

The Hidings Of God

F.B. Meyer:

Isaiah 45:15

“Thou art a God that hidest Thyself,” the prophet Isaiah said, as he looked up from his study of the processes by which God was educating His people for their great destiny. Permitted an insight into the ways of God's providence, he had beheld the rise and fall of dynasty and empire, the captivity, the exile, the restoration, the gradual elimination of idolatry and impurity, and the fusing of the entire nation into a condition in which God could use it for His own purpose; and now breaking away from his long and intent scrutiny of the ways of God, he breaks out with the cry, “Verily thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Savior.”

In Nature

It is an exclamation that often rises to our lips in nature. We are always treading in the recent footprints of God; entering chambers that He seems just to have left; catching the glow of light which has just fallen from His face; but we always miss him. We go forward, and He is not there, and backward, but cannot perceive Him; we speak, and feel that He hears, but there is no reply; we look up, and know that He is looking down, but we cannot see Him; we feel after Him, and are conscious that His hand is somewhere within reach, but we never touch it. Men talk of law, and force, but what are these expressions save confessions that God, the mighty worker, is hidden from our view?

The World

What thoughtful man can look upon the state of the world without acknowledging, on the one hand, that God must be present, and yet feeling, on the other, that He is certainly concealed. He does not step out of the unseen to arrest the progress of crime and high-handed wrong. There is no sign of His displeasure.

Though His name is constantly taken in vain He utters no word of remonstrance. Though His glory is constantly trodden under foot He does not strive nor cry. Though His help is invoked, the heavens do not rend, or the cherub wings become the chariot of His descent, as of old, to the psalmist's thought. He cannot be far away; He evidently hears and observes and feels all, but who would dare to speak or act as bad men do unless men were wont to calculate upon God's concealment of Himself?

In Life

In our own life also we have to do with the hidings of God. Some days we walk in the dark, unable to see His face or to feel Him near; we sit in our deserted chambers; we puzzle over our insoluble problems; we ask our myriad questions. It seems then as though a thick veil hangs between us and Him whom we love. We are not sensible of any sin or inconsistency which has caused Him to withdraw, and yet there are the hidings of His face. Why has He taken that wife, or husband, or friend from our warm embrace, when so many another life, if similarly bereaved, would have felt it less? Why this passion for love without its satisfaction? Why this hunger for knowledge and service without gratification?

From all these questions we turn, heartsick and weary, as Noah's dove from winging her flight over the restless water. We are conscious that the miracle of the gradual healing of the blind man is a parable of our experience. Our vision is but indistinct; we see men as trees walking. It will be necessary that the hand of Christ be laid again upon us ere we see all things clearly.

The Veiled View of God

And yet we cannot wonder at the mystery which veils God and His ways. We are but children. Yesterday we were in the cradle; today we are sitting on the low form of the infant school. We have not yet commenced to graduate in the higher classes, and the faculties of the wisest and best amongst us, compared with those of the youngest angel, will probably range as those of a babe, when compared with the furthest acquirements of philosophic thought.

Besides, God has to graduate His revelation. Many mysteries have been unfolded to mankind in the later pages of the Bible, which were hidden from ages and generations. The sudden blaze of uncreated glory would dazzle, blind, and kill us. We could not bear the unveiled view of God. He must needs hide His glory as He passes by, revealing only His back parts. The revelation of the majesty of our Savior was attuned to the ability of the

disciples to bear it. The dawn of revelation, like that of the natural day, must by almost insensible degrees.

And then, further, it is obvious that there are reasons for God's dealings with ourselves and with others, which He cannot disclose. If He did we should not understand. How often does a parent tell a child to wait, because there are things which cannot be explained; terms, the full meaning of which cannot be understood; relations, connections with others that involve principles which lie altogether beyond the range of immature thought. God has explained as much as our human faculties can apprehend, but there is much beyond our range; we see but part of His ways, and the thunder of His power we cannot understand.

What if evil is stronger than we think? What if mere omnipotence be powerless to deal with it, and that it can only be quelled by moral and spiritual processes? What if the moral benefit of the universe can be best promoted by allowing evil slowly to work itself out? What if the redemptive purpose needs time to assert its supremacy? What if the position of all beings and all worlds is being affected by the incidents which are transpiring upon the surface of our earth? We know so little. We stand upon the rim of inexplicable mysteries; our circle of light only reveals the surrounding realm of darkness.

Moreover, God must teach us to walk by faith and not by sight; what we see we cannot hope for. Where there are no rocks we need no pilot; where the path is plain we need no guide. It often happens that God says to His child, "I must shadow from you the sensible enjoyment of My presence; I must withdraw the sunlight from your path; I must lead you from the green pastures and still waters into the darkened valley; I must deprive you of emotion, for you will grow better in the dark; but trust Me." When God hides from us so much that we would fain know, let us believe that the same love conceals, as at other times reveals, and that shadow and sun are accomplishing our growth in grace, and in the knowledge and love of God.

The Love of God

One consideration, however, is growing precious—"God is love. He that hides Himself is also the Savior. There is no question as to the essential nature of Him who is working all things after the purpose of His own will. We know what friendship is. We can trust some souls so utterly that no act of theirs, however strange it seemed, could shake our faith in their unutterable love. Instead of interpreting their heart by an isolated act, we explain the act by the tender heart behind it. We dare to believe that whatever appears to militate against love is only another way of expressing it more deeply. Thus as we think of God and know Him to be love, we stand in the sunshine of certainty, and everything settles into harmony and peace.

All attests His love. The adaptation of light to the eye, of sound to the ear, of love to the heart. Take out of human life sin and its consequences, and the residuum proclaims the beneficence of the Creator. We can account for the presence and power of much which is dark and forbidding, and for the rest we can trust. The love of kindred hearts; the rhythm and beauty of nature; the evident purpose which is leading all events and minds to a goal of glory; above all, the revelation given to us through holy men, through the Son and by the Cross—all prove to us that God is a Savior.

All His purposes emanate from His heart; all His dealings have salvation as their end; all events beneath His strong hand subserve the aims of His redeeming grace. He is saving us; He is saving the world; He is saving the universe; the Savior God is ever going forth upon His ministries of love, and whatever may daunt and bewilder is somehow consistent with a love so divine, so all-embracing, so infinite, that when the end has arrived the universe will be compelled to admit that not one act was inconsistent with its loftiest conceptions of divine tenderness.