

## THE BYSTANDERS.

(By A. W. Lewis, B.D.)

Dvorak has composed a great oratorio, which he calls *The Symphony of the New World*. He gathered up fragments of music native to the New World such as negro melodies; and he beautified these, and wove them into one grand, master-piece of harmonies. In every man there are chords capable of development and snatches at least of native music. Christ takes these melodies and exalts them into a divine oratorio, and so transforms the innate capacities, that chords which were broken will vibrate once more. Thus He can make human life one grand symphony of the New Affection. This is the resurrection of man's buried magnificence. It is from this viewpoint that we should regard the bystander.

Jesus came back into Judea at the call of the sorrowing sisters in Bethany, whom He loved. Thus He put Himself into the hands of the bitter foes who plotted His death. The disciples realized the peril and Thomas said, "Let us also go that we may die with Him." Martha and Mary were well known and well beloved. Their brother Lazarus had now been dead four days; and his body was lying in the tomb. Many had come to the darkened home to comfort the bereaved family. Jesus and His disciples visited the tomb and awaited the coming of the sisters. Martha first and then Mary heard that He was there; and they went out to meet Him. The mourners followed, not knowing where they were going. In a few minutes a large company of Jews assembled at the place of the dead, with Jesus in their midst. He wept in sympathy with the weeping ones; for He "loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus." He spoke words of comfort and then, "groaning in Himself," He came to the grave, and ordered the stone to be taken away. In the midst of personal danger overwhelmed with the tide of sorrow, face to face with earth's greatest secret, announcing His mission to perishing humanity, and about to assert the power of life centreing in Himself, He did not forget the bystanders. "And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

Many to-day in their zeal to be abreast of the most advanced thinkers say that miracles do not prove the source of Christianity. It is interesting to see what Jesus thought, what use He made of the raising of Lazarus. He was not satisfied to let the act speak for itself. Being the author of the "sign," He felt He had a right to interpret its deeper meaning, for those that had ears to hear. "Because of the multitude that stand around I said it, that they may believe that Thou didst send Me."

Jesus' treatment of the bystanders is an expression of how God treats you and me, how He treats the human race, which stands around His works and ways. "It is not God's will that anyone should perish, but that all should come to Him and live." He makes His presence felt by every human being. Wherever the missionaries have gone in all the world, even among the most degraded savages, they have found men groping after God, assured that He is not far from any one of us. This is the universal source of religion. It is the capacity for God in man responding to God's attitude towards the bystanders. As Jesus laid His hand in blessing upon the head of little children, as He touched even the shunned lepers, as He took the hand of the dead and restored them to life; so He now by His Spirit pours forth the life-giving efficacy of His love into the hearts of the bystanders, at the point of contact. Not even the worst prodigal can say that God does not care for him. The Father thinks of him, as he stands outside the realm of good; and he yearns after him.

When a man comes to himself he realizes the Heavenly Father's love; and he says within his heart: "I will arise and go to the Father."

As God reaches out to the bystanders, He used your hand and mine, by which to touch them. If we are to have the spirit of Christ towards the bystander, and if we have not the spirit of Christ we are none of His; then we must see eye to eye with Him. We must be able to see beneath the exterior of man, which may repel us; and ponder the greatness of the human soul and the possibilities of life even in this world. Then we will continually reach out beyond ourselves, to be the hand of God to others, "for the sake of the multitude that stand around, that they may believe" in Jesus Christ.

It is much to be true and helpful to our own family, and to those that are friendly with us; but even pagans will do as much. It is characteristic of Christ and His followers to have regard for the outsider, the bystander, the one that sees us at a distance. It is Christlike to try to help those in our own "set" and in our own church; but the spirit of Christ in us enables us to see the eternal possibilities for us in the bystander. It is better to win one soul from selfishness and animalism and sin than to gain possession of millions of dollars of bank stock and railways and gold mines. In our eagerness to gain treasures we often make woful miscalculations, so that we look right over the heads of our bystanders. The priest and the Levite avoided the bystander; but the good Samaritan saw his opportunity and made the most of it. That Samaritan is to-day the richest of the three.

Livingstone had regard for the outsider, when he went to Africa. While there he saw a poor, diseased, repulsive woman by the roadside. His companions wondered how he could touch her and why he wished to help her; but he saw a fragment of God's work and a soul with a capacity for God's spirit. Here was one for whom Christ would have had pity, and for whom He died. Even the natives appreciated his faith in humanity; and when he died two of them lovingly bore his embalmed body hundreds of miles to the coast and went with it to Westminster Abbey. Livingstone had the spirit of Christ, such as Christians have everywhere.

