

MAN'S CHANGING VIEW

By A. J. Truesdell

Anyone who studies the Scriptures diligently will no doubt detect reports of spiritual experiences and developments recurring throughout. From Genesis to Revelation, the symbology setting forth principles of creation makes a fascinating study. Thousands of students have poured over these sacred volumes. Each has received light and understanding to the degree that he has let his own spirit accept hidden knowledge.

As we read the Scriptures we are impressed by the different concepts of God revealed by many writers. The Jehovah of the early Israelites was a strict disciplinarian and, according to report, a hard taskmaster. Jehovah was not a God with whom one could take liberties.

The relationship between the Israelites and Jehovah can be likened to the relationship of employees and a big executive. Jehovah was the Big Boss and the Israelites' welfare depended on their ability to please their Boss. Jehovah was almost inaccessible. He was as hard to get to see as was the industrial Big Boss in the days of rugged individualism in this country. Even such a favored person as Moses had to make rather elaborate preparations to enter his august presence. Moses had to hold himself in a state of spiritual solvency, apart from the people, in order to be able to serve at all times as an intermediary between Jehovah and them.

Jehovah was a "hard man." Not even Moses dared run in on Jehovah as you or I might run in on a next door neighbor. Moses made an appointment and was obliged to put his best foot forward to see the Almighty. Even then he might have to cool his heels for a season before Jehovah would condescend to communicate with him.

This approach and attitude are now changed. Today's God must be on his toes, on his good behavior at all times, and he must come bearing gifts if he expects this super-intelligent generation to be willing even to consider any proposition he might venture. All that fear of Jehovah was all right for the ignorant primitives who knew no better than to fight for their God. Today, man has reached the point where he can fight without any God at all.

God must be up-and-coming indeed to keep abreast a generation so smart that they are just about to out-smart themselves. They have learned how to hide from God and seem to take great delight in making the Almighty extend himself in order to keep up with them. They have God on the spot (they think) and will make him prove his innocence before they pass judgment. Through this attitude man chastizes and punishes himself to the point of near-extinction.

A vindictive God of retribution is hardly one to make friends and influence people. That kind of God set forth in early sacred writings would be reason enough for anyone attempting to hide. But continued examination of the Scriptures reveals a changing God. As man moves forward he seems to sense, and to report God as relenting, changing in character until, from the original vindictive, jealous God, there emerges one more amenable, more agreeable.

If a student presses his reasoning and devotion at this point, he suddenly realizes that the change has not been in God, but in man himself. He discovers that the whole Bible is a story about man going through processes of evolution and involution. His material, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual progress is set forth in perfect sequence, as the various ruling ideas in consciousness emerge from the lowest to the highest state, so that they spring forth in response to the principle of Good that caused them to be and accomplish the purpose for which they were designed. He sees that while the Scriptures are a fascinating history and an absorbing study-book for those who have the leisure and inclination to study, it is also a hand-book for men busily engaged in the business of living and working, and so designed that even those who run may read.

The Scriptures, written by men, are a record of the processes involved in the building of a universe and in the making of a man. They are a man's best exposition of spiritual laws. They set forth his concept of things spiritual when he, man, is inspired of the Almighty God to make honest and full report of his Omnipresent Goodness.

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SPIRITICITY March 1947

A LETTER

Dear Friend:

SPIRITICITY is a full six years old this MARCH, 1947. During the period of publication we have been steadfast in declaring to our readers that the Way of life is above thinking and above feeling; and, that Way is discovered through persistent uplook toward the Most High whose thoughts are above ours and whose ways transcend ours.

What would your life be without the truth you know? Would you be willing to return to an order devoid of even your concept of truth? I believe not, for I know that once we are touched by the Grace which invites us to look above what is already known and experienced we begin to live in a new and thrilling manner. We are filled with the spirit of adventure as we attempt to chart the new Path toward the Father's house. All our faculties are brought into play as we are forced, step by step, to make the proper choice. If we should happen to step off and follow a route which is either out or down, we have the exciting alternative of turning toward and again facing our goal. When we really want to find the right Way we discover that it starts where we are, and it is always on the up-grade.

