

Vision and Disclosure.

BY F. C. WRIGHT.

Prov. 29-18. Where there is no vision the people perish.

Ideals rule the world. The dream may be a vagary. The vision is the perception of reality, the revelation of forces and possibilities before unseen and unappreciated. It uplifts, controls and glorifies principle, impulse and life. Where there is no vision the people throw off restraint. Where there is a vision, in the very revelation the people see a great light. Everywhere man moves from meanness to nobleness, from limitations to enlargement, from subjugation to freedom, from sin to grace, not so much by argument as by the distant and radiant vision. We live in two kingdoms. The opening of the inner eye gives revelation, we become affiliated to the spiritual universe, the invisible things of God become visible, in their light we see light and are transformed from glory to glory. The redemption of humanity is in the awakened perception and vivid realization of the Christ. The gospel is the Christ. The Christ is the gospel. Apostolic conquest was because of inspired vision. When the disciples say one to another "we have seen the Lord" their hearts burn within them and their lives glow with service and sacrifice. As the vision fades or becomes distorted, material things attain undue proportions, doubts enter, spiritual passion is chilled, and spiritual adventure shrinks and dies.

Then comes to the church and the individual, the alternations of enthusiasm and coldness of power and weakness, as formalism and reformation, of apostasy and return, and the quickening has ever been, not in war or conquest, but in the renewed and more distinct vision of the Christ.

In the presence of that beauty our deformities seek hiding. In the radiance of that grace our own beings become illumined. In the sufficiency of that work our hopes are enlivened and enriched and in the authority of that presence the soul bows and yields.

The answer to every need today and every day is in this revelation. If there be anxiety or fear, if there be lack in faith and faithful service, if materialism threatens and chills our life, or infidelity in new forms insinuates doubt, or marshals mighty attack, if in any way life or doctrine or ordinance have threat or anxiety, the redress must still be in the restoration of the divine vision. "Look unto me and be saved." The test and deliverance of a church, a nation, or a man, is in its or his ideas. Men today are confused and doubting. Difficult problems, intellectual perplexities, practical perils encompass us. Our redemption is in the full vision; for standing in the full vision we stand with Christ and look with his eyes and have inspiration in his spirit. Henceforth may the reality of this vision and its disclosure inspire us to greater sacrifice and service.

Notice:—

I. THE VISION.

(a). It is the vision of the divine Christ.—He is the deistic one to us. Modern philosophies patronize our Lord. Robe and palace and courtier may be his but the crown is withheld. In every magnifying of his humanity they detract from his divine claim. If he is not divine his law is no more authoritative than Justinian's, his exhortations no more truthful than Seneca's, his example no more winning than Plato's, his work no more sufficient than Caesar's. We hear a good deal today about 'transitional theology.' Systems may and do change but the truth abides. If we clothe our prophet only in human flesh we dethrone and repudiate. There is no room for compromises.

His own claim of divinity is explicit and the Father hath glorified himself in his confirmation. He that would see God, must see him in the face of Jesus Christ. No appreciation of humanity, no wisdom of teaching and example, no beauty or power of life, should seduce us from the unequivocal and triumphant ascription to his divinity. Let no man take his crown. To surrender his divinity is to surrender his redemption. "All our springs are in thee." His commission and benediction are to a worshipping church. He, from whom is our hope, in whom is our life, and by whom we conquer, is the One whose coming was with the song of angels, whose divine look upon the waters brought its blush; whose Almighty touch multiplied the bread; whose benign presence blessed the weary and heavy-laden and constrained to his arms the little children; whose feet trod the waves; whose voice commanded the winds and broke the bands of death asunder; who laid down his own life and took it again; who ascended far into the opening heavens, before the gladdened eyes of his worshipping church and who in the heavens clothed in our humanity, waits, rules and lives, Emmanuel, God with us. He is this to us. Is he the same to you?

Again:—

(b). It is the vision of the wounded Christ.—"Thus it behooved Christ to suffer." His supreme mission was not example, but sacrifice and propitiation. We must not be misled. Vicariousness is written into all history. It is the story of all humanity.

