

The Vision of God.

BY REGINALD J. CAMPBELL, D. D.

"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." John 14:9.

The kingdom of God is a thing that comes slowly. Men have hoped for it through the long centuries. Some day, some day we shall see it when "the earth is filled with knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." The advent of Jesus was prepared for it by the apostle in the wilderness. "Is he the one, then, who shall restore the Kingdom of God in Israel?" said Peter and James and John. "Now" said they, "we shall hear about the kingdom." How did Jesus begin to teach them? Observe the slight discrepancy between Matthew and Luke. This gives me a clue to the way the Master taught on the mountain top. You see that Matthew began: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Luke's version is: "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." Which is right? Which is wrong? Both are right; neither wrong; and it is certain that Jesus said both. Each beatitude was a lesson for the day. Perhaps Jesus began this way. "You are expecting to hear about the kingdom. Well now, Peter, how do you suppose that the kingdom will come?" Peter would say: "We have all got to insist. We will follow you. Lift up the old banner of Israel, and see how many will come to your side."

"What sort of people will I want first, Peter? "First, you must call in the Pharisees. They are the natural leaders of Israel; they are our religious authority; they are the men who pull the first stroke. Let us call them and we shall take our places behind them. Such are the recruits of the kingdom." The Master would say: "Now listen, Peter, blessed are the poor men—yourselves, for yours is the kingdom of God." There would be a dead silence, I will be bound; because, however things are in America, it is a little different in the old world. Over our way the poor man does not reckon himself to be of much account when it comes to founding kingdoms. The Master would go on: "You get your living on the sea, you fishermen who draw nets in the night. You one people whom nobody wants or counts when anything big is to be done. Blessed are the poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God, if you only knew it." Again there would be silence, and the Master would continue: "There is no chance for the poor man at all. A poor man has to keep quiet in the presence of his betters; he has to take what another man says; he has to give place to the rich man. The spirit natural to a poor man he may keep, or he may not. Some poor men don't, and as the spirit natural to the rich man is not that one, but blessed is that man, whether poor or rich, who can keep the spirit of a poor man."

Now, look for a moment at the first part. Matthew sat with his pencil and waited for the second. He wrote down: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God." That would do for one day. Another day the Master said: "Peter, John, would you like to see the God to whom we have together prayed? Would you like to see him?" "Impossible!" would be the reply. "Clouds and darkness are around about Jehovah; there is danger on Mount Sinai; thunder and lightning guard the throne of God. Ah, that would be to die! I am undone when I have seen the Lord of Hosts." Then the Master would say: "Stay a little. There are more ways than one of seeing a thing. I can give you a vision of God. Blessed are the pure in heart, who are seeking the kingdom, for they shall see the King." I venture to say, my friends, that none of those simple men understood more than just a little of what the Master meant. They did not alter their minds nor outlook upon the kingdom in the least. They followed him for a year and a half, maybe—how much longer I do not know—and still they did not see what he meant by the kingdom and the vision. That was given to the poor in heart. And at last they came to the "upper room," and there they gathered round him. They did not know it, but it was to say good-bye before that one great event of Calvary, the central eye in the world's history. Jesus spoke about going away, and they felt, for the first time, now much they were going to lose, supposing the Master was not to be the Messiah after all. Supposing Jesus went away. They did not want him to go. They had learned to love him, and I am sure you will agree with me when I say, although they were not aware of it, they had never been so near to God before as when they were sitting at the feet of Jesus. They never made any creed about it, but somehow they felt that they had come into contact with the Father as they had never done before. Jesus was going and at the terrible news their hearts sank. "I shall show you of the Father," "Lord show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied," said one of them. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not seen the Father," said Jesus. Even then they did not get behind the mystical veil as you and I are getting behind it now as I speak. We do not want in a way to crush all God into the figure of the human Jesus, and say: "There, that is all there is and all there is to be." We do not mean that, and Jesus did not mean that. That is all he meant, and it is true: If God be like Jesus it is well for men. We may have many things to learn concerning the purposes of God after we have looked upon the face of Christ, but we have nothing more to learn about himself—he will be the same to all eternity. We cannot explain in human language what we

mean when we say, Jesus is God; but, believe me, you will never learn any more about the love of God to all eternity than you know when you have really got a grasp of what is meant by the love of Christ. The thought that Jesus is the Father at once is more to me than any meta-physical proposition. He could guarantee God. "In the bosom of the Father he hath declared him." There is the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. These men felt all this; it had not become a creed, but it was already an experience; and when my second text was spoken they were nearer to what we know as a vision of God than they had ever been before. This is only exordium. I want to apply it.

