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sent to Bro. Stracy by Br. Morton Edgar.  
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In the margin an alternative translation is given: "reflecting as in a mirror."

It has been said that the word "reflecting" must be rejected for three reasons: (1) grammatical form, (2) context, and (3) doctrine. Let us examine these three objections while presenting our explanation of this important statement of the Apostle in 2 Cor. 3:18.

### GRAMMATICAL FORM.

We are unqualified to pass an opinion under this heading. We note that the word "beholding" is preferred in the above two translations, but "reflecting" is used in both Weymouth and Rotherham translation. Also in the Cambridge Bible for schools and colleges, and in the Devotional Commentary published by the Religious Tract Society, the word "reflecting" is used. In addition to its use in the margin of the American Revised Version, "Reflecting" is the word used in the text of the English Revised Version.

In the light of the foregoing, it is evident that there is abundant scholarship of the highest order in favor of the translation "Reflecting;" and "laymen," like ourselves must conclude that, so far as "grammatical form" is concerned, the original Greek word can be rendered "Reflecting."

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Another eminent writer, J.H. McFayden, in the Interpreters Commentary on the Epistles, although himself preferring the word "beholding," admits that "reflecting" is possibly correct. He writes: "The word KATOPTHIZOMENOY has been the subject of much dispute; the two possible meanings are given in (English) margin and text respectively - beholding and reflecting (as in a mirror). The active voice must be determined by the context."

### Context

When we examine the context, we find that the apostle Paul is here contrasting the glory attending the "ministration of death" (the Law) with the far greater glory of the "ministration of the spirit" (the Gospel), see verses 7 and 8 of 2 Cor. 3. However, there is difference of thought as to the points of contrast he is dealing with. We submit the following for the consideration of our readers:

To understand the passage properly, it is necessary to keep in mind that, one of the prominent purposes, if not the main purpose of the Epistle, is the vindication of the Apostle's preaching and conduct. Because it is necessary in the interests of the Corinthians, the Apostle in the epistle is making a "fool" of himself by "boasting." See 2 Cor. 11:16, 19, 23, etc.

Note particularly that the contrast between the old and the new dispensation is incidental to this "boasting." This contrast, when rightly understood, contributes to the Apostle's personal vindication. Consistently with this purpose (his teaching and his personal vindication), the contrast he is here presenting is not between Moses and Jesus, as is generally understood, but rather, between Moses and himself, as is indicated when he says: "We (Paul) use great plainness of speech: and not as Moses..." (2 Cor. 3:12, 13).

In what respect does the Apostle contrast himself with Moses? To answer this question, it is necessary to refer to the narrative in Exodus 34:29-33. Here we read that, when Moses appeared from communing with Jehovah, the children of Israel were at first afraid to approach him because of his shining face. But he overcame their fears, and with unveiled face talked with them. Then, having with shining face delivered the message of Jehovah, and not till then he put on the veil. (This is an important point which is obscured by a wrong translation in the Authorized Version, of Exod. 34:33. This should read: "And when (not "till") Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. That this procedure of Moses was invariably followed may be seen from the remaining Verses of the 34<sup>th</sup> chapter of Exodus.

There is no reason given in Exodus as to why Moses veiled his face; but the Apostle does not infer, as many suppose, that Moses covered his face to hide the reflected glory of the Lord which shone from his face. Moses delivered his message while his face shone, and then, having delivered his message, he covered his face with the veil. The Apostle infers from this donning of the veil immediately after the Divine message was delivered, that the shining glory began thereafter to gradually vanish, to fade away! The veil was put on for the purpose of hiding this evanescence (2 Cor. 3:13).

Quoting from Moffatt's translation, we read: "Such being my hope then, I (Paul) am quite frank and open - not like Moses who used to hang a veil over his face to keep the children of Israel from gazing at the last rays of a vanishing glory." (2 Cor. 3:12, 13).

Moses, then, had something to hide, namely, the fact that the glory of his countenance was a fading glory. True "reflection" through the glory of his countenance was of Jehovah's countenance, and symbolizing as it did the glory of the Mosaic dispensation, the reflection was not a lasting one, in which it well represented the vanishing glory of the Law dispensation.

The Apostle, on the contrary, had nothing to hide. The Gospel he ministered was not transient but permanent. It is the "everlasting Gospel" (Rev. 14:16). Paul "reflected," "mirrored" it continuously. His opponents might accuse him of dishonorable practices, but such accusations were false.