We are bearing in ourselves the sins, sorrows, the hopes and the acquirements of generations past. The cross is not unique to the history of redemption nor limited to the spiritual experiences of the soul. It throws its shadows over all existence. The life is in the blood. We must restore the old terms and fill them up with their excluded meaning and proclaim them in their authoritative exclusiveness:—"substitution," "propitiation," "expiation," and "atonement"; these are the key words of the Scripture. One may sympathize with every honest effort to see larger truth, or to put the old truth in new and perhaps more acceptable garments, but truth must abide and have revelation. The atonement is the way of salvation. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanse us from all sin." The cross must abide the central theme of a regenerated life and regenerating gospel. The crucified is the only answer to the guilty, the only peace to the troubled, the only rest to the weary and heavy-laden. We must not strive to heal the wounds in his hands and side. Whatever beauty, grace and wisdom or power he may bring to our varied wants and ambitions and possibilities, over all and through all must appear the shadow of that cross. Back, back, back from temporalities, politics, questions, literature, society, philosophies, back to the sweet story of old, simple, comprehensive, enduring, satisfying. To the uplifted cross flow all nations, all influences, all delights, all monies, all song, all life and peace.

The cross is the very messenger of grace. Out of atonement is the highest conception of love and fatherhood. The cross inspires both reverence and love. It is the richest revelation of the divine heart. Justice is the expression of love and love moves the universe. Divine love will swallow up death. It only has within itself the expression of divine justice. It is the quickening of spiritual life. It is the inspiration of morality. "Thou bleeding Lamb, the best morality is love of thee." It is also the development of beneficence.

Again:—

(c) The vision of the regnant Christ.—It is, then, not only the vision of the divine Christ and the suffering Christ, but it is the vision of the regnant or reigning Christ. He is the Son of God with power. When Paul reveals him to the Philippians it is not only as the one obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, but by very reason of that humiliation, as the one whom God hath highly exalted, and given a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow—of things in heaven, and things on the earth, and things under the earth. When he was revealed to the apostle John, he moved with authority and glory in the midst of the golden candle sticks. When he was pictured to the Centurion, he was the gold ring set with beryl. He wears the seal ring of Jehovah. We find some nowadays, who seem to be getting a little tired of the old word mediator. It is rather obsolete to speak of the mediatorial reign of Christ; but with the words, the truth also slumbers that this Christ, as our redeemer, has sovereign power and authority and that he has authority by virtue of that sacrifice. He is incomplete in his relationship to you and me save as the sceptre and the crown and the gold ring, gleam before our eyes and in our hearts. We teach the children in our Sabbath Bible schools that Christ executes, as our redeemer, the offices of prophet, priest and king, but evangelistic and easy-going Christians, persuade us almost unconsciously, that there is nothing in Christ's work save that of an atoning sacrifice. A monotonous call of "come to Jesus" is a belittling gospel. A Christ only imploring men to be saved is a belittled Saviour.

Brethren, indissolubly linked together are these three offices of Jesus Christ, and one link broken all fall to the ground. He who accepts him as prophet, and not as priest and king, has a broken chain. If to the prophet relationship and the priesthood of Jesus Christ we add this royal prerogative, we are bound with chains stronger than those of steel, indissolubly united in the very work and nature of Jesus Christ. The vision clearly reveals him as our prophet, our priest and our king. The mediatorial reign of Christ governs all conditions of life. All physical conditions are under his control. This One who was born in Bethlehem, who walked in Palestine, who died upon the Cross, this One is in heaven carrying our humanity to the right hand of the Father, glorified, regal, absolute. This world does not exist for Caesar, but for the church through Christ, and he is the hope over all things thus to the church. The church is his especial care because he is its origin and life. He has assured his divine presence always unto the end of the world. He rules in all things for his church. The progress of the years is Christ's work. This is not the day for microscopic vision but the day for telescopic vision. The horizon is wide and much land remains yet to be possessed. It is not the time for retrenchment. Our missionary field is broadening. The command to advance can be heard all along the line. The church is moving and as a grand part of it let us keep well to the front. We have had a first place for upwards of a century and shall we now allow ourselves to drop behind? I trow not. It is vision then of the church. Lastly notice:

II. THE DISCLOSURE.

The vision we have been considering will not come through mere knowledge of the truth. Knowledge cannot raise the dead. The ministerial touch has no disclosing power. The person of the Holy Spirit must be recognized in his presence and power if the vision is to come with its illumination and control. The need of the church is not in dogmas, or treasures, or machineries, or methods. With these multiform, abundant, adapted as never before, the hands hang down and the knees are feeble.