We are just in the position of those simple men, and are seeking as they sought, for the vision of God. As Dr. Hillis said, quoting someone else, men are incurably religious. Yes, often when they seem not to be. Sometimes men will not listen to the preacher because they feel that he knows no more than they do about that mysterious something which hides his face behind the clouds. I do not believe there is a man who would not this morning, if he could, without trouble and sorrow and sacrifice, he would be among the great company who stand adoring round the throne of God. I believe there is something in us that protests for God. As Augustine said: "Thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are not at rest until they find rest in thee." This is the mood in which we find ourselves. How many of us have a vision of God? Have you, have you? No; there is very little in our outward life to remind us of God at all. In the struggle for the dollar we cannot see much of God. In America, politics sometimes make you wonder if he has taken his hand off the helm. Then it may take a cataclysm—it may be civil war—to deepen within you all that you should have thought of before. God is, in our most deep and solemn moments we feel it, and we have and can have no companion but him; and when we seek him—Just as Peter and John did—turn to Christ craving. We feel a need somehow, and it there is a way unto God for us, if the curtain would ever be drawn aside, the way must be Jesus, it will be his hand that draws aside the curtain that veils the seen from the unseen. The best of humanity have felt it—the noblest that England and America have produced have felt it that the Christ has given us God. It is Jesus' God that we worship, and I confess I never say my prayers to the Father without somehow looking into the face of the Son. Jesus gives me all I want of God. If there is a craving not yet satisfied it will be by and by; we shall see and know more on the other side than we were privileged to see here.

Dr. Hillis and a few friends were talking about Mr. Beecher, and one of them told me this story, which is probably familiar to you, but it struck home to me for the first time. It was given on the authority of Major Pond. Not long before his death Mr. Beecher and Major Pond were together and Beecher, leaning forward, without introduction said, with tears in his eyes: "Pond, think of it, only think of it, soon I shall see Jesus!" That was spoken in the nineteenth century. Let me remind you of something which was written in the twelfth; Beecher might have said it, but it was not Beecher, it was St. Bernard:

Jesus the very thought of thee,
With sweetness fills my breast,
But sweeter far thy face to see
And in thy presence rest.

"Canst thou by searching find out God?" No. But unto the babes it is revealed. You can be simple sometimes in a time of trouble. It is wonderful how we strip the trappings off and our real self appears when we are bowed down. Sometimes a man discovers himself in the hour of darkness. He never knew what he was until that season came. That is God's chance. Whenever a man is low down, with the cross on top of him, that is the time to feel the pressure of God's hand; and somehow we all turn wistfully to Jesus where there is any question of a broken heart. He is the Comforter, the Saviour; and best of all, he is a Saviour who can save, and a comforter who can comfort, for he sits up there on the throne of the Universe, Lord over all. The other day I met with some wonderful testimony concerning this very truth.

I am not attempting to prove it; I am only holding it up. A young man who is at work in London told me this concerning his life in America and England. He is the son of a British general, born to high estates himself and was an officer in the British army. His commission was taken from him for bad conduct and he was exiled at home. He came to this country, went from bad to worse and sank lower and lower, until at last he became a common soldier—shall I say a private soldier?—in your army when it disposed of Spanish pretensions a little south of here. Perhaps I have not stated that properly. He went from bad to worse, but there was a gleam of something better when he enlisted. After the war he left the army and went on his own resources. He said there was scarcely any sin he did not commit—sins of the flesh I mean. We are harder on those, somehow, than we are on sins of a different kind. If a man makes a pile he can sin with impunity, but if a man has little to spend and gives away his constitution, we dance on him. In a public house brawl he was brought to book. They threatened to kill him and said he was a wild beast not a man. He left that place and went back to the west and got a situation as a garden-

