one objective, namely, conformation to the image of Christ. Truly

NOT WHAT BUT WHOM

"For I know whom I have believed." - 2 Timothy 1:12.

Not what, but *Whom* I do believe --
That, in my darkest hour of need
Hath comfort that no mortal creed
To mortal man can give.

Not what, but *WHOM!*
For Christ is more than all the creeds,
And his full life of gentle deeds
Shall all the creeds outlive.

Not what I do believe, but *WHOM!*
Who walks beside me in the gloom?
Who shares the burden wearisome?
Who all the dim way doth illumine?
Who bids me look beyond the tomb
The endless life to live?

Not what I do believe, but *WHOM* --
Who lives himself beyond the tomb;
Not what, but *WHOM*.

The time for us all draws to its close. There is a feeling of expectancy in the air, a sense of impending events fraught with significance for all the world. Solemn thoughts move us. The Church's course is almost run. The great "Mystery [Secret] of God" is almost finished. But a short time is left for the remaining "Feet Members" to adjust one another's wedding robes, to add the finishing stitches of wondrous embroidery, to be ready for that presentation "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." The time for individual parting has arrived. Shall we not the more heed the words of the poet?:

If thou dost bid thy friend farewell,
But for one night though that farewell may be,
Press thou his hand in thine.
How canst thou tell how far from thee
Fate or caprice may lead his steps, ere that tomorrow comes?
Men have been known *lightly* to turn the corner of a street,
And days have grown to months,
And months to lagging years, ere they
Have looked in loving eyes again.
Parting at best is underlaid
With tears and pain:
Therefore, lest sudden death should come between,
Or time, or distance, -- Clasp with *pressure firm* the hand
Of him who goeth forth: Unseen, fate goeth too.
Yea, find thou always time to say some earnest word
Between the idle talk, lest with thee henceforth,
Night and day, regret should walk.

PROSPECT

Under this heading our thoughts look forward to what is to be, the momentous days which lie ahead. The period of evil is almost ended; the Kingdom is at the door. And we, the "living who remain,"

"We're now but in creation's vestibule,
And acting the mere prelude unto joy Immortal, universal."

Let us look up and behold the glorious vision. It is joy that is set up before us and not a mere dream of delight to be swept away by the never failing stream of woe besetting us about. Sorrows, conflicts, perplexities may be thickening about us but does not the very thought of His promises lighten the burden of our cross? Wherever the load of human anguish presses most heavily,, let us, even in sorrow, rejoice that the time of suffering will soon be over and that he by his mighty power will bring us safely through it to wipe away all tears from our eyes. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." And not only ours but that of all suffering humanity. Think "what a glorious prospect the new dispensation will present when fully inaugurated! The changes from one dispensation to another in the past have been marked and prominent, but this change will be the most eventful of all.

No wonder that the thought of such a spectacle -- of a whole race returning to God with songs and praise and everlasting joy upon their heads -- should seem almost too good to believe; but he who has promised is able to perform all his good pleasure.

Though sorrow and sighing seem almost inseparable from our being, yet sorrow and sighing "*shall flee away*"; though weeping in sackcloth and ashes has endured throughout the long night of the dominion of sin and death, yet joy awaits the Millennial morning, and all tears shall be wiped from off all faces, and beauty shall be given for ashes, and the oil of joy for the spirit of heaviness."

"Happy Zion! What a favored lot is thine!"

For all the saints who from their labors rest,
Who Thee by faith before the world confessed,
Thy Name, O Jesus, be forever blest! Alleluia!

Thou wast their rock, their fortress, and their might;
Thou wast their Captain in the wellfought fight;
Thou in the darkness drear their one true light. Alleluia!

O Blest Communion, Fellowship Divine!
We toil on earth, while they in glory shine:
Yet all are one, for all, dear Lord, are thine. Alleluia!

And when the strife is fierce, the conflict long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
And hearts are brave once more, and arms are strong. Alleluia! Alleluia!

- *Will Siekman*

Witnesses for Jesus

"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." - Acts 1:8.

THE last recorded utterance of our Lord on earth is found in the text cited above. These words constitute the terms of the Lord's commission to his Church. Had there been no such commission, there could have been no Church. Although given over nineteen hundred years ago, this commission is still operative. The changing scenes of time have not altered its terms and conditions. These were to remain constant "until He come." They were to do so in three respects:

First: The *subject* of the witness, the *theme* is unvarying, "Ye shall be witness unto *me*." If we may coin a word here, "channelitis" is an infection to which the professing Church of Christ has been prone from the earliest times. The Lord has been equated with some human channel; some men, or organization, or system of truth. The rise and reign of antichrist was due to a false equation which made loyalty to the channel equal to loyalty to Christ. Our own day and generation is not wanting in examples of the devastating effects of this spiritual disease.

Second: The *object* or *purpose* of the witness remains constant. The witness, though not for the conversion of the world but for its evangelization, is in order that the Church might be selected and fitted for her future position and work. The consideration that the end of the Age is approaching very rapidly, does not alter the objective. Even though we should know, which we do not, just when the end is coming, this would be no reason for departing from the terms of our commission. The objective being to find and prepare the Church, our concern must be primarily for its members. Before becoming children of God, the believer passes through various zones of approach to God. Using the Tabernacle illustration, he may commence in the zone outside the Camp, entirely without God and without hope. He then may draw nearer and join the Camp condition as represented in the professing Christian Church. Not satisfied there, he draws nearer into the Court condition of personal contact with Christ and by faith receives forgiveness of sins. He then draws nearer still into the Holy by a complete surrender of his will to God. While the professing Church of Christ in any given place might contain all these elements, the special care must be for those who have come into vital relationship with God in the Holy. Indications that the Lord's Kingdom is near, should be a stimulus to the true Church members to increase their love for each other and their endeavors to assist in getting ready for the consummation of their hope. Nearness to the end is no reason why increased time should be given to these in the Court or Camp zones of approach. On the other hand, it is no reason why these zones should be neglected. It would be still in order to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially unto those who are of the household of faith.

Third: The *method* of witnessing remains constant in our commission. What a different world we live in as compared with the first witnesses for Jesus! In their day the art of printing was unknown; no books or tracts or leaflets to tell of the purposes of God. No radio to carry messages of his grace to the four corners of the earth. Notwithstanding all this, the method of witnessing is not really changed. Today, we witness as the Apostles and early Church did, with our lips and by our lives. The radio and printed page are only extensions of the witness with our lips in the same way as the use of a loud speaker carries the message to a wider circle of hearers.

