

"BEHOLDING AS IN A GLASS"
ITS MEANING IN 2 CORINTHIANS 3:18

BY WAYNE ELLSWORTH COLWELL

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Bachelor of Divinity in
Grace Theological Seminary
May 1958

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PREFACE

The purpose of this paper is to clarify the meaning of a phrase which many people do not clearly understand, even though their general impression of the verse in which it appears is quite accurate.

The joy of a deeper study into the Word of God is reward enough. The blessings received have many times repaid the long hours spent preparing this work.

The faithful corps of professors of Grace Theological Seminary which has earnestly endeavored to weld and strengthen the circle of truth about its students is to be commended for its diligent service.

The writer expresses his sincere appreciation to all who have helped, specifically, in the preparation of this critical monograph, especially Dr. James L. Boyer, faculty adviser.

To God be the glory for any spiritual blessing that may be derived from reading this paper. Let the Lord Jesus Christ be praised. Let his Name be magnified forever.

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INTRODUCTION

A discussion of this verse and its context in a Bible study at a midweek prayer service proved so interesting to this writer that he selected it for the subject of this critical monograph.

Properly interpreting the problem portion of 2 Cor. 3:18 makes this verse a classic text to confirm the doctrine of present sanctification through the Word of God and to lay heavy emphasis on the written record of Gospel truth.

Through research and careful study the writer has been thoroughly convinced that this verse can be properly interpreted in only one way.

Arriving at such a conclusion and seeing it line up with the rest of Scripture has been a source of much personal blessing.

This study has led the author to but one conclusion--that the Word of God is the only means he has of seeing the glory of the Lord; therefore, it should be the one treasure held uppermost in his Christian life.

GREEK TEXT

According to The New Testament in the Original Greek,
edited by Westcott and Hort

ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες ανακαλυμμένοι
προσώπῳ τὴν δόξαν Κυρίου κατὸπριζόμενοι
τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ
δόξης εἰς δόξαν, καθάπερ ἀπὸ
Κυρίου πνεύματος.

VARIANT READINGS: Codex Vaticanus (β) has καθὼς περ
in place of καθάπερ, but it
does not effect in any way the problem
of this paper. This is the only textual
variation listed.

ENGLISH VERSIONS

Wiclif Version, 1380

And alle we that with open face seen the glorie of the Lord; ben transformed in to the same ymage, fro clerness in to clerenesse as the spirit of the Lord.

Tyndale Version, 1534

But we all beholde the glorie of the Lorde with his face opene, and are chaunged unto the same similitude from glory to glory, even of the spirite of the Lorde.

Cranmer Version, 1539

But we all beholde in a myrroure the glorie of the Lorde with his face open, and are chaunged unto the same similitude, from glory to glory, even as the spryte of the Lorde.

Geneva Version, 1557

But we all beholde as in a myrroure the glorie of the Lord with open face, and are changed into the same image, from glorie to glorie, even of the Sprite of the Lord.

King James Version, 1611

But 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.

English Revised Version, 1881

But we all, with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror (margin, 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.

Rotherham's Emphasized Bible, 1897

And we all with unveiled face receiving and reflecting the glory of the Lord, into the same image are being transformed, from glory into glory, even as from a Spirit that is Lord.

The Twentieth Century New Testament, 1898-1901

And all of us with unveiled faces, see, as if reflected in a mirror, the splendour of the Lord, and are being transformed into his likeness, from one degree of splendour to another, as it comes from the Lord, even the Spirit.

American Standard Version, 1901

But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror (margin, reflecting as a mirror) the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.

Weymouth's New Testament, 1903

And all of us, with unveiled faces, reflecting like bright mirrors the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same likeness, from one degree of radiant holiness to another, even as derived from the Lord the Spirit.

The Twentieth Century New Testament,
Revised Edition, 1904

And all of us, with faces from which the veil is lifted, seeing, as if reflected in a mirror, the glory of the Lord are being transformed into his likeness from glory to glory, as it is given by the Lord, the Spirit.

The American Bible, 1935

And all of us, reflecting the splendor of the Lord in our unveiled faces, are being changed into likeness to him, from one degree of splendor to another, for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Moffatt's Bible, 1935

But we all mirror the glory of the Lord with face unveiled, and so we are become transformed into the same likeness as himself, passing from one glory to another--for this comes of the Lord the Spirit.

