

a God who hideth Himself, and that not only in the greatness of His ineffable glory as He "whom no eye hath seen, or *can* see," but even as our Redeemer. "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour."

There is much in God's word and in God's providence, in our outward circumstances and in our internal feelings to perplex and disquiet us. There are doctrinal difficulties which we cannot understand, doctrinal mysteries which we cannot solve, providential dealings with us the use of which we cannot at present see. Our daily experience turns out so very different from what we had expected that we become completely bewildered, not knowing which way to turn for the light, and utterly uncertain as to the issue of all his mysterious treatment.

Afflictions we had looked for, knowing that this is the lot of universal humanity; but we looked for them under very different circumstances from those in which they actually overtook us, and for very different ends from those they have actually subserved.

And if we look inwardly upon ourselves we find a corresponding state of darkness, doubt and uncertainty there. Our internal feelings—even our religious feelings are as variable almost as the wind or weather. If we anticipate what our feelings *will* be in given circumstances, our *actual* experience often disappoints our anticipations. We mark out for ourselves what we may be disposed to call the path of duty, and connect with the discharge of those duties certain states of feeling; but our great Leader may have marked out for us a very different course, and thus changed very materially both our views and feelings. New surprises meet us at every turn in the Christian life, and mystery attends our every footstep. Of course, to Him who sees the end from the beginning, there is no mystery, but the carrying out of an eternal plan in all its details. And if we follow our great Leader, walking in his footsteps, though we cannot trace those footsteps but one at a time, we may rest assured that both His glory and our own eternal good will be the result.

No *secondary* good is sacrificed in seeking the chief good, as is generally the case in the schemes of this life. The *command* of implicit obedience in darkness as in light, through evil as well as good report, is designed to work in us a *habit* of implicit obedience, and thus bring us back to that original condition from which Adam by

transgression fell, and with a character formed for future steadfastness—a Christianity acquired step by step, as we encounter and conquer the difficulties and perplexities which meet us as we "follow on to know the Lord"—a Christianity which Adam, through inexperience, lacked. But notice again, that though darkness, perplexity and mystery be characteristic of our earthly pilgrimage, yet occasional light and relief are granted, our perplexities are cleared up, and we are permitted to see that the very things which we are wont to regard as un-mixed evil are the things that turn out in the long run to our greatest advantage.

God makes those events, which seemed to man's short-sightedness, adverse and calamitous, the means of furthering both the individual and the general good; "darkness has been turned to light, and crooked things have been made straight." Weak in knowledge, the truths of God at first seem unintelligible to us; but the darkness is made light, knowledge becomes easy; weak in duty, the commands of God seem impracticable to us, and insuperable difficulties lie in the way of our obedience; but the crooked things have been made straight. We see this clearly illustrated in the history of the Apostles. Think of what darkness surrounded their pathway as they first left their nets and their boats, and their worldly occupations to follow Jesus. How perplexed they were when he spoke to them of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven! And when he told of his approaching sufferings, and of the spiritual nature of the kingdom which he came to set up, it was like talking to them in an unknown tongue: they could not understand the simplest truths. The mental and spiritual blindness referred to in the text seemed in their case to be entire and hopeless; and they were ready to take offence at much that he told them. And almost up to the hour of his crucifixion the same stupid ignorance to a great extent remained. But after his resurrection the light broke in upon their darkened understanding, and they were led to wonder at their own previous blindness. Soon those truths which before could gain no access to their minds, became clear and plain to their understandings, and they went forward thenceforth glorying in that cross of which before they scarce could bear to hear their master speak.

Notice the further promise of faithfulness on the part of God towards those He is leading in the way to heaven. "These things will I do unto them and not forsake them."