In the estimation of Jesus, the witness of the lips is of no value unless it is an expression of the witness of the life. Postmen and ambassadors are both servants of the Crown. Both convey messages, but the ambassador is himself the embodiment of his message which is to represent his King and Country. This he does not merely by his words and actions, but by what he is *in his personal character*. Our position as witnesses is similar to that of our Lord himself. His mission was to reveal the Father. That is what man needed. Not merely to be told about God, but to see God manifest in flesh. As witnesses we hold the same position with regard to our Lord. His commission for us is that we should be Christ manifest in the flesh as he was God manifest in the flesh; that we should be the embodiment of the message, not merely declaring truths about Christ and the purposes of God, but manifesting by what we are, something approximating as nearly as possible to what he is. What an honor and dignity is this, and what a great responsibility!

THE CHRISTIAN'S HANDBOOK FOR SERVICE

It is common for large undertakings to issue handbooks for the guidance of their representatives. The Book of Acts could be called the Bible handbook for Christian service. It forms an indispensable link between the Gospels and the Epistles. In the Gospels we have a record of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. In the Epistles we are introduced to churches already established throughout the Roman world. In the Acts we have the story of how the formation of these churches was accomplished by the fulfillment of the terms of the Church's commission. Not only so, but we can see in the Acts how each succeeding generation of witnesses, right up to and including our own day, can, by following its guidance, continue and complete the good work. Let us bear in mind too that the commission "Ye shall be my witnesses" means *you* and it means *me* if we are in Christ. There are no exceptions, and therefore the Book of Acts is of deep concern to us all if we would render acceptable service to our Master.

Let us take a brief glance at the structure of our handbook before noting four cardinal principles that run throughout its chapters. The Book covers a period of about twenty-eight years, from Pentecost to Paul's first imprisonment at Rome. There are also twenty-eight chapters in the Book, but that does not mean that we have one chapter dealing with each year of the period. The first seven chapters have to do with the events of the first two years, giving us a close-up view of the establishment of the Church at headquarters in Jerusalem. Chapters 8 and 9 deal with the establishment of the Church in Judea and Samaria, and also with the conversion of Saul in preparation for the wider witness, and covers a period of approximately two years. Chapter 10 tells us of the first Gentile convert, Cornelius; and chapter 11 of the first Gentile Church, at Antioch. Thereafter the Book is concerned with Paul's missionary journeys to the Gentiles, the last seven chapters dealing with his experiences leading up to the two years' imprisonment at Caesarea Philippi, and his journey to, and his two years' imprisonment at, Rome.

The Book of Acts thus shows how accurately our Lord's words were fulfilled, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem" (chapters 1 to 7, period two years) "and in all Judea and in Samaria" (chapters 8 and 9, period approximately two years) "and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (chapters 10 to 28, period about twenty-four years). The Book of Acts is then supplemented by the history in prophecy of the Book of Revelation, confirmed by the records of world history right up to the last generation of witnesses, represented in the Church of today.

Like colored threads which form the pattern, there run throughout all those wonderful chapters of the Acts, teeming with information, interest, and adventure, four great principles, which govern our witness for Jesus. These could be represented by four key words, *Presence, Program, Power,* and *Protection*. Throughout the Gospel Age the Church as soldiers of Christ have been engaged in a long campaign in the war between good and evil. As Commander-in-chief our Lord has been

ever *present* with his troops in the field. As a great Leader beyond all compare, he has been conducting the campaign according to a definite *program* or plan. While engaged in the long conflict, superhuman as their tasks have been, the soldiers of Christ have never been lacking in the *power* to fight the good fight of faith, nor have they, to use a modern term, ever lacked the indispensable "air cover" *protection*. Our success and our joy in the Master's service will depend on our recognition of and alignment with these four principles. It is of the utmost importance that we look to the Lord alone for direction as to one personally present with us; that we be assured that we are on his program; that we constantly receive of his power; and that we are joyfully conscious of being under his protection.

PRESENCE THROUGHOUT THE AGE

First, the Lord's *Presence*. In Matthew's record of the Church's commission this fact is emphasized. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, . . . and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the Age" (Matt. 28:18-20). This fact of the continuing presence of Christ with his Church is illustrated in the frontispiece to the Book of Revelation, where we see him depicted in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. Throughout the Gospel Age in all the checkered experiences of the Church as outlined in the succeeding chapters of the Revelation, the Lord has been present with her to comfort, strengthen, and sustain. Wherever two or three have gathered in his name, all the days, even to the end of the Age, they have found Jesus in the midst.

The opening words of the Acts are arresting. Luke, the beloved physician, was the author of the Acts as well as of the Gospel which bears his name, and in verse 1 he refers to the Gospel as the former treatise: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was taken up." We can emphasize the word "began," for the Acts make it clear that the Lord Jesus, present with and working in and through his Church by the holy spirit, has continued doing and teaching throughout the whole course of the Gospel Age.

So prominent is the holy spirit in the Acts that the suggestion has been made that the term "Acts of the Apostles," could better be rendered, "Acts of the holy spirit." Since it is clear in the Book that the holy spirit is identified with the Lord, in one instance being called the spirit of Jesus, the Acts of the holy spirit are the Acts of Jesus. It is important to remember when reading the Acts, that when it speaks of the holy spirit, it has reference always to the Lord behind it. The thought is not that he is present by proxy through the holy spirit, as a substitute, but that the holy spirit is the medium whereby he makes his invisible presence known to us. Like the carrier wave in wireless, the holy spirit is the medium whereby the Lord can convey to us his messages and influence and power. On the evening of his betrayal, the Lord had much to tell the disciples about the holy spirit. One of the things he said about it was that when it came, "it would not speak of itself." Weymouth translates this as, "it would not speak as originating what it says." When listening to the wireless, we know that the set does not originate the message, that it is transmitting only what it receives. Similarly the Lord was informing the disciples beforehand, that when this mysterious power began to operate, they were to bear in mind that he was present with them and communicating in this way to them. During the forty days following his resurrection, the Lord, although present, could not communicate with them except by assuming human form. After Pentecost, the holy spirit which had been *with* them in the person of the Lord, was now *in* them, and a means of contact established thereby.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Let us look now at some of the instances where this fundamental principle of the Lord's continuing presence with his people is emphasized. Acts 13:2 reads: "As they [the prophets and teachers of the Church at Antioch] ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the holy spirit said, 'Separate *me* Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.'" Here the Lord is speaking, and we should not think of this as being in the nature of a long distance message from some one far away, but as a voice from One who throughout all the days even unto the end of the Age has been "closer than breathing, nearer than hands or feet." The distance separating us is not a distance in space but in nature, a distance bridged over meantime by the medium of the holy spirit, and will be annihilated by and by when the body of our humiliation is made like unto his own glorious body.