Williams' New Testament, 1937

And all of us, with faces uncovered, because we continue to reflect like mirrors the splendor of the Lord, are being transformed into likeness to Him, from one degree of splendor to another, since it comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Basic English New Testament, 1941

But we all with unveiled face, giving back as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are **changed** into the same image from glory to glory, even **as from** the Lord who is the Spirit.

New World Translation, 1950

And all of us, while we with unveiled faces reflect like mirrors the glory of Jehovah, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, exactly as done by Jehovah the Spirit.

Revised Standard Version, 1952

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding (margin reflecting) the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Confraternity Version, 1941

But we all, with faces unveiled, reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into his very image from glory to glory, as through the Spirit of the Lord.

ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND

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The Greek word κατοπτρίζομενοι as it occurs in 2 Cor. 3:18 is found nowhere else in the New Testament or in the Septuagint. Even in the classics it is only rarely found. Κατοπτρίζεσθαι has a double signification among the Greeks, meaning sometimes to hold out a mirror to be looked into and at others to look into a mirror when presented. Paul used this word at the height of a paragraph in which he was contrasting the fading glory of the old covenant of law with the unchanging unending glory of the new covenant of grace.

A clear understanding of the Old Testament account of Moses' shining face is essential to the interpretation of this verse in the New Testament.

The law was given to Moses twice at Sinai. When God first gave the law, Moses took the tables of law down to the people only to find them worshipping a golden calf which Aaron had provided. Moses broke the tables of law without delivering the law to the people, for had the law been enforced at this point, it would have demanded the death of all the people. Jehovah said, "Let Me consume them and I will make of thee a great nation" (Ex. 32:10 ASV). But Moses interceded for the children

of Israel, and Jehovah turned from the evil which he had said He would do unto his people. Thus Moses in the long ago displayed the Spirit of Christ, for he became a mediator willing to die that his people might be saved.

Again Moses went up into Mount Sinai to commune with God and to see his glory. Moses was there with Jehovah forty days and forty nights, eating no bread and drinking no water. Moses received the decalogue, but this time on the basis of Ex. 33-40, it was tempered with a system of sacrifices whereby a penitent lawbreaker could plead with God to show mercy on the basis of the shedding of blood.

It was after this second receiving of the law that Moses' face reflected a radiance when he came down from the presence of Jehovah. God had revealed his grace and glory to Moses. When Aaron and the people saw Moses' shining face, they were afraid to come near him, but Moses called them all to him and gave them in commandment all that Jehovah had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. The children of Israel saw that his skin shone. After speaking to them Moses put a veil on his face and kept it on except when entering the presence of the Lord or when speaking to the people for God. Moses saw the divine glory of God, and his face shone from being in the Lord's presence.

It remains for the apostle Paul to tell under Holy Spirit guidance the reason Moses veiled his face.

Was it because Moses' face was so radiant that it was impossible for the people to be in his presence unless he wore a veil? Contrary to prevailing opinion, Paul explains in 2 Cor. 3:13 that Moses veiled his face so the people would not see that his radiance was fading. It may not have mattered to the people if Moses had not veiled his face and they had seen the fading glory, but it mattered to Paul, for the splendor passing from the countenance of Moses typically represented to him the termination of the ministry of Moses. They were not intended at that time to contemplate the end of this ministry which was to cease through the ministry of the gospel.

Second Corinthians 3:7-18 is a masterpiece of rabbinic-allegorical exposition; the physical events of the Old Testament must be understood only as Paul gives them spiritual significance in the New Testament in order to follow Paul's argument.

The first significant point of the Exodus 34 narrative is that with the ministration of the old covenant came glory--so brilliant that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look upon the face of Moses. Second, this glory faded from Moses' face, which to Paul was indicative of the passing of the law. Third, Moses wore a veil so the people would not see the fading glory.

Paul is using this Old Testament illustration to

show the superiority of the ministry of grace. "For if (since) the ministry of condemnation hath glory, much rather doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory" (3:9, ASV).

"For if (since) that which passeth away was with glory, much more that which remaineth is in glory" (2 Cor. 3:11, ASV).

"Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness of speech, and are not as Moses, who put a veil upon his face, that the children of Israel should not look steadfastly on the end of that which was passing away" (2 Cor. 3:12, 13, ASV).

