

Scriptures and Doctrine :: GOD PROCLAIMING HIS OWN NAME

**GOD PROCLAIMING HIS OWN NAME - posted by pastorfrin, on: 2009/1/20 7:13**

- I. THE GOLDEN CALF
- II. THE SWIFT DECAY OF LOVE
- III. THE MEDIATOR'S THREEFOLD PRAYER

GOD PROCLAIMING HIS OWN NAME

“The Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.”—EXODUS xxxiv. 6.

This great event derives additional significance and grandeur from the place in which it stands. It follows the hideous act of idolatry in which the levity and sinfulness of Israel reached their climax. The trumpet of Sinai had hardly ceased to peal, and there in the rocky solitudes, in full view of the mount that burned with fire, while the echoes of the thunder and the Voice still lingered, one might say, among the cliffs, that mob of abject cowards were bold enough to shake off their allegiance to God, and, forgetful of all the past, plunged into idolatry, and wallowed in sensuous delights. What a contrast between Moses on the mount and Aaron and the people in the plain! Then comes the wonderful story of the plague and of Moses' intercession, followed by the high request of Moses, so strange and yet so natural at such a time, for the vision of God's glory. Into all the depths of that I do not need to plunge. Enough that he is told that his desire is beyond the possibilities of creatural life. The mediator and lawgiver cannot rise beyond the bounds of human limitations. But what can be shall be. God's goodness will pass before him. Then comes this wonderful advance in the progress of divine revelation. If we remember the breach of the Covenant, and then turn to these words, considered as evoked by the people's sin, they become very remarkable. If we consider them as the answer to Moses' desire, they are no less so. Taking these two thoughts with us, let us consider them in—

I. The answer to the request for a sensuous manifestation.

The request is “show me,” as if some visible manifestation were desired and expected, or, if not a visible, at least a direct perception of Jehovah's glory. Moses desires that he, as mediator and lawgiver, may have some closer knowledge. The answer to his request is a word, the articulate proclamation of the “Name” of the Lord. It is higher than all manifestation to sense, which was what Moses had asked. Here there is no symbol as of the Lord in the “cloud.” The divine manifestation is impossible to sense, and that, too, not by reason of man's limitations, but by reason of God's nature. The manifestation to spirit in full immediate perception is impossible also. It has to be maintained that we know God only “in part”; but it does not follow that our knowledge is only representative, or is not of Him “as He is.” Though not whole it is real, so far as it goes.

But this is not the highest form. Words and propositions can never reveal so fully, nor with such certitude, as a personal revelation. But we have Christ's life, “God manifest”: not words about God, but the manifestation of the very divine nature itself in action. “Merciful”—and we see Jesus going about “doing good.” “Gracious,” and we see Him welcoming to Himself all the weary, and ever bestowing of the treasures of His love. “Longsuffering”—“Father! forgive them!” God is “plenteous in mercy and in truth,” forgiving transgression and sin:—“Thy sins be forgiven thee.”

How different it all is when we have deeds, a human life, on which to base our belief! How much more certain, as well as coming closer to our hearts! Merely verbal statements need proof, they need warming. In Christ's showing us the Father they are changed as from a painting to a living being; they are brought out of the region of abstractions into the concrete.

“And so the word had breath, and wrought  
With human hands the creed of creeds.”

“Show us the Father and it sufficeth us.” “He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father.”

Is there any other form of manifestation possible? Yes; in heaven there will be a closer vision of Christ—not of God. Ou

our knowledge of Christ will there be expanded, deepened, made more direct. We know not how. There will be bodily changes: 'Like unto the body of His glory.' etc. 'We shall be like Him.' 'Changed from glory to glory.'

## II. The answer to the desire to see God's glory.

The 'Glory' was the technical name for the lustrous cloud that hung over the Mercy-seat, but here it probably means more generally some visible manifestation of the divine presence. What Moses craved to see with his eyes was the essential divine light. That vision he did not receive, but what he did receive was partly a visible manifestation, though not of the dazzling radiance which no human eye can see and live, and still more instructive and encouraging, the communication in words of that shining galaxy of attributes, 'the glories that compose Thy name.' In the name specially so-called, the name Jehovah, was revealed absolute eternal Being, and in the accompanying declaration of so-called 'attributes' were thrown into high relief the two qualities of merciful forgiveness and retributive justice. The 'attributes' which separate God from us, and in which vulgar thought finds the marks of divinity, are conspicuous by their absence. Nothing is said of omniscience, omnipresence, and the like, but forgiveness and justice, of both of which men carry analogues in themselves, are proclaimed by the very voice of God as those by which He desires that He should be chiefly conceived of by us.

The true 'glory of God' is His pardoning Love. That is the glowing heart of the divine brightness. If so, then the very heart of that heart of brightness, the very glory of the 'Glory of God,' is the Christ, in whom we behold that which was at once 'the glory as of the only begotten of the Father' and the 'Glory of the Father.'

In Jesus these two elements, pardoning love and retributive justice, wondrously meet, and the mystery of the possibility of their harmonious co-operation in the divine government is solved, and becomes the occasion for the rapturous gratitude of man and the wondering adoration of principalities and powers in heavenly places. Jesus has manifested the divine mercifulness; Jesus has borne the burden of sin and the weight of the divine Justice. The lips that said 'Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee,' also cried, 'Why hast Thou forsaken Me?' The tenderest manifestation of the God 'plenteous in mercy . . . forgiving iniquity,' and the most awe-kindling manifestation of the God 'that will by no means clear the guilty,' are fused into one, when we 'behold that Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.'

## III. The answer to a great sin.

This Revelation is the immediate issue of Israel's great apostasy.

Sin evokes His pardoning mercy. This insignificant speck in Creation has been the scene of the wonder of the Incarnation, not because its magnitude was great, but because its need was desperate. Men, because they are sinners, have been subjects of an experience more precious than the 'angels which excel in strength' and hearken 'to the voice of His word' have known or can know. The wilder the storm of human evil roars and rages, the deeper and louder is the voice that peals across the storm. So for us all Christ is the full and final revelation of God's grace. The last, because the perfect embodiment of it; the sole, because the sufficient manifestation of it. 'See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.'

Alexander Maclaren, Expositions of Holy Scripture