Nearly two thirds of the Acts have to do with the Apostle Paul's experiences. It is interesting to note how very near and very real the Lord's presence was to him. Five times, it is related in the Acts, that the Lord appeared to Paul in a vision. The first was that most memorable one of all in chapter 9:4 and 5. On the way to Damascus, breathing out threatening and slaughter, he was arrested by the bright vision and the voice that said, "'Saul. Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Connected with this is a companion vision to Ananias recorded in verses 10-12 of the same chapter: "To him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias ... go into the street which is called Straight and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in." The Lord was here as in all the other instances giving to Paul a miraculous manifestation of a presence which was always with the Church though unseen. After three years had passed, Paul returned to Jerusalem, and in the temple there he had another vision. It is recorded in Acts 22:17, 18: "While I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; and saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me." Eager to undo, if possible, the evil that he had done, Paul asks that he might remain and witness in the city where he had blasphemed the name of the Lord, only to be told, "Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." The years rolled by, and Paul in his third missionary journey arrived at Corinth. He had just come from a discouraging time at Athens, and the Lord again appeared to him in a vision. It is recorded in Acts 18:9: "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."

PAUL'S DESIRE TO WITNESS AT ROME GRATIFIED IN THE LORD'S WAY

For years Paul had treasured the idea of going to Rome in person and preaching the Gospel there. Time and again he had been hindered from accomplishing his desire, but at last the Lord opened the door of opportunity. In Acts 23:11 he appeared in a vision to Paul concerning the matter: "And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." At last Paul was to have his longed-for experience, but in the Lord's own time and way. He was to go as a prisoner, and before he got there, he had to spend two years in prison at Caesarea Philippi and then suffer a disastrous shipwreck on the voyage to Rome.

All these illustrations abundantly confirm and emphasize the fundamental principle that the Lord himself according to his promise has been in the midst of his Church, initiating, directing, and controlling their service for him. If this had been borne in mind, it would have prevented the sad experiences caused by "channelism," from which the Church has suffered so much.

(Continued in next issue)

-A. D. Kirkwood, Scot.

Lights and Shadows in Christian Experience

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." - Romans 8:18.

As was noted in our last issue, Brother Alec L. Muir ended his earthly journey March 27, 1972. As a special tribute to his memory, we are publishing, in four installments, an article of his which previously appeared in this journal. The first three were published in recent issues. Here we conclude the series.

- Directors and Editors

FOR our closing meditation we once more visit, in thought, a peaceful and happy home scene in the same Bethany household. The severed links in that broken chain are again united. It was on a Sabbath evening, the last Sabbath but one, of the waning Jewish dispensation, when Spring's loveliness was carpeting the Mount of Olives and clothing with fresh verdure the groves around Bethany, that our dear Redeemer was seen approaching the village.

Imagine the joy with which the announcement would be received that the Lord was approaching, and the welcome which would be given to him in a home consecrated alike by his love and power! Now every tear was dried. Feelingly alive to all they owed him, the restored brother and rejoicing sisters, with hearts overflowing with gratitude, could say with the Psalmist: "Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever." - Psalm 30:11, 12.

THE ANOINTING

But does the love and affection of that household find expression in nothing but words? No, indeed! Supper is being made ready and the Apostle John, in his delightful way, adds a few words so full of meaning - "and Martha served" (John 12:2). We can, be sure the lesson learned by Martha on a former occasion remained with her, and that now her service was within the bounds of sanctified common sense. During the course of the evening, the gentle spirit of Mary prompts her to a significant proof of the depth of her gratitude. Some fragrant ointment of spikenard (contained, as we gather from the other Evangelists, in a box of alabaster) had been procured by her at great cost; either obtained for this anticipated meeting with her Lord, or it may in some way have fallen into her possession, and been carefully kept among her treasured gifts till some befitting occasion occurred for its use. With her own hands she pours it on his feet. Stooping down, she wipes them, in further token of her devotion, with her loosened tresses, till the whole apartment was filled with the sweet perfume.

And what was it that constituted the value of this tribute-the beauty and expressiveness of the action? It was this: She gave her Lord the best thing that she had. The poet Tennyson has expressed it:

"Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,
Nor other thought her mind admits;
But, he was dead, and there he sits,
And He that brought him back is there.

"Then one deep love doth supersede
All other, when her ardent gaze
Roves from the living brother's face
And rests upon the Life indeed.

"All subtle thoughts, all curious fears,
Borne down by gladness so complete;
She bows, she bathes the Savior's feet
With costly spikenard and with tears."

Are *we* willing to give our Lord the best of what we have -to consecrate time, talents, strength, life, to him? Not as the many, to give him the mere dregs and sweepings of existence, but, like Mary, anxious to take every opportunity of testifying the depth of obligation under which we are laid to him? Let us not hold back, saying: "My sphere is lowly, my means are limited, my best offerings would be inadequate." Hundreds of more imposing deeds may have been left unrecorded by the Evangelists; but "wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her" (Matt. 26:13). Would that this love for Jesus were paramount with all of us! "Lovest thou me more than these?" is his own searching test and requirement (John 21:15). Happy for us if it be so. There will be a joy in the very consciousness of making the effort, feeble, and unworthy as it may be, for his sake, and in acknowledgement of the great love wherewith he loved us. Again, the poet has expressed it:

"Thou hast thy record in the monarch's hall,
And on the waters of the far mid sea;
And where the mighty mountain shadows fall,
The alpine hamlet keeps a thought of thee.
Where'er, beneath some oriental tree,
The Christian traveler rests -- wher'er the child
Looks upward from its mother's knee,
With earnest eyes, in wondering reverence mild,
There art thou known. Where'er the Book of Light
Bears hope and healing, there beyond all blight,
Is borne thy memory -- and all praise above.
Oh! say what deed so lifted thy sweet name,
Mary, to that pure, silent place of fame?
One lowly offering of exceeding love."

