

BEHOLD THY MOTHER!

By A. J. Truesdell

In John 19:25-28, we read thus:

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdelene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith to his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

Since Adam called his wife's name Eve, mothers have been all things to all men and men have achieved in ratio to the ideals held for them by their mothers. We could safely say that one of the primary reasons for the spiritual conquest of Jesus Christ was the fact that Mary pondered the things of the Spirit in her heart.

Mothers hold such high ideals for their children, especially for their sons, that many times they are astonished to find the ideal, in process of fulfillment, takes those sons into realms of action where the mother cannot follow, nor can she continue to play the leading part.

The process of a child being conceived and gestated, and that of any ideal is similar. While an ideal is being conceived in the inner consciousness and then is pondered in the heart, the individual in whom it has taken up its abode is dominated by that ideal, possessed by that which was conceived. But, after the ideal is brought forth, there is more of a tendency to possess it rather than to be possessed by the ideal. Thus we find the mother of Jesus endeavoring to exercise her maternal office over her son even after he began to exercise and administer the ideal which Mary herself had pondered in her heart. This is one of the tendencies men discover in the feminine nature which, along with other traits, bewilders the masculine mind.

The role of mother is seldom spectacular. Mostly, it consists of waiting, serving, and sometimes struggling for honors far less worthy than those of the natural role of mother. However, always imbued with an ideal, the mother-instinct (if we may use the term), is responsible for most of the progress and improvement the human race has made.

Men will never understand women. The boy thinks his mother is an institution, a source of constant irritation to him, especially when he is trying his wings of self expression. Though when his experiments are over, and he is tired, he spontaneously returns to the maternal influence for comfort and cheer.

Many a man has found a contrary streak in his wife, the mother of his children, who will slave, save, and sacrifice to encourage him while he is building up his business enterprises and is taking his place in the world of affairs, only to lose interest after a firm economic status is established.

A mother's place of power is in the realm of the soul. But, when she is enticed from this ruling place, her queenly court is set up wherever she find herself, and there she exercises her royal prerogatives as she assumes the power to judge all according to their need of the moment.

A mother knows many things not revealed to the mere man of her household. Because she has been the means of bringing a soul into the world, a mother often feels she has had the doctrine of divinity revealed to her. This is something God has wrought. For the time being the theory of the immaculate conception is a positive reality, for she knows the conception which took place in her is spiritual and immaculate; though later she usually makes her progeny her object of personal ownership.

To the father, the son is a chip off the old block; but, to the mother, this which the Lord has done through her is a potential savior of mankind. Because she considers her offspring a divine manifestation accounts for the adulation and worshipful attitudes some mothers have for their sons. It accounts, too, for the child's turning his attention to his mother exclusively when he fails to measure up to the high ideal she has held for him. For it is a known fact that a mother imbued with an ideal for her son will never concede the possibility of failure of fulfillment.

Three women and one man stood by the cross of Jesus. The sister of Mary was there because of sympathetic amenities. Mary Magdelene was there because of gratitude. The disciple was there because of that powerful attraction that exists between men who love one another, and the presence of this man was a vindication of the judgment of Jesus. He had known where to place his special affection: it was not misplaced.

The presence of the mother was a most natural circumstance. Her place was beside her son during the great crisis of his life. Had Jesus been accorded high honors in the world the chances are that his mother might have been absent. But never, while she felt he was in trouble and she might give some message of comfort.

A mother is always a mother and must behave as such. A mother cares little for the detailed circumstances that lead to a crisis in her son's life. No mention is made of the fact, but an impartial eye-witness of this forlorn gathering might have revealed two other women, one at the foot of each cross on either side of Jesus, the mothers of the two thieves. This would be a true impression of the steadfastness of the eternal mother. Christ or criminal; Jesus, thieves, or even Judas; the mother of one would be as deeply grieved for her son as is another. For a mother knows the secret that her son is essentially spiritual, perfect as the Heavenly Father who caused him to be, regardless of the experiences, condemnations, or even crucifixions the world has to offer.

What a tower of strength this unwavering loyalty to idealism must have been to all great men of history cannot be measured. But where such a fundamental impulse to all-achieving power is known to exist, the wonder is not that great men have been so great, but that so few have accepted this heritage that has been held in trust for them by all the mothers through all the ages.

This is the one secret, at least, that women have been able to keep. Perhaps the innocent charm of the secret of truth lay in the fact that whenever any one of them tried to reveal the secret, she has been ridiculed. The

fantastic simplicity of truth is so obvious throughout all creation that minds, overflowing with the importance of self, can neither see nor accept such seeming commonplace solutions to their tremendous problems. For the most part, consideration of Reality has been left for the feminine department of humanity to ponder in their hearts. So common is this practice of relegating this important undertaking to the ladies (God bless them), that a noted churchman who declared that all church structures should be destroyed every hundred years excepted the departments presided over by the women in the ecclesiastical community.

