CHARLES KINGSLEY

WESTMINSTER SERMONS

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Kingsley C.

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Содержание

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Westminster Sermons / with a Preface

PREFACE

I venture to preface these Sermons—which were preached either at Westminster Abbey, or at one of the Chapels Royal—by a Paper read at Sion College, in 1871; and for this reason. Even when they deal with what is usually, and rightly, called "vital" and "experimental" religion, they are comments on, and developments of, the idea which pervades that paper; namely—That facts, whether of physical nature, or of the human heart and reason, do not contradict, but coincide with, the doctrines and formulas of the Church of England, as by law established.

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Natural Theology, I said, is a subject which seems to me more and more important; and one which is just now somewhat forgotten. I therefore desire to say a few words on it. I do not pretend to teach: but only to suggest; to point out certain problems of natural Theology, the further solution of which ought, I think, to be soon attempted.

I wish to speak, be it remembered, not on natural religion, but on natural Theology. By the first, I understand what can be learned from the physical universe of man's duty to God and to his neighbour; by the latter, I understand what can be learned concerning God Himself. Of natural religion I shall say nothing. I do not even affirm that a natural religion is possible: but I do very earnestly believe that a natural Theology is possible; and I earnestly believe also that it is most important that natural Theology should, in every age, keep pace with doctrinal or ecclesiastical Theology.

Bishop Butler certainly held this belief. His *Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature*—a book for which I entertain the most profound respect—is based on a belief that the God of nature and the God of grace are one; and that therefore, the God who satisfies our conscience ought more or less to satisfy our reason also. To teach that was Butler's mission; and he fulfilled it well. But it is a mission which has to be re-fulfilled again and again, as human thought changes, and human science develops; for if, in any age or country, the God who seems to be revealed by nature seems also different from the God who is revealed by the then popular religion: then that God, and the religion which tells of that God, will gradually cease to be believed in.

For the demands of Reason—as none knew better than good Bishop Butler—must be and ought to be satisfied. And therefore; when a popular war arises between the reason of any generation and its Theology: then it behoves the ministers of religion to inquire, with all humility and godly fear, on which side lies the fault; whether the Theology which they expound is all that it should be, or whether the reason of those who impugn it is all that it should be.

For me, as—I trust—an orthodox priest of the Church of England, I believe the Theology of the National Church of England, as by law established, to be eminently rational as well as scriptural. It is not, therefore, surprising to me that the clergy of the Church of England, since the foundation of the Royal Society in the seventeenth century, have done more for sound physical science than the clergy of any other denomination; or that the three greatest natural theologians with which I, at least, am acquainted—Berkeley, Butler, and Paley—should have belonged to our Church. I am not unaware of what the Germans of the eighteenth century have done. I consider Goethe's claims to have advanced natural Theology very much over-rated: but I do recommend to young clergymen Herder's *Outlines of the Philosophy of the History of Man* as a book—in spite of certain defects—

full of sound and precious wisdom. Meanwhile it seems to me that English natural Theology in the eighteenth century stood more secure than that of any other nation, on the foundation which Berkeley, Butler, and Paley had laid; and that if our orthodox thinkers for the last hundred years had followed steadily in their steps, we should not be deploring now a wide, and as some think increasing, divorce between Science and Christianity.

But it was not so to be. The impulse given by Wesley and Whitfield turned—and not before it was needed—the earnest minds of England almost exclusively to questions of personal religion; and that impulse, under many unexpected forms, has continued ever since. I only state the fact: I do not deplore it; God forbid. Wisdom is justified of all her children; and as, according to the wise American, "it takes all sorts to make a world," so it takes all sorts to make a living Church. But that the religious temper of England for the last two or three generations has been unfavourable to a sound and scientific development of natural Theology, there can be no doubt.

We have only, if we need proof, to look at the hymns—many of them very pure, pious, and beautiful—which are used at this day in churches and chapels by persons of every shade of opinion. How often is the tone in which they speak of the natural world one of dissatisfaction, distrust, almost contempt. "Change and decay in all around I see," is their key-note, rather than "O all ye works of the Lord, bless Him, praise Him, and magnify Him for ever." There lingers about them a savour of the old monastic theory, that this earth is the devil's planet, fallen, accursed, goblin-haunted, needing to be exorcised at every turn before it is useful or even safe for man. An age which has adopted as its most popular hymn a paraphrase of the mediæval monk's "Hic breve vivitur," and in which stalwart public-school boys are bidden in their chapel-worship to tell the Almighty God of Truth that they lie awake weeping at night for joy at the thought that they will die and see "Jerusalem the Golden," is doubtless a pious and devout age: but not—at least as yet—an age in which natural Theology is likely to attain a high, a healthy, or a scriptural development.