Let it be our privilege and delight to give him our pound of spikenard, whatever it may be; let us offer the fragrance of holy hearts and lives revealed by kindness, gentleness, amiability, unselfishness, flowing from a principle of grateful love to him, who, though unseen, has been to us as to the family of Bethany -- Friend, Helper, Guide, Deliverer, and Portion. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." - Psalm 51:17.

THE LORD'S SUPPER INSTITUTED

The two days preceding the beginning of our Lord's betrayal seem to have been spent at Bethany. We may still follow him in imagination as he and his disciples quietly rested for the coming turbulent experiences. We have no recorded incidents in connection with these two days. We are left only to realize in thought the refreshment alike for body and mind which our Lord enjoyed. The last evening that he spent there must have been full of sorrowful thoughts. He left the

threshold on the Thursday of that week, not to return again until death had claimed him. On that same morning he had sent two of his disciples into the city to make preparation for the keeping of the Passover Supper. He himself followed with the other ten, probably towards the afternoon, and joined them in the upper room, where, after celebrating for the last time the old Jewish rite, he instituted the Lord's Supper, a Memorial of the antitype. This ended, the disciples, probably, contemplated nothing but a return, as on preceding evenings, by their old route to Bethany. Singing their Paschal hymn, they descended the Jehoshaphat ravine, by the side of the Temple. The brook Kedron was crossed and they are once more on the Bethany path. They have reached Gethsemane; their Master retires into the depths of the olive grove, as was often his wont, to hold secret communion with his Father. The crisis hour has at last arrived! Rude hands arrest him on his way. In vain shall Lazarus and his sisters wait for their expected Lord. For him that night there is no voice of earthly comfort -- no couch of needed rest; when the shadows of darkness have gathered around Bethany, and the pale Passover moon is lighting up its palm trees, the Lord is standing buffeted and insulted in the hall of Annas. The remembrances of Bethany are here absorbed and overshadowed for a time by the darker memories of Gethsemane and Calvary.

VIA DOLOROSA

In vain do we picture the feelings of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary on that day of ignominious crucifixion. Can we imagine that they could linger behind, unconcerned, in their dwelling? We cannot think so. Rather we may believe that among the tearful eyes of the women that followed Jesus along the "Dolorous way," not the least anguished were the two Bethany mourners; and that as he hung upon the cross, the presence of Lazarus would be soothing and comforting in that hour of need. We may well believe that when the first day of the week had come and the glad announcement spread from disciple to disciple: "The Lord is risen" (Luke 24:34), on no home in Judea would the tidings fall more welcome than on that of Bethany. Martha and Mary had, a few weeks before, experienced the happiness of a restored brother. Now it was that of a restored Savior. Whether he revisited the home in the days immediately after his resurrection, we cannot tell. We think it more than probable that he would. Perhaps we have a hint of such a thing in the words of John: "There are also many other things which Jesus did." - John 21:25.

THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

With what a new and glorious meaning to Martha must her Savior's words have now been invested: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). What saddening thoughts are associated with our final visit with a beloved friend. He was in health when we last met; we little dreamt, in parting, we were to meet no more. Every circumstance of that visit is stored up in the most hallowed chambers of the heart. His last words, his last look, his last smile, they live there in undying memorial. Such was now the case with the disciples. They had had their last walk together with their beloved Lord. Ere another sun goes down over the western hills of Jerusalem he will have returned to his Father. And what is the spot which he selects as the place of the ascension? It is Bethany (Luke 24:50). We may imagine it, in all likelihood, the early dawn of the day. The gray mists of morning were still hovering over the Jehoshaphat valley, as for the last time he descended the well-known path. He must have crossed the brook Kedron -- that brook which had so oft before murmured in his ear during nights' seasons of deep sorrow; he must have passed by Gethsemane, the thick olives pendant with dew, the shadows of early day still brooding over them. Their gloomy vistas must have recalled terrible hours, when the sod underneath was moistened with "as it were great drops of blood" (Luke 22:44). Had he dashed to the ground untasted the cup which his Father had poured for him, his work would not have been done. But he shrank not from that baptism of blood and suffering.

In these final hours of early communion, we may be sure the Lord was occupied in preparing the hearts of the sorrowful band around him for his approaching departure. He would unfold to them the glorious conquests which, in his name, they were to achieve on earth, as his standardbearers and apostles. The disciples had in their hearts a full and tender impression of three years of unvarying kindness and affection; sorrows soothed, burdens eased, ingratitude overlooked, denial forgiven. Of many others they could think only in connection with altered tones and changed affection. But he was ever the same. Now, however, comes the parting. No more tender counsels in difficulty; no more gentle rebukes in waywardness; no more joyous surprises as on the sea of Tiberias, or on the road to Emmaus when, with joy they would exclaim, "It is the Lord."

THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER

Whether Jesus visited the home at Bethany on this occasion we cannot tell. All the notice we have regarding it is: that "He led them out as far as to Bethany." - Luke 24:50.

He cheers them with the promise of another Comforter -- the Holy Spirit -- which would continue with them and the entire Church throughout the Gospel Age, taking of the things of Jesus and revealing them in their true and deeper meaning. He enjoined the disciples to linger in Jerusalem until the fulfillment of the promise of the Father, that they might be qualified for their ministry (Acts 1:4). Have we known, in the midst of our weaknesses and wants, our griefs and sorrows, the power and grace of the promised Paraclete? To what is much of the deadness and dullness and languor of our frames to be traced -- the poverty of our faith, the lukewarmness of our love, the little hold and influence of divine things upon us? Is it not to the feeble realization of the quickening, life-giving power of the Holy Spirit? "It is the spirit that quickeneth." - John 6:63.

THE APOSTLES' COMMISSION

Another theme of Christ's converse was the nature of his Kingdom. "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel," was the inquiry of the disciples. "And he said unto them: It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." - Acts 1:6, 7.