Enterprise never languishes when faith is clear-eyed. We must re-emphasize the doctrine in pulpit and principle. He is. He is a person. He is here. He is almighty. He is not straitened nor given in measure. Honor him and he will honor you. We often say that we need more of the Spirit but the fact is he needs more of us. A revival is simply a day of the Spirit's power. It is possible to return to the simplicity and enthusiasm of other days. We seem in many instances to be wandering in uncertainty and ineffectiveness. The deliverance and success of the church will not be in its machinery, nor its wealth, nor its accomplishments, but in the recognized presence and spiritual submission to the supernatural power promised in olden time. As ever he is waiting to be gracious.

We are straitened in our own selves. We must restore and vivify our conception of the Holy Spirit, and our humble acceptance of his method and control. Our assertive energy and pride of conquest, may, themselves, dishonor his presence and withhold his power. In waiting upon we shall renew our strength. Let us be known as those who sing our hymns not only to Christ, but to the Holy Spirit as God. He stands waiting with responsive revelation to every honest cry. "Lord that I might receive my sight." The supreme, imperative, and essential need of today is, the divine touch of the Holy Spirit, which will arrest our wandering and bewildered gaze, illumine the word, give money to our treasures, devotion to our worshippers, peace to our councils, wisdom to our legislation, simplicity to our faith, radiance to our hope, and ardour to our sacrifice, because it will give clear-eyed enrapturing and inspiring vision of him, who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Thou spirit of the living God, come in thy vivid disclosure, come in thy quick deliverance, come in thy gentleness and power, come in thy glorious revelation. Heal us with thine almighty touch. Anoint our eyes with eye-salve that we may see. Speak that our opened eyes may behold the glory of the king and in that light see the great light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. God grant it for the sake of the true one, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

Troy, N. H.

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How Shall We Give.

BY CHARLES H. HARRISON.

It is remarkable with what precision the New Testament sets forth the principles which underlie Christian giving. This subject has been most ably and exhaustively discussed by Dr. A. L. Vail in his "Open Letters on Christian Stewardship," which appeared recently in The Baptist Commonwealth. Dr. Vail strikes deep below the surface, and has uncovered many rich and shining veins of truth. These letters are a most valuable contribution to the literature of the subject; and if published in permanent form would doubtless receive, as they deserve, a wide reading.

The writer has been recently much interested in three phases of Christian giving as outlined by the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Corinthians, namely, the spirit, the law and the method prescribed.

In Second Corinthians 8:1-5, there is emphasized what might with propriety be denominated the Macedonian Spirit of Giving. The Apostle commends the Macedonian Christians to their Corinthian brethren, because they "first gave their own selves to the Lord," and having done that one supreme act of consecration, the lesser deed of giving from their "extreme poverty" came easy and natural.

In this Macedonian spirit of giving is seen in full and blessed operation what Dr. Vail calls the "Doctrine of Totality." The giving of ourselves implies the giving of all we have and are. Having in a real and absolute sense given ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, at once our personal and property relations to his kingdom are fixed and established forever. Hereafter we may not higgie as to what we shall do or how much we shall give—ability and opportunity become the measure of obligation.

In Second Corinthians 9:6-8, is found what may be called the Harvest Law of Christian Giving. According to this law we are not to "give grudgingly or of necessity." The Apostle names no specific amount which the Lord's people are to give. He does not say one-half, one-fourth, one-tenth, one-fifth. No. The gift is to balk with our heart. "Let every man give according as he purposeth in his heart." It is the heart gift that