

Visions of John Adam, 1712

A BRIEF account of some remarkable visions and passages of John Adam^r of Yorkshire a little before and in the time of his travels in Holland and Germany, supposed to be in the 2nd and 3rd months, 1712.

I the said John Adam having drawings on my spirit to go to Holland on truth's service I was under reasonings of mind before I could give up thereto, considering my want of qualifications to go to a people of a strange language, but in some time I received encouragement in a dream or vision of the night season, in substance as follows :

I was in my vision in a very pleasant delightful plain where I was filled with heavenly enjoyments, and in a little time beheld a bright appearance approaching as a man but exceeding glorious beyond what I can express ; and the nearer he drew to me the more my heart was filled with love to him and also with holy admiration, reverence, and fear, and when he came nigh he spake unto me, saying :—" Wilt thou go with me and preach the Gospel in Holland." To which I answered, " I think myself very unworthy and unqualified to undertake so great a work, yet if thou please to accompany me with thy sweet and comfortable presence as I now enjoy it, I dare not deny thee." He said, " Thy request is granted, fail not to do it," whereupon I awoke with the evidence that it was the Lord Jesus Christ who had appeared unto me, and therefore I freely gave up and made ready for my journey.

^r John Adam (c. 1674-1731) lived at Welwick, in the Holderness district of Yorkshire. He commenced preaching at about twenty-five years of age and travelled in the British Islands, Holland and Germany. Some autobiographical references to Adam's earlier experiences are recorded by John Kelsall in his *Diaries*, under date 1730 (v. 210-213, MS. in D.), the writer concluding with the remark, " He seemed a very plain innocent man."

There are several copies of these Visions among MSS. in D. The matter here printed from a manuscript supplied by Edwin Fayle, of Dublin, appeared in *The Irish Friend*, iv. (1841), 150.

Accordingly I went to Hull, intending directly from thence to go to Amsterdam, and found that several ships were ready and putting out to sea for that port, but I was so seized with horror and darkness and as it were death, that I could not go on board any of them, seeing no way to escape destruction if I so went, but there being some other ships bound for London I was more easy to go in one of them than in any of those bound for Holland; tho' that also seemed dim and afflicting, yet there appeared a little glimmering of light, and it came to pass that the first night after we were at sea, after a time of calm, there arose a storm which increased so that the waves beat into and over the ship, besides which about midnight another distressed vessel came full upon us, fastened to ours whereby both were like to sink and perish together, and four men of that ship were cast thence by the waves into our ship and so saved, but after some time the ship loosed or broke from ours and passing athwart our stern sunk, and all therein perished, the shrieks of the people were very dismal and piercing to us, but through good Providence we got safe to London, and here I met my companion Joseph Richardson² and from thence we had a good passage to Holland. It is also to be noted as a very remarkable signal that the ships which had set out from Hull directly for Holland (in one of which I had purposed to have gone, had not Providence miraculously preserved me) were all lost the same night, being nine or ten in number, and the People perished.

We landed at Helvetsluice and traveled through Holland to Fredrickstadt in Germany where that night I had a vision as follows:—I thought I was standing alone in a large plain wherein for a time no other living creature appeared, after which I saw some appearance at a distance advancing gradually towards me and as it came nigh me a living sense arose in my heart that it was the Devil and also a caution or warning to me to prepare for war; so he came up, and stood, as I suppose, within ten yards distance off me in figure of a mighty giant or greater than any such I have read of, his raiment (if any) and colour

² Joseph Richardson (c. 1648-1717) lived at Brigg in Lincolnshire. He accompanied John Adam to Ireland in 1710. He was also in Ireland in 1716. See *The Journal*, v. 179, x. 174, 216.

was black and shining, his eyes dreadful, and on his head as it were a crown of moving fire, his aspect grim and frightful, but I was not at all afraid of him ; after a while he spoke to this effect :—“ So, John, thou hast got here.” “ Yes,” said I, “ I have got here.” “ More shame and contempt,” says he. “ Why so ? ” said I. He said, “ Because thou art led by a wrong spirit, and fled from thy reputation ; thy business and concerns which thou hast left behind are made wreck of and are become a dismal reproach in the country thereabouts, the religious people are filled with mourning and sorrow of heart, and the more loose sort shake their heads and hiss, ‘ This is he that pretends to inspiration, now we see the bottom of him that he is a deceiver.’ ” I said that I did not believe him nor his doctrine, for I apprized who he was, and beside I knew I left all things at home to my own satisfaction, and also my freinds committing them to that good hand which always provided for me and is with me still, therefore, “ I would have thee desist for I believe thee not.” “ Oh,” said he, “ thou art hard, but I will convince thee before I have done, for thou readest out of the mouth of two or three witnesses everything shall be established.” “ I grant it,” said I, “ with a proviso that those two or three witnesses are credible ones but if thou bringest two or three hundred there are none of them worth believing.” Then said he, “ The main reason why things are so is thy wife that used to be at the helm in thy business is dead, and this is not the first time thou hast been deceived in such undertakings, but the Lord being long suffering did not bring this judgement upon thee until now.” So being silent a while I saw at a distance something sliding along the ground, which, when it came nigh, appeared to be a coffin, and settled with the head towards me, the lid whereof opened of its own accord, so that I saw an appearance really and personally of my wife’s corpse, but a caution arose in my heart touch not the dead nor believe the living. Then said I to the enemy, “ It is but like the second part of the same tune, prithee, who was the master of all the Magicians of Egypt, it was thyself, and I suppose thou art no less cunning now, wherefore I believe thee no more than before, how came it to pass thou should make appearance of great things falsly

which the Almighty was pleased to do really for the confirmation of his people and confounding their enemies, ye could not all make a Louse." To which being silent, I told him they were permitted to do great things, yet it pleased the Almighty to shew that he could confound them in so small a thing, to which he made no answer. After some time of silence I saw afar off an appearance like a man which drawing near to me was so great a resemblance of a neighbour of mine who lived with me some years as a servant and behaved himself faithfully that not duly regarding the caution given me not to believe the living, I said in my heart, "Here comes my neighbour Thomas who being directly from home will tell me truly," and when he came nigh, I said, "So, Thomas, how dost thou do, and how do my wife, relations, and affairs at home?" He answered with seeming gravity and solemnity confirming what the enemy had said before with great illustration desiring me for the Lord's sake and for my own soul's sake and reputation to return home, and he said he had faith to believe that if I returned home speedily I might with his assistance which he would give me together with others retrieve and bring things to a degree of reputable order before I died; "but," said he, "if thou dost not comply with my advice and believe the foregoing testimonies, there is nothing for thee but Hell and damnation."

Whereupon I waked under a sense of horror, afflicting my companion, and prepared myself to hasten homewards, but in the interval a messenger came to the door with a letter to my companion Joseph Richardson which I stayed to hear read, the conclusion whereof gave an account of the welfare of my Wife and family, friends, relations, and affairs at home, whereby I was relieved in my mind and confirmed I was in my place, and that it was Satan by transformation who had so deceived and distressed me, and then I resigned to stay to do what service the Lord had for me in those parts.

"I feel," the poet wrote to a friend, "that love is victorious, that there is no dark it cannot light, no depth it cannot reach."

John G. Whittier, by E. E. Taylor, 1914.