We might liken the Way, or Path, unto a ladder set upright, the first rung of which lies at our feet. As we look along its shafts, upward, the magnetic glory above pulls us toward itself and we dare to determine to grasp the opportunity to take the first step so that we might swing clear of the things of the world. From that decisive moment we make the effort to begin the climb toward the celestial heights. We are forced to admit that too long have we been willing to remain buried in the glooms of materiality. As wraiths, despairing possibility of escape, we have moved about in its sepulchral shadows. Now, our restless glance touches the Light directly overhead that hitherto remained unnoticed because we had never looked toward it. One glimpse, however, and we know it was what we sought, unconsciously, hopelessly, perhaps, but with a relentlessness born of desperation.

Whenever we look up, the soft radiance of the glory of the Father draws us toward him. As we are impelled toward the Light, we are amazed to discover the cause lies within us, for we are indeed creatures of Light and not of darkness. The beaming brightness striking our sight reveals the dynamics of its nature and we know that never shall we rest until we come full-fledged into its limitless radiance. So we undertake through the days, months, and years, the practice of looking upward toward God. We feel, all too often, that we fail in practice. But something within assures us that never shall we fail so long as we persist, for any effort we make builds foundations under and within us that stand firm and sure against times of stress and despair.

The first step in practice involves a change in our belief about the nature of God. This revolutionizes all former concepts built on the fallacy that God is a super-being with the characteristics of man (usually his worst or most extreme peculiarities).

We learn that God is Good; that God is a present help in times of trouble; that God is Love; that God has time for us and that he is willing to aid and abet us because he is pleased with us. He is the blessed Presence we seek to rest our weary souls before as we offer our pitiful little-self in childlike generosity of self-giving, much as a child offers a crumpled flower to a beloved teacher. God never turns away from such an offering. It is our best -- the only offering we can make that is acceptable.

Frequently a distraught student will ask, What IS the uplook? It is just exactly what it implies: the act of looking up. One of the first things we learn in the study of Astronomy is that we always carry our zenith around with us. The point directly overhead is always there, no matter where we are, what we think or how we feel. In the practice of uplook, we acquire the feeling of being able to glance or sight upward along an invisible vertical line. By directing the attention of the mind over the path of vision upward, we are able to attain immediate and fundamental knowledge through it of the Most High God who is above our lowered thoughts about him.

Through the ages man has been interpreting God in his (man's) image and likeness. With the uplook, he reverses the practice and begins to apprehend Deity according to God's measure of himself. He discovers that the Good is an absolute, unvarying requisite of the Almighty. Too, he begins to evaluate himself as made in God's image and likeness.

Since a few readers have asked for definite instructions as to how to acquire the uplook, I can only offer a few suggestions that might be helpful. In the beginning, it is wise to go alone to practice. Whether you stand, sit, or kneel makes little difference.

You might begin to pray the Lord's Prayer and, as you do, close your eyes and get quiet within yourself. Be so earnest that you are aware of a sense of peace and release in your heart. Then, glance upward while you are still reciting your prayer. As you come to the end of it, start over again, while you continue to look toward God.

At first, you will feel that you are looking up with your organs of sight, your eyes, and that is all right. Keep trying several times a day, for just a few minutes at a time, and in the night when you waken. Gradually, you will lose the tense feeling of trying to look up and your perception will detach, as it were, from your physical sight and you will sense the rush of your inner visional faculty straight upward, overhead, while your eyes just rest in their

sockets. Then you will know, with a surge of warm joy, that at last you have begun to look toward the Most High God, above thinking and above feeling.

From that moment on, you will practice the uplook. While you visit friends; while you transact the business of your day; while you work, play, go to market, buy, sell, sing, cry, are well or ill, you will turn your inner vision Godward. As you practice, you will delight to notice that the ills of mind, body, and affairs gradual lessen and eventually are lost altogether to you. You get to KNOW, consciously, a Something that spreads through your being as confidence, strength, vital helpfulness, and increased supply. In the simplest language it is the Light sweeping through your consciousness, filling you with aspiration that influences the very bones of your body (the hardest substance of your make-up).

The inner vision set God-ward is the only faculty we possess able to penetrate the gloom of intellectual atmosphere that closes down over our heads like bathing caps. This is the darkness that appears to be light in the world. How great that darkness is only the uplooker perceives. Man in general senses it as he stumbles awkwardly through a changing world, yet he appears not to know enough to look in the direction whence the freeing Light emanates.

One by one the Father seems to be toughing us and, as we respond to the God-call within, we make an effort to break through the surrounding darkness. Like all birth, the small opening to the larger area of living and being enlarges as we persist in our efforts to get through and be free of the narrow confines of Pre-spiritual existence. To choose to remain in the small realm is to die; but, Life -- the Light -- draws us toward itself with a greater persistence than we can exercise against it, and to our amazement we eventually discover that it was primarily God-activity urging us toward himself. The truth still stands that God is seeking man.

