

ESSENTIAL MANIFESTATION

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Essential Manifestation

Merry Christmas

496

in 14 series
from

Procession of Doctrine

by

GEORGE VERNER BISHOP
Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Bishop

1955

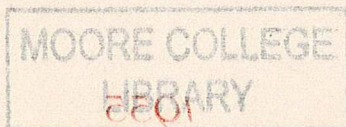
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Lecture Number

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• Essential Manifestation

During Christmastide the infant Jesus, lying in His humble crib, is each day gaining strength. His mother, Mary, has shown Him to the shepherds; and now she is about to present Him to the Magi. It is at this season that the gifts which we intend to offer Him should be prepared. Let us, like the three Wise Men, follow the star's glow to Bethlehem, the house of supersubstantial bread.

Today is Epiphany. Epiphany means the showing forth, in heaven and on earth, of God's glory; it is the season for the manifestation of the power of God on the stage of experience. But here the mind is frustrated because of the very human tendency to make more of manifestation than of the gift itself.

*(Class lecture, January 6, 1954)

This is, we like to believe, a passing phase of Christianity. Farjes states in his book called "Mystical Phenomena," that what is generally called miraculous is merely accidental phenomena. Spiritual union with God is the true miracle of life. Union with God—and especially the realization of this union, even without any external signs—is the essential and true spiritual phenomenon. It is not that we intend to disparage in any sense at all the miracles that reveal and manifest on earth the glory of God; but we must remember that the signs—that is, the accidental phenomena—followed the realization of union with God instead of preceding it. If you did not have God's presence, you certainly could not have any outward signs of it. But too often the tendency of the mind is to turn these ideas backward, to pervert perceptions, so that we look upon the visible signs as a test of invisible truth. We try to test the validity of truth by what it can do for us.

I am told of an article written by Dr. Norman Vincent Peale in which he states that the

test of the power of prayer is its work. That means that we test the validity of truth by what it can be seen to do for us. Now actually we can have no contention with this statement providing we understand what is meant by "work." What do we mean by "the working power of truth"? Are we putting emphasis entirely on the accidental phenomena, such as the miracles which we commemorate today—such spectacular events as changing water into wine; at the baptism of Jesus, the hearing of the voice from heaven proclaiming the Lord; and the dove descending to confirm the words: "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased," thus pointing out the Messiah, making manifest the Son of God? Ask yourself this question: What do I mean by the working power of God? Do I mean external demonstrations only, or do I mean the real import, the awareness of God independent of accidental phenomena?

The real miracle is union with God—God's gift of Himself. God giving Himself to man is

God with us. Let us not be dependent upon objective signs; rather let us be sufficiently matured in spiritual consciousness to accept the gift of God Himself, even though the action is invisible. Can we recognize the gift? Do we know the giver? Is it God you seek, or is it some outward sign of God? With which are you more concerned? This is a test you can make yourself. Consider this: Are you chiefly concerned with what God can do for you, or do you disregard the accidental phenomena and desire only the real and true miracle of mystical union with the Supreme? Even though we may not see it by any sign, the acceptance of this union is our ultimate. This is the point wherein one becomes spiritually mature.

Children are enticed by all-day suckers; the infantile mind craves the outward signs rather than the inward satisfaction. Consequently, even though seeking the kingdom of God, there is always an eye out for the promised "things." But the spiritually mature mind, the mind of one confirmed in truth, desires only God without thought of the rewards. It is an infantile

mind that is dependent upon signs, experiences, and consolations.

Many times you have been informed by illustration of the various stages through which the candidate passes. He seems to begin, according to the laws of appearance, as a spiritual infant, dependent upon consolations; that is, being fed as a babe at the mother's breast. In this manner mother nature begins to nurse you along with predigested goodness in the form of rational milk; but there must come a time in the life of each candidate for truth when he is ready for the substantial meat. This is my meat, said the Lord: to do the will of God. He who has tasted of this meat is no longer dependent upon those consolations which the mind refers to as demonstrations or external manifestations.