"Boasting" in the surpassing glory of the Gospel, in the firm conviction that this glory will never face to make way for another glory (as the glory of the Mosaic Law had to make way for the everlasting glory of the Gospel), the Apostle assures the Church at Corinth that, unlike Moses, he had nothing to conceal. At the risk of being accused of self-commendation, he preached with confidence, frankness and courage.

True, his Gospel was veiled to some, but to those only whose minds were blinded by the adversary (2 Cor. 4:3, 4). So far as his personal intentions were concerned, Paul says: "I disown those practices which vary shame conceals from view; I do not go about it craftily; I do not falsify the word of God; I state truth openly and so commend myself to every man's conscience before God." (2 Cor. 4:2; Moffatt).

After verse 13 of 2 Cor. 3 the Apostle's argument proper would appear to be resumed in the 1<sup>st</sup> verse of the next, the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter, when he declares, seeing we have this ministry (so much more glorious than that of Moses), as we have received mercy, we faint not."

There is another lesson which the metaphor of the veil has stirred in the Apostle's mind, and he pauses long enough to give it expression. It was not from the Israel of Moses' day only, that the transience of the Law dispensation was veiled - it was veiled from the Israel of the Apostle's day also. And this lesson, by the slight variation in the metaphor of "the veil", Paul proceeds to press. "Even unto this day," he declares, etc.) is upon their hearts (2 Cor. 3:15). And thus they still think of their Covenant of the Law as permanent. It is only when anyone of them turns to recognize Christ, that the veil is taken away. They then recognize that the glory of the Old Covenant is fading glory, not everlasting.

This happy thought, that others besides himself had the veil removed from their eyes, suggests to the Apostle yet another contrast: The old Law Covenant was ministered by a single man, Moses; but the New (Law) Covenant is to be ministered by the entire membership of the Christ, Head and Body. This thought is contained in his words: "We all (all who have consecrated to follow Jesus Christ even unto death) with unveiled face, behold, reflect, mirror, the glory of the glory of the Lord." (2Cor. 3:18).

In their consideration of this passage of 2 Cor. 3:18, some hold the thought that the Apostle does not here refer to a veil which may have been lifted from our eyes, but rather, with their understanding that Moses and Jesus are being contrasted, they believe that Paul is referring to the "unveiled face of our Master Jesus Christ." But we think we have proved in the foregoing paragraphs that our Lord Jesus and Moses are not being contrasted - that the contrast is, in the first place, between Moses and Paul, and, in the second place, between Moses and the church-members.

In this view of the context, it indeed does appear that Paul refers to the veil, now happily removed, which covered our hearts in former days (His words in the 15<sup>th</sup> verse are "...the veil is upon their heart"). We might therefore have expected him to say: We all with unveiled hearts. But the metaphor of the veil is not worked out with strict consistency, but is varied somewhat in the same ways as the metaphor of "the epistle" earlier in the chapter (2 Cor. 3:1-5). There, it will be seen, "the epistle" is, in one place, said to be written on the Apostle's heart (verse 2), while in another place it is said to be written on the hearts of the Corinthians themselves (verse 3), yet his meaning is easily to be understood.

So here, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians where the "veil" is spoken of, it is said to be on the face of Moses (v.13), and then it is said to be on the heart of Israel (verse 15). Nevertheless the thought of the Apostle is clear.

Just as Moses reflected the glory of the Old dispensation, so did Paul reflect the grater glory of the New. And just as Moses reflected the glory of the Old dispensation, so do we, the church, reflect the greater glory of the New.

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In this view, the one "beholds" remains passive; the change which takes place in the "beholder" is clearly the result, not from anything he did, but from the influence of the One beheld. On the other hand, such reason, "To reflect" is an active accomplishment, it is an activity accomplished by the "reflector" and, therefore, his transformation, resulting as it does from his own efforts, must be attributable to the individual himself. Those who thus reason claim that the translation "reflecting" must be rejected. It is in conflict with the general tenor of Scripture, they say, because the Word of the Lord teaches that our transformation is "all of grace."

To our understanding, however, "beholding" and "reflecting" are complementary, not conflicting. It is impossible to "behold", in the truest sense, without faithfully "reflecting". The faithfulness of the reflection is always a certain indication of the clarity of the vision. Nay, more than this, a true reflection is the only certain indication of it. Where Christ is not reflected, it is reasonable to conclude that he is not beheld. "I will show thee my faith (and my clearness of vision) by my works - by my reflecting

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