Not a scriptural development. Let me press on you, my clerical brethren, most earnestly this one point. It is time that we should make up our minds what tone Scripture does take toward nature, natural science, natural Theology. Most of you, I doubt not, have made up your minds already; and in consequence have no fear of natural science, no fear for natural Theology. But I cannot deny that I find still lingering here and there certain of the old views of nature of which I used to hear but too much some five-and-thirty years ago—and that from better men than I shall ever hope to be—who used to consider natural Theology as useless, fallacious, impossible; on the ground that this Earth did not reveal the will and character of God, because it was cursed and fallen; and that its facts, in consequence, were not to be respected or relied on. This, I was told, was the doctrine of Scripture, and was therefore true. But when, longing to reconcile my conscience and my reason on a question so awful to a young student of natural science, I went to my Bible, what did I find? No word of all this. Much—thank God, I may say one continuous undercurrent—of the very opposite of all this. I pray you bear with me, even though I may seem impertinent. But what do we find in the Bible, with the exception of that first curse? That, remember, cannot mean any alteration in the laws of nature by which man's labour should only produce for him henceforth thorns and thistles. For, in the first place, any such curse is formally abrogated in the eighth chapter and 21st verse of the very same document—"I will not again curse the earth any more for man's sake. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." And next: the fact is not so; for if you root up the thorns and thistles, and keep your land clean, then assuredly you will grow fruit-trees and not thorns, wheat and not thistles, according to those laws of nature which are the voice of God expressed in facts.

And yet the words are true. There is a curse upon the earth: though not one which, by altering the laws of nature, has made natural facts untrustworthy. There is a curse on the earth; such a curse as is expressed, I believe, in the old Hebrew text, where the word "*admah*"—correctly translated in our version "the ground"—signifies, as I am told, not this planet, but simply the soil from whence

we get our food; such a curse as certainly is expressed by the Septuagint and the Vulgate versions: "Cursed is the earth"—εν τοις εργοις σου; "in opere tuo," "in thy works." Man's work is too often the curse of the very planet which he misuses. None should know that better than the botanist, who sees whole regions desolate, and given up to sterility and literal thorns and thistles, on account of man's sin and folly, ignorance and greedy waste. Well said that veteran botanist, the venerable Elias Fries, of Lund:—

"A broad band of waste land follows gradually in the steps of cultivation. If it expands, its centre and its cradle dies, and on the outer borders only do we find green shoots. But it is not impossible, only difficult, for man, without renouncing the advantage of culture itself, one day to make reparation for the injury which he has inflicted: he is appointed lord of creation. True it is that thorns and thistles, ill-favoured and poisonous plants, well named by botanists rubbish plants, mark the track which man has proudly traversed through the earth. Before him lay original nature in her wild but sublime beauty. Behind him he leaves a desert, a deformed and ruined land; for childish desire of destruction, or thoughtless squandering of vegetable treasures, has destroyed the character of nature; and, terrified, man himself flies from the arena of his actions, leaving the impoverished earth to barbarous races or to animals, so long as yet another spot in virgin beauty smiles before him. Here again, in selfish pursuit of profit, and consciously or unconsciously following the abominable principle of the great moral vileness which one man has expressed—'Après nous le Déluge,'—he begins anew the work of destruction. Thus did cultivation, driven out, leave the East, and perhaps the deserts long ago robbed of their coverings; like the wild hordes of old over beautiful Greece, thus rolls this conquest with fearful rapidity from East to West through America; and the planter now often leaves the already exhausted land, and the eastern climate, become infertile through the demolition of the forests, to introduce a similar revolution into the Far West."

As we proceed, we find nothing in the general tone of Scripture which can hinder our natural Theology being at once scriptural and scientific.

If it is to be scientific, it must begin by approaching Nature at once with a cheerful and reverent spirit, as a noble, healthy, and trustworthy thing; and what is that, save the spirit of those who wrote the 104th, 147th, and 148th Psalms; the spirit, too, of him who wrote that Song of the Three Children, which is, as it were, the flower and crown of the Old Testament, the summing up of all that is most true and eternal in the old Jewish faith; and which, as long as it is sung in our churches, is the charter and title-deed of all Christian students of those works of the Lord, which it calls on to bless Him, praise Him, and magnify Him for ever?

What next will be demanded of us by physical science? Belief, certainly, just now, in the permanence of natural laws. That is taken for granted, I hold, throughout the Bible. I cannot see how our Lord's parables, drawn from the birds and the flowers, the seasons and the weather, have any logical weight, or can be considered as aught but capricious and fanciful "illustrations"—which God forbid—unless we look at them as instances of laws of the natural world, which find their analogues in the laws of the spiritual world, the kingdom of God. I cannot conceive a man's writing that 104th Psalm who had not the most deep, the most earnest sense of the permanence of natural law. But more: the fact is expressly asserted again and again. "They continue this day according to Thine ordinance, for all things serve Thee." "Thou hast made them fast for ever and ever. Thou hast given them a law which shall not be broken—"

Let us pass on. There is no more to be said about this matter.