Actually, there is no criticism regarding the manifestation; but what we are trying to say is that the test of truth is not by its manifestation. This is going at the matter in the wrong way. Signs *follow* them that believe; they do not *lead to* belief. Miracles come to confirm

truth, not to affirm it. Accidental phenomena follow naturally our gift of union with God, but the signs do not make the union. The gift is there all the time, but we know the gift as ours when we accept it. Having accepted, one does not need to prove the acceptance by outward signs.

Spiritual technology is not the object of our Lord's teaching. He was not showing us how to live an easier life, but rather, a more perfect one. The scientific world may have its technology, but the spiritual mind seeks a truth beyond the operation of human affairs. We should not be dependent upon a display of power. God is power; and the Magi, the Wise Men, were able to recognize this divine power even in a tiny infant lying in a manger.

A question has been raised whether Jesus was actually in the manger at the time when the Magi came. I had this very question asked me this morning. Just when, chronologically, did the Magi arrive? Their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh were tangible. So what became of them? Why were they not used? The sup-

position is that the gold was used for the flight into Egypt. Gold brought to a child who was materially poor was a tangible asset. These wise men recognized the King and brought Him a suitable gift to alleviate the appearance of poverty.

Gold was in recognition of His divine royalty. Frankincense and myrrh were more devotional treasures. Gold—something so tangible—where did it go? What happened to the gold afterwards? Scientifically, no particle of gold in the world is ever lost—it may be hidden, but never assimilated by other elements. Therefore, what about this gold that the Magi brought? Where did it go? What was it used for?

According to historical data the Magi paid homage to the Lord nearly two years after His nativity. Their gifts came, chronologically, after His presentation by His mother in the temple; consequently, at the time of His presentation there was nothing to offer as sacrifice but two turtle doves.

It was after the Magi had been to Jerusalem that Herod was roused to destroy all male

children under two years of age, lest one of them threaten his kingdom. There would have been no time for any presentation in the temple after Herod was aware of the danger. Herod, questioning the Magi, was aware that they had been almost two years on their journey from the moment they first saw the star. The Massacre of the Innocents followed this questioning. These events seem to place the visit of the Magi at about two years after the birth of Jesus. Soon after the Magi had left their gifts and had returned home, the angel came to Joseph and warned him of the inevitable massacre. It was then that the little family made its way to Egypt.

They were poor, but this gold of the Magi gave them a material security of providential value. The frankincense which honored the divinity of our Lord and the myrrh which was in recognition of His humanity, also had their devotional place; but the gold became a very practical and useful commodity to assist them during their exile in Egypt. It should not be disparaged among spiritual treasures. Gold itself is

not evil, nor is it the root of evil; only the love of gold causes trouble. The gold that was brought by the wise men and laid at the feet of this King of kings, did not result in a love of material things, but in a prudent use of gold. Our Lord came to establish a spiritual, not a material kingdom; and yet He did not disparage anything that belonged to the world.

That is one of the perceptions we ought to acquire in relation to the miracles: that never at any time did our Lord disparage the good things of creation nor make an issue of His power or of His miracles. He did not use His divine power when He was being tempted to show that He was the Son of God; He did not use His spiritual strength to prove His power. Yet signs of power followed, as the wake of a ship. We can recognize the presence of a ship by the waves that radiate from its passage.

In the same manner we recognize that the ship of the Magisterium is passing through because of the Epiphany in its wake. It seems as though the Wise Men followed the star as a sign—as though the star guided them to the

Lord; but actually, the star followed the Lord and so indicated His presence. Let us remember what happened with the Lord and His star. The pattern of the stars did not decree the Lord's presence on earth nor what His future would be. Instead of the Lord following His star, the star followed Him. And so it is with every person who has found within himself this essential, this central phenomenon of the miracle, the true miracle of union with God. He does not have to follow stars nor be dependent on star patterns; stars follow him. He does not follow signs; signs follow him. His faith is not dependent on the way truth works in his affairs; he knows that the real miracle is divine recognition within his own heart. He has outgrown dependence upon consolations; he has raised his eyes to new horizons. He is no longer a victim of the Magic City for he has moved out into the desert again where the truly miraculous is revealed. Consolations and dependence on them are seen in a new light. One becomes the giver of consolation rather than the recipient of it.