Two great ministries thus stand forth, one centered in Moses for death, the other centered in the apostles for life. They are only ministries, neither produces what it brings. The death in the one is God's judgment; the spirit of life in the other is God's gift of grace. The ministers are only God's "slave stewards," his "underlings" (ὑπηρέται), 1 Cor. 4:1. He made the face of the one shine with his own glory, with the blinding, unendurable light, that shows forth his holy righteousness. Paul asks, how, having done this, God could leave the other, the great apostolic ministry without glory? Does not this ministry minister God's love, grace, mercy; plant spirit and life in place of death? Is there no glory in these attributes of God, to reflect itself in the human ministers of these attributes? Certainly it will not be blinding glory-light, which goes with divine justice. It will be, not a light that shines upon the sinners, like judgment comes upon them, but a light that "shines in our hearts," even as this ministry puts spirit and life in our hearts, it will match the love, mercy, and space of God, it will be and is "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). This light will never be "done away with." This light shines not only in the hearts of the

ministers, but likewise in the hearts of the New Testament believers.¹

In this portion of his second epistle to the Corinthians, Paul changes from his communicative letter style of writing into a didactic expositional style.

Paul uses Moses, who held the highest Old Testament office, to contrast and to show the superior glory of the Christian ministry.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

¹
R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of I and II Corinthians. (Columbus, O.: Lutheran Book Concern, 1935), p. 954.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Major Problem: What is the meaning of
"Beholding as in a glass" in
2 Cor. 3:18?

VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS

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"Beholding as in a glass" in
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The Gospel as Mirror View

A general expression of the view is clearly
presented in the words of Kling in Lange's Commentary:

This word which is not found at all in the LXX, and occurs in the New Testament only in this place, has the sense in the active voice of: to show in a mirror, or, as in a mirror to reflect; and in the middle to reflect one's self, to see one's self in a glass. With reference to the example of Moses, we may interpret the words thus: we show to ourselves in a mirror the glory of the Lord; and in doing so we are not veiled as Moses, but we have uncovered faces. We are compelled, however, by both the preceding and succeeding context, to think of a looking of believers, 1) in contrast with the Israelites, who were kept from looking upon the Divine glory by a covering upon their hearts; and 2) with reference to the being changed (μεταμορφοῦμεθα) connected with this looking (comp. 1 Jn. 3:2). κατοπτρίζεσθαι has therefore the meaning in this place of: to perceive as in a mirror. There is no imperfection of vision necessarily implied here, as in 1 Cor. 13:12. The glass is not the internal spirit, i. e., the heart of the believer (for the eye which looks is supposed to be there), but the Gospel.
1. The object beheld, was the glory of the Lord. Paul had shown this to be Christ (ver. 17), but He is here contemplated as an image (εἰκόνα) in a mirror (not "a glass," but κατόπτρον.) An image is usually an imperfect likeness (1 Cor. 13:12), and the Gospel must imperfectly represent Him. It is not the objective and glorified Christ that we see.
2. The act of beholding, is here (not ἀτενίζω, as with Moses, but) κατοπτρίζω. The rays reflected are

and not directly received. The ancient expositors usually interpreted this word in the sense of reflecting as in a mirror, meaning that believers reflect the glory of the Lord, and they are followed by Luther, Olshausen, Billroth, and Stanley. But most modern commentators have felt compelled to disregard their authority, high as it is on such a question, and to take the word in the sense of beholding as in a mirror. Though they have been able to appeal to but one well established quotation (Philo) to sustain them in such a usage, one instance especially in Alexandrian Greek is sufficient, with the obvious necessities of the context, to warrant us in adopting such a meaning. Certainly no instance has been found in which the word has the meaning: to reflect, and we can see no connection between reflecting the Divine image and being changed into the same. . . . The moment we. . . recognize and surrender our hearts to Christ, we renounce all idea of satisfaction in ourselves or our doings, and we lay hold on Christ as the only source of peace or life. The veil immediately drops from our spiritual face, the divine glory in the Scriptures acquires a wonderful lustre, our souls become thoroughly enamored of God in Christ, and we begin to grow into the image of holy love as it beams from the Gospel.²

Gill,³ Calvin,⁴ McCosh,⁵ Jamieson, Fausset and

²Christian F. Kling, "The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians," trans. Conway P. Wing, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, eds. John Peter Lange and Philip Schaff. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), VI, N. T., 58-60.

³John Gill, An Exposition of the New Testament. (London: William Hill Collingridge, 1853), II, 297.

⁴John Calvin, Commentary on the Epistles to the Corinthians, trans. and ed. John Pringle. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., reprinted 1948), II, 186, 187.

