

## The Rent Veil

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### Chapter Five The Rending of the Veil

The symbolic veil was rent: and at the same moment the true veil was also rent. It is this that we have now to consider.

The following are the words of the evangelist: "Behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Matthew 27:51). In considering them we must endeavour to realize the scene of which this is a part. The passage transports us to Jerusalem; it sets us down upon Moriah; it takes us into the old temple at the hour of evening sacrifice, when the sun, though far down the heavens, is still sending its rays right over turret and pinnacle, on to the gray slopes of Olivet, where thousands, gathered for the great Paschal Sacrifice, are wandering; it shows us the holy chambers with their varied furniture of marble and cedar and gold; it brings us into the midst of the ministering priests, all robed for service. Then suddenly, as through the opened sky, it lifts us up and carries us from the earthly into the heavenly places, from the mortal into the immortal Jerusalem, of which it is written by one who had gazed upon them both, "I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."

For we must take the earthly and the heavenly together, as body and soul. The terrestrial sun and the sun of righteousness must mingle their radiance, and each unfold the other. The waters of the nether and the upper springs must flow together. The Church must be seen in Israel, and Israel in the Church; Christ in

the altar, and the altar in Christ; Christ in the lamb, and the lamb in Christ; Christ in the mercy-seat, and the mercyseat in Christ; Christ in the shekinah-glory, and the shekinah-glory in Him, who is the brightness of Jehovah's glory. We must not separate the shadow from the substance, the material from the spiritual, the visible from the invisible glory. What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

Even the old Jew, if a believing man, like Simeon, saw these two things together, though in a way and order and proportion considerably different from what our faith now realizes. To him there was the vision of the heavenly through the earthly; to us there is the vision of the earthly through the heavenly. He, standing on the outside, saw the glory through the veil, as one in a valley sees the sunshine through clouds; we, placed in the inside, see the veil through the glory, as one far up the mountain sees the clouds beneath through the sunshine. Formerly it was the earthly that revealed the heavenly, now it is the heavenly that illuminates the earthly. Standing beside the brazen serpent, Moses might see afar off Messiah the Healer of the nations; standing, or rather I should say sitting, by faith beside this same Messiah in the heavenly places, we see the brazen serpent afar off. From the rock of Horeb, the elders of Israel might *look up* and catch afar off some glimpses of the water of life flowing from the rock of ages; we, close by the heavenly fountain, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, *look down* and recognize the old desert rock, with its gushing stream. Taking in his hand the desert manna, Israel could look up to the true bread above; we, taking into our hands the bread of God, look downward on the desert manna, not needing now with Israel to ask, "What is it?"

But let us look at

*The rending of the veil.* This was a new thing in its history, and quite a thing fitted to make Israel gaze and wonder, and ask, what meaneth this? Is Jehovah about to forsake His dwelling?

1. *It was rent, not consumed by fire.* For not its mere removal, still less its entire destruction, was to be signified; but its being transformed *from being a barrier into a gate of entrance.* Through it the way into the holiest was to pass; the new and living way; over a pavement sprinkled with blood.

2. *It was rent while the temple stood.* Had the earthquake which rent the rocks and opened graves, struck down the temple or shattered its walls, men might have said that it was this that rent the veil. But now was it made manifest that it was no earthly hand, nor natural convulsion, that was thus throwing open the mercyseat, and making its long-barred chamber as entirely accessible as the wide court without, which all might enter, and where all might worship.

3. *It was rent in twain.* It did not fall to pieces, nor was it torn in pieces. The rent was a clean and straight one, made by some invisible hand; and the exact

division into two parts might well figure the separation of Christ's soul and body, while each part remained connected with the temple, as both body and soul remained in union with the Godhead; as well as resemble the throwing open of the great folding door between earth and heaven, and the complete restoration of the fellowship between God and man.

4. *It was rent from the top to the bottom.* Not from side to side, nor from the bottom to the top: which might have been man's doing; but from the top to the bottom, showing that the power which rent it was from above, not from beneath; that the rending was not of man but of God. It was man, no doubt, that dealt the blow of death to the Son of God, but, "it pleased *the Lord* to bruise him; *He* hath put him to grief." Beginning with the roof and ending with the floor, the rest was complete; for God, out of His own heaven, had done it. And as from roof to floor there remained not one fragment of the old veil; so from heaven to earth, from the throne of God, down to the dwelling of man, there exists not one remnant nor particle of a barrier between the sinner and God. He who openeth and no man shutteth has, with His own hand, and in His own boundless love, thrown wide open to the chief of sinners, the innermost recesses of His own glorious heaven! Let us go in: let us draw near.