The thoughts of his followers were clinging, to the last, to the dream of earthly sovereignty. The Lord tells them there is to be no present fulfillment of these visions of Millennial glory. The Church may not attempt rashly and inquisitively to lift the veil. She is not to know the time of the Savior's appearing until that day when the cry shall be heard, "Behold the Bridegroom" (Matt. 25:6). Then the Father would make known the time of the Second Advent accompanied by signs attesting it. Meantime the disciples were to proclaim his name throughout the world. But was Jerusalem -- the scene of the Lord's sufferings and death -- to be an exception? Nay, rather they were to begin there. But beginning at Jerusalem it was to embrace Judea, then Samaria, and then the uttermost parts of the earth. From the elevated ridge of Olivet, on which he now stood, he might tell them to gaze, in thought at least, far north beyond the cedars of Lebanon and Hermon; southward to the desert and the isles of the ocean; westward to the fair lands washed by the Great Sea; eastward across the palm trees of Bethany and the chain of the Moabite mountains on to unexplored continents. The Gospel was to be preached as "a witness unto all nations." - Matthew 24:14.

THE ASCENSION

And now his themes of instruction and counsel are over and he is about to ascend. "He lifted up his hands, and blessed them" (Luke 24:50). His last words are those of mercy; his last act is outstretching his arms to bless. There is something, moreover, significant in the words: "While he blessed them" (Luke 24:51). The benediction was unfinished when the cloud bore him away. It would seem as if he wished to indicate that the act begun on earth would be carried on beyond the veil: "He ever liveth to make intercession" for us. - Hebrews 7:25.

The time has come when the disciples must leave the crest of Olivet and return to Jerusalem. Were they borne down with grief? Nay, "They returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24:52). Oh, the wonders of the grace of God! And here the earthly vision of Bethany is sealed. Let us rise from our Olivet ridge and be going; and though traversing different footpaths to the same home -- be it ours, like the disciples, to reach at last the true heavenly Jerusalem -- *"with great Joy."*

Our Inheritance in the Psalms and Sacred Songs

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." - Col. 3:16.

To those who seek "the old paths" (Jer. 6:16) the Scripture at the head of this article is significant, for from it we learn something regarding the worship of the Church in the days of the Apostles. Our text not only proves that congregational singing was a part of the worship of the believers, but it gives a brief description of the hymnody of the Apostolic Church -- that it consisted of "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs."

The writer proposes to first give a brief history of Christian hymnody, in order to show how the Apostle's admonition has been followed (and disregarded); then to point out our rich legacy of songs -- the inspired as well as those of human composition -- and finally to offer a few practical thoughts on our text.

HYMNODY OF THE EARLY CHURCH

In the New Testament the references to singing are not numerous but they are interesting. Only from the familiar words: "When they had sung an hymn" (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26) do we know that our Lord himself sang, though we would expect him to follow the custom of the Jews, who sang some of the Psalms in their temple worship and at the Passover meal. In the prison at Philippi Paul and Silas "sang praises unto God" at midnight (Acts 16:25). St. James *says*: "Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise" (James 5:13, RSV). To the church at Corinth St. Paul writes: "When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm" (or one of the other spiritual gifts)-i Cor. 14:26. The psalm sung on that occasion was evidently not congregational singing, but a solo rendering of an inspired hymn, for it would not require a special gift of the Spirit to sing (or recite) a Scripture Psalm. We realize, of course, that with the passing away of the "charismatic gifts" that kind of psalmody would cease, though such "psalms" (or some of them) may have been preserved for use in the Church.

The hymnody that remained in the Church is that described by the Apostle in our text. As to manner, we infer that the singing was congregational and in unison. As to subject matter, it consisted of "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." The "psalms" were doubtless some from that cherished heritage of the Jewish church, the Book of Psalms, mainly the inspired work of David, "the sweet singer of Israel." In the Hebrew these would be familiar to Jewish Christians, and others would likely use the Greek version of them in the Septuagint. The Greek word rendered "psalm" literally means "a striking of musical strings" (ABBOTT-SMITH), while the original Hebrew word means "praise." According to its Greek derivation the word "hymn" also denotes a song of praise (to God). The third word used by St. Paul, "song" (or ode), is a general word for any kind of song, but the Apostle qualifies it by the word "spiritual," restricting the meaning to sacred song. Unlike the Psalms, which were Scripture, the "hymns and spiritual songs" were human compositions, but since these were "offered to Christ" they were germane to the new dispensation, and from the first age of the Church had their rightful place in the Christian hymnody. They were needed to supplement the Psalms; for a new salvation called for "a new song."

IN THE MIDDLE AGES

In the writings of the Greek and Latin Fathers there are many references to singing in the church and the composing, of hymns. One of the earliest of these, Clement of Alexandria, who wrote 'in the latter half of the second century, is thought by some to have been the author of the hymn appended to one of his writings. If true, this is possibly the oldest Christian hymn extant.' The ancient Latin doxology GLORIA IN EXCELSIS, which is still in use," is ascribed to the third or fourth century. From all accounts that have come down to us, there was in those early centuries no lack of hymns and for about three centuries the common people' had the right to sing them in the church service. Then the night began to set in.

The" Synod of Laodicea in the year 363 decreed that (a) "Psalms composed by private men" must not be used in the church, and (b) "None but appointed singers shall sing in church." Eventually these two rules became virtually the law in both branches of the Catholic Church. Toward the end of the fourth century Ambrose (bishop of Milan) composed some hymns in Latin, which had limited use; for four centuries they were not accepted at Rome in spite of their considerable merit. The circumstances that the Psalms were commonly in Greek and Latin effectively barred the "laity" from singing them.

IN THE REFORMATION

When the Reformation of the 16th century dawned each of the leading reformers was faced with such questions as: What about singing in the church? and, What is there for the people to sing? Each reformer solved the problem of the hymnody in his own way; for they were divided on the question.

Martin Luther was best equipped to cope with the problem, for he was both a poet and a musician. He loved the Latin Psalms but he wished to give the people songs in German. Accordingly, he wrote the stirring "Eine feste Burg" ("A Mighty Fortress") and other hymns. The Lutherans did not wait long for a serviceable hymnbook; their great leader saw to that. Luther retained the Latin Psalms of the Catholic Church, but also translated some of their metrical hymns, and in addition he composed others. He gave as his authority St. Paul's words of our text, and the practice of the early Church.