er—this son of a British general. Then he came to himself in a far country." It was not an earthly father he was thinking about—he was afraid to go home to him—but of a heavenly one. He didn't know much about God, but this is his account of it: "I was at work one day," he said, "when I seemed to hear a voice within, a voice not my own, protesting and calling me. It seemed as if the spirit of all things was speaking to me. I found myself saying (I do not know why), 'If you will help me, I will.' That was Pauline in its significance. I had never heard anything like it." He went to a minister to see if he could not be put on the right way. The minister could not understand what he was driving at, so he left him; bought a Bible and turned up the chapter, the fourteenth of John. "Up to that time," he said, "I had a thousand times repeated in church, as a child, at the tale end of the collect the phrase, 'through Jesus Christ our Lord,' but never knew who Jesus was."

Now, when I read these words I found out: "Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me," and "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." I said to myself: Now I know who Jesus is. "He was the voice that spake to me in the garden." It is good theology. Christ has far more to do with you than you have to do with him, and what I have been telling you this morning is idgible truth. You could not wipe it out with the worst life that ever lived. Christ is the spirit of all things, the Master of all. He is the deeper self within the soul of every man, no matter how sunken or low down. The Christ came, the Christ follows, the Christ saves.

Then, to enter into union with such a Christ is possible here and now. There are some here who found that out long ago, who know there is a Christ. If we denied it they would say: "I know whom I have believed." "But you cannot see him." Yes, you can. Communion of the soul is the only real communion. You can live close up to the Christ, and look up into his Godlike face all the time, and no one can take you from him, and you can tell if you cannot prove, that the Christ cares for you and belongs to you and speaks to you. He looks upon you and you know his face. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," and you know that because you are trying to bring something to the Christ—a broken life which he is mending, a faulty character which he is to cure, and Christ takes just what you have to bring and makes it whole.—Sel.

The Help of Head-Winds.

BY THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

Human life is a voyage, but our Heavenly Father does not give us control of the weather. If he did, we should be apt to choose nothing but smooth seas, fair winds, full cargoes and secure harbors. God is wiser than we are, and he no more consults us than I consult my gross plot as to when I shall use the mower, or my grape-vine, whether I shall prune away the surplus branches.

On a certain night we are told that Jesus Christ directed his disciples to cross the lake of Galilee. He knew that a storm was coming but he did not tell them. They found it out for themselves before they had gone far; and Peter who was an "old hand" on that lake had never known a rougher night or an angrier sea. The wind is right in their teeth, and the waves hammer the bow of their fishing-smack like iron sledges. With all their sturdy pull at the oars, they make but little headway. They are learning some lessons that night; and so are some of my readers who are passing through storms of trouble and are enveloped by the darkness of a mysterious Providence. They are learning the blessings of head-winds, and what spiritual help they bring to us.

Prosperity very often breeds self conceit both in a Christian, in a church and in a nation. We take to ourselves the credit. When we are "hard up" we are apt to call upon God for what we need; when we have got it we are equally apt to set it down to our own skill or our own seamanship. Prosperous churches congratulate themselves on the eloquence and popularity of their pastor, on the inflow of people to their pews and of money into their contribution boxes. When the children of Israel had things to their liking, they forgot God and turned idolaters; when calamities overtook them they were driven back to God, and cried lustily for his delivering arm. One of the subtlest forms of sin is self-direction. We ignore God and set up a will and choose a way of our own. He is too wise and too loving to allow this, and he often sends a stiff gale into our faces for our chastisement and correction. Whom he loveth he chasteneth: the self-willed and the rebellious are left to go on the rocks.

Head winds strengthen the sinews and develop strong characters. Many of our Americans who have attained to the highest work of honor and usefulness were "seasoned" in their youth by sharp adversity. As Joseph was prepared by a pit and a prison for the premiership of Egypt, so Abraham Lincoln was educated for his high calling by severe study of a few books in a log cabin, and by eating the tonic bread of a laborious poverty. If he had been born in the brown stone mansion of a great city and reared in luxury, his biography would have read very differently and perhaps history might never have heard of him. Probably the best part of George Washington's training for his destiny was his rough experience in the frontier wilderness. I seriously doubt whether the luxurious style of life in