How willing we become when we know how to answer and follow his call. How docile. How amenable. We begin to appreciate the fact that we carry the Presence of God around with us just as we carry our zenith. We bear constant witness to our consciousness of that Presence through our thinking and our behavior. We stare, sometimes, at our old-self and determine to transfer ourselves completely as fast as possible to the new estate.

But the old-self is not too willing to be dropped on the trash-heap like a discarded coat. He dogs every step; he entices, pleads, offers promises of wealth, fame, even happiness, if we will but turn to him once again. Frequently his persistence is so charming that our determination lags and we wonder what choice to make. As we waver, we need only skim the far horizons to realize nothing is there for us. Then, as we sweep the upper regions of consciousness to the center overhead, the gleams of the golden Light of God's pure Love upward catches our sight and we know in our hearts we cannot resist. Our prayer becomes a hope that we might continue to be worthy to enter his Presence.

Your destiny and mine is to come into a full-fledged realization of Self-hood. Though we take a million-million years, we cannot escape that destiny. Fortunately the time element is shortened to this instant, now, if we will but choose to follow Jesus Christ who admitted he and God were one, and who taught that as the truth about man.

We have been richly blessed to have been fortunate enough to have caught the first glimpses of the Light that shines unto an eternal Day. Our work is to bear witness to that Light so that all mankind can see and, seeing, turn -- not

to us -- but to the Light within and above them. We cannot reform another nor convert him to our view. Our work is to look so steadfastly toward the Father that we burn with a quiet brilliance that attracts attention for one prime reason, that others will know the same opportunity is theirs to take.

"Return unto me, and I will return unto you." How true the words, untouched by man's ignorance and pugnacity, ring down the ages. How thrilled we ought to be to have been awake enough to answer the call to the heights. With Jesus Christ we are coming to know what manner of Spirit we are.

Through the uplook God-ward we achieve right communication with Deity, direct. We learn the language of God so that our words fly forth with sweet messages of peace, healing, and helpfulness toward our fellows.

To be stirred to the very roots of being by willing choice in service of God is a privilege anyone can enjoy. It matters not what economic, social, intellectual, or religious station is held; nor race, nor color. God always beholds his radiant, upright Self-hood embodied in his highest creation, man.

To speak with lips of truth is to taste the sweetness of words, soft and caressing, filled with loving kindness and tender mercies. All weakness, mistakes, contamination, foolishness, and grief of the mortal are clean dissolved away. No matter what miracles transpire, the vision never wavers from the Source; no personal credit is ever taken for majestic deeds of salvation from ill or evil. No sense of doing one's duty sullies the heart. The knower is conscious only that God IS the Reality and his Presence is the working power.

As you, dear reader, step with me into this seventh year of spiritual fellowship in truth work, let us abandon heart and mind to him who doeth all things well, knowing we shall be blessed, healed, and prospered because we are one with God. May we realize anew that all mankind are blessed through our willingness to be steadfast in gazing God-ward because there is no separation in Spirit. Our Good and the Good of mankind is the same Good. It is God.

Lovingly yours,
Nell Truesdell

SPIRITICITY March 1947

PLOTINUS AS A SPIRITUAL GUIDE

By R. A. Applegate, Jr.

CHAPTER II, PURGATION (Continued from last month.)

The philosopher, according to Plotinus, will refuse to identify himself with the body. "In us the individual, viewed as body is far from reality." The philosopher accepts this, not as a theory, but as a working principle; and, therefore, he puts away the bodily that he may come into a truer knowledge of his real self. "He would be neither wise nor in the state of happiness if he had not quitted trifling with such things and become as it were another being." Thus he will, as far as possible, withdraw his attention from the objects of sense perception. He will flee from the earthly beauties which once made his love, and he will know them for vestiges and copies. He will not, however, despise earthly beauty, but he will regard it in its true light as an image, a

further emanation of the One. He will, thus viewing it, refuse to let it enslave his attention.

