

THE WITNESS

By Nell Truesdell

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just: because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

The life of every person bears witness to his deep and inner hidden beliefs. The tenets of his heart become visible in countenance and impress themselves on the body and affairs, thus formulating what are called the circumstances of life. No one can hide the trend of his most secret attitudes and opinions.

The most revelatory factor in a person's make-up is his spoken word. Words reveal what he is feeling after. Ordinary conversation reveals to the keen observer just where the attention of the speaker is directed. If it is toward negative things of the world (such as suffering, violence, trial, lack), the spoken word readily delineates. If it is toward what are called the good things of life, here too, the spoken word bears witness.

As a whole, the attention of man is upon things of the world. He is schooled to believe certain things about the civilization in which he exists, so he follows automatically the drift of his contemporaries; in short, the mores of his group mold and guide his inclinations and conclusions. As his personal desires formulate they become the multiplicity of the appearances about him. He strives in many ways to achieve and maintain an economic and cultural status equal to, or even superior to that of his immediate circle of friends. But the fruit of his strenuous efforts to conform to and surpass others eventually proves not to offer the one Elixir he would sell all to possess - the gift of eternal life.

To tell any man that his attention should be focused on God to the exclusion of all else frightens and chills him for he has been trained to believe his personal good is the result of his concentration on a desired standard or goal in the world. He feels that if he should take time out to learn of God he would miss inviting opportunities for success in the world. Yet, strange as it seems, this is not so. No one knows what God has in store for him until he stops long enough to give undivided attention to God. For some, the time-period would be short, as in the case of Jesus; for others who are slower to respond, it would be long - too long, they think. Man's heedlessness blinds him to the fact that God can achieve for and through him with less effort than he, through his own struggles, could possibly accomplish in several life-times.

Who will believe this? What would happen to a man who made the decision to look to and follow, consciously, God's plan for his life?

The first experience would be revolution. All that had been built up under the old order would seem to fly to pieces. A chemicalization of the entire consciousness would set in and the disturbance involved would be volcanic in proportion. However, if a man who had made his decision, whether or no, understood this change and kept his balance, he would soon find himself on firm ground, beginning what is generally called a new life.

This new life would reveal definite essential attitudes and practices. Watchful of thought and word, the novice would exchange his old manner of thinking and speaking for a new. Actually, he would hold right thoughts and speak of the Good. As his adjustment continued, his vision would increase. It would swing upward to a realm celestial of which he had been grossly ignorant. This would be no imaginary realm: it would prove itself to be the realm of truth, more real than the realm of appearances, with which he was so familiar.

The truth always lives beyond and above knowledge; yet, it interpenetrates all knowledge. It is what enlivens knowledge and makes it attractive and productive. However, man's tendency is to exalt knowledge thinking that in it he will find and keep the satisfaction he craves. This is not so. No matter how much information the studious or non-studious person has gained, none of it is of any value unless he has caught the gleam of truth that seasons and makes his knowledge fertile, fruitful, and delightful.

Jesus, in one instance, stood before a group of accusers who were well versed in the Law; but, no man of them had ever looked above the law to the truth which the Law represented. They could see only that Jesus, in healing an impotent man on the Sabbath, had done something unlawful. To them, transgression of the letter of the Law overbalance the fact that a man, who had lain prostrate thirty-eight years, could now carry his bed through the city streets.

The religion of the Jews declared plainly man's relation to God: they acknowledged God to be the Father. But they missed the point in realizing that if God is the Father then they, as sons, were brothers. Jesus revealed this fact in more than one instance, but it was resented every time.

The Jews then were like the general run of people in our day. Today most church members accept their religion as a beautiful theory, full of promise of reward in a state called the after-life, but impossible to put into daily practice, except in minor ways. The Jews had a witness to truth through their great teacher Moses, but they did not understand nor did they practice what he taught. Still, they protested they were followers of Moses.

Jesus revealed the flaw in his accusers. He said, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." The self-righteous troublers were stung: they did not want to face the starkness of their own unflattering delusions. But the truth, like a clear light, uncovered and revealed their false attitudes and declarations. If a man's motives are right, the light does not disturb him. But the hearts of Jesus' accusers were filled, not with love for human-kind, but with hate that a man dared publicly to break a Law. They could react in but one way - they wanted to kill Jesus.

Men love the praise of men. They set great store by their connections and are flattered by recognition of self-righteousness. But Jesus was no truckler who fawned upon the ecclesiastic body. He spoke as God within him prompted, and the honor which comes from God was upon him.

To attract and hold the favorable attention of human beings involves great effort. Bearing witness to the good points in men is not the highest practice; pointing to God and bearing witness to God will not only attract attention, but will hold it even against men's wills. Paul understood this when he wrote that a veil is upon the heart of those who read Moses, and, until the heart is turned to the Lord, the veil is not taken away.

No matter what elaborate claims are made for the Law, they fail if the heart is not illumined, for then the Law is looked upon as something separate from man, something to be enforced upon him. The Jews had come to worship the Law instead of the God about whom it testified.