⁵M. McCosh, "Second Corinthians," The Biblical Illustrator, ed. Joseph S. Exell. (New York: Revell, n. d.) p. 118.

Brown,⁶ Pool,⁷ Farrar,⁸ Gould,⁹ and Alford,¹⁰ agree with this. Among the lexicographers, those preferring the "Gospel as Mirror" view are Arndt and Gingrich,¹¹ Thayer,¹² and Robinson.¹³

The reader will notice that Kling uses Gospel, Word, and Scriptures interchangeably. Throughout this paper, the writer does likewise, understanding all three words as referring to that body of truth which finds its center in the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁶Robert Jamieson, A. R. Faussett, and David Brown, A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, n. d.), II, 305.

⁷Matthew Pool, Annotations Upon the Holy Bible. (New York: Robert Carter and Bros., 1853), III, 611.

⁸Fredric W. Farrar, "II Corinthians," The Pulpit Commentary, eds. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., reprinted 1950), XIX, 61.

⁹E. P. Gould, "Commentary on the Epistles to the Corinthians," An American Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Alvah Hovey. (Philadelphia: American Baptist Pub. Soc., 1887), p. 168.

¹⁰Henry Alford, The Greek Testament. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894), II, 648.

¹¹William Arndt and Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 425, 426.

¹²Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament. (Corrected ed.; New York: American Book Co., 1886), p. 341.

¹³Edward Robinson, Greek and English Lexicon. (New York: Harper and Bros., 1858), p. 393.

The Believer as Mirror View

Olshausen treats the verse as follows:

Paul in conclusion portrays in himself and all believers this condition of liberty effected by the Spirit of the Lord. This freedom effected by the Lord (ἀπὸ κυρίου) manifests itself by imparting its glory to believers, which beams from their unveiled face, which mirrors itself in them. In Christianity all are become like Moses, with each regenerate soul the Lord speaks, as a man with his friend, nay, this glory increases in itself until the believer is transformed into the image of Christ.--This explanation of the passage agrees most strictly with the connection; the κατοπτρίζεσθαι alone forms a difficulty. This expression elsewhere occurs only in the signification of "to reflect one's self, to behold one's self in a mirror," or as deponent, to see something in a mirror. But with this the thought becomes obscure. The μεταμορφούμεθα plainly proves that the apostle considers the Christians themselves as those in whom the glory of the Lord is displayed; for from its continual operation, they are described as gradually transformed into the image of Christ. It is therefore impossible that Paul should but just previously say that they behold the glory in some way without themselves, and indeed only in a mirror. κατοπτρίζεσθαι is rather here employed in the sense of to reflect as from a mirror, i. e., to beam forth, to reflect back the glory, so that the parallel with Moses again presents itself; only while the latter veiled his countenance, and its brightness speedily vanished (ver. 13), and Christians walk with uncovered face for their glory steadily increases; they are conducted from one degree of glory to another (ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν), and transformed into the image of Christ.¹⁴

This view is held by the following commentators and lexicographers: Marcus Dods,¹⁵

¹⁴Herman Olshausen, Biblical Commentary on the New Testament, trans. A. C. Kendrick. (New York: Sheldon & Co., 1861), IV, 433, 434.

¹⁵Marcus Dods, "Second Corinthians," The Biblical Illustrator, ed. Joseph S. Exell. (New York: Revell, n. d.), p. 110.

Hay-Aitken,¹⁶ Williams,¹⁷ Robertson,¹⁸ Luther,¹⁹
 Abbott-Smith,²⁰ Liddell and Scott,²¹ Lenski,²²
 MacClaren²³ and Ironside.²⁴

¹⁶W. Hay-Aitken, "Second Corinthians," The Biblical Illustrator, ed. Joseph S. Exell. (New York: Revell, n. d.), p. 112.

¹⁷George Williams, The Student's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Pub. Co., 1949), pp. 899-900.

¹⁸A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament. (New York: Harper and Bros., 1931), IV, 223.

¹⁹George Frederick Luther, "Annotations on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians," The Lutheran Commentary, ed. Henry Jacobs. (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1897), VIII, 197.

²⁰G. Abbott-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clarke, reprinted 1944), p. 242.

²¹H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, Greek-English Lexicon, Revised Seventh Edition. (Oxford: Oxford Press, n. d.), pp. 787, 788.

