

THE PRESENT TRUTH

Bishop Stephen D. Lewis

What Is It That They Hear?

Eve was surprised and startled as she thus seemed to hear the echo of her thoughts. But the serpent continued, in a musical voice, with subtle praise of her surpassing loveliness; (Patriarchs and Prophets Pg.54)

As Moses and Joshua came down from the mount, the former bearing the "tables of the testimony," they heard the shouts and outcries of the excited multitude, evidently in a state of wild uproar. To Joshua the soldier, the first thought was of an attack from their enemies. "There is a noise of war in the camp," he said. But Moses judged more truly the nature of the commotion. The sound was not that of combat, but of revelry. "It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome; but the noise of them that sing do I hear."

As they drew near the encampment, they beheld the people shouting and dancing around their idol. It was a scene of heathen riot, an imitation of the idolatrous feasts of Egypt; but how unlike the solemn and reverent worship of God! Moses was overwhelmed. He had just come from the presence of God's glory... (Patriarchs and Prophets Pg.319-320)

At Balaam's suggestion, a grand festival in honor of their gods was appointed by the king of Moab, and it was secretly arranged that Balaam should induce the Israelites to attend. He was regarded by them as a prophet of God, and hence had little difficulty in accomplishing his purpose. Great numbers of the people joined him in witnessing the festivities. They ventured upon the forbidden ground, and were entangled in the snare of Satan. Beguiled with music and dancing, and allured by the beauty of heathen vestals, they cast off their fealty to Jehovah. (Patriarchs and Prophets Pg.454)

To us the warning is given, "All these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." Mark the influence of their extremes and fanaticism in the service of the great master worker, Satan. As soon as the wicked one had the people under his control, there were exhibitions of a satanic character. The people ate and drank without a thought of God and His mercy, without a thought of the necessity of resisting the devil, who was leading them on to the most shameful deeds. The same spirit was manifested as at the sacrilegious feast of Belshazzar. There was glee and dancing, hilarity and singing, carried to an infatuation that beguiled the senses; then the indulgence in inordinate, lustful affections--all this mingled in that disgraceful scene. God had been dishonored; His people had become a shame in the sight of the heathen. Judgments were about to fall on that infatuated, besotted multitude. Yet God in His mercy gave them opportunity to forsake their sins. (Testimonies to Ministers 102)

When professing Christians reach the high standard which it is their privilege to reach, the simplicity of Christ will be maintained in all their worship. Forms and ceremonies and musical accomplishments are not the strength of the church... The Lord has revealed to me that when the heart is cleansed and sanctified, and the members of the church are partakers of the divine nature, a power will go forth from the church, who believe the truth, that will cause melody in the heart. Men and women will not then depend upon their instrumental music but on the power and grace of God, which will give fullness of joy. There is a work to be done in clearing away the rubbish which has been brought into the church. . . (Manuscript 157, 1899)

"Queen of Gospel " Mahalia Jackson Oct. 26, 1911, New Orleans, La, Jan. 27, 1972, Evergreen Park, near Chicago, Ill. As a child, Jackson sang in the choir of the small New Orleans church in which her father was a Sundaypreacher, and she grew up in a very strict religious environment. She learned sacred songs but also, in the homes of friends and neighbours, became acquainted with the recordings of such blues singers as Bessie Smith and Ida Cox. Their syncopation entered her religious singing. At the age of 16 she went to Chicago, where she worked at various odd jobs and, while singing with a touring quintet of gospel singers, saved enough money to open a beauty shop and then a flower shop and to invest in real estate. Jackson's extraordinary voice first came to wide public attention in the 1930s, when she participated in a cross-country gospel tour singing such songs as "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands," "I Can Put My Trust in Jesus," and her first recording (1934), "God Gonna Separate the Wheat from the Tares." Later Jackson's records sold in the millions, and with them came a recognition beyond the black communities. This brought about her first appearance at New York's Carnegie Hall on Oct. 4, 1950. Radio and television appearances were followed by tours at home and abroad, including an appearance at the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, where she joined with Duke Ellington in his gospel interlude Black, Brown, and Beige. Jackson was active in the black Civil Rights Movement from 1955, when she went to Montgomery, Ala., to support Martin Luther King's bus boycott. In 1963 she sang at the Washington, D.C., rally at which King gave the eloquent oration

"I have a dream." Jackson was married and divorced twice and, in her final years, suffered from a series of illnesses. (Ebony Magazine 1999)

How can I endure the thought that most of the youth in this age will come short of everlasting life! Oh, that the sound of instrumental music might cease and they no more waste away so much precious time in pleasing their own fancy. Oh, that they would devote less time to dress and vain conversation, and send forth their earnest, agonizing prayers to God for a sound experience. There is great necessity for close self-examination in the light of God's word; let each one raise the inquiry: "Am I sound, or am I rotten at heart? Am I renewed in Christ, or am I still carnal at heart, with a new dress put on the outside?" Rein yourself up to the great tribunal, and in the light of God examine to see if there be any secret sin that you are cherishing, any idol that you have not sacrificed. Pray, yes, pray as you have never prayed before, that you may not be deluded by Satan's devices, that you may not be given up to a heedless, careless, vain spirit, and attend to religious duties to quiet your own conscience. (Testimonies for the Church Volume Two Pg.144)

It is not a conclusive evidence that a man is a Christian because he manifests spiritual ecstasy under extraordinary circumstances. Holiness is not rapture: (rap.ture= a state or experience of being carried away by overwhelming emotion) it is an entire surrender of the will to God; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; (The Acts of the Apostles PG- 51)

Please compare your music to this final statement:

Good singing is like the music of the birds--subdued and melodious. (Manuscript 91, 1903)

Conformity to worldly customs converts the church to the world; it never converts the world to Christ. Familiarity with sin will inevitably cause it to appear less repulsive. He who chooses to associate with the servants of Satan, will soon cease to fear their master. When in the way of duty we are brought into trial, as was Daniel in the king's court, we may be sure that God will protect us; but if we place ourselves under temptation, we shall fall sooner or later. (The Great Controversy [1888 edition] Pg.509)

There are multitudes today as truly under the power of evil spirits as was the demoniac of Capernaum. All who willfully depart from God's commandments are placing themselves under the control of Satan... The subtlety of Satan will not decrease, but the wisdom given to men through a living connection with the Source of all light and divine knowledge will be proportionate to his arts and wiles. (The Faith I Live By Pg.312)

Solomon says, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Prov. 28:26); and there are hundreds of such to be found among professors of godliness. (The Faith I Live By Pg.313)

Our Prophet gives us firm warnings; the honest in heart will take heed. The multitude will never heed, because the broad road is full. The narrow road is going in the opposite direction of the crowd. Is your road crowded?

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