But next: it will be demanded of us that natural Theology shall set forth a God whose character is consistent with all the facts of nature, and not only with those which are pleasant and beautiful. That challenge was accepted, and I think victoriously, by Bishop Butler, as far as the Christian religion is concerned. As far as the Scripture is concerned, we may answer thus—

It is said to us—I know that it is said—You tell us of a God of love, a God of flowers and sunshine, of singing birds and little children. But there are more facts in nature than these. There

is premature death, pestilence, famine. And if you answer—Man has control over these; they are caused by man's ignorance and sin, and by his breaking of natural laws:—What will you make of those destructive powers over which he has no control; of the hurricane and the earthquake; of poisons, vegetable and mineral; of those parasitic Entozoa whose awful abundance, and awful destructiveness, in man and beast, science is just revealing—a new page of danger and loathsomeness? How does that suit your conception of a God of love?

We can answer—Whether or not it suits our conception of a God of love, it suits Scripture's conception of Him. For nothing is more clear—nay, is it not urged again and again, as a blot on Scripture?—that it reveals a God not merely of love, but of sternness; a God in whose eyes physical pain is not the worst of evils, nor animal life—too often miscalled human life—the most precious of objects; a God who destroys, when it seems fit to Him, and that wholesale, and seemingly without either pity or discrimination, man, woman, and child, visiting the sins of the fathers on the children, making the land empty and bare, and destroying from off it man and beast? This is the God of the Old Testament. And if any say—as is too often rashly said—This is not the God of the New: I answer, But have you read your New Testament? Have you read the latter chapters of St Matthew? Have you read the opening of the Epistle to the Romans? Have you read the Book of Revelation? If so, will you say that the God of the New Testament is, compared with the God of the Old, less awful, less destructive, and therefore less like the Being—granting always that there is such a Being—who presides over nature and her destructive powers? It is an awful problem. But the writers of the Bible have faced it valiantly. Physical science is facing it valiantly now. Therefore natural Theology may face it likewise. Remember Carlyle's great words about poor Francesca in the Inferno: "Infinite pity: yet also infinite rigour of law. It is so Nature is made. It is so Dante discerned that she was made."

There are two other points on which I must beg leave to say a few words. Physical science will demand of our natural theologians that they should be aware of their importance, and let—as Mr Matthew Arnold would say—their thoughts play freely round them. I mean questions of Embryology, and questions of Race.

On the first there may be much to be said, which is, for the present, best left unsaid, even here. I only ask you to recollect how often in Scripture those two plain old words—beget and bring forth—occur; and in what important passages. And I ask you to remember that marvellous essay on Natural Theology—if I may so call it in all reverence—namely, the 119th Psalm; and judge for yourself whether he who wrote that did not consider the study of Embryology as important, as significant, as worthy of his deepest attention, as an Owen, a Huxley, or a Darwin. Nay, I will go further still, and say, that in those great words—"Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them,"—in those words, I say, the Psalmist has anticipated that realistic view of embryological questions to which our most modern philosophers are, it seems to me, slowly, half unconsciously, but still inevitably, returning.

Next, as to Race. Some persons now have a nervous fear of that word, and of allowing any importance to difference of races. Some dislike it, because they think that it endangers the modern notions of democratic equality. Others because they fear that it may be proved that the Negro is not a man and a brother. I think the fears of both parties groundless.

As for the Negro, I not only believe him to be of the same race as myself, but that—if Mr Darwin's theories are true—science has proved that he must be such. I should have thought, as a humble student of such questions, that the one fact of the unique distribution of the hair in all races of human beings, was full moral proof that they had all had one common ancestor. But this is not matter of natural Theology. What is matter thereof, is this.

Physical science is proving more and more the immense importance of Race; the importance of hereditary powers, hereditary organs, hereditary habits, in all organized beings, from the lowest plant to the highest animal. She is proving more and more the omnipresent action of the differences

between races: how the more “favoured” race—she cannot avoid using the epithet—exterminates the less favoured; or at least expels it, and forces it, under penalty of death, to adapt itself to new circumstances; and, in a word, that competition between every race and every individual of that race, and reward according to deserts, is, as far as we can see, an universal law of living things. And she says—for the facts of History prove it—that as it is among the races of plants and animals, so it has been unto this day among the races of men.

The natural Theology of the future must take count of these tremendous and even painful facts. She may take count of them. For Scripture has taken count of them already. It talks continually—it has been blamed for talking so much—of races; of families; of their wars, their struggles, their exterminations; of races favoured, of races rejected; of remnants being saved, to continue the race; of hereditary tendencies, hereditary excellencies, hereditary guilt. Its sense of the reality and importance of descent is so intense, that it speaks of a whole tribe or a whole family by the name of its common ancestor; and the whole nation of the Jews is Israel, to the end. And if I be told this is true of the Old Testament, but not of the New: I must answer,—What? Does not St Paul hold the identity of the whole Jewish race with Israel their forefather, as strongly as any prophet of the Old Testament? And what is the central historic fact, save One, of the New Testament, but the conquest of Jerusalem; the dispersion, all but destruction of a race, not by miracle, but by invasion, because found wanting when weighed in the stern balances of natural and social law?