²²Lenski, op. cit., p. 976.

²³Alexander MacClaren, "Corinthians to II Corinthians Chapter V," Expositions of the Holy Scripture. (New York: George H. Doran Co., n. d.), pp. 308, 309.

²⁴H. A. Ironside, Addresses 1 on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. (New York: Loizeaux Bros., 1939), p. 93.

The Combined Beholding and Reflecting View

This view is held primarily by men who are interpreting κατοπτρίζεσθαι in its fullest sense. The commentators who take this view see two mirrors-- the primary one being the Gospel, which means they could all be claimed for the "Gospel as Mirror" view, and a secondary mirror which is the Christian.

Doddridge,²⁵ quoted in Valpy's New Testament endorses this view as follows:

Moses saw the Shekinah, and it rendered his face resplendent, so that he covered it with a veil, the Jews not being able to bear the reflected light: we behold Christ, as in the glass of his word, and (as the reflection of a very luminous object from a mirror gilds the face on which the reverberated rays fall) our faces shine too; and we veil them not, but diffuse the lustre, which as we discover more and more of his glories in the Gospel, is continually increasing.

In agreement are Butler,²⁶ Benson,²⁷ Denney,²⁸

²⁵E. Valpy, The New Testament. (London: A. J. Valpy, 1836), II, 477, 478.

²⁶J. Glentworth Butler, The Bible Readers' Commentary. (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1879), II, N. T. 355.

²⁷Joseph Benson, The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (New York: T. Carlton & J. Porte n. d.), V, 226.

²⁸James Denney, "II Corinthians, Galatians," The Expositor's Bible. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1900), pp. 136-143.

Weiss,²⁹ and Vincent.³⁰

The Christ as mirror view.--The believer beholds

the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Daniel Whitby writes:

The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shines as in a glass which reflects the image upon us Christians, so that we all are transformed. . . and so the glory which the Father gave to Him He hath given to us (Jn. 17:22).³¹

Thomas Scott also holds this view.³²

The mirror simile view.--The believer sees the glory of the Lord in the Word as clearly as he sees his own face in a mirror.

Gray and Adams take this view: "Beholding . . . the Lord," Beholding the glory of the Lord in the Word, as clearly as our own faces in a mirror.³³

²⁹Bernhard Weiss, A Commentary on the New Testament. Trans. George M. Schodde and Epiphanius Wilson. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1906), III, 302.

³⁰Marvin Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), III, 309.

³¹Daniel Whitby, A Commentary on the Gospels and

Minor Views

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³¹Daniel Whitby, "A Commentary on the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament," Commentary on the Scriptures, ed. Symon Patrick. (Philadelphia: Frederick Scofield and Co., 1877), IV, 686.

³²Thomas Scott, The Holy Bible. (Boston: Samuel T. Armstrong, and Crocker and Brewster, 1831), VI, 218.

³³James C. Gray and George M. Adams, Gray and Adams' Bible Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, n. d.), VI, 189.

WRITER'S INTERPRETATION

Major Problem: What is the Meaning of "Beholding as in a glass" in 2 Cor. 3:18?

Gospel as Mirror View

The writer of this monograph accepts the view that the best meaning for the Greek word κατοπτρίζομαι is "beholding as in a mirror." He therefore holds to the view that the mirror is the Word of God. This view is supported by arguments from the standpoint of linguistics, context, exegesis, doctrine, and parallel passages.

Linguistic Argument

The middle voice of κατοπτρίζω means among the Greeks to look into, to behold oneself in a mirror. Meyer and Calvin document their examination of this word. The following are some examples:

I. "To this head belong Athen. XV, p. 687 C, and all the passages in Wetstein, also Artemidorus, II, 7."¹

¹Heinrich A. Wielhelm Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Hand Book to the Epistles to the Corinthians. Trans. D. Douglas Bannerman. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1890), p. 481.

II. Thus Plato says τοῖς μεθουσι συνεβούλευε
κατοπτρίσθαι -- "He advised drunken persons to
 look at themselves in a mirror." So also Diogenes
 Laert (in Socrate) Ἡεῖον δὲ τοὺς νέους συνεχῶς
κατοπτρίσθαι. He thought that young men should
 frequently look at themselves in a mirror.²

III. This meaning is unquestionably found in
 Philo (Loesner, Obss. p. 304). See especially Alleg.

p. 79E: μηδὲ κατοπτρίσαιμην ἐν ἄλλῃ
τινὶ τὴν σὴν ἰδέαν ἢ ἐν σοὶ τῷ θεῷ.³

"Nor let me see thy form mirrored in any other
 thing than in Thee, even in God."