Always in Christianity there has been a special place for the accidental phenomena, yet we like to believe that dependence on such signs and wonders is giving place to the really important presence of God. As we said before, Jesus never made a campaign issue of the miraculous. He never flaunted the power of God. Just the reverse; He concealed His power that His presence might be more greatly revealed. Even as a little infant and in His simple and humble manner of life, in His hidden life, His presence was of greater importance than His power. His power did not need to be proved when His presence was recognized; there is no need to prove truth when you recognize its presence. Why prove the presence of a truth you recognize? Proof would be superfluous. Actually it is truth that proves power, rather than power proving truth.

Therefore, when you consider the question, "Does your religion work?" you need first to clarify the point of just what is meant by the "working" of religion. Is it an outward or an inward power? When the disciples came back

to Jesus after their missionary experience, they were elated because they had found that they could do so many wonderful things, had had so much outward power; the accidental phenomena had been theirs for the asking. They could command nature, cast out devils, heal the sick, and even raise the dead. But the Lord reminded them that these signs and wonders were nothing, nothing but shadows; the real miracle was to have their names written in the Book of Life. Now you may say, "How am I going to know that my name is written in the Book of Life?" I hear such questions constantly. And how *are* you going to know? Perhaps you do not need to know; perhaps you can accept truth without needing proof. Actually you do not need to prove truth to yourself; and the moment you try to put power to the test, you are doubting the substance. He who is free from doubt would not even question effectuality. You would not have to be always testing yourself if you were sure of yourself. You would not need to take your spiritual measure if you knew who and what you are. There are those who are always

taking their so-called spiritual temperatures—testing themselves to see whether they are devotionally hot or cold. Actually the essential, central, true phenomenon of mystical life is a presence that does not have to be tested. It is so much more wonderful in presence than any measure or test could disclose, that our greatest happiness is simply to accept. It is a presence that does not depend on outward signs or on how you feel or think; it depends on truth only. You do not need to support truth with your ideas. The man who tried to steady the ark soon learned his mistake. In the same way, the instant you try to bolster up truth in your life or affairs, you are doubting the omnipotence of God. Our Lord did not need miracles to prove truth. If He had thought them necessary, He would have performed many more. Miracles do not prove truth; rather, truth proves the miracles.

There were special moments when Jesus revealed His power; as, for example, at the request of His mother during the marriage feast. Again He allowed Himself to be announced

publicly as the "Lamb" at the baptism in the Jordan; He also let the Magi recognize His divinity in the tiny Babe. The Magi were wise men, because He let them see His divine presence. They had that vision which belongs to true wisdom. Outward signs did not divert them. What do you do with outward signs? Do they divert you? I am inclined to think this may be the case, but it should not be so.

If these Wise Men had been diverted by outward signs, they would never have found the King of kings, because He was not where they expected to find Him. Outward circumstances were not in accord with the general ideas as to where a king should be born. They naturally went to Jerusalem and to the palace to find the royal child. Yet He was not in a palace, but in a manger! His royalty was so transcendent that it could not be recognized through ordinary eyes; it took the wisdom of the Magi to discover, in the frail form of the child, the omnipotence of God. It was to truth they paid homage. There was nothing spectacular in the child, for we do not find that the

Lord ever disparaged natural laws; He shone through the natural laws without doing violence to nature at any time. He did this because He had such great respect for the order of nature which He Himself had provided. Even His miracles did not break the order of nature; He transcended this order, but never at any time did He break nature's law. This is a "must" to be remembered. Consequently, when, in our own affairs, we think that we can do violence to the laws of nature by miraculous power, we are not revealing the pattern of God's will.