John Calvin handled the matter differently, in his position as leader of the Swiss reformation at Geneva. His language and that of his followers was French, so he provided metrical versions of the Psalms in French. For this undertaking he enlisted the services of the French court-poet Clement Marot, who translated most of the Psalms for Calvin's hymnbook. Unlike Luther, Calvin used only the Psalms in his book; also he banished the organ from the church. Luther liked singing in part-harmony; Calvin insisted that the singing be in unison. At that time a musician named Louis Bourgeois was living at Geneva; to him the Reformer turned for help, and Bourgeois composed most of the tunes for the GENEVAN PSALTER of 1551. One of the melodies in that famous old hymnbook was the deservedly popular chorale tune now known as "Old Hundred," to which is sung Wm. Kethe's metrical version of the hundredth Psalm, which he composed in the middle of the sixteenth century. In the GENEVAN PSALTER, however, that tune was used with the 134th Psalm.

Another prominent Swiss reformer, -- Zwingli, dealt drastically with the problem of church hymnody; he ruled out all singing in his church at Zurich -- even the singing of the Psalms !

Strangely enough, this able and zealous leader contended that preaching and hearing are the only proper worship, and he allowed little else than that. This attitude can only be understood as a strong reaction to Catholic practice, in which music had displaced the ministry of the Word.

HYMNODY OF ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH CHURCHES

In the British Isles the influence of Luther and Calvin inspired similar efforts to provide a Psalter and a hymnbook in the English language. As a result the Psalter came first, with its metrical versions which were provided with such tunes as were available, most of which would probably in our day be considered quite dull. The Genevan melodies had become popular in other European countries, but they had been composed for the French meter and *they* were found difficult to adapt to the English metrical Psalms, which explains the little use made of them. The English Psalter was soon followed by editions of "hymns and spiritual songs," this enlargement marking a new era in English hymnody. Although this era was inaugurated amid much controversy and disruption, it brought great enrichment in the sphere of sacred song to succeeding generations of Christians, including ourselves.

The first great name appearing in the history of this movement is that of Isaac Watts, an Independent minister of great talent who became prominent at the beginning of the 18th century. In bodily stature Dr. Watts was a small man (little over five feet), but he was a giant among the writers of sacred verse. Not satisfied with existing conditions this bold spirit called for a "new deal" in English hymnology, and offered his talents in its service. Watts thought it wrong to use only the Psalms in the hymnody and he proposed a new "System of Praise," which would include "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." He put the matter to a test; his own published hymns found acceptance with the people, and the battle was won. It was the viewpoint of Luther versus that of Calvin. Luther's won. Many of Dr. Watts' hymns are still in general use, and as they are so well known it is not necessary to list them here. Among the most famous of them doubtless are "O God, our help in ages past" and "When I survey the wondrous cross."

Isaac Watts was "the father of English hymnology," but he was the first of an illustrious group of English hymn writers of the 18th century. Of these the limits of this article will allow only the briefest mention, but they all made important contributions to our hymnody.

Charles Wesley was the great hymnist of the Methodist movement. He is said to have written over 6500 songs, some among the finest in our language. Some of the best loved of them are: "Love divine all love excelling," "Hark, the herald angels sing," and "Jesus, Lover of my soul." Of Wesley's great talent for verse it has been said that Charles and his brother John came from 'a remarkable family; they were reared in the very atmosphere of poetry. It seemed to come naturally to them.

A noted contemporary of the Wesleys was Augustus Toplady, a Calvinist minister and poet. Toplady's best contribution to our hymnbook was his "Rock of Ages," a hymn that ranks with the most popular of all time, and has been translated into many languages. It has been said that Christians in Armenia have gone down singing this inspiring hymn when they were slaughtered by the Turks. There is food for thought in the fact that though Charles Wesley and Toplady were poles apart on the doctrine of election (and even engaged in controversy over it), this did not prevent these sincere men from using their great talent for the blessing of all Christians everywhere.

Two other hymn writers of that period must be noticed in even such a brief sketch as this. Wm. Cowper and John Newton together produced the "Olney Hymns," among which were some gems, such as Cowper's "There is a fountain" and Newton's "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds."

BROUGHT TO THE NEW WORLD

When the Pilgrim Fathers landed at Plymouth in 1620 they brought with them the best of English hymnody as it was at that early period. Hymns have always given solace and strength to the persecuted and these Puritans were a singing people, as described by Felicia Hemans in her well known poem:

"Not as the flying come
In silence and in fear: --
They shook the depths of the desert gloom
With their hymns of lofty cheer."

What were their hymns? What hymnbook did the Pilgrims use? Certainly not our hymnal, for this was fifty years before Isaac Watts was born! We cannot doubt that the hymns used were the versified Psalms in the STERNHOLD AND HOPKINS version, which was used in England at that time. This, then, was the foundation of Christian hymnody in America, which here too, as elsewhere, was enlarged in after years by the addition of "hymns and spiritual songs," though not without controversy and opposition particularly from those who held to the practice of Calvin.

OUR HYMN BOOK

Christians of our day have indeed a rich legacy in their hymnbook. The typical hymnal contains a cross-section of the best in sacred verse that sanctified and talented men have written -- from Isaac Watts down -- and even earlier, for the familiar "Doxology" is ascribed to Thomas Ken who died in 1711.

Our hymnbook is the work of many men -- and of many women too. Though in the Lord's arrangement women have been shut out from some fields of service, this is certainly not true of Christian hymnology for so many of our most popular and spiritual hymns are the work of talented women. Only a few can be mentioned here; Adelaide Pollard's "Have Thine own way, Lord"; Elizabeth Prentiss' "More love to Thee, O Christ" and the many fine hymns of the blind poetess, Fanny J. Crosby, such as: "Jesus, keep me near the cross," "Blessed Assurance," and "Thou my everlasting portion."

Catholics as well as Protestants are represented among our hymn writers, as J. H. Newman who wrote "Lead kindly Light," and F. W. Faber to whom we owe "There's a wideness in God's mercy" and "Faith of our fathers" the latter revised considerably by Protestant editors.

And finally, although the words of our hymns are most important, we realize that without the tunes we could not sing them, therefore we must give credit to those who have given us the melodies. It is evident that the development of melody has kept pace with the improvement in verse, for in our hymn tunes there are reminiscences of the "plain song" commonly used in the medieval church service, and of the stately chorales which Luther did so much to develop-along with the more modern type of hymn tune.