Think over this. I only suggest the thought: but I do not suggest it in haste. Think over it, by the light which our Lord’s parables, His analogies between the physical and social constitution of the world, afford; and consider whether those awful words—fulfilled then, and fulfilled so often since—“The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof,” may not be the supreme instance, the most complex development, of a law which runs through all created things, down to the moss which struggles for existence on the rock.

Do I say that this is all? That man is merely a part of nature, the puppet of circumstances and hereditary tendencies? That brute competition is the one law of his life? That he is doomed for ever to be the slave of his own needs, enforced by an internecine struggle for existence? God forbid. I believe not only in nature, but in Grace. I believe that this is man’s fate only as long as he sows to the flesh, and of the flesh reaps corruption. I believe that if he will

> Strive upward, working out the beast,
> And let the ape and tiger die;

if he will be even as wise as the social animals; as the ant and the bee, who have risen, if not to the virtue of all-embracing charity, at least to the virtues of self-sacrifice and patriotism: then he will rise towards a higher sphere; towards that kingdom of God of which it is written—“He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

Whether that be matter of natural Theology, I cannot tell as yet. But as for all the former questions; and all that St Paul means when he talks of the law, and how the works of the flesh bring men under the law, stern and terrible and destructive, though holy and just and good,—they are matter of natural Theology; and I believe that here, as elsewhere, Scripture and Science will be ultimately found to coincide.

But here we have to face an objection which you will often hear now from scientific men, and still oftener from non-scientific men; who will say—It matters not to us whether Scripture contradicts or does not contradict a scientific natural Theology; for we hold such a science to be impossible and naught. The old Jews put a God into nature; and therefore of course they could see, as you see, what they had already put there. But we see no God in nature. We do not deny the existence of a God. We merely say that scientific research does not reveal Him to us. We see no marks of design in physical phenomena. What used to be considered as marks of design can be better explained by considering

them as the results of evolution according to necessary laws; and you and Scripture make a mere assumption when you ascribe them to the operation of a mind like the human mind.

Now on this point I believe we may answer fearlessly—If you cannot see it, we cannot help you. If the heavens do not declare to you the glory of God, nor the firmament show you His handy-work, then our poor arguments will not show them. "The eye can only see that which it brings with it the power of seeing." We can only reassert that we see design everywhere; and that the vast majority of the human race in every age and clime has seen it. Analogy from experience, sound induction—as we hold—from the works not only of men but of animals, has made it an all but self-evident truth to us, that wherever there is arrangement, there must be an arranger; wherever there is adaptation of means to an end, there must be an adapter; wherever an organization, there must be an organizer. The existence of a designing God is no more demonstrable from nature than the existence of other human beings independent of ourselves; or, indeed, than the existence of our own bodies. But, like the belief in them, the belief in Him has become an article of our common sense. And that this designing mind is, in some respects, similar to the human mind, is proved to us—as Sir John Herschel well puts it—by the mere fact that we can discover and comprehend the processes of nature.

But here again, if we be contradicted, we can only reassert. If the old words, "He that made the eye, shall he not see? he that planted the ear, shall he not hear?" do not at once commend themselves to the intellect of any person, we shall never convince that person by any arguments drawn from the absurdity of conceiving the invention of optics by a blind man, or of music by a deaf one.

So we will assert our own old-fashioned notion boldly: and more; we will say, in spite of ridicule —That if such a God exists, final causes must exist also. That the whole universe must be one chain of final causes. That if there be a Supreme Reason, he must have reason, and that a good reason, for every physical phenomenon.

We will tell the modern scientific man—You are nervously afraid of the mention of final causes. You quote against them Bacon's saying, that they are barren virgins; that no physical fact was ever discovered or explained by them. You are right: as far as regards yourselves. You have no business with final causes; because final causes are moral causes: and you are physical students only. We, the natural Theologians, have business with them. Your duty is to find out the How of things: ours, to find out the Why. If you rejoin that we shall never find out the Why, unless we first learn something of the How, we shall not deny that. It may be most useful, I had almost said necessary, that the clergy should have some scientific training. It may be most useful—I sometimes dream of a day when it will be considered necessary—that every candidate for Ordination should be required to have passed creditably in at least one branch of physical science, if it be only to teach him the method of sound scientific thought. But our having learnt the How, will not make it needless, much less impossible, for us to study the Why. It will merely make more clear to us the things of which we have to study the Why; and enable us to keep the How and the Why more religiously apart from each other.