Let us remember what real mystical phenomenon is: that it is not at all dependent on the outward show; not on the ability to demonstrate the spectacular, but on the truth of God's living presence. Saint Thomas Aquinas says that even though no evidence of God's power were ever given in the world, His power still would be omnipotent; because the power of God is not ordained to an end—as a cause to an effect—but rather is God Himself, the end of all things ordained. He does not need to break the laws of nature, for He is Himself the

eternal Law of all natures. It is only the so-called ego-consciousness that emphasizes external signs. We see now through a glass, darkly; we see perceptions by piecemeal; we see fractions here and there instead of seeing the whole vision of allness. Consequently, because of our limited horizons, we are inclined to look upon experience in the world as limited and unfulfilled. Where we should see perfection, we see old age, weakness, and material frustration, resulting finally in death. We look upon life as full of evils, because we do not see the nothingness of nothing.

Privation of good is not in itself a substance; therefore it may be seen through; only the positive being of perfection has authority. If we let our minds stop with an idea of death or with an idea of sickness or old age, we have accepted a privation as a substance and thus have missed the mark. Actually, every person is equipped to complete his cycle of perception from God to God. In this complete perception death gives place to life, nothingness to allness.

The world's finite limitations seem to compel

the mind to seek spiritual freedom by violating nature's laws. In this stage of development, our ego-consciousness looks upon the miracle *par excellence* as the overcoming of material frustration in the form of old age and death. Yet always the true miracle is union with God, which should be experienced independently of all outward picturization. You can look at shadows and see light, at old age and see youth, at sickness and see health, at death and see life; for there cannot be a privation except at the very point where positive being exists. People caught in an ego-consciousness are lured to an idea of freedom beyond their finite limitations, when actually, right in the midst of such finite limitations, comes the recognition of the infinite ground of all being—the place where the finite and the infinite are not opposed, but where the finite, through its own limitation, becomes the point of revelation for the infinite.

Union with God can be experienced, in its fullness, only when the nothingness of nothing has been accepted. Not anything is overcome by running away from it. Freedom is revealed

only when you can go through life and experience, witnessing to truth. No matter what you seem to see on the surface, all you can really see is truth; even as the Magi looked at the Infant and recognized the King of kings. Their witnessing was not because of any spectacular demonstration: The kingly court was a stable—a humble place for Eternal Presence to be revealed—Joseph and Mary were His attendants. No outward display was necessary to demonstrate His presence. He glorified the place; the place did not glorify Him. His presence was so powerful that no outside covering could conceal it from the eyes of the Wise Men.

We are talking about the truly wise (the Magi) perception in each one of us; not wisdom in a particular sense, but the awakening of a true wisdom—the wisdom of truth, possible only when our intellect is raised to the intelligence of God. Such wisdom is not diverted by what is seen around us; that is, by the accidents of life, by the circumstances and surrounding situations. The penetrating gift of wisdom, of understanding, of knowledge, is able to dis-

cern, even in the simplest and the most humble, the omnipotence, the perfection, and the beauty of God Himself.

Can you look at appearances which on the surface contradict perfection, and find there the glory of truth? If you can, you have found the real importance of Christianity. Or are you always looking for signs to prove to yourself that you are searching in the right place? Actually truth does not depend on place; wherever you look, if you understand omnipresence, you can see God. God is everywhere and in everything, regardless of surface appearances; but it seems to be the tendency of the human mind to be diverted by outward appearances. The elements were able to recognize their Lord, but it took the Magi to recognize His presence in incongruous surroundings.

The Lord's presence shines through everything, yet you may say, "I do not see it." Perhaps you do not see this, yet the elements themselves are responding; the natural world is responding—of this you may be sure. It is only the human mind with its irrational contentions

that seems to lack response, because the mind wants to have truth proved, wants signs and wonders, wants to experience God with human senses. It takes faith to transcend the limitations of human senses and to enter horizons of the imperceptible.

We are told that the heavens declare God's handiwork and that the earth declares His glory. Heaven and earth speak of Him; yet you say, "But I do not see Him on my earth or in my heaven." This is not because He is not declared; rather it is because the human mind, looking for Him here or there, finds Him only as being concealed. Maybe you are looking for your own idea of what He should be. Too often one is bound up in his own ideas, and therefore he misses reality itself. Let the elements teach us; let nature testify to the Creator.