Jesus had faith in the bystanders, even though they were Pharisees, who hated Him. For their sakes He lived openly His faith in the Father—Almighty. As Christians we all strive to lead others to Christ, as Andrew brought his brother Simon. We should always keep the bystander in mind, and have faith in his capacity for good, and for God. The pessimist, the cynic, the defamer, sees only the outward mistakes and sins. He is tempted to rail against the worst in the bystander, and thus drive him away in bitterness of soul. We should show the spirit of Christ in treating the worst of men as if they were all that they might be. We then try to win them by living the winsomeness of Jesus. Our faith and our sympathy win their confidence and their love, thus opening their heart to the love of God in Jesus Christ. This is the only way to the higher life in man, to renew the image of God in his soul. Our sacrifice of self for them enables them to understand and believe in the love and sacrifice of Christ for them. They are constrained to love Him when they are convinced that He loves them first.

When we live for the bystander, we not only help him, giving him a vision of life and a greater power to realize it; but it is the greatest possible advantage to ourselves. The only one that truly lives is the one that lives for others. To live for self only is to be dead while we live. The virtues and the graces divine wither and die in the atmosphere of vanity and self-seeking, as the flowers perish around the western lake of alkali. The rich man did not abuse the beggar

Lazarus, who sat at his gate. He even allowed his dogs to minister to him and his servants to give him crumbs from his table. He simply ignored his presence, like many to-day, that have it in their power to help. At the end of his mortal life the rich man found that he had nothing but mortal things, and these must perish on earth while he went into the great beyond, the great unknown. The cultured of Greece neglected the bystander; and its glory went out into darkness. The powerful of Rome ignored the rights of the weak bystander; and its world-wide empire was swamped in a sea of corruption. The salvation of our own great cities must be found in our regard for the good of the bystanders, who are coming in like a flood from every nation under the sun.

Our fortune is increased by the good of the bystander, whom we help. The church must "make good" and must increase by the winning of the bystander. To injure those that stand by is to injure ourselves. Many are tempted to make large gains by trampling upon the rights of others, by sharp practice. A young doctor confessed that he might easily have won a high position and wealth if he had been willing to depart just a little from the Golden Rule; but he said he could not do it; for he must forever live with himself. We must take account of conscience; for conscience outraged will reckon with us, and it will have a long time to unbind us for short-sighted folly and inconsiderate selfishness. He lives best who lives most like Jesus; and He was true to God publicly, "because of the multitude that stood around, that they might believe."

A young man went out to Africa as a missionary. In one year he lay dying. Sad? A misfortune? No. And he realized that it was best to have regard for the bystander, even if we die in helping him. He spoke to his friend at his side. "Yes. You will go to Manchester, to my old Sunday school; and you will tell the girl I was going to make my wife that my last words were, 'Let a thousand die, but never give up Africa.' It was worth while living in Africa even for one year, when he lived for the great multitude that stood around the lone disciples of Jesus. James Russell Lowell has expressed this truth in writing of the United States of America after the slaves were emancipated.

"For it was felt from pole to pole,  
Without a need of proclamation;  
Earth's biggest country's got her soul  
And risen up earth's greatest nation."

Shortly before he died, Shelley had a dream. In it his disembodied spirit seemed to come to him and ask him, "Art thou satisfied?" A great truth we all believe, but which we are so prone to forget is that we are hastening to the world of spirits, and the spirit life is the essential life. If we think only of the life of the mortal body then we are tempted to forget the bystander, and live only for self. Its pleasures and its gains will be our life; and all will be buried in the grave with the body corruptible. It is not wonderful that to the selfish worldling death is full of terrors. But if we forget our own pleasure and worldly gains in striving to help the bystander, we lose the lower life to gain the higher life. We sow a kindly act and reap a worthy habit. We sow this habit and reap a Christianlike character. Blessed indeed are those that continually feel the presence of the spirit world, the presence of the spirit of God, who is the Father of our spirit; for then it is easy, then it is joyous, then it is the passion of life to invest our influence in the life of immortals. "Every one that hath left houses or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for My Name's sake shall receive a hundredfold and shall inherit eternal life." (Matt. 19:29).

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