

H Y M N S

Longings for Light

- 1 Remove my covering, Lord,
That I may see Thy light,
And be deceived no more,
But all things see aright.

Oh, may Thy living light, Lord,
Scatter all my night, Lord,
And everything make bright, Lord,
For this I pray to Thee.
- 2 I hardly know myself;
Deceived so much by pride,
I often think I'm right
And am self-satisfied.
- 3 I know Thee even less;
In doctrine, shallowly;
True revelation lack
Of Thy reality.
- 4 As for Thy life within,
In darkness I mistake—
If spirit or the flesh,
One for the other take.
- 5 As for Thy way, O Lord,
I often am not clear;
I toward seclusion tend
And from the pathway veer.
- 6 As for Thy will for me,
I do not know it well;
I substitute my own
And often would rebel.
- 7 As for the church, I need
Thy revelation more,
The Body-life to know,
Thy wisdom to explore.
- 8 I long to be unveiled,
In everything made clear,
No more to be deceived
Or to my pride adhere. (*Hymns* 384-385)

knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (v. 6). Yet, even we, the believers, also are under the pressure of a continuing battle between light and darkness. The real danger for the believer is that he may fail to realize how veiled he is—under the subtle influence of the natural man with all of his concepts and opinions.

Every believer has a daily need of the Lord's illumination concerning things which veil him, such as the sinful nature, the lack of a fresh experience of the Lord in a practical way each day, and the inability to distinguish light from darkness. He may be crystal clear that he was once a sinner in need of the redeeming work of Christ, yet not have any sense of his need of the daily application of the Lord's redeeming blood. When a Christian lives without the consciousness of his sin, he may live in pride and self-righteousness yet believe that he is quite exemplary in his character and behavior. He is in need of the living light of the Lord to scatter his night.

The darkness that blinds us as believers is the theme of the hymn for this issue. Written by Witness Lee, this hymn should be frequently sung or spoken by every seeking believer. We need its reminder of the factors which hinder our fresh and living experience of the Lord every day.

Stanza 1 and the chorus establish the motif for the entire hymn—a prayerful and contemplative longing before the Lord to be unveiled in order to know and discern in experience that which is real and genuine from that which is false and vain: "Remove my covering, Lord, / That I may see Thy light, / And be deceived no more, / But all things see aright." The apostle Paul exhorts the believers to be careful not to walk as the Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance in them, because of the hardness of their heart (Eph. 4:17-18). Many believers may be surprised at the apostle's words. Is it possible for those who are "light in the Lord" (5:8) to walk in darkness and in the vanity of their mind? It is, in fact, our experience many times over. Darkness alienates us from the life of God, our hearts become hardened, and we are ignorant concerning the things of both God and man. Surely, then, the heart's cry of a sincere seeker after God will echo the chorus of this hymn: "Oh, may Thy living light, Lord, / Scatter all my night, Lord, / And everything make bright, Lord, / For this I pray to Thee."

In the universe there is a continuing conflict between darkness and light. The thoughts of every unbeliever are blinded and hardened under the influence of the god of this age. As a result, the light, the illumination, of the gospel of the glory of God cannot shine on them (2 Cor. 4:4). Distinctively different are those whose faces are unveiled so that they are able to receive the shining, the illuminating, of the

The layers of veils may be manifold. As stanza 2 suggests, we may be completely ignorant of the self: “I hardly know myself; / Deceived so much by pride, / I often think I’m right / And am self-satisfied.” One who is under the covering of pride and self-righteousness cannot realize that he is “wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked”; rather, he may consider himself as being rich and having need of nothing (Rev. 3:17). Blindness related to self-knowledge is often generated by pride. To escape, we need to buy from the Lord the items that we sorely lack: gold, white garments, and eyesalve (v. 18). Gold signifies the golden nature of God needed to replace our fallen nature. A man who is covered by the veils of his natural pride does not feel the need of a new nature. But fallen man, even though redeemed by the death of Christ, can never be inwardly acceptable before God. His nature must be systematically replaced by the addition of God’s nature into his redeemed humanity until he is fully transformed and conformed to the image of the firstborn Son (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29). We also need the white garments which indicate that just as our inward nature is unacceptable to the Lord, so also our outward conduct cannot be approved by the Lord. In our natural man our conduct is a kind of “fig leaf” that can never cover our nakedness. In our conduct we are naked in the sight of the Lord, yet somehow we may feel that we are rich and quite proper in our manner of living. Only when we are unveiled by the Lord’s living light will we experience a proper opening of our being to the Lord. Further, we need to come to the Lord in desperation to buy the eyesalve, the anointing Spirit of the living God. Then we may see our real condition before the Lord. Without the removal of our coverings, we remain in a kind of theological trance thinking that we are right—being fully self-satisfied.