Let me read you from the Breviary the sermon on the Epiphany in the form of a commentary by Saint Gregory. In this account you will see how all elements testify that their Creator has come. Notice that the elements

respond; they receive and recognize their Creator, even though the mind of man may not. The mind has its own ideas of what to expect, and thus it misses reality. But through the world, even in an everyday fashion, the heavens declare their God. A star came to herald Him; the sea knew Him, for it bore up His feet when He walked upon it; the earth knew Him and trembled when He died; the sun knew Him and hid its light at the Cross; the stones and walls knew Him and were rent at His death; hell knew Him and gave up its dead. All the insensible elements of nature knew Him, but even up to this minute the hearts of the unbelieving people will not recognize their God. Hearts more hard than rock seem not to be rent in penitence. This is a sad state; so let the elements, let the natural world, reveal that God is in His world. Let us put away the hardness of our beliefs and accept the presence of truth. Hearts so hard that they cannot be rent must be healed, must be melted down by contrition, must be freed from resistant pride, must be purged of

false ideas and pictures. Who but the Lord Himself is to say how this is to be done?

Let me read you today's lesson from the sermon on Epiphany.

Dearly beloved, in the Magi adoring Christ, therefore, let us recognize the first fruits of our calling and our faith . . . Let us celebrate the beginning of that blessed hope. From this day we begin to enter upon an eternal inheritance. From this day lies open to us the hidden meaning of those Scriptures referring to Christ. The truth which the Jews in their blindness rejected, sheds its light upon all nations. Therefore, let this most holy day be honored among us, this day on which the Author of our salvation manifests Himself.

Our Lord is manifesting Himself right now. You may not see Him, but actually He is all there is to see! Are we heedless of His own words—that when two or more are gathered together in His name, He is present? Are you depending on your own senses instead of listening to His promise, instead of listening to your heart, opened by faith that He is here? He *is* manifesting His glory, whether you see Him or not; His presence is not dependent on your

seeing. Dependence on the senses causes the greatest mistakes.

People make their own minds the criterion of manifestation, because they tend to be ego-conscious instead of God conscious. If they were really God conscious, nothing in the world, no matter how incongruous it might appear, could conceal from them the everlasting and eternal truth. Can one do less in acceptance of God than do the natural elements? These natural elements are in you and can respond if you give them a chance.

Let us not divert truth by false tendencies of mind. Mental rationalism—not rationality, but rationalism—proposes an antimiraculous sense; but today we are proposing to you a super-miraculous wisdom, called the Magi, which transcends the need of signs and wonders. This true wisdom discovers, even in the objective world, God with us; this is the miracle of union with God. On this day the Author of our salvation manifests Himself. He reveals Himself; He comes to all the world, and He reveals Himself to you. Have you the faith to accept?

Have you the faith which is the evidence of things not seen?

Let us adore, omnipotent in heaven and on earth, the Lord Whom the Magi first adored as an infant. They brought forth from among their treasures mystical gifts; let us from our hearts bring forth greater gifts fit for His Presence. The Magi came from the East to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He Who has been born, Whose star we have seen?" We come from all parts of the earth to adore this same Lord; let us also offer Him the gift of our own heart.

*We also, O Jesus! come to adore thee on this glorious Epiphany, which brings all nations to thy feet. We walk in the footsteps of the Magi; for we too have seen the star, and we are come to thee. Glory be to thee, dear king! to thee who didst say in the Canticle of David thine ancestor: 'I am appointed king over Zion, the holy mountain, that I may preach the commandment of the Lord. The Lord hath said to me, that he will give me the Gentiles for mine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for

*The Liturgical Year, by Dom Gueranger
Christmas, Volume 2, page 135

my possession. Now, therefore, O ye kings, understand: receive instruction, ye that judge the earth.'

*All the Presence there is,
All the Power there is,
All the Consciousness there is,
Is *Love*, the *Living Spirit Almighty*.

GENEVIEVE BURNELL ROBINSON

*AXIOMS: Book of Health,
by George Edwin Burnell, page 80