This was a tribute to woman's propensity for mothering ideals and pondering truth in her heart. The woman treasures ideals in her soul and man, catching the contagion of ideas, thinks thoughts which bring the hidden ideals to full bloom, and he declares, "What a big boy am I!"

Seldom does the son see eye to eye with the mother until that day when the principle becomes master of his person. Where, at first he might have felt interference in his long delayed desire to be about his Father's business ("Woman, what have I to do with thee!"), he now speaks with the authority of the Son conscious of his mother's need, "Woman, behold thy son!" And to the disciple, "Behold thy mother."

His work is finished: the ideal is manifest.

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SPIRITICITY May 1947

PRAISE THE LORD

By Nell Truesdell

Why are we urged to praise God? Because the effect of praise, the result of praise is Good. We desire what is Good. We want to do that which culminates in Good for us.

Praise and love are akin. Where there is love, there is an active appreciation and appraisal which voices itself in the form of praise. Whoever loves God will voluntarily praise him.

Even deliberate practice of praise to God is perhaps the best form of mental gymnastics in which anyone can indulge. No matter what the state of mind or condition of body and affairs, a full and complete remedy for all ills and ailments and lacks can be found in a liberal dose of praise.

If we praise, we are lifted up by our praise. If at first the mind refuses to praise God, believing its present negative state to be an affliction from God, then we (if we really want benefits), can surely find something outside ourselves, or somebody, toward which or whom we can honestly direct praise. None of us is so lacking that we cannot find something to praise. When we want to, each of us can locate one thing and at least one friend in our life for whom we can give hearty and unstinting praise. The person caught in a negative stream of belief can help himself mightily by beginning to praise what he likes best, whether a thing or some friend. It is not that the thing or the person praised does anything for the praiser. It is the act that does the work, gives the benefit.

Praise is a healing balm because praise and joy are coordinate; and, where joy is, the life principle manifest. Joy acts as a carrier for a greater realization of the presence of life. The very fact of life should be cause enough for praise. We forget this sometimes.

Often people who feel they have been deprived of the good things of life decide they will begin to praise God when they have sufficient proof that he is interested in them. They determine to wait until a certain state of body or

standard of affairs which they feel is good appears. Such people wait long for their good to appear; and, tragically, it seems, they seldom seem to get that for which they long. If only they knew the secret of quick results lay in praise. If they loved God sufficiently, they would be given the understanding of this secret.

You and I might begin, right now, to praise that which appears to be good, though it seems to be very insignificant and far from our heart's desire. Often, just starting to praise opens the consciousness to realize that the good we have longed for is already present, though we did not have eyes to see.

I have discovered this: the human-part of us has a way of completely overlooking the good we have asked for, even after it has been delivered. Its appearance and establishment is so silent, so gradual, so unpretentious, that we are totally unaware of it even though we are experiencing it every hour of the day. Perhaps this is because we are constantly centered in what we wish we had - giving our attention to that which is not - instead of calmly and gratefully thanking God for the good that is at hand.

If we should practice this sort of praise we should never want for any good thing. This is true. To magnify the good all about seems to make it increase and multiply. As Mr. Jeffery writes in his Prosperity Treatment, "To the consciousness of having, more will be actually added, for increase is the order of creation." Magnify the good you can see and you will see truly how generous God has been.

The act of lifting the heart in grateful acknowledgment is inspiring and quickening. Hear the Psalmist sing: "Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely." This is just a beautiful way of stating that whatever we give our attention to responds to us, favorable, spontaneously, joyously. Praise augments and expands and urges to greater dimensions that toward which it is directed.

Criticism is a negative form of praise. It increases what is criticized. We understand more and more as we press upward, that we blend or combine with whatever we look toward. We join up with what we look at. A union is consummated. We become at-one with whatever the attention is directed toward. It is a process of addition, as it were. Attention toward an objective acts as an open door in consciousness and the objective walks in and makes its abode with us. When we are negative, the experience is not pleasant.

We must expand to the point where we understand that how we feel is not the point. Feelings are a poor basis to try to stand on. They are like a log in water. But no matter how we feel, we can lift our gaze God-ward; the gaze, whether fixed on the terrifying instability under us, or on the reliable, steadfast God, remains unaffected. We are affected, however, by what we let into our consciousness by means of it. To look God-ward consciously, is to open heart and mind to him. Whenever we return unto him by this means, we find him returning to us. Not that he ever left us; but we had ceased to look toward him and, forgetting him, seemed to have lost contact.

When we strike the cord of praise to God, the attention rises and obeys the injunction "Look unto me." "Watch and pray." The whole being responds and receives new inspiration and glad instructions.