Another phase of the reformation of character is forgetfulness. Just as the soul will refuse to give its attention to the present needs or clamorings of the body, so also it will repudiate the memory of past pleasure, and will refuse to revel in that which is over and done with. "The memory of friends, children, wife, country, the lower man retains with emotion, the authentic man passively. The loftier soul must desire to come to a happy forgetfulness of all that has reached it through the lower. The more urgent the intention towards the Supreme, the more extensive will be the soul's forgetfulness." This forgetfulness will include not only past pleasures, but also all fixed opinions based upon the reports of the senses ("all that has come through the lower") and, in fact, all the reports of the senses themselves. It is necessary for the philosopher to become as humble as a little child and to be as willing to unlearn as to learn. He cannot be led up to the place of higher knowledge so long as he is clinging to his old beliefs and concepts. The mind must be emptied of all this before it can receive the higher instruction.

Another aspect of the purgation of character is the controlling of anger, grief, and fear by reason and the higher virtues. Fear must entirely cease except in so far as it is purely monitory. This, however, is not easily accomplished. This is the arena for the powerful combatant holding fast against outside terrors and knowing that dreadful though they seem, they are nothing to him, because they cannot touch his inner hold, his inviolate soul. Plotinus lived in a period of extreme pessimism. The Roman Empire was in the throes of dissolution. The barbarians on the borders were pressing in, and within the Empire there was rottenness. Seven emperors ruled within the course of fourteen years (235-249), and each of them died a violent death. However, Plotinus' concentration of the Divine enabled him to live in a realm above the temporal, and to insist, "Where there is dread, there is not perfect virtue; the man is some sort of a half-thing."

The purgation of consciousness, which is the last stage in the purification of the soul, consists for Plotinus in the complete withdrawal of the attention from the physical world and the refusal to accept the reports of the senses as true. Evil, as pointed out in the first chapter, has, for Plotinus, no reality; and at least the higher phase of the soul is immune to all that is lower than itself. The question naturally arises at this point as to why, if the soul is thus unreceptive to everything except to "what it receives from the Existents prior to itself," purgation is necessary at all. The answer is that "representations" (phantasma) or appearances of evil attack the soul at its "affective phase" (to pathetokon) (consciousness). These representations cause a disturbance in the soul, which amounts to an "affection" (pathos); and therefore it is necessary to drive them out. They have, according to Plotinus, no reality, because evil has no reality; and thus it is as though a man were having a nightmare, from which it is only necessary to wake him for him to see the unreality of the experience from which he has been suffering. "Take it that some such affections have engendered appearances presented before the Soul or Mind from without but taken (for practical purposes) to be actual experiences within it -- then Philosophy's task is like that of a man who wishes to throw off the shapes presented in dreams, and to this end recalls to waking condition the mind that is breeding them." To accomplish this wakening of the soul, it is merely necessary to let it alone, to let it withdraw from the outer and forego all that is known by the senses.

This phase of purgation is summed up in the third Ennead: "You must turn appearances about or you will be left void of God. You will be like those at the festivals who in their gluttony cram themselves with things which none going to the gods may touch; they hold these goods to be more real than the vision of the God who is to be honored, and so they have no share in the sanctities of the shrine. In these celebrations the unseen God leaves those in doubt of His existence who think nothing patent but what may be known to the flesh; it happens as if a man slept a life through and took the dream-world in perfect trust; wake him, he would refuse belief to the report of his open eyes and settle down again to sleep."

At the same time that the attention of the soul is withdrawn from the external world, the intellect must be stilled. "As one wishing to contemplate the intellectual Nature will lay aside all representations of the senses and so may see what transcends the realm of sense, so one wishing to contemplate what transcends the Intellectual attains by putting away all that is of the intellect." The intellect can reason only from the basis of experiential data; therefore it must be stilled before the philosopher can attain knowledge of the unexperienced. As Dean Inge says, "The intellectual puzzles about sameness and otherness, movement and stability, do not help us at all to understand the spiritual world. They only convince us of the inadequacy of the discursive reason to comprehend the things of the Spirit." The intellect is not to be denied or exorcised as something evil, but rather it is to be stilled that it may be illumined by the "Light from on high."

This phase of purgation is intimately connected with the vision for which it is the preparation; for it is when the intellect has been stilled, when the soul has ceased looking to externals for satisfaction, when all selfish desire has ceased, that the vision comes. Likewise, purgation cannot be separated from dialectic, especially from the ethical ascent. Every choice, it seems to me, involves purgation. We decide against one thing and for something else. Purgation deals with what is rejected; dialectic, with that which is chosen.

Purgation is finished when the philosopher has become "adept" (*spoudaios*), when he is capable of living entirely within himself, when he is no longer conscious of the presence of evil in the universe, and when he no longer thinks of himself as a physical being. "Once the man is adept, the means of happiness, the way to good, are within."