The second layer of veils is our deficiency in knowing the Lord as reality. So stanza 3 says, “I know Thee even less; / In doctrine, shallowly; / True revelation lack / Of Thy reality.” Very few Christians have the inward registration of their poverty in the matter of knowing the Lord. Paul’s experience of counting all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus is admired by many of us who genuinely love the Lord. But among us all, how many are really ready to count all things loss that we may know Christ? Rather, we prefer to learn doctrines and argue the finer points of theology. Where is the inward cry that we may know the Lord and be found in Him? The heartfelt lament of one who honestly seeks after the Lord may often be, “I hardly know myself—I am so deceived by my self-righteous pride; yet I know You even less. My knowledge of You is simply shallow doctrine.” Our appreciation of the Lord Jesus Christ should not be superficial or without depth. We must seek to know the Lord in more than an outward, objective way. Our goal is to know Him inwardly in an intimate, experiential way. “Oh, may Thy living light, Lord, scatter all my night, Lord.”

Stanzas 4, 5, and 6 speak of smaller veils within the larger veil of our dearth of knowing the Lord in a deeply intimate and experiential way. In these stanzas we see three aspects of an inadequate knowledge of the Lord: the want of knowing His life within; the need of enlightenment concerning His way; and the lack of discerning His will for us personally. Concerning the life of the Lord within the believer, we must know Him as the indwelling Spirit in our spirit. In resurrection Christ became the life-giving Spirit that He might indwell our spirit, bringing us into an organic relationship with Him through which we enjoy the divine sonship (1 Cor. 15:45; 6:17; Rom. 8:15). We must learn to use our human spirit to contact the Lord within to discern life from death (vv. 5-6).

Concerning His way, the hymn testifies that it is very easy to veer from the pathway; that is, we tend toward seclusion, cultivating our own interests rather than laboring together with Him for His interests. And concerning His will for us—His personal leading in our lives—we also do not know it well. In fact, we substitute our own will, and we even must confess that we often rebel against that which we sense to be His will. How much we need the Lord’s living light to shine into us, enlighten us, and rescue us from the tyranny of darkness!

Stanza 7 reveals the third major layer of covering—the shortage in revelation concerning the church and the Body life. The church as the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem as God’s ultimate purpose is the mystery which has been hidden from the ages but has now been revealed through His holy apostles and prophets in spirit (Eph. 3:9-11, 4-5). The Bible clearly reveals that God’s great goal is the church as His embodiment to be His expression. It is for this purpose that He has redeemed and regenerated us. Yet, sadly, the majority of His people have no consciousness of His heart’s desire. We need the living light of the Lord’s person to shine into our hearts to give us the clear revelation of His Body, the church.

The final stanza once more breathes out the longing of the heart of one who wants to know his God deeply and intimately: “I long to be unveiled, / In everything made clear.” The writer feels that his contact with the Lord is insufficient. We who serve the Lord may forget who we are until we become more intimate with Him. Then we realize that our contact with the Lord is actually quite limited. We may lack an attraction to Him. Hence, we need Him to attract us that we may seek Him with our whole heart. Then we will love Him and seek to fellowship with Him in the inner chambers. We will long for more separation of light from darkness that we may fully enjoy and experience His living presence. O Lord, may Your living light scatter all our night!

by Gary Kaiser