

The Rent Veil

Horatius Bonar

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Chapter One Open Intercourse with God

It does not seem a strange thing that the creature and the Creator should meet face to face, and that they should hold intercourse without any obstructing medium.

We may not understand the mode of communication between the visible and the invisible, but we can see this, at least, that He who made us can communicate with us, by the ear or the eye or the touch. He can speak and we can hear; and, again, we can speak and He can hear. His being and ours can thus come together, to interchange thought and affection: He giving, we receiving; He rejoicing in us, and we rejoicing in Him: He loving us, and we loving Him. He can look on us, and we can look on Him; He “guiding us with His eye” (Ps. 32:8), and we fixing our eye on His, as children on the eye of a father, taking in all the love and tenderness which beam from His paternal look, and sending up to Him our responding look of filial confidence and love. Not that He has “eyes of flesh, or seeth as man seeth” (Job 10:4); but He can fix His gaze on us in ways of His own, and make us feel His gaze, as really as when the eyes of friends look into each other’s depths. “He that formed the eye shall He not see” (Ps. 94:9). He who made the human eye to be “the light of the body” (Matthew 6:22), that organ through which light enters the body,—in order that He might pour into us the glory of His own sun and moon and stars,—can He not, through some inner eye

which we know not, and for which we have no name, pour into us the radiance of His own infinite glory, though He be the “King invisible” (1 Tim. 1:17),—He “whom no man hath seen nor can see” (1 Tim. 6:16),—the “invisible God” (Col. 1:15). He can touch us; for in Him we live and move and have our being:¹ and we can lay hold of Him, for He is not far from any one of us; He is the nearest of all that is near, and the most palpable of all the palpable. It would seem, then, that open and free and near intercourse with the God who made us arose from His being what He is, and from our being what we are: as if it were a necessity both of His existence and of ours.

That He should be our Creator, and yet be separated from us, seems an impossibility; that we should be His creatures, and yet remain at a distance from Him, seems the most unnatural and unlikely of all relations. Intercourse, fellowship, mutual love, then, seem to flow from all that He is to us, and from all that we are to Him.

We can conceive of no obstruction, no difficulty in all this, so long as we remained what He has made us. There could be nothing but the sympathy of heart with heart; a flow and reflow of holy and unobstructed love.

Unhindered access to the God who made us seems one of the necessary conditions of our nature; and this not arising out of any merit or worthiness on the part of the creature, but from the fitness of things; the adaptation of the thing made to Him who made it; and the impossibility of separation between that which was made and Him who made it. The life above and the life below must draw together; heart cannot be separated from heart, unless something come between to put asunder that which had by the necessity of nature been joined together. Distance from God does not belong to our creation, but has come in as something unnatural, something alien to creative love, something which contravenes the original and fundamental law of our being.

The tree separated from its root, the flower broken off from its stem, are the fittest emblems of man disjoined from God. Such distance seems altogether unnatural. The want of vital connection, in our original constitution, or the absence of

¹ It is interesting to notice the way in which the negative particle is used in the different designations of God. He is called invisible,—He who cannot be seen, He who cannot lie (Titus 1:2) incorruptible (Rom 1:23; 1 Tim 1:17) He who cannot be tempted (James 1:13): He who only hath immortality (1 Tim 6:16). In connection with the things of God, and of Christ, we have a similar use of the same negative particle:—Thus, “His eternal power and Godhead” (Rom 1:20); unfading (1 Peter 1:4); immutability (Heb 6:17); without repentance (Rom 11:29); undefiled (Heb 7:26); past finding out (Rom 11:33); unchangeable (Heb 7:24). These instances will illustrate the truth that very much of what we express of God, is expressed in the form of a contrast to the things of man.

sympathy, would imply defect in the workmanship, of the most serious kind,—and no less would it indicate imperfection on the part of the Great Worker.

God made us for Himself; that He might delight in us and we in Him; He to be our portion and we His; He to be our treasure and we His.² He made us after His own likeness; so that each part of our being has its resemblance or counterpart in Himself: our affections, and sympathies, and feelings being made after the model of His own. We are apt to associate God only with what is cold and abstract and ideal; ourselves with what is emotional and personal. Herein we greatly err. We must reverse the picture if we would know the truth concerning Him with whom is no coldness, no abstraction, no impersonality. The reality pertaining to the nature of man, is as nothing when compared with the reality belonging to the nature of Him who created us after His own image. In so far as the infinite exceeds the finite, in so far does that which we call reality transcend in God all that is known by that term in man. We are the shadows, He is the substance. Jehovah is the infinitely real and true and personal: and it is with Him as such that we have to do. The God of philosophy may be a cold abstraction, which no mind can grasp, and by which no heart can be warmed; but the God of Scripture, the God who created the heavens and the earth, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is a reality,—a reality for both the mind and heart of man. It is the infinite Jehovah that loves, and pities, and blesses; who bids us draw near to Him, walk with Him, and have fellowship with Him. It is the infinite Jehovah who fills the finite heart; for He made that heart for the very purpose of its being filled with Himself. Our joy is to be in Him; His joy is in us. Over us He resteth in His love, and in Himself He bids us rest. Apart from Him creaturehood has neither stability nor blessedness.

