**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**ISAIAH-018. THE VEIL OVER ALL NATIONS by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations."*

*Isaiah 25:7*

The previous chapter closes with a prediction of the reign of Jehovah in Mount Zion before His elders in Glory. The allusion apparently is to the elders being summoned up to the Mount and seeing the Glory, as the body of heaven in its clearness. The veil in this verse is probably a similar allusion to that which covered Moses face. It will then be an emblem of that which obscures for all nations the face of God. And what is that but sin?

**I. Sin veils God from men's sight.**

It is not the necessary inadequacy of the finite mind to conceive of the Infinite that most tragically hides God from us. That inadequacy is compatible with true and sufficient knowledge of Him. Nor is it the veils of flesh and sense, as we often hear it said, that hide Him. But it is our sinful moral nature that darkens His face and dulls our eyes. Knowledge of God, being knowledge of a Person, is not merely an intellectual process. It is much more truly acquaintance than comprehension; and as such, requires, as all acquaintance does, some foundation of sympathy and appreciation.

Every sin darkens the witness to God in ourselves, In a pure nature, conscience would perfectly reveal God; but we all know too sadly and intimately how it is gradually silenced, and fails to discriminate between what pleases and what displeases God. In a pure nature, the obedient Will would perfectly reveal God and the man's dependence on Him. We all know how sin weakens that.

Every sin diminishes our power of seeing Him in His external Revelation. Every sin ruffles the surface of the soul, which is a mirror reflecting the light that streams from Creation, from Providence, from History. A mass of black rock flung into a still lake shatters the images of the girdling woods and the overarching sky.

Every sin bribes us to forget God. It becomes our interest, as we fancy, to shut Him out of our thoughts. Adam's impulse is to carry his guilty secret with him into hiding among the trees of the garden. We cannot shake off His presence, but we can--and when we have sinned, we have but too good reason to exercise the power--we can dismiss the thought of Him. They did not like to retain God in their knowledge.

Individual sins may seem of small moment, but an opaque veil can be woven out of very fine thread.

**II. To veil God from our sight is fatal.**

We imagine that to forget Him leaves us undisturbed in following aims disapproved by Him, and we spend effort to secure that false peace by fierce absorption in other pursuits, and impatient shaking off of all that might wake our sleeping consciousness of Him.

But what unconscious self-murder that is, which we take such pains to achieve! To know God is life eternal; to lose Him from our sight is to condemn all that is best in our nature, all that is most conducive to blessedness, tranquillity, and strenuousness in our lives, to languish and die. Every creature separated from God is cut off from the fountain of life, and loses the life it drew from the fountain, of whatever kind that life is. And that in man which is most of kin with God languishes most when so cut off. And when we have blocked Him out from our field of vision, all that remains for us to look at suffers degradation, and becomes phantasmal, poor, unworthy to detain, and impotent to satisfy, our hungry vision.

**III. The Veil is done away in Christ.**

He shows us God, instead of our own false conceptions of Him, which are but distorted refractions of His true likeness. Only within the limits of Christ's revelation is there knowledge of God, as distinguished from guesses, doubtful inferences, partial glimpses. Elsewhere, the greatest certitude as to Him is a peradventure; Jesus alone says Verily, verily.

* Jesus makes us able to see God.
* Jesus makes us delight in seeing Him.
* All dread of the steady whole of the Judge's face is changed to the loving heart's joy in seeing its Beloved.

**IV. The Veil is wholly removed hereafter.**

The prophecy from which the text is taken is obviously not yet fulfilled. It waits for the perfect condition of redeemed manhood in another life. But even then, the chief reason why the Christian is warranted in cherishing an unpresumptuous hope that he will know even as he is known is not that then he will have dropped the veil of flesh and sense, but that he will have dropped the thicker, more stifling covering of sin, and, being perfectly like God, will be able perfectly to gaze on Him, and, perfectly gazing on Him, will grow ever more perfectly like Him.

The choice for each of us is whether the veil will thicken till it darkens the Face altogether, and that is death; or whether it will thin away till the last filmy remnant is gone, and we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.