

The Glory in the Cloud

J. G. Bellett.

BT vol. 6 p. 193.

The cloud which conducted Israel through the wilderness was the servant and the companion of the camp. But it was the veil or the covering of the glory also. Commonly it appeared in the sight of Israel only as a cloud, and the glory was known only by faith to be within it. But still the glory was always there, and at times it shone forth.

Such was that beautiful mystery. It was occasionally a hidden, occasionally a manifested glory. It was the servant and the companion of the camp, but it was, so to speak, its God also.*

*The glory in the cloud was that which dwelt between the cherubim in the holy of holies, the sanctuary or dwelling of Jehovah. The glory which served the camp under a veil was that which, without robbery, assumed all the divine honours of the temple.

Now, all this was Jesus, God manifest in flesh, God in "the form of a servant" commonly, occasionally shining forth in divine authority, and always entitled to the honour of the sanctuary of God.

Let us look at instances of this shining forth.

Israel had to be defended. The cloud changes its place and comes between Egypt and the camp, and then the glory looks through it and troubles the host of Egypt, so that they come not nigh Israel all the night, and this was doing for the camp the service of God.

Just so, Jesus. On a kindred occasion Jesus acts exactly as the cloud and the glory on the banks of the Red Sea. He comes between the disciples and their pursuers. "If ye seek me, let these go their way." He defends them; and then, as of old in the borders of Egypt, He looks through the veil and troubles the enemy again; and all this with the same ease, the same authority, as in the day of Pharaoh. He did but, as it were, look out again. He did but show Himself; saying, "I am he," and the Egyptians lie on the shore again. (See Exodus 14: 24, and John 8: 6.) Can we refuse to see the God of Israel in Jesus? "Worship him; all ye gods." He is the God of Psalm 97: 7, and yet Jesus. (Heb. 1: 6.) The Egyptian gods worshipped Him at the Red Sea, and the Roman gods in the garden of Gethsemane. And when brought again as the first-begotten into the world, it shall be said, "Let all the angels of God worship him."

But further, Israel had to be rebuked as well as defended, to be disciplined as well as saved. The same glory hid within the cloud will do this divine work as well as the other.

In the day of the manna, in the day of the spies, in the matter of Korah, and at the water of Meribah (Exodus 16; Numbers 14, 16, 20.) Israel provokes the holiness of the Lord, and as often the Lord resents it. The glory is seen in the cloud, expressing this resentment, a witness against the camp.

Just so Jesus in His day. When grieved at their unbelief or hardness of heart, He asserts His glory, His divine person and power in the midst of the disciples, and is thus, as of old in the wilderness, rebuking their way. (Mark 4: 37-41; Mark 5: 39-43; Mark 6: 36-51; John 14: 8-11.)

Surely, here again was the mystery of the glory in the cloud realized in Jesus, God manifest in flesh. That cloud veiled the glory, and was at once the servant and the God of Israel. The cloud was the ordinary thing; the glory was occasionally manifested, but it was always there, and in the temple. And

is not Jesus in all this?

But I would look a little more particularly at one instance of Jesus as the hidden glory, alluded to above, that in John 15. In the parting scene on the shore at Miletus, we see the dear apostle full of affection towards the saints, and also strong in the consciousness of integrity. (Acts 20.) But there is no glory shining out there. Paul was a servant and a brother. He was a vessel in God's house. Others had been blessed through him: but he was, all the while, a companion, a brother, a fellow-servant, a minister, and apostle, and such only. No veil is to be rent to let him appear other than he is seen to be. There was no hidden glory in him, nothing to be manifested personally which had not been manifested.

But there is another parting scene where we get this. I mean that which is presented to us in John 13 - 17. We find there the tokens of the most devoted affection, as we may get in Paul on the shore at Miletus. Jesus girds Himself with a towel, pours water into a basin, and washes His disciples' feet. But with all this, mark the sense of His authority and of Himself, of His office, and of His person, which fills His soul. He knows Himself to be the "Lord and Master," though washing their feet, and "that he was come from God and went to God." (John 13.) Here is glory in the cloud again. He is the servant of the camp again, but when Israel's ways or words challenge or demand it, Israel shall again, for their rebuking, look to the wilderness again (Ex. 16: 10), and see the glory in the cloud. And so, quickly afterwards (John 14: 1-3), the same Jesus would render them other service. He would prepare mansions for them in heaven, as well as wash their feet while on earth. He would also return to take them home. But if the disciples, like the camp of old, be unbelieving, the glory shall shine through the cloud for their confounding, and Jesus will say, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip; he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou then, Show us the Father.

Thus, Jesus is the clouded glory. And very grateful all this truth is to those who trace, and delight to trace, that glory in its full brightness because of the thickness of the veil under which, in measureless grace, He hid it. He was the servant and the companion of the camp still, on whatever stage of the journey they were. Here was love — the patient serving love known of old to Israel in the desert. But it is the love of the glory. That is the joy, had we but hearts to take it. Paul's was love, patient, serving love. But it was the love of a brother, of a fellow-servant, of a man of "like passions," the service of a Moses. Jesus' was the love of the glory.

The glory in the cloud was the God of Israel. (Ezek. 43: 4; Ezek. 44: 2.) The God of Israel was Jesus of Nazareth. (Isaiah 6: 1; John 12: 41.) The Nazarene was as the cloud which veiled a light, which, in its proper fulness, no man can approach unto, though discovered by faith.

Here let me add that it is the business of faith (through the indwelling Spirit) to discover the hidden true glory, and to refuse the displayed false glory. How quickly Abram discovered it! (Gen. 18: 3.) How beautifully Abigail owned it in David, type of Christ! (1 Sam. 25.) How did the wise men discover it in a manger, after they had passed by all the false displayed glory of the world round Herod in Jerusalem! (Matt. 2.) And how did old Simeon discover it in the Child, the same Child in the temple, and passed by all the religion, glory, and array which was then filling that very same spot! (Luke. 2.) Faith was doing this, discovering hidden glory, all through the life of Jesus. Under the despised form of the Galilean, at one time, the Son of God was owned; at another, the Jehovah of Israel; at another, the Creator of the world; at another, the Son of David or the King of Israel. All these were different glories of the same person hid under the same veil.

How precious to Christ was that faith which rent the veil! The wise men, Simeon, Anna, rent the veil of infancy, the dying thief rent the veil of the cross. And see Mark 10: 34. The Lord was speaking of His deepest humiliation, but at that very moment the sons of Zebedee speak of His kingdom and

desire it. The multitude speak of "Jesus of Nazareth" (ver. 47), but the blind beggar at that very moment speaks of "the Son of David" and prays to Him for help.

How precious is sweet faith as this! And I ask myself, am I rending veils in like power of faith? Do I see glory in the Church still? not doctrinally merely in the person of Christ, but really and livingly in the persons of His people? If I am delighting in, and honouring, a member of Christ under the veil of worldly degradation, such as men would neglect and despise, I am doing this ancient beautiful work of faith, rending veils.