The Philo passage expresses the idea of seeing
 by means of a mirror.

No instance has been found where the word means
 to reflect. The difficulty has arisen undoubtedly be-
 cause κατοπτρίσω in its active form means to show
 in a mirror, or as in a mirror to reflect, but this idea
 has not been carried over into the middle voice, at least
 so far as the classics are concerned.

Understanding the middle to mean "to look at
 oneself in a mirror" the writer here quotes Denney:

This, at least, is the sense of most of the
 examples of the middle which are found in Greek
 writers; but as it is quite inapplicable here, the
 question of interpretation becomes rather difficult.

²John Calvin, Commentary on the Epistles of
Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, trans. John Pringle.
 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., reprinted 1948),
 II, 186.

³Meyer, loc. cit.

It is, however, in accordance with analogy to say that if the active means "to show in a mirror," the middle means "to get shown to one in a mirror," or, as the Authorized Version puts it, "to behold in a mirror." I cannot make out that any analogy favors the new rendering, "reflecting as a mirror"; and the authority of Chrysostom, which would otherwise be considerable on this side, is lessened by the fact that he seems never to have raised the question, and in some point of fact combines both renderings. His illustration of the polished silver lying in the sunshine, and sending back the rays which strike it, is in favor of the change; but when he writes, "We not only look upon the glory of God, but also catch thence a kind of radiance," he may fairly be claimed for the other side.⁴

Since the meaning has to be governed by Paul's usage of the word, it seems more logical to preserve the middle idea of "beholding" rather than to preserve the active meaning of "reflect," and lose the force of the middle.

From the linguistic viewpoint, "beholding as in a mirror" is the better meaning to give this present middle participle.

Bear in mind that the literal veil of Moses is used here in a spiritual symbolical sense. It is on Moses' face in verse 13, on Israel's mind in verse 14, and on Israel's heart in verse 15. In verse 16, it is seen removed from the believer's face. The first occurrence is literal, the next three are figurative.

Alford writes concerning verses 14-16:

The contrast is now made between the children of Israel, on whose heart this veil still is in

⁴Denney, op. cit., pp. 137, 138.

Contextual Argument

The contrast in this passage is between the Jews, or the unconverted, of verse 15, and Christians. The former were blinded by a veil; the latter see with an unveiled face. The one see and the others do not.

To see this plainer the preceding context should be further explained. Paul makes the fading of the glory a symbol of the transitoriness of the Law and the veil a symbol of obscurity and concealment. In these two respects the Gospel ministration is superior to that of the Law, for the Gospel, instead of diminishing, extends into eternity with increasing brightness, and the Christ of the Gospel lifts away the veil separating men from the light.

Paul's usage of the veil is intricate and easily confused, but this is the writer's explanation.

Bear in mind that the literal veil of Moses is used here in a spiritual symbolical sense. It is on Moses' face in verse 13, on Israel's mind in verse 14, and on Israel's heart in verse 15. In verse 18, it is seen removed from the believer's face. The first occurrence is literal, the next three are figurative.

Alford writes concerning verses 14-18:

The contrast is now made between the children of Israel, on whose heart this veil still is in

the reading of the Old Testament, and us all (Christians), who with uncovered face behold the glory of the Lord. This section is parenthetical. Before and after it, the ministry is the subject: in it, they to whom the ministry is directed. But it serves to show the whole spirit and condition of the two classes, and thus further to substantiate the character of openness and freedom asserted of the Christian ministry.⁵

"The same veil" (14) once regarded on Moses' face is now laid "upon their hearts" (15). While they listened to Moses, he was active, they were passive; but after Moses passed from the scene, oral teaching was replaced by written admonition. The Israelites had to become active listeners because the book was passive. The book is the same no matter who reads it, but only those whose heart is unveiled can perceive it. The nation of Israel has a veil on her heart, though there have always been a few individuals who have seen the glory of God.

Thus, since Moses, the veil has ceased to be objective. It has become subjective, no longer on the face of the speaker, but on the heart of the reader, or the one listening to the reading.

Since the agent is now changed from Moses' speaking to the children of Israel listening, Paul changes the veil accordingly.

Approaching verse 18, one would expect to find an unveiled heart, in contrast to the veiled heart of

⁵Alford, op. cit., p. 646.