But if it be said—After all, there is no Why. The doctrine of evolution, by doing away with the theory of creation, does away with that of final causes,—Let us answer boldly,—Not in the least. We might accept all that Mr Darwin, all that Professor Huxley, all that other most able men, have so learnedly and so acutely written on physical science, and yet preserve our natural Theology on exactly the same basis as that on which Butler and Paley left it. That we should have to develop it, I do not deny. That we should have to relinquish it, I do.

Let me press this thought earnestly on you. I know that many wiser and better men than I have fears on this point. I cannot share in them.

All, it seems to me, that the new doctrines of evolution demand is this:—We all agree—for the fact is patent—that our own bodies, and indeed the body of every living creature, are evolved from a seemingly simple germ by natural laws, without visible action of any designing will or mind, into the full organization of a human or other creature. Yet we do not say on that account—God did not create me: I only grew. We hold in this case to our old idea, and say—If there be evolution,

there must be an evolver. Now the new physical theories only ask us, it seems to me, to extend this conception to the whole universe; to believe that not individuals merely, but whole varieties and races; the total organized life on this planet; and, it may be, the total organization of the universe, have been evolved just as our bodies are, by natural laws acting through circumstance. This may be true, or may be false. But all its truth can do to the natural Theologian will be to make him believe that the Creator bears the same relation to the whole universe, as that Creator undeniably bears to every individual human body.

I entreat you to weigh these words, which have not been written in haste; and I entreat you also, if you wish to see how little the new theory, that species may have been gradually created by variation, natural selection, and so forth, interferes with the old theory of design, contrivance, and adaptation, nay, with the fullest admission of benevolent final causes—I entreat you, I say, to study Darwin's "Fertilization of Orchids"—a book which, whether his main theory be true or not, will still remain a most valuable addition to natural Theology.

For suppose that all the species of Orchids, and not only they, but their congeners—the Gingers, the Arrowroots, the Bananas—are all the descendants of one original form, which was most probably nearly allied to the Snowdrop and the Iris. What then? Would that be one whit more wonderful, more unworthy of the wisdom and power of God, than if they were, as most believe, created each and all at once, with their minute and often imaginary shades of difference? What would the natural Theologian have to say, were the first theory true, save that God's works are even more wonderful that he always believed them to be? As for the theory being impossible: we must leave the discussion of that to physical students. It is not for us clergymen to limit the power of God. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" asked the prophet of old; and we have a right to ask it as long as time shall last.

If it be said that natural selection is too simple a cause to produce such fantastic variety: that, again, is a question to be settled exclusively by physical students. All we have to say on the matter is—That we always knew that God works by very simple, or seemingly simple, means; that the whole universe, as far as we could discern it, was one concatenation of the most simple means; that it was wonderful, yea, miraculous, in our eyes, that a child should resemble its parents, that the raindrops should make the grass grow, that the grass should become flesh, and the flesh sustenance for the thinking brain of man. Ought God to seem less or more august in our eyes, when we are told that His means are even more simple than we supposed? We held him to be Almighty and All-wise. Are we to reverence Him less or more, if we hear that His might is greater, His wisdom deeper, than we ever dreamed? We believed that His care was over all His works; that His Providence watched perpetually over the whole universe. We were taught—some of us at least—by Holy Scripture, to believe that the whole history of the universe was made up of special Providences. If, then, that should be true which Mr Darwin eloquently writes—"It may be metaphorically said that natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinizing, throughout the world, every variation, even the slightest; rejecting that which is bad, preserving and adding up that which is good, silently and incessantly working whenever and wherever opportunity offers at the improvement of every organic being,"—if that, I say, were proven to be true: ought God's care and God's providence to seem less or more magnificent in our eyes? Of old it was said by Him without whom nothing is made, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

Shall we quarrel with Science, if she should show how those words are true? What, in one word, should we have to say but this?—We knew of old that God was so wise that He could make all things: but, behold, He is so much wiser than even that, that He can make all things make themselves.

But it may be said—These notions are contrary to Scripture. I must beg very humbly, but very firmly, to demur to that opinion. Scripture says that God created. But it nowhere defines that term.

The means, the How, of Creation is nowhere specified. Scripture, again, says that organized beings were produced, each according to their kind. But it nowhere defines that term. What a kind includes; whether it includes or not the capacity of varying—which is just the question in point—is nowhere specified. And I think it a most important rule in Scriptural exegesis, to be most cautious as to limiting