Men resent attack upon established custom, tradition, or institutions. All new ideas are bathed in blood before they are accepted by the mass mind. A natural antagonism to anything different exists in every human being which puts him on guard and sets him to oppose anything that threatens his fixed beliefs. This human perversity greets all new concepts.

Only consecration to God will endow anyone with the necessary strength to overcome his indwelling opposition to new ideas. The attention had been so long trained in an outward direction to observe the formalities of living long established in the race-consciousness, that it is difficult for anyone to about face suddenly and give attention to what cannot be seen with the eyes, heard with the ears, and touched with hands.

God remains forever the Unknown. Yet the sincere seeker after God finds him. He gives his heart to God and after a little begins to see faintly a light from above thinking and feeling and worldly conditions that ever beckons him onward and upward.

In Revelation we read, "Worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." It may seem that our devotion to the things of God is of little help in the conversion of the world: but the world is not ours to cope with. We are in the world to overcome what is worldly in our own consciousness. Only one sure aid to success is available: knowledge of God through Jesus Christ. Then shall we be true witnesses of him.

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SPIRITICITY July 1948

ACCEPT OR REJECT OPPORTUNITY

By R. A. Applegate, Jr.

Arnold J. Toynbee has a section in his Study of History which should be read and reread by all who are in positions of authority. The title of the chapter is "Peripeteia," or, "Reversal of Roles". The Reversal of Roles is a phenomenon recurrent in history and is repeatedly illustrated in both Old and New Testaments. Briefly stated, it is that any person, group of persons, or nation which has made one major demonstration and thus been lifted to a position of supremacy, is more apt to fail than to succeed when an opportunity is offered to make a new and greater demonstration. This new demonstration is then made by a hitherto unheard of or despised person or group which reaps the reward belonging rightfully to the more privileged individuals.

The phenomenon is well illustrated by the advent of Christianity. The educated Greeks and Romans and the educated Jews of the first century A.D. would probably not have agreed about anything else, but they would certainly have agreed that no good thing could come out of Galilee - that "out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." Galilee was the backwoods region of the day and the Galileans were despised as boors, and ignorant, worthless creatures.

Nevertheless, the New Dispensation was introduced, not by the orthodox Jews, heirs of the Law of Moses and teaching of the prophets; not by Romans, the rulers of the world; nor by Greeks, the possessors and teachers of the most advance learning of the day; but by these simple, backward, country-folk who dwelt on the shores of the sea of Galilee. Jesus and all of his disciples but one (Judas Iscariot) were of Galilee. Jesus did most of his preaching there and, after his resurrection, it was to Galilee that he returned.

Thus it was the despised Galileans who brought to the world the new message; but, even after it had been publicly announced and proved by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the orthodox Jews, who were "heirs of the promise," did not accept it. The first Christians, it is true, were all Jews, and for several centuries there was a Jewish Christian Church, but the Jews were too intent upon keeping all the Mosaic Law and trying to fit the New Dispensation into it. Thus they drew the rebuke from Paul and Barnabas, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." It was among the Gentiles that the new Church grew and flourished; but, among them, it was not the intellectuals nor those in authority, but rather the common people who accepted the new Faith and swelled the ranks of the growing Church.

Athens was the intellectual center of the time of Jesus; but, when Paul visited that city and delivered his famous address on Mars Hill, the Athenians paid little attention to him. No church was founded at Athens and Paul was confirmed in his first impression of the city, that it was "wholly given to idolatry."

The Romans were the rulers of all the Mediterranean region at the time of Jesus. It was in a part of their Empire that Jesus lived and taught and it was within this Empire that the Church developed; but the ruling classes of the Empire did not respond to the new message. For three centuries Christianity was either officially ignored or else officially persecuted until, at last, the Church grew so strong that the State was forced to recognize and accept it.

The reason for the non-acceptance on the part of the Jews, Greeks, and Romans of the most priceless of all gifts is easy to find. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The one demand which Christianity makes is that one be humble enough to accept it. The Pharisees, the learned Jews, and even the most down-trodden Hebrews were not about to become as little children. They had not intention of surrendering their pride, their conception of themselves as the chosen race, and thus they lost the opportunity of being the conveyors to the world of the most priceless heritage it has ever received. The same thing was true of the Athenians and of the Roman officials. The former worshipped their position as the "School of Greece," the latter, their status as rulers of the world and so they both lost their golden opportunity, which was gladly accepted by the common, dispossessed persons who were willing to receive what was freely offered.

The Christian Church grew and developed among the proletariat of the Roman Empire, among the peasants, the day-laborers, and the former slaves. Few of the early Christians were men of education or of political authority or social position. Most were of the despised dregs of society who, however, had the virtues of humility and receptivity. These men became the light of their day and, when the Roman Empire passed away, they became not only the spiritual but

also the temporal leaders of the world, whereas, the former ruling and privileged classes passed into oblivion.

This Reversal of Roles is a phenomenon of universal occurrence. All the great religions, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Confucianism, have developed among the lower classes and these classes have, in turn, supplanted those which were formerly in authority. Within Christianity itself, the true followers of Christ in all the generations since his advent have been, not the intellectuals, the politicians, or the ecclesiastics, but the humble, the meek, the lowly. These men have been the leaven in the lump, the ones who have kept Christianity alive. They have always been despised and often persecuted for their simplicity and their difference, but they have rendered an inestimable service unto mankind as a whole.