5. *It was rent in the presence of the priests.* They were in the holy place, outside the veil, of course, officiating, lighting the lamps, or placing incense on the golden altar, or ordering the shewbread on the golden table. They saw the solemn rending of the veil, and were no doubt overwhelmed with amazement; ready to flee out of the place, or to cover their eyes lest they should see the hidden glories of that awful chamber which only one was permitted to behold. "Woe is me, for I am undone; I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts" (Isa. 6:5). They were witnesses of what was done. They had not done it themselves; they felt that no mortal hand had done it; and what could they say but that God Himself had thrown open His gates, that they might enter in to precincts from which they had been so long debarred.

6. *It was rent that it might disclose the mercy-seat, and the cherubim, and the glory.* These were no longer to be hidden, and known only as the mysterious occupants of a chamber from which they might not go out, and into which no man might enter. It was no longer profanity to handle the uncovered vessels of the inner shrine; to gaze upon the golden floor and walls all stained with sacrificial blood; nay, to go up to the mercy-seat and sit down beneath the very shadow of the glory. Formerly it was blasphemy even to speak of entering in; now the invitation seemed all at once to go forth, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace." The *safest*, as well as the most blessed place, is beneath the shadow of the glory.

7. *It was rent at the time of the evening sacrifice.* About three o'clock, when the sun began to go down, the lamb was slain, and laid upon the brazen altar. Just at

the moment when its blood was shed, and the smoke arose from the fire that was consuming it, the veil was rent in twain. There was an unseen link between the altar and the veil, between the sacrifice and the rending, between the bloodshedding and the removal of the barrier. It was blood that had done the work. It was blood that had rent the veil and thrown open the mercy-seat: the blood of "the Lamb, without blemish, and without spot."

8. *It was rent at the moment when the Son of God died on the cross.* His death, then, had done it! Nay, more, that rending and that death were one thing; the one a symbol, the other a reality; but both containing one lesson, that LIFE *was the screen which stood between us and God*, and death the removal of the screen; that it was His *death* that made His incarnation available for sinners; that it was from the cross of Golgotha that the cradle of Bethlehem derived all its value and its virtue; that the rock of ages, like the rock of Rephidim, must be smitten before it can become a fountain of living waters. That death was like the touching of the electric wire between Calvary and Moriah, setting loose suddenly the divine power that for a thousand years had been lying in wait to rend the veil and cast down the barrier. It was from the cross that the power emanated which rent the veil. From that place of weakness and shame and agony, came forth the omnipotent command, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors." The "It is finished" upon Golgotha was the appointed signal, and the instantaneous response was the rending of the veil. Little did the Jew think, when nailing the Son of the carpenter to the tree, that it was these pierced hands that were to rend the veil, and that it was their being thus pierced that fitted them for this mysterious work. Little did he suppose, when erecting a cross for the Nazarene, that that cross was to be the lever by which both his temple and city were to be razed to their foundations. Yet so it was. It was the cross of Christ that rent the veil; overthrew the cold statutes of symbolic service; consecrated the new and living way into the holiest; supplanted the ritualistic with the real and the true; and substituted for lifeless performances the living worship of the living God.

9. *When the veil was rent, the cherubim which were embroidered on it were rent with it.* And as these cherubim symbolized the Church of the redeemed, there was thus signified our identification with Christ in His death. We were nailed with Him to the cross; we were crucified with Him; with Him we died, and were buried, and rose again. In that rent veil we have the temple-symbol of the apostle's doctrine, concerning oneness with Christ in life and death,—*"I am crucified with Christ."* And in realizing the cross and the veil, let us realize these words of solemn meaning, *"Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."*

The broken body and shed blood of the Lord had at length opened the sinner's way into the holiest. And these were the tokens not merely of grace, but of righteousness. That rending was no act either of mere power or of mere grace. Righteousness had done it. Righteousness had rolled away the stone. Righteousness had burst the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. It

was a righteous removal of the barrier; it was a righteous entrance that had been secured for the unrighteous; it was a righteous welcome for the chief of sinners that was now proclaimed.

Long had the blood of bulls and goats striven to rend the veil, but in vain. Long had they knocked at the awful gate, demanding entrance for the sinner; long had they striven to quench the flaming sword, and unclasp the fiery belt that girdled paradise; long had they demanded entrance for the sinner, but in vain. But now the better blood has come; it knocks but once, and the gate flies open; it but once touches the sword of fire, and it is quenched. Not a moment is lost. The fullness of the time has come. God delays not, but unbars the door at once. He throws open His mercy-seat to the sinner, and makes haste to receive the banished one; more glad even than the wanderer himself that the distance, and the exclusion, and the terror are at an end for ever.

O wondrous power of the cross of Christ! To exalt the low, and to abase the high; to cast down and to build up; to unlink and to link; to save and to destroy; to kill and to make alive; to shut out and to let in; to curse and to bless. O wondrous virtue of the saving cross, which saves in crucifying, and crucifies in saving! For four thousand years has paradise been closed, but Thou hast opened it. For ages and generations the presence of God has been denied to the sinner, but Thou hast given entrance,—and that not timid, and uncertain, and costly, and hazardous; but bold, and blessed, and safe, and free.