the meaning of any term which Scripture itself has not limited, lest we find ourselves putting into the teaching of Scripture our own human theories or prejudices. And consider—Is not man a kind? And has not mankind varied, physically, intellectually, spiritually? Is not the Bible, from beginning to end, a history of the variations of mankind, for worse or for better, from their original type? Let us rather look with calmness, and even with hope and goodwill, on these new theories; for, correct or incorrect, they surely mark a tendency towards a more, not a less, Scriptural view of Nature. Are they not attempts, whether successful or unsuccessful, to escape from that shallow mechanical notion of the universe and its Creator which was too much in vogue in the eighteenth century among divines as well as philosophers; the theory which Goethe, to do him justice—and after him Mr Thomas Carlyle —have treated with such noble scorn; the theory, I mean, that God has wound up the universe like a clock, and left it to tick by itself till it runs down, never troubling Himself with it; save possibly—for even that was only half believed—by rare miraculous interferences with the laws which He Himself had made? Out of that chilling dream of a dead universe ungoverned by an absent God, the human mind, in Germany especially, tried during the early part of this century to escape by strange roads; roads by which there was no escape, because they were not laid down on the firm ground of scientific facts. Then, in despair, men turned to the facts which they had neglected; and said—We are weary of philosophy: we will study you, and you alone. As for God, who can find Him? And they have worked at the facts like gallant and honest men; and their work, like all good work, has produced, in the last fifty years, results more enormous than they even dreamed. But what are they finding, more and more, below their facts, below all phenomena which the scalpel and the microscope can show? A something nameless, invisible, imponderable, yet seemingly omnipresent and omnipotent, retreating before them deeper and deeper, the deeper they delve: namely, the life which shapes and makes; that which the old schoolmen called “forma formativa,” which they call vital force and what not—metaphors all, or rather counters to mark an unknown quantity, as if they should call it *x* or *y*. One says—It is all vibrations: but his reason, unsatisfied, asks—And what makes the vibrations vibrate? Another—It is all physiological units: but his reason asks—What is the “physis,” the nature and innate tendency of the units? A third—It may be all caused by infinitely numerous “gemmules:” but his reason asks him—What puts infinite order into these gemmules, instead of infinite anarchy?

I mention these theories not to laugh at them. I have all due respect for those who have put them forth. Nor would it interfere with my theological creed, if any or all of them were proven to be true to-morrow. I mention them only to show that beneath all these theories, true or false, still lies that unknown *x*. Scientific men are becoming more and more aware of it; I had almost said, ready to worship it. More and more the noblest-minded of them are engrossed by the mystery of that unknown and truly miraculous element in Nature, which is always escaping them, though they cannot escape it. How should they escape it? Was it not written of old—“Whither shall I go from Thy presence, or whither shall I flee from Thy Spirit?”

Ah that we clergymen would summon up courage to tell them that! Courage to tell them, what need not hamper for a moment the freedom of their investigations, what will add to them a sanction —I may say a sanctity—that the unknown *x* which lies below all phenomena, which is for ever at work on all phenomena, on the whole and on every part of the whole, down to the colouring of every leaf and the curdling of every cell of protoplasm, is none other than that which the old Hebrews called —by a metaphor, no doubt: for how can man speak of the unseen, save in metaphors drawn from the seen?—but by the only metaphor adequate to express the perpetual and omnipresent miracle; The Breath of God; The Spirit who is The Lord, and The Giver of Life.

In the rest, let us too think, and let us too observe. For if we are ignorant, not merely of the results of experimental science, but of the methods thereof: then we and the men of science shall have no common ground whereon to stretch out kindly hands to each other.

But let us have patience and faith; and not suppose in haste, that when those hands are stretched out it will be needful for us to leave our standing-ground, or to cast ourselves down from the pinnacle

of the temple to earn popularity; above all, from earnest students who are too high-minded to care for popularity themselves.

True, if we have an intelligent belief in those Creeds and those Scriptures which are committed to our keeping, then our philosophy cannot be that which is just now in vogue. But all we have to do, I believe, is to wait. Nominalism, and that "Sensationalism" which has sprung from Nominalism, are running fast to seed; Comtism seems to me its supreme effort: after which the whirligig of Time may bring round its revenges: and Realism, and we who hold the Realist creeds, may have our turn. Only wait. When a grave, able, and authoritative philosopher explains a mother's love of her newborn babe, as Professor Bain has done, in a really eloquent passage of his book on the *Emotions and the Will*, [1] then the end of that philosophy is very near; and an older, simpler, more human, and, as I hold, more philosophic explanation of that natural phenomenon, and of all others, may get a hearing.

Only wait: and fret not yourselves; else shall you be moved to do evil. Remember the saying of the wise man—"Go not after the world. She turns on her axis; and if thou stand still long enough, she will turn round to thee."

[1] Second edition, pp. 78, 79.

SERMON I. THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS. A GOOD FRIDAY SERMON

Philippians ii. 5-8

> Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a slave, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.

The second Lesson for this morning's service, and the chapter which follows it, describe the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, both God and Man. They give us the facts, in language most awful from its perfect calmness, most pathetic from its perfect simplicity. But the passage of St Paul which I have chosen for my text gives us an explanation of those facts which is utterly amazing. That He who stooped to die upon the Cross is Very God of Very God, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe, is a thought so overwhelming, whenever we try to comprehend even a part of it in our small imaginations, that it is no wonder if, in all ages, many a pious soul, as it contemplated the Cross of Christ, has been rapt itself into a passion of gratitude, an ecstasy of wonder and of love, which is beautiful, honourable, just, and in the deepest sense most rational, whenever it is spontaneous and natural.