Practicing praise for the things we can get is not the highest virtue. It might be difficult at first to praise God for himself alone. Just to practice praise because we are attracted to the things we desire to possess through it places us in bondage. But to practice praise, forgetting its rewards, leads to release and rest and freedom.

The power of praise soon puts the devotee in touch with all things everywhere. The nearer we come to God through praise, the closer we find ourselves related to all things and people. We cannot long continue to praise God for ourselves alone; we must praise him for the whole universe. Then we find all things working together for good.

We do not stimulate the activity in praise, by praising; but, applying ourselves unto praise, actively engaging in it, produces a largeness in us that ripens into good and perfect gifts. As we enter into praise "our mouth will be filled with good things."

Regain sight of God and all differences will be solved. God is sufficient for all. "Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness." When the song is done, the beneficent quiet of profound communion clothes one as with a mantel, and the heart is at rest. Behold, all is accomplished; all is perfected.

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SPIRITICITY May 1947

PLOTINUS AS A SPIRITUAL GUIDE

By R. A. Applegate, Jr.

(Continued from last month)

Chapter III, DIDACTIC

Christianity and Neoplatonism also agree to the part that ministry should play in the quest. It is not to be sought as an end any more than contemplation is, but it is to be practiced for the sake of finding and knowing God. Christianity places a great deal more emphasis on this ministry than does Neoplatonism, and that is perhaps the glaring error in the latter; but it will be noted that Plotinus emphasizes that the political virtues must at all times accompany the higher quest. If we accept Marius' list of the civic virtues as those of Plotinus (and from the testimony of his own life we are certainly justified in doing so), then they constitute at least a step towards what Christian means by ministry.

The office of the political or social reformer Plotinus rejects completely. "That the wicked should expect others to be their saviors at the sacrifice of themselves is not a lawful prayer to make; nor is it to be expected that divine Beings should lay aside their own lives and rule the details of such men's lives, nor that good men, who are living a life that is other and better than human dominion, should devote themselves to the ruling of wicked men." Here Plotinus is following Plato; and here once more his is in accord with the true Christian doctrine. Most modern attempts at reform are carried out in the name of Christianity, but they are not in accord with the original Christian message. Jesus was not a reformer. If he had tried to reform the Sanhedrin or the synagogue, he would have accomplished absolutely nothing and he would have been forgotten long ago. Likewise, he did not command his disciples to try to reform the world; and, if they had tried it, they too would have been forgotten. Jesus said, just before his crucifixion, that he did not even pray for the world, but only for those who had been given him. On the cross he could not forgive the world for its blind ignorance; he had to ask the Father to do it.

Men do not want to be reformed and they will not let themselves be reformed. The thing that a man reacts against most quickly is any attempt to reform him. Plato realized this, and he said that only a miracle would ever bring about an ideal state in this world. Furthermore, by making surface changes, the reformer actually changes nothing. Only a radical, quantitative change in character can ever permanently improve the lot of mankind; and that can never be forced on mankind from without; it must come from within each

individual. From this it follows that the only service which any person can really do for another is to show him the way: to teach him, guide him, instruct him; to heal him, if he needs healing; to pick him up when he stumbles; to help him along the way; above all, to set the example himself: but not to try to reform him, because he will not accept it.

This is taking a dim view of the reformer, but it is not possible for me to take any other view. So long as the character is unchanged, every other reform is futile because it will soon be repudiated. It is utterly impossible, by any political manipulation, to make selfish, sensual, mentally lazy individuals live in peace and harmony. It is futile even to try. Dean Inge has pointed out that mankind has still failed to find a suitable form of community government, and I can see no basis for hope that it ever will be found. All forms of government have the ultimate weakness that their success depends on the integrity of the majority of both the rulers and the ruled: an integrity, which, if it existed, would make it unnecessary to seek for a suitable form of government.

A proportionately long time has been spent on the question of ethics because it is central to the Plotinian philosophy. The ethical ascent is necessary for the attainment of the desired goal. The other two paths are aids and abetments adapted to the character of the individual. They may be followed separately or together, but the ethical ascent must accompany whichever one is chosen.

The intellectual ascent is adapted to the man who is a born philosopher: the man who is quick to learn, stirred of himself toward the Divine, and by nature a moral being. Such a man needs only a guide on the way. He will be trained in mathematics to teach him to think in the abstract, and he will have to make his virtue perfect. Then he will be ready for the further training of dialectic.