This Reversal of Roles contains a lesson for all of us because it is a phenomenon which applies not only to nations and social groups but also to individuals. Many a person has made one major demonstration in Truth and then suddenly become respectable. Later, when an opportunity to make a SECOND and greater demonstration was offered, he failed to respond and the privilege was accepted by someone else who, at first sight, seemed to be the last person in the world to fulfill that function. Many others are born with an intellectual, or even a spiritual, pride which prevents them from accepting the greatest of all gifts. Thus, "many are called, but few are chosen."

There is no necessity, however, about the Reversal of Roles. There is no reason why a person who has made one major demonstration should not go on to make another and another unto the complete perfection which Jesus attained. The very fact of Jesus Christ shows that such attainment is not impossible. It seems, however, that everyone who has attempted to follow Jesus Christ has failed at some point and the stumbling block for almost everyone has been the thought that he of himself has attained something. This thought is an effective block against further progress.

No matter how much any one person may seem to have achieved, it still remains true that God is the only Reality and the only Power; and, it still remains true that "whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." This is what we must cling to and know. It is not always easy to do because pride is a subtle tempter; but the reward for success is priceless.

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SPIRITICITY July 1948

NO NEW DOCTRINE

By A. J. Truesdell

From time to time during the ages it appears that some persons become occupied with formulating new doctrines. In our present time we know of people banding together to support a new teaching of some sort or another. Even we might be accused of formulating a new doctrine. This would be unjust for we are not presenting a new doctrine for people to follow. We are attempting to understand and interpret the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

Often people become so enamored of their seeming new discoveries of truth that they set themselves up as something special and unusual. When a zealot is fired with a specific idea, he believes he has something new. However, it is only new to him because he has so recently stumbled upon it. If he presents his concept in an energetic way, his listeners believe with him that it is something new. However, the newness is not in discovery of ideas, but in the teacher.

In every age there have been the few illumined ones who have covered the same ground. Solomon, the enlightened man of his time, concluded there was nothing new under the sun. Students of the sacred books see in the life of Solomon the development of the quality of wisdom in the race consciousness of the Hebrews themselves. They say also that the history of the Hebrew race is symbolic of the development of the consciousness of every individual. Any person might devote his whole life to research work in the field of metaphysics in the hope of uncovering something new. Through such labors he will gain a new perspective for himself; but, he will have discovered nothing new. Even I should like to say I knew the truth, but I am unable to do that. In Spirit, I am perfect; but, in my experience I am no better and no worse than any other person in the world. The same is true for all people.

Since there is really nothing new under the sun, whoever attempts to add to or detract from the doctrine of Reality is assuming a responsibility which he shall be obliged to account for all by himself.

We have a sufficiency of doctrine: what is needed is an intelligent application of pure doctrine. The only error is man's misunderstanding and misinterpretation and misapplication of the pure doctrine of Jesus Christ. This works out in mind, body, and affairs as hurt seeming to originate and come from people and things that appear in the outer. But the only power anyone or anything has to hurt us is the power given by ourselves.

There is a continuous effort on the part of old thoughts and feelings retained in memory to rise up and bind the person who is attempting to free himself from the toils of false thinking. What are these daring to bind limitations upon us? "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler. The snare is broken and we are escaped." "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." "Fear not; it is I."

How can worshippers of God and Jesus Christ overlook such assurances? Why should they not take such blessings to themselves?

"These signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

The feeling nature shall be freed from all erroneous and painful impressions. There shall be a new tone and quality in the speech. All enticing and subtle sensations that would distract from God's wise security shall be lifted and man will rise out of trouble and glorify God.

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Alphabet of
DAILY MEDITATIONS
For Every Week Day of the Month

July 1948

1. In ALL thy ways ACKNOWLEDGE Him.
2. BLESSED shall BE thy BASKET and thy store.
3. Before they CALL, I will answer.
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5. DAILY shall He be praised.
6. The EARTH is the Lord's.
7. The Lord make His FACE to shine upon thee.
8. The servant of the Lord must ... be GENTLE.
9. HONOR the Lord with thy substance.
10. God gave the INCREASE
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12. The JOY of the Lord is your strength.
13. He that KEEPETH thee will not slumber.
14. LEAD me in Thy truth.
15. Let the Lord be MAGNIFIED.
16. I Am the Lord; that is My NAME.
17. The Lord God OMNIPOTENT reigneth.
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19. PEACE be within thy walls.
20. The word of God is QUICK and powerful.
21. The RANSOMED of the Lord shall RETURN.
22. Thou shalt take thy rest in SAFETY.
23. TEACH me Thy Way, O Lord.
24. Give me an UNDERSTANDING heart.
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26. O VISIT me with Thy salvation.
27. WAIT upon the Lord.
28. YIELD YOURSELVES unto the Lord.
29. See my ZEAL for the Lord.
30. A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday.
31. Establish Thou the work of our hands.

Please join us in DAILY MEDITATION.