

Reflections on Mirrors

2 Corinthians 3:18 NJB

And all of us, with our unveiled faces like mirrors reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the image that we reflect in brighter and brighter glory; this is the working of the Lord who is the Spirit.

Recently I saw an episode of a documentary about Police response to emergency domestic abuse calls. At one point the cameras tracked a screaming woman as she attacked her family and then turned on the officers as she was manhandled out of her house into the police van. The closing of the van door was all that stopped the viewer from hearing a nonstop stream of invective in which every other word was unprintable. It was a scene that stuck in my mind: there seemed to be such a gulf between the display I had witnessed and picturing her living a life that reflected the glory of the Lord.

Yet she doesn't stretch the imagination half as much as, say, those who abuse and murder little children, or terrorists who indiscriminately blow up innocent people, or those who advocate and carry out genocide. You can find yourself wondering how some will ever become loving children of God.

But God does not leave us guessing as to the extent of his power to turn us round and transform us, even the worst of us. Take Paul: here's a man whom militant fundamentalists could name their patron saint - until, that is, he 'reneged' on his convictions. He had approved of Stephen's stoning and made it his business to make havoc of the fledgling church, dragging men and women out of their homes and throwing them in prison. But as this man with murder in his heart was on his way to Damascus to round up more victims he was confronted by his Saviour and led to embrace the very faith he was making his life's work to stamp out. The churches could hardly believe it when they heard about it. Perhaps they too had trouble in grasping the power of God to turn us round, as he transformed Paul to become one of his mightiest instruments, bringing Christ's name to the world, and bequeathing to us through his letters a profound understanding of the love and grace of God.

And on behalf of all the dysfunctional and mentally ill we could also get a lot of encouragement by taking a look at Mary Magdalene. We are not told much about her, but possessed by seven demons she surely must have been outside the boundaries of what we recognize as human. Released by Jesus, she followed him through his ministry to the end - to the foot of the cross and to his grave. And it was given to this transformed woman to become the first person on earth to see and know the risen Christ, and the first person on earth to respond in believing adoration. That's the power of God to change us all, however damaged, intransigent, murderous or hostile we are.