OUTWARD AND INWARD SONG

In our text St. Paul says: "Let the Word dwell in you *richly*"; we ought not to be content with a smaller measure. In whatever other respects we might suffer from poverty, in the word of Christ we can be rich. Another lesson given is that our hymns can be a vehicle of instruction, as well as of admonition. To be a suitable means of instruction our hymns need to be free of error; this would seem to justify the rather common practice of revising the original text of some hymns. This practice ("hymn tinkering" some call it) has no doubt been to some extent a source of annoyance, and its ethics have been questioned. But it would seem to this writer that here the end justifies the means, and that many a fine hymn has had a wider use in the Church because an objectionable word or phrase was changed.

If the Word dwells in us richly it will find spontaneous expression in song-in the meeting and in the home. God's people are a singing people. In Eph. 5:19 St. Paul writes: "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." From these words we see that when the true Christian sings there are in reality *two songs* -- *the outward song* upon his lips and the *inward song* in his heart. An unbeliever, if he has a fine voice, may sing a hymn beautifully but in that case the inward song, the "melody in the heart" will not be there. The least musical Christian, on the other hand, though he may sing a hymn a bit off key or have trouble following the rhythm of the tune, will, if living up to his privileges, have in his heart that melody of thanksgiving and praise to which the Lord listens.

- *W. A. Eliason*

The Question Box

"We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord."

- 2 Corinthians 3:18.

Question:

Will you please discuss 2 Corinthians 3:18, particularly in reference to the word "beholding"?

Answer:

In the Authorized Version this verse reads: "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord."

The American Revised Version (A.D. 1881-1885, edited A.D. 1901) translates: "We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the spirit." In the *margin* an alternative translation is given: "reflecting as a mirror." The American Revised Standard Version (1952) also retains "beholding" in the *text* but gives "reflecting" in the *margin*.

It has been held that "reflecting" must be rejected on three grounds: (1) grammatical form, (2) context, and (3) doctrine. Let us examine the question from these three points of view.

GRAMMATICAL FORM

In regard to the grammatical form of the Greek word, the writer is without qualification to pass on the question. In the three translations above quoted, it will be noted that "beholding" is preferred. However, "reflecting" is given in *Weymouth's* translation and appears in *Rotherham's*. It is preferred in the *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, and also in the *Devotional Commentary* published by the Religious Tract Society; and, in addition to the *margin* of the American Revised Version and the American Revised Standard Version, is adopted *in the text* of the English Revised Version.

In the light of the foregoing, there would appear to be plenty of scholarship of the highest type in favor of "reflecting," and in the presence of such testimony we do not know that "laymen" such as the writer, can reach any other conclusion than that, so far as its grammatical form is concerned, the word is capable of being so rendered. *Moffatt's* translation reads: "We all *mirror* the glory of the Lord," and in a note on the verse, *Rotherham* comments: "If we could say so, 'Mirroring,' both 'receiving' and 'reflecting.'"

Another eminent writer, J. E. McFadyen, in the *Interpreter's Commentary on the Epistles*, although himself preferring "beholding," admits that "reflecting" is possibly correct. He writes: "The word *katoptrizomenoi* has been the subject of much dispute; the two possible meanings are given in the [English] Revised Version, margin and text respectively - *beholding* and *reflecting* (as in a mirror). The active voice means 'to show in a mirror,' and the precise force of the middle [voice] must be determined by the context."

CONTEXT

In examining the context we find that St. Paul is here contrasting the glory attending the "ministration of death" (the Law) with the far greater glory of the "ministration of the spirit" (the Gospel). (See verses 7 and 8.) However, there is some difference of thought as to the points of contrast he is making. We submit the following to the consideration of our readers:

To properly understand the passage it seems necessary to keep in mind the fact that one of the prominent purposes, if not the main idea of the Epistle, is that of vindicating the Apostle's own preaching and conduct. In other words, and because it was necessary in the interests of the true Christians in Corinth, he is, in this Epistle, making a "fool" of himself (so his enemies would say) by "boasting" (11:16, 19, 23, etc.). And it is important to observe that even so magnificent a subject as the contrast between the old and the new dispensations *is incidental to this "boasting,"* and is introduced into the Epistle primarily because when rightly understood, such contrast will materially contribute to the Apostle's personal vindication. Consistently *with this purpose,* the contrast he is here presenting is not between Moses and Jesus, as many appear to think, but between Moses and himself. "We," he says, speaking of himself, "use great plainness of speech and not as Moses," etc. - Verses 12 and 13.

We next inquire: In what respect does the Apostle contrast himself with Moses? To answer this question it is necessary to refer to the narrative in Exodus 34:29-35. Here we read that when Moses appeared from communing with Jehovah, the children of Israel were at first afraid to come near him because of his shining face, but that he overcame their fears and *with unveiled face talked* with them. Then having, *with shining face,* delivered Jehovah's message, *and not until then,* he put the veil on (a point misrepresented in the Authorized Version, which in Exodus 34:33 wrongly reads "till" for "when"). That this procedure was invariably followed may be seen from the remaining verses of the Exodus passage.

No reason is assigned in Exodus as to why Moses veiled his face, but the Apostle does not infer, as many students of the Bible do, that it was to hide the reflected glory of the Lord, which shone from his countenance. Recognizing the fact that the delivery of Jehovah's message *was accompanied by the shining face,* the Apostle infers from the donning of the veil *immediately afterwards,* that the glory began thereafter gradually to vanish, and *the veil was to hide its evanescence.* - Verse 13.

Quoting from Moffatt's translation we read: "Such being my hope then, I [Paul] am quite frank and open -- not like Moses who used to hang a veil over his face to keep the children of Israel *from gazing at the last rays of a vanishing glory.*" - Verses 12 and 13, italics ours.