Dialectic starts in discursive reason and ends in contemplation. Its purpose is to establish in the consciousness of the philosopher the fact that behind the changing material world there is a stable Spiritual World, and that behind the plurality of the Spiritual World there is an eternal Unity. To accomplish this, it determines the different categories of all Beings and Non-Beings; it traces the unity which exists in each category, and the unity which pervades all the categories; then it resolves this unity back into particulars again. When it has thus covered the intellectual realm, it leaves it behind. It has arrived at the Unity, and it settles down to the contemplation of that Unity. Even in its early stages, it receives the principles for its discussion directly from Divine Mind by means of contemplation. It will use, however, whatever methods of other sciences such as logic, which it finds useful. "It distinguishes the forms and authentic Existence and primary genera and follows in thought their intercommunications, until it has traversed the entire Intellectual Realm and returned in analysis to the first principle. Now it rests; at peace while there, it is no longer busy about many things; it has arrived at Unity and it contemplates; it leaves to another science all that coil of premises and conclusions called the art of reasoning. The Divine Mind furnishes its standards, the most certain for any soul that is able to apply them." Dialectic deals with verities; it deals with Truth, and leaves to other sciences all petty precisions and study of particulars. It starts with reasoning, but ends with contemplation; and thus it joins the current of the ethical and esthetic ascents.

Plotinus has followed Plato closely with respect to the intellectual ascent. The description of the born philosopher corresponds closely with Plato's description of the philosopher who is qualified to rule the ideal state. The recommendation of mathematics as a preliminary study comes directly from Republic 522-532, although Plotinus departs from Plato in saying nothing about geometry or astronomy. The description of dialectic given above is almost the same as that given by Socrates in Republic 533; and for Plato, as for Plotinus, the last step is that of contemplation. "The eye of the soul, which is literally buried in an outlandish slough, is by her gentle aid lifted upwards."

The esthetic ascent is designed for the man who is by nature a born musician or a born lover. The musician is sensitive to harmonies as timid people are to noise, and that must be made the starting point for him. He must be led from the particular beauty of the external harmonies with which he is familiar to their source, which is the Harmony of the Spiritual World. This Harmony is identical with the Absolute Beauty, and is the source of all the harmony and beauty that exists in the physical world. When the musician has been led to see this, he must be further trained in dialectic to give him faith in the intuitive knowledge of Beauty which he has (as proved by his mastery of his art) although he does not know it. From there his path will be the same as that of the philosopher and the lover.

The born lover has a certain memory of the Supernal Beauty, but he has lost contact with it, and no longer realizes what it is that arouses the desire within him. He therefore worships the physical beauty which he sees around him. He must be led from this beauty to its source. He must be shown that the beauty of physical things is borrowed and that the Spirit is, in reality, the loveliness of the beloved. He must be shown, first, the beauty of a noble conduct of life or of an admirably organized social system. Then he must be led from these manifestations of Beauty to the beauty of the arts, sciences, and virtues. He must be shown the splendor of "Justice and Moral Wisdom, beautiful beyond the beauty of the evening and the dawn." Then he must have the common origin of all this beauty explained to him. He must be led to see the beauty of the souls which has produced these various works, and he must be shown that this beauty is in turn derived from the Beauty of Spirit. Then he will be ready to turn within himself and find the Supernal Beauty there. He must awaken "that other power of vision, the birthright of all, but which few turn to use." If he does not see yet, then he must further purify himself within until the alien is removed, and Beauty shines forth unimpeded. When he has become one glow of beauty within then he will be ready for the vision of the Supreme Beauty. "Therefore let each become god-like and beautiful who cares to see God and Beauty. The Primal Good and the Primal Beauty have one dwelling-place, and thus, always, Beauty's seat is There."

(to be continued)

Alphabet of
DAILY MEDITATIONS
For Every Day of the Month

May 1947

1. Offer up spiritual sacrifice, ACCEPTABLE to God.
2. He gave them BREAD to eat.
3. He hath CLOTHED me.

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5. He shall DIRECT thy paths.
6. His mercy ENDURETH for EVER.
7. FORGIVE if ye have ought against any.
8. GOOD shall come unto thee.
9. My HEART is glad.
10. Thou upholdest me IN mine INTEGRITY.

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12. Your JOY no man taketh from you.
13. My KINDNESS shall not depart from thee.
14. The Father LOVETH the Son.
15. MOUNT up with wings as eagles.
16. There is NONE holy as the Lord.
17. Nothing shall OFFEND them.

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19. Thou wilt keep him in PERFECT PEACE.
20. QUIETLY wait for ... the Lord.
21. REMEMBER me, O my God, for good.
22. Ye SERVE the Lord Christ.
23. TALK ye of His wondrous works.
24. Good and UPRIGHT is the Lord.

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26. Use not VAIN repetitions.
27. Praise the Lord ... for His WONDERFUL WORKS.
28. YE are the temple of God.
29. He was ZEALOUS for my sake.
30. I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.
31. The Lord reigneth; he is clothed with majesty.

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DAILY MEDITATION builds mind, body, and affairs according to right patterns when the thoughts are set On High. Please join us.