The veil, then, has been rent in twain from the top to the bottom. The way is open, the blood is sprinkled, the mercy-seat is accessible to all, and the voice of the High Priest, seated on that mercy-seat, summons us to enter, and to enter without fear. Having, then, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,—by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, and having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith. The message is, Go in, go in. Let us respond to the message, and at once draw near. To stand afar off, or even upon the threshold, is to deny and dishonour the provision made for our entrance, as well as to incur the awful peril of remaining outside the one place of safety or blessedness. To enter in is our only security and our only joy. But we must go in in a spirit and attitude becoming the provision made for us. If that provision has been insufficient, we must come hesitatingly, doubtfully, as men who can only venture on an uncertain hope of being welcomed. If the veil be not wholly rent, if the blood be not thoroughly sprinkled, or be in itself insufficient, if the mercy-seat be not wholly what its name implies,—a seat of mercy, a throne of grace; if the High Priest be not sufficiently compassionate and loving, or if there be not sufficient evidence that these things are so, the sinner may come doubtfully and uncertainly; but if the veil be fully rent, and the blood be of divine value and potency, and the mercy-seat be really the place of grace, and the High Priest full of love to the sinner, then every shadow of a reason for doubt is swept utterly away. Not to come with the boldness is the sin. Not to come in the full

assurance of faith is the presumption. To draw near with an “evil conscience” is to declare our belief that the blood of the Lamb is not of itself enough to give the sinner a good conscience and a fearless access.

“May I then draw near as I am, in virtue of the efficacy of the sprinkled blood?” Most certainly. In what other way or character do you propose to come? And may I be bold at once? Most certainly. For if not at once, then when and how? Let boldness come when it may, it will come to you from the sight of the blood upon the floor and mercy-seat, and from nothing else. It is bold coming that honours the blood. It is bold coming that glorifies the love of God and the grace of His throne. “Come boldly!” this is the message to the sinner. Come boldly now! Come in the full assurance of faith, not supposing it possible that that God who has provided such a mercy-seat can do anything but welcome you; that such a mercy-seat can be anything to you but the place of pardon, or that the gospel out of which every sinner that has believed it has extracted peace, can contain anything but peace to you.

The rent veil is liberty of access. Will you linger still? The sprinkled blood is boldness,—boldness for the sinner, for any sinner, for every sinner. Will you still hesitate, tampering and dallying with uncertainty and doubt, and an evil conscience? Oh, take that blood *for what it is and gives*, and go in. Take that rent veil for what it indicates, and go in. This only will make you a peaceful, happy, holy man. This only will enable you to work for God on earth, unfettered and unburdened; all over joyful, all over loving, and all over free. This will make your religion not that of one who has everything yet to settle between himself and God, and whose labours, and duties, and devotions are all undergone for the purpose of working out that momentous adjustment before life shall close, but the religion of one who, having at the very outset, and simply in believing, settled every question between himself and God over the blood of the Lamb, is serving the blessed One who has loved him and bought him, with all the undivided energy of his liberated and happy soul.

For every sinner, without exception, that veil has a voice, that blood a voice, that mercy-seat a voice. They say, “Come in.” They say, “Be reconciled to God.” They say, “Draw near.” They say, “Seek the Lord while He may be found.” To the wandering prodigal, the lover of pleasure, the drinker of earth’s maddening cup, the dreamer of earth’s vain dreams,—they say, there is bread enough in your Father’s house, and love enough in your Father’s heart, and to spare,—return, return. To each banished child of Adam, exiles from the paradise which their first father lost, these symbols, with united voice, proclaim the extinction of the fiery sword, the reopening of the long-barred gate, with a free and abundant re-entrance, or rather, entrance into a more glorious paradise, a paradise that was never lost.

But if all these voices die away unheeded,—if you will not avail yourself, O man, of that rent veil, that open gate,—what remains but the eternal exclusion, the

hopeless exile, the outer darkness, where there is the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth? Instead of the rent veil, there shall be drawn the dark curtain, never to be removed or rent, which shall shut you out from God, and from paradise, and from the New Jerusalem for ever. Instead of the mercy-seat, there comes the throne of judgment; and instead of the gracious High Priest, there comes the avenging Judge. Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ is coming, and with His awful advent ends all thy hope. He is coming; and He may be nearer than you think. In an hour when you are not aware He will come. When you are saying peace and safety, He will come. When you are dreaming of earth's long, calm, summer days, He will come. Lose no time. Trifle no more with eternity; it is too long and too great to be trifled with. Make haste! Get these affections disengaged from a present evil world. Get these sins of thine buried in the grave of Christ. Get that soul of thine wrapped up, all over, in the perfection of the perfect One, in the righteousness of the righteous One. Then all is well, all is well. But till then thou hast not so much as one true hope for eternity or for time.

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