Moses, then, had something to hide, namely the fact that the glory of his countenance was a fading glory. True "reflection," though the glory of his countenance was, of Jehovah's own shining countenance, and symbolizing, as it did, the glory of the Mosaic dispensation, it was but a vanishing glory. The Apostle, on the contrary, had nothing to hide. The Gospel he ministered was not transient but permanent - "everlasting" (Rev. 14:6). He "reflected" or "mirrored" it *continuously.* His opponents might accuse him of dishonorable practices, but such accusations were false. "Boasting" in the surpassing glory of the Gospel, and in the firm conviction that its glory will never fade before a yet greater glory, he assures the Church at Corinth that, unlike even Moses, he had nothing to conceal, but at the risk of being accused of self-commendation, preached with confidence, frankness, and courage. True, his Gospel was veiled to some, but only to those whose minds were blinded by the Adversary (4:3, 4). But so far as his own personal intentions were

concerned, he says: "I disown those practices which very shame conceals from view; I do not go about it craftily; I do not falsify the Word of God; I state the truth openly and so commend myself to every man's conscience before God." 4:2, *Moffatt*.

After 3:13 the Apostle's argument proper would appear to be resumed in 4:1 - "Therefore seeing we have this ministry [Oh! how glorious a ministry contrasted with even that of Moses], as we have received mercy, we faint not." But there is another lesson which the metaphor of the veil has stirred in his mind, and he pauses long enough to give it expression. It was not alone from the Israel of Moses' time that the *transcience* of the Law Dispensation was veiled. It was veiled also from the Israel of his own day. And this lesson, by a slight variation in the metaphor of "the veil" he proceeds to press. "Even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil [of prejudice, etc.] is upon their heart" (verse 15), and thus they still think of their covenant as permanent. It is only when any one of them turns to Christ that the veil is taken away and they recognize that the glory of the old covenant is a fading glory.

This happy thought, that others besides himself had had the veil removed from their eyes, suggests yet another contrast. The Old Covenant was ministered by a single man, Moses, but *the New Covenant is to be ministered by the entire membership of the Christ Company*. "We all," says he (referring, in our understanding of the passage, to all Christians, who have consecrated themselves to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, even unto death), "with unveiled face behold, reflect, mirror, the glory of the Lord." - 3:18.

In their consideration of this passage some hold the thought that the Apostle does not here refer to any veil that may have been lifted from our eyes, but, understanding him to be contrasting Moses with Jesus, refer to the "unveiled face of our Master Jesus Christ." But we submit, and in the foregoing paragraphs we have sought to show, that the contrast is not between Moses and Jesus but, in the first place, between Moses and Paul, and next between Moses and the entire Church. In this view of the context it appears that the Apostle does indeed refer to the veil, now happily removed, which used to be on our hearts. We might have expected him to say: "We all with unveiled hearts" (in view of the word he uses in verse 15), but the metaphor of the veil is not worked out with strict consistency, but is varied somewhat in the same way as he varied the metaphor of "the epistle" earlier in the chapter (ver. 1-3). There, it will be remembered, "the epistle" in one place is said to be written on Paul's heart (verse 2), while in another place it is said to be written on the hearts of the Corinthians themselves (verse 3), yet the meaning is not difficult. So here, the veil is at one time on the face of Moses (verse 13), at another it is on the heart of Israel (verse 15). But the thought of the Apostle seems clear. Just as Moses reflected the glory of the Old Dispensation, so did Paul reflect the glory of the New. Just as Moses reflected the glory of the Old Dispensation, so do we, the Church, reflect the glory of the New. Unlike Moses, Paul needed no veil, neither do we, but like Paul, we may continuously reflect the surpassing glory of the Gospel Dispensation. "Reflecting" in this view of the matter does not appear to be out of harmony with the context, while *Moffatt's* translation: "We mirror," together with *Rotherham's* interesting comment: "'Mirroring,' both 'receiving' and 'reflecting,'" to our mind still further illuminates the passage.

DOCTRINE

One further point: To some minds the thoughts contained in the words "beholding" and "reflecting" are incompatible -- in doctrinal conflict -- and must, therefore, mutually exclude each other. In this view, the one who "beholds" remains passive; the change which takes place in the "beholder" is clearly seen to result not from anything he did, but from the influence of the One beheld. On the other hand, so such reason, "to reflect" is an activity accomplished by the "reflector" and, therefore, his

transformation, resulting as it does from his own efforts, must be held attributable to the individual himself. Those who thus reason believe the translation "reflecting" must be rejected as in conflict with the general tenor of Scripture which teaches that our transformation is "all of grace."

To our understanding "beholding" and "reflecting" are not incompatible but complementary to each other. It is impossible to *truly* behold, without *faithfully* reflecting. The faithfulness of the reflection is always a certain indication of the clarity of the vision. Nay, more than this, it is the *only* certain indication of it. And where Christ is not reflected it is reasonable to conclude that he is not beheld. "I will show thee my faith [and my clearness of vision] by my works [my reflecting]."

"One ship sails east, another west,
By the self-same wind that blows;
It is not the gale, But the set of the sail,
Which determines the way they go.

"Like the winds of the sea
Are the ways of time,
As we voyage along through life;
'Tis the set of the soul,
That determines the goal,
And not the calm or the strife."

While, therefore, for the purpose of clearness in thinking, we may separate in our minds the two ideas "beholding" and "reflecting," we should ever remember that they are inseparable in fact.

RECEIVING AND OBEYING

It was not an advocate of "great works," of "much preaching," of "converting the world in this Age," etc., but our beloved Brother Russell himself who, in commenting on 1 Peter 1:14,15, wrote: "Some Christians have the erroneous idea that God does all the fashioning, and that his children are to be merely passive in his hand; but Peter does not so express it. He exhorts us to fashion ourselves according to the divine instructions." Brother Russell elsewhere reminds us that "our Lord always links the progress and development of our spiritual life with our *receiving* and *obeying* the truth," and in a direct reference to 2 Corinthians 3:18 he wrote: "This change comes in proportion as we 'behold the glory of the Lord' -- in proportion as we come to appreciate and *learn to copy* the grandeur of the divine character."

"Too long have I, methought, with tearful eye
Pored o'er this tangled work of mine, and mused
About each stitch awry, and thread confused;
Now will I think on what in years gone by
I heard of them that weave rare tapestry
At royal looms, and how they constant use
To work on the rough side, and still peruse
The picture pattern set above them high;
So will I set my copy high above,
And gaze, and gaze till on my spirit flows
Its gracious impress, till some line of love
Transferred upon my canvas, faintly flows;
Nor look too much on warp or woof, provide
He whom I work for sees their fairer side."

- P. L. Read

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