15 and 16, instead of an unveiled face,

but Paul changes the figure, because he wishes here to represent the persons not as hearing, but as seeing, and therewith his conception has manifestly returned to the history of Moses who appeared before God with the veil removed.⁶

The veiled heart and the unveiled face represent the same thing, that is, the spiritual center of man's being; and since they do refer to the same thing, here lies the proof that Paul is contrasting the spiritual conditions of saved and lost men. The Jews are lost because their spiritual centers are veiled from seeing Christ in the Law.. "But whensoever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away" (verse 16, ASV). Christians are saved because they have turned to the Lord; the veil is lifted from their spiritual centers.

In the words of Gould:

The mirror is the word preached, or as we have it, written, through which the knowledge of Christ is obtained. Men do not, since Christ left the world see Him as one sees a reflection in a mirror, through the spoken or written record.⁷

The importance of establishing that the contrast is between Christians and the unsaved Jews will be seen in the refutation of the "Christian as mirror" view.

⁶Meyer, op. cit., p. 480.

⁷Gould, loc. cit.

Exegetical Argument

There is only one point necessary to consider, since the meaning of κατοπτιζόμενοι has already been dealt with in the linguistic argument.

In support of the contextual argument, the first three Greek words of the verses are very helpful.

ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες

The object of δὲ is not to put the content of this verse in contrast with what has been written in the preceding verses about Moses or Israel, as if to suggest what was true of one is true of all, but simply to indicate a continuance of the discourse. Meyer suggests that δὲ "forms the transitions from the thing (ἐλευθερία) to the persons, in whom the thing presents itself in definite form."⁸

The primary emphasis of the verse is on ἡμεῖς (we), the subject of the sentence. The addition of πάντες is not for emphasis in order to contrast "all" with the one Moses, but rather to expand ἡμεῖς to include all believers. By the close connection to verse 17 "we all" are understood to mean, "all of us whom the Spirit of the Lord has set free." The emphasis on ἡμεῖς contrasts that word with the οἱ Ἰσραήλ whom Paul has just been discussing.

⁸Meyer, loc. cit.

Doctrinal Argument

This verse has real significance with regard to the doctrine of present sanctification, but only if the mirror is the Word.

By definition, present sanctification is "a present work of God whereby the believer is progressively set apart from sin and brought toward perfection."⁹

Scripture is very clear that the method of present sanctification is through the instrumentality of the Word. Jesus said: Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth" (Jno. 17:17, ASV).

The Word reveals man's sinful conditions:

For the Word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12, ASV).

The Word cleanses from sin: ". . .ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you" (Jno. 15:3, ASV). Just as the blood deals with the guilt of sin, so the Word deals with the habit of sin:

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him: he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked (1 Jno. 1:4-6).

⁹Alva J. McClain, "The Doctrine of Sanctification," (Unpublished notes for theology class, Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, Ind., n. d.), p. 54, (mimeographed).

As a result of a progressive cleansing from the habit of sin, it follows that the Word is continually perfecting the believer. Second Corinthians 3:18 fits in beautifully here if κατοπτριζόμενοι be understood as "beholding as in a mirror." But 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" (ASV). Taking the mirror to be the Word, the believer looks into the Word, sees reflected there the image of Christ, and is transformed unto that same image. Thus the Word is used by the Holy Spirit to accomplish progressive transformation "from glory to glory."

A passage in 2 Thessalonians is quite clear that the Holy Spirit uses the Word to accomplish present sanctification, which lends strong support to the idea that the Word is referred to in the problem passage. Paul writes:

But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours (2 Th. 2:13-15, ASV).

Argument from Parallel Passages

Outstanding, besides those verses discussed under the doctrinal argument, are 1 Cor. 13:12, 1 Jno. 3:2, and Jas. 1:23-25.

For now we see in a mirror, darkly (enigmatically), but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known (1 Cor. 13:12, ASV).

No matter how clearly a believer sees the glory of God, it will never be, during this present age, clearer than this verse states. His vision is reflected in a mirror, indirect, not as it one day shall be, "face to face."

That the mirror is the Word in this verse closely parallels the common meaning attached to Paul's usage of κατοπτρίζόμενοι in the problem passage.

The very familiar 1 Jno. 3:2 passage carries this thought that it is not yet clear what the believer shall be, because he does not have a direct vision of Christ. This strengthens the idea that he sees Christ now only as He is reflected in his Word.