But there have been thousands, as there may be many here to-day, of colder temperament; who would distrust in themselves, even while they respected in others, any violence of religious emotion: yet they too have found, and you too may find, in contemplating the Passion of Christ, a satisfaction deeper than that of any emotion; a satisfaction not to the heart, still less to the brain, but to that far deeper and diviner faculty within us all—our moral sense; that God-given instinct which makes us discern and sympathise with all that is beautiful and true and good.

And so it has befallen, for eighteen hundred years, that thousands who have thought earnestly and carefully on God and on the character of God, on man and on the universe, and on their relation to Him who made them both, have found in the Incarnation and the Passion of the Son of God the perfect satisfaction of their moral wants; the surest key to the facts of the spiritual world; the complete assurance that, in spite of all seeming difficulties and contradictions, the Maker of the world was a Righteous Being, who had founded the world in righteousness; that the Father of Spirits was a perfect Father, who in His only-begotten Son had shewn forth His perfectness, in such a shape and by such acts that men might not only adore it, but sympathise with it; not only thank Him for it, but copy it; and become, though at an infinite distance, perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect, and full of grace and truth, like that Son who is the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person. Such a satisfaction have they found in looking upon the triumphal entry into Jerusalem of Him who knew that it would be followed by the revolt of the fickle mob, and the desertion of His disciples, and the Cross of Calvary, and all the hideous circumstances of a Roman malefactor's death.

But there have been those, and there are still, who have found no such satisfaction in the story which the Gospel tells, and still less in the explanation which the Epistle gives; who have, as St Paul says, stumbled at the stumblingblock of the Cross.

It would be easy to ignore such persons, were they scoffers or profligates: but when they number among their ranks men of virtuous lives, of earnest and most benevolent purposes, of careful and learned thought, and of a real reverence for God, or for those theories of the universe which some of them are inclined to substitute for God, they must at least be listened to patiently, and answered

charitably, as men who, however faulty their opinions may be, prove, by their virtue and their desire to do good, that if they have lost sight of Christ, Christ has not lost sight of them.

To such men the idea of the Incarnation, and still more, that of the Passion, is derogatory to the very notion of a God. That a God should suffer, and that a God should die, is shocking—and, to do them justice, I believe they speak sincerely—to their notions of the absolute majesty, the undisturbed serenity, of the Author of the universe; of Him in whom all things live and move and have their being; who dwells in the light to which none may approach. And therefore they have, in every age, tried various expedients to escape from a doctrine which seemed repugnant to that most precious part of them, their moral sense. In the earlier centuries of the Church they tried to shew that St John and St Paul spoke, not of one who was Very God of Very God, but of some highest and most primeval of all creatures, Emanation, Æon, or what not. In these later times, when the belief in such beings, and even their very names, have become dim and dead, men have tried to shew that the words of Scripture apply to a mere man. They have seen in Christ—and they have reverenced and loved Him for what they have seen in Him—the noblest and purest, the wisest and the most loving of all human beings; and have attributed such language as that in the text, which—translate it as you will—ascribes absolute divinity, and nothing less, to our Lord Jesus Christ—they have attributed it, I say, to some fondness for Oriental hyperbole, and mystic Theosophy, in the minds of the Apostles. Others, again, have gone further, and been, I think, more logically honest. They have perceived that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, as His words are reported, attributed divinity to Himself, just as much as did His Apostles. Such a saying as that one, "Before Abraham was, I am," and others beside it, could be escaped from only by one of two methods. To the first of them I shall not allude in this sacred place, popular as a late work has made it in its native France, and I fear in England likewise. The other alternative, more reverent indeed, but, as I believe, just as mistaken, is to suppose that the words were never uttered at all; that Christ—it is not I who say it—possibly never existed at all; that His whole story was gradually built up, like certain fabulous legends of Romish saints, out of the moral consciousness of various devout persons during the first three centuries; each of whom added to the portrait, as it grew more and more lovely under the hands of succeeding generations, some new touch of beauty, some fresh trait, half invented, half traditional, of purity, love, nobleness, majesty; till men at last became fascinated with the ideal to which they themselves had contributed; and fell down and worshipped their own humanity; and christened that The Son of God.

If I believed that theory, or either of the others, I need not say that I should not be preaching here. I will go further, and say, that if I believed either of those theories, or any save that which stands out in the text, sharp-cut and colossal like some old Egyptian Memnon, and like that statue, with a smile of sweetness on its lips which tempers the royal majesty of its looks,—if I did not believe that, I say—I should be inclined to confess with Homer of old, that man is the most miserable of all the beasts of the field.