The purpose of purgation is the same as the purpose of the whole mystic quest, that is, to know God and to know the Truth of Being which is identical with God. "In order to know what Divine Mind is you must observe Soul and especially its most God-like phase. One certain way to this knowledge is to separate yourself from your body and very earnestly to put aside the system of sense with desires and impulses and every such futility, all setting definitely towards the mortal." Purgation is not, Plotinus insists, mortification. It is not directed against the body as something evil, but it is rather only a necessary discipline for the sake of knowledge and understanding of the Good. "Essentially all the aspiration is not so much away from evil as towards the soul's highest and noblest."

The inner phases of purgation of Plotinus are taken directly from such passages of Plato as *Phaedo* 83. "Philosophy, seeing how terrible was her (the soul's) confinement, of which she was herself the cause, received and gently comforted her and sought to release her, pointing out that the eye and the ear and the other senses are full of deception, and persuading her to retire from them, and to abstain from all but the necessary use of them." This is a summing

up of the Plotinian position: that the appearances of the physical world are not the reality, and that the philosopher should withdraw his attention from these representations, so that he may give that attention to the things of Spirit. The same thing is implied in the banishment of the artists from the ideal state. One reason for the banishment is that the artist usually portrays those emotions which the philosopher should dry up by withdrawing his attention from them. Thus the principle of attention, on which Plotinus places so much emphasis, is derived directly from his forerunner.

It may be noted also that Plotinus expresses the purpose of purgation in almost the same words Plato does. The former says that the purpose is "to know Divine Mind;" and the latter says "I reckon that we make the nearest approach to knowledge when we have the least possible intercourse or communion with the body." Thus Plotinus' whole theory of purgation, with the exception of the discipline of celibacy, can be found in the dialogues of Plato, and it is possible that Plotinus derived it all from this source.

The need for discipline in the present time is so obvious that comment seems almost superfluous. Life as it is generally lived today seems to be conducted on the theory that we must distract our separate selves in as many ways as possible until we reach the end of our short span and, like tired children, fall asleep. Instead of this our whole life should be purposive and directed. Everyone feels this at times, I believe, and also feels that he is capable of living the fuller life which he feels is desirable. Very few, however, are willing to undertake the necessary discipline which such a life requires. Perhaps the greatest contribution of Neoplatonism is the insistence on just such a discipline. However, what is lacking in Neoplatonism, for most, is the motive for such a discipline. For those who do not see the mystic quest as something desirable or attainable, then Neoplatonism has no compelling motive to make them want to undergo training. Such a motive can be supplied only by Christianity. The acceptance of the simple statement of St. Paul that "none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" can supply what is missing in Neoplatonism; for once a man realizes that his life is inextricably bound up with the happiness and welfare of others, he becomes willing to live that life to the very best of his ability. The lack of any such emphasis on the essential oneness of mankind is perhaps the glaring error of Neoplatonism.

(End Chapter II)

(Chapter III, next month)

Alphabet of
DAILY MEDITATIONS
For Every Week Day of the Month

MARCH 1947

1. Set your AFFECTION on things ABOVE.
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3. BLESSED is every one . . . that walketh in His ways.
4. He hath COVERED me with the robe of righteousness.
5. The Spirit of God DWELLETH in you.
6. I will EXALT Him.
7. The FRUIT of righteousness is sown in peace.
8. Make His praise GLORIOUS.
*
10. Teach me, and I will HOLD my tongue.
11. The Spirit maketh INTERCESSION for us.
12. The tongue of the JUST is as choice silver.
13. The KINGDOM of God is . . . righteousness and peace.
14. Great peace have they which LOVE Thy LAW.
15. Thou shalt love the Lord . . . with all thy MIND.
*
17. All NATIONS shall call Him blessed.
18. The kingdom of God cometh not with OBSERVATION.
19. All the PEOPLE . . . shall PRAISE the Lord.
20. Many waters cannot QUENCH love.
21. REMEMBER me, O Lord, with . . . favor.
22. The SPIRIT SEARCHETH all things.
*
24. I bring you good TIDINGS of great joy.
25. UNTO thee, O my strength, will I sing.
26. O VISIT me with Thy salvation.
27. The WORDS of the Lord are pure WORDS.
28. YIELD YOURSELVES to the Lord.
29. I am returned unto ZION (peace).
*
31. Come before His Presence with thanksgiving.
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Constructive thoughts help build a happy world. Please keep the DAILY MEDITATIONS with us.

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