James compares a man looking at his face in a mirror with one who "looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty," which clearly is the Word, the Gospel of Christ. One could not help but see the parallel between Jas. 1:23-26 and 2 Cor. 3:18.

In James the one who continues looking into the Word, "being a doer that worketh," shall be blessed in his doing.

In 2 Corinthians, all believers who behold in the mirror of the Word the glory of God are continually being "transformed into the same image" which they see reflected there.

The author maintains that beholding by the help of a mirror does not lack linguistic evidence (see linguistic argument); and Paul did not use *katoptrizo* because he did not mean simply "behold, but "beholding in a mirror."

Moreover the dative "with unveiled face, points too plainly, not to the "sons of Israel," but to Moses who faced God without a veil and to believers who turn to the Lord having the veil forever removed.¹⁰

As was pointed out in the contextual and exegetical arguments, the contrast is between the sons of Israel and believers. If there must be a contrast with Moses, the obvious one would be between him and the "we" of verse 12: "we use great boldness of speech and are not as Moses who put a veil upon his face."

¹⁰ Lenski, *loc. cit.*

¹¹ Lenski, *loc. cit.*

Refutation of Opposing Views

The believer as mirror view.--This view is refuted by all five of the writer's arguments. To give scholars voice who hold this view, however, the author here quotes Lenski, who writes:

The dictionaries are peculiarly unsatisfactory in regard to the middle participle κατοπτριζόμενοι. The idea of the κάτοπτρον or mirror is retained: to behold in or by the help of a mirror, which the commentators have frequently attempted to make serve, understanding as the mirror Christ, or the Word, or the believer's heart. This idea lacks linguistic evidence, especially here where if "beholding" is meant we have had ἀτενίσειν twice (verse 7 and 13).¹⁰

The author maintains that beholding by the help of a mirror does not lack linguistic evidence (see linguistic argument); and Paul did not use ἀτενίσειν because he did not mean simply "behold, but "beholding as in a mirror."

Moreover the dative "with unveiled face, points too plainly, not to the "sons of Israel," but to Moses who faced God without a veil and to believers who turn to the Lord having the veil forever removed.¹¹

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¹⁰ Lenski, loc. cit.

¹¹ Lenski, loc. cit.

Continuing with Lenski: *---This minor view is*

The whole context as well as the original Greek usage compel us to discard these mistaken views, (beholding as in a glass, AV; beholding as in a mirror, RV margin), and to take the meaning "reflecting as in a mirror." On the face of Moses the glory of the judgment of God was reflected; on our face the Lord's Gospel glory.¹²

Nowhere in Scripture is there the implication that a person is transformed because he reflects what he has seen. The causal relationship does exist, however, between the beholding and the transformation. The believer is transformed because he beholds. Even though he does not yet see Christ face to face, the vision he has through the Word begins his conformity to Christ.

This is not to say that the idea of the believer reflecting Christ must be given up. Though it is lost in κατοπτρίζομενοι, it is preserved in μεταμορφούμεθα. The transformation has the reflection of Christ's glory for its effect, not for its cause; but the reflection is eventually there. It is well to keep in mind that the image of God in man, when discussed in Scripture, is not so much a physical, but a mental and moral image.

The combined beholding and reflecting view.--
This view is refuted by the linguistic argument and the last paragraph of the preceding refutation.

¹²Lenski, loc. cit.

The Christ as mirror view.--This minor view is refuted by the doctrinal argument. It is true that Christ is the image of the Father. In Heb. 1:3, He is called "the express image of his person," but the Greek word is χαρακτήρ (an exact copy or representation), not εἰκὼν (likeness, profile, resemblance) which is used in 2 Cor. 3:18. The εἰκὼν is what one would expect to see in a mirror, because of its limitations. But if Christ is the mirror, then there should be no limitations or imperfections.

The mirror simile view.--This view is not wholly inaccurate, but unnecessary. Perhaps Gray and Adams in accordance with their objective of clarifying by illustration, expressed themselves in this way to make the meaning plain for their readers.

ENGLISH PARAPHRASE

But we all, that is, all Christians whom the Holy Spirit has set free, with our faces unveiled, that is, with the veil of sin lifted from our hearts, beholding as in a mirror, which is the Word of God, the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, are continually being transformed into the same image which we see in the mirror, from one degree of glory to another, even as by the Lord the Spirit.

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