Free and open intercourse with the God who made us, is one of the necessities of our being. Acquaintanceship with Him, and delight in Him, are the very life of our created existence. Better not to be than not to know Him, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Better to pass away into unconsciousness or nothingness, than to cease to delight in Him, or to be delighted in by Him.

The loss of God is the loss of everything; and in having God we have everything. His overflowing fulness is our inheritance; and in nearness to Him we enjoy that fulness. He cannot speak to us, but something of that fulness flows in. We cannot speak to Him without attracting His excellency towards us. This mutual speech,

² John Howe thus writes on this point, in his treatise on “Delighting in God”:—
“The most excellent portion, in whom all things that may render Him such do concur and meet together; all desirable and imaginable riches and fulness, together with large bounty, flowing goodness, every way correspondent to the wants and cravings of indigent and thirsty souls. How infinitely delightful is it to view and enjoy Him as our portion . . . every way complete and full, it being the all-comprehensive good which is this portion, God all-sufficient . . . making His boundless fulness overflow to the replenishing of thirsty longing souls.”

or converse, is that which forms the medium of communication between heaven and earth. Man looketh up, and God looketh down: our eyes meet, and we are, in the twinkling of an eye, made partakers of the divine abundance.³ Man speaks out to God what He feels; God speaks out to man what He feels. The finite and the infinite mind thus interchange their sympathies; love meets love, mingling and rejoicing together; the full pours itself into the empty, and the empty receiveth the full.

The greatness of God is no hindrance to this intercourse: for one special part of the divine greatness is to be able to condescend to the littleness of created beings, seeing that creaturehood must, from its very nature, have this littleness; inasmuch as God must ever be God, and man must ever be man: the ocean must ever be the ocean, the drop must ever be the drop. The greatness of God compassing our littleness about, as the heavens the earth, and fitting into it on every side, as the air into all parts of the earth, is that which makes the intercourse so complete and blessed. "In His hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind" (Job 12:10). Such is His nearness to, such His intimacy with, the works of His hands.

It is nearness, not distance, that the name Creator implies; and the simple fact of His having made us is the assurance of His desire to bless us and to hold intercourse with us. Communication between the thing made and its maker is involved in the very idea of creation. "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn Thy commandments" (Ps. 119:73). "Faithful Creator" is His name (1 Peter 4:19), and as such we appeal to Him, "Forsake not the work of Thine own hands" (Ps. 138:8).

Nothing that is worthless or unloveable ever came from His hands; and as being His "workmanship," we may take the assurance of His interest in us, and His desire for converse with us.⁴

He put no barrier between Himself and us when He made us. If there be such a thing now, it is we who have been its cause. Separation from Him must have

³ "How pleasant to lose themselves in Him; to be swallowed up in the overcoming sense of His boundless, all-sufficient, everywhere flowing fulness! By this dependence they make this fulness of God their own. They have nothing to do but to depend; to live upon a present self-sufficient good, which alone is enough to replenish all desires. How can we divide the highest pleasure, the fullest satisfaction, from this dependence! 'Tis to live at the rate of a god; a godlike life; a living upon immense fulness; as He lives."—Howe's *Blessedness of the Righteous*, Chapter 8.

⁴ "God's excellency, His wisdom, His purity and love seemed to appear in everything; in the sun, moon, and stars; in the clouds and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, and trees; in the water, and all nature—which used greatly to fix my mind."—Jonathan Edwards

come upon our side. It was not the father who sent the younger son away; it was that son who “gathered all together and took his journey into the far country” (Luke 15:13), because he had become tired of the father’s house and the father’s company.

The rupture between God and man did not begin on the side of God. It was not heaven that withdrew from earth, but earth that withdrew from heaven. It was not the father that said to the younger son, Take your goods, pack up and be gone; it was that son who said, “Father give me the portion of goods that falleth to me,” and who, “not many days after, took his journey into the far country,” turning his back on his father and his father’s house.

“O Israel! thou hast destroyed THYSELF” (Hosea 13:9). O man! thou hast cast off God. It is not God who has cast off thee. Thou hast dislinked thyself from the blessed Creator; thou hast broken the golden chain that fastened thee to His throne, the silken cord that bound thee to his heart.

Yet He wants thee back again; nor will He rest till He has accomplished His gracious design, and made thee once more the vessel of His love.

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