

COLLEGE CHAPEL TALK

THE VISIBLE GOD

by the Rev. Ormond Odhner

Readings: John 15:1-17, *True Christian Religion* 787

As we have just read from *The True Christian Religion*, “This New Church is the crown of all the churches that have hitherto existed on the earth, because it is to worship one visible God in whom is the invisible, like the soul in the body”(TCR 787).

“One *visible* God:” This, and all that it implies, is the cornerstone of the faith of the Lord’s New Church, the church to which He Himself has called you, not to be His unseeing, blindly obedient servants, but to be His free and rational and fully human friends, to whom He, your God, has made known all things of the Father.

“The one visible God”—*your* God—is the God of the New Church. He is, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ, for in His Person was and is the fullness of the Godhead bodily: The Divine Love which was and is and ever will be His very life itself (God the Father); the Divine Wisdom which He taught and still teaches in His Word (God presenting Himself to our view, God the Son); and His Divine Use or Work or Influence, the Divine Truth operating upon us and through us upon others for our salvation (God the Holy Spirit)—all a visible one in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

But for us in the New Church, this is not merely the Jesus Christ who is revealed in the New Testament. Always, it is true, the natural picture of Him there given (the works He wrought; the things He taught)—always this will remain the basic picture of our God. But part of that picture is His own promise to come again as the Spirit of Truth, leading us into an understanding of all the Divine Truth that mortal minds can ever comprehend: the one God, at last made fully visible, not merely His words and works, but the infinite love, the infinite wisdom, the infinite purpose within them.

Is not a knowledge of the Divine purpose in creation, the Lord’s purpose in our lives, the very thing itself which makes the Lord Jesus Christ in His new revelation the truly visible God? It is variously phrased in the Writings. “The sole end [or purpose] of God’s love/Divine, when He created the world, was to conjoin man to Himself and Himself to man, that thus He might dwell with man” (*True Christian Religion* 786). Or, in more familiar terms, “The Lord’s Divine Providence has for its end a heaven from the human race” (*Divine Providence* 27).

Heaven then is the Lord’s purpose in our lives. Heaven is not some mystical, ethereal thing away off there somewhere. Indeed, I am not even talking about that heaven of a truly human, useful life-after-death which has now been revealed to us in greater fullness and detail than any person before us have ever known, even since the beginning of time. But I am referring to heaven in the present here and now.

A common (and most instructive) synonym for heaven is happiness. Think of that a moment. Heaven is happiness. What else does the word heaven mean in the story of the Tower of Babel? When the people said, "Let us build us a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven," what did they mean? Let us people find our own way to happiness without help or interference from God. Heaven, to you, is happiness. And heaven or happiness, here and now, as a prelude to happiness forever more, is the Lord's purpose for us in our lives. Not a fleeting happiness, here today and gone tomorrow. Not happiness for ourselves alone, for that is not real happiness at all, not even for ourselves. But the lasting happiness, the eternal happiness, that comes with being truly useful to our fellows through helping them to find such happiness for themselves.

Ours is a visible God, if we will but open the eyes of our hearts and minds to see Him. Ours is His wisdom, just for the taking, if we will but take it. For behold, He stands at the doors of our hearts and knocks, seeks to enter in, that He may abide in us, and we in Him, cooperating with Him as friends in finding from His Word the solutions to the problems of life now confronting our world and working to establish those solutions as realities, establishing His kingdom even here on the earth, as it already is established in the heaven that awaits us after death.