

"And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

"And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

"And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him."

- Matthew xvii, 1-3

Isaiah vi

Matthew xvii, 1-13

Psalm 97

New Book of Worship, Psalm 89, p.68

The Transfiguration is a picture of the Lord as He is in His glorified Humanity. The Lord took Peter, James, and John up into a high mountain apart from the others, and He was transfigured before them. His face shone as the sun, His raiment was white as the light, Moses and Elijah were with Him, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice was heard from the cloud saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." And when they had come down from the mountain, the Lord said to them, "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead."

In order that they might witness His Transfiguration the Lord raised His three closest disciples out of their ordinary states into the high mountain of spiritual perception. He drew aside the veil of the senses, and gave them a glimpse of His glory as they would see Him in the after life, that they and men of all time might have some true idea of His real nature.

Many years later the Lord appeared to John in vision as described in the opening chapter of the Book of Revelation.

The Transfiguration has a lesson for us. It is the example and pattern of the change which takes place in us by our regeneration. It shows what we may remotely, finitely become compared with our state at present, for by regeneration we become formed into His image and likeness.

All the details mentioned represent states and changes in us. The Transfiguration occurred "after six days." These six days are the days of labor in which we search out and reject our falsities and seek to overcome our evils. They are the six days of our spiritual creation, in which the spiritual mind is forming. In them we collect the materials; we learn truths; we combat spiritual enemies; we labor for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life.

The Lord did not take all of His disciples with Him. He took only Peter, James, and John his brother. These three disciples represent the three essential principles which make the man of the church, namely, faith or truth, charity or love, and life or good works. To be a man of the church one must know and believe

the truth, he must love the principles which it teaches, and he must apply those principles to his life.

It is only those who have these three principles that can be led up into the high mountain to see the glory of the Lord. The Lord cannot take anyone and bring him into an elevated state of perception unless he has faith. Genuine faith is that belief in the Lord which leads us to put our trust in Him and to do His commandments. And the Lord cannot lead us by faith only. We must love Him or our knowing and doing will be of no avail. But love, though it is the motive power of the soul, is by itself as powerless as faith. Until it becomes embodied in act it cannot exert its power.

The Lord brings us into the high mountain of His love by these principles. First our attention must be awakened by the learning of truths about the Lord and heaven. Then we must desire the heavenly life, and then we must seek to embody the heavenly life in deeds. What Peter, James, and John represent must be in us before the Lord can take us up into the mount and show us His glory.

It is impossible for us to gain full and complete understanding of the meaning and importance of the Transfiguration. But appreciation of it will increase as we rise in our ability to understand it. It was not the material body of the Lord that the three disciples saw. Until their eyes were opened in vision they saw Him as a man among men. Today some see Him only so. The Jews saw Him as one undermining their authority, and they crucified Him. Today some see Him as a noble man, a great leader and teacher, but do not see Him as God. The varying concepts of Christ held by men are due to their own spiritual states. They see Him according to the constitution of their own minds and lives.

Peter, James, and John had long looked upon Jesus with their material eyes. They saw His form; they walked and talked with Him. But they had no idea of His true character. If they hoped that He would be their Redeemer, it was from civil, not from spiritual bondage that they expected to be redeemed. If He was to be their King, their thought was not of a King of glory to rule their minds and lead them in the conquest of their spiritual enemies. Their ideas of Him were bounded by this world.

So He appears to each one according to his state, according to his knowledge and love and wisdom. When we read what is recorded of Him in the Gospels, we shall see only what we have eyes to see. This vision of the Lord was given for the benefit of men of all ages. It was given to Peter, James, and John that we today may see the same vision, that we may begin to see Him as He is.

When He was in the world, there were many things that He could not reveal concerning Himself, but toward the end of His ministry He was able to reveal more and more to His close disciples, and this vision took place toward the end of His ministry. There was no change in the Lord; the change was in the disciples.

Today through the opening of the Scriptures we can have this sight. As the real change was in this case in the disciples and not in the Lord, so, as we become changed, we shall be able to see Him - just as the universe becomes changed to us by a change in our capacity to see what it really is.

It is a teaching of the New Church that our spiritual senses are as much superior to our natural senses as the mind is superior to the body. While we live in the body our spiritual senses are veiled by our material ones. For this reason it is hard for some to think of anything or to believe in anything that is not cognizable by the senses. The disciples were momentarily withdrawn from the body and introduced into the light of heaven, that they might get a spiritual idea of the Lord and of their own possibilities. We should see these possibilities in ourselves and in our friends. Then we shall see in them and they in us a new beauty and a more attractive loveliness. So the vision tells us of our own nature.

If Peter, James, and John could see the Lord in such a glorious form, why cannot we so see Him?

In the vision Moses and Elijah were seen talking with the Lord. This reveals to us where He is to be seen. Moses represents the historical parts of the Word and Elijah the prophetic or that which gives us some insight into the future. Truth in the mind is like a light in the hand. It not only illuminates the spot where we stand but casts rays before and behind us. So every spiritual truth looks to the present, the past, and the future. As we rise in spiritual attainment, we come to see that Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets, tell us about the Lord.

When he saw the vision, Peter was inspired to say, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." A tabernacle is a tent to dwell in. We should make a place for the Lord to dwell in the heart, in the understanding, and in the natural plane of the mind - a place for those Divine truths represented by Moses and Elias.

Peter, James, and John are the proper persons to make these tabernacles in the mind. No dwelling place of the Lord can be made in the mind without truth, which is Peter. James must shape the particular parts and arrange them so that they can be put together in their proper form. And John must combine them into one beautiful whole.

"While he yet spake" - while we are thinking and forming plans for building a place for the Lord, a bright cloud overshadows our minds. The letter of the Word becomes translucent, and its central message becomes clear. "This is my beloved Son... hear ye him." We see this truth, that the Lord is God Himself come into the world. The cloud has been dissipated, Moses and Elias have gone. The whole sight, the whole thought, the whole heart rest on Jesus only. Amen