For consider but this one argument. It is no new one; it has lain, I believe, unspoken and instinctive, yet most potent and inspiring, in many a mind, in many an age. If there be a God, must He not be the best of all beings? But if He who suffered on Calvary were not God, but a mere creature; then—as I hold—there must have been a creature in the universe better than God Himself.

Or if He who suffered on Calvary had not the character which is attributed to Him,—if Christ's love, condescension, self-sacrifice, be a mere imagination, built up by the fancy of man; then has Christendom for 1800 years been fancying for itself a better God than Him who really exists.

Thousands of the best men and women in the world through all the ages of Christendom have agreed with this argument, under some shape or other. Thousands there have been, and I trust there will be thousands hereafter, who have felt, as they looked upon the Cross of the Son of God, not that it was derogatory to Christ to believe that He had suffered, but derogatory to Him to believe that He had not suffered: for only by suffering, as far as we can conceive, could He perfectly manifest His glory and His Father's glory; and shew that it was full of grace.

Full of grace. Think, I beg you, over that one word.

We all agree that God is good; all at least do so, who worship Him in spirit and in truth. We adore His majesty, because it is the moral and spiritual majesty of perfect goodness. We give thanks to Him for His great glory, because it is the glory, not merely of perfect power, wisdom, order, justice; but of perfect love, of perfect magnanimity, beneficence, activity, condescension, pity—in one word, of perfect grace.

But how much must that last word comprehend, as long as there is misery and evil in this world, or in any other corner of the whole universe? Grace, to be perfect, must shew itself by graciously forgiving penitents. Pity, to be perfect, must shew itself by helping the miserable. Beneficence, to be perfect, must shew itself by delivering the oppressed.

The old prophets and psalmists saw as much as this; and preached that this too was part of the essence and character of God.

They saw that the Lord was gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repented Him of the evil. They saw that the Lord helped them to right who suffered wrong, and fed the hungry; that the Lord loosed men out of prison, the Lord gave sight to the blind; that the Lord helped the fallen, and defended the fatherless and widow. They saw too a further truth, and a more awful one. They saw that the Lord was actually and practically King of kings and Lord of lords: that as such He could come, and did come at times, rewarding the loyal, putting down the rebellious, and holding high assize from place to place, that He might execute judgment and justice; beholding all the wrong that was done on earth, and coming, as it were, out of His place, at each historic crisis, each revolution in the fortunes of mankind, to make inquisition for blood, to trample His enemies beneath His feet, and to inaugurate some progress toward that new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and righteousness alone. That vision, in whatsoever metaphors it may be wrapped up, is real and true, and will be so as long as evil exists within this universe. Were it not true, there would be something wanting to the perfect justice and the perfect benevolence of God.

But is this all? If this be all, what have we Christians learnt from the New Testament which is not already taught us in the Old? Where is that new, deeper, higher revelation of the goodness of God, which Jesus of Nazareth preached, and which John and Paul and all the apostles believed that they had found in Jesus Himself? They believed, and all those who accepted their gospel believed, that they had found for that word “grace,” a deeper meaning than had ever been revealed to the prophets of old time; that grace and goodness, if they were perfect, involved self-sacrifice.

And does not our own highest reason tell us that they were right? Does not our own highest reason, which is our moral sense, tell us that perfect goodness requires, not merely that we should pity our fellow-creatures, not merely that we should help them, not merely that we should right them magisterially and royally, without danger or injury to ourselves: but that we should toil for them, suffer for them, and if need be, as the highest act of goodness, die for them at last? Is not this the very element of goodness which we all confess to be most noble, beautiful, pure, heroical, divine? Divine even in sinful and fallen man, who must forgive because he needs to be forgiven; who must help others because he needs help himself; who, if he suffers for others, deserves to suffer, and probably will suffer, in himself. But how much more heroical, and how much more divine in a Being who needs neither forgiveness nor help, and who is as far from deserving as He is from needing to suffer!

And shall this noblest form of goodness be possible to sinful man, and yet impossible to a perfectly good God? Shall we say that the martyr at the stake, the patriot dying for his country, the missionary spending his life for the good of heathens; ay more, shall we say that those women, martyrs by the pang without the palm, who in secret chambers, in lowly cottages, have sacrificed and do still sacrifice self and all the joys of life for the sake of simple duties, little charities, kindness unnoticed and unknown by all, save God—shall we say that all who have from the beginning of the world shewn forth the beauty of self-sacrifice have had no divine prototype in heaven?—That they have been exercising a higher grace, a nobler form of holiness, than He who made them, and who, as they believe, and we

ought to believe, inspired them with that spirit of unselfishness, which if it be not the Spirit of God, whose spirit can it be? Shall we say this, and so suppose them holier than their own Maker? Shall we say this, and suppose that they, when they attributed self-sacrifice to God, made indeed a God in their own image, but a God of greater love, greater pity, greater graciousness because of greater unselfishness, than Him who really exists?

Shall we say this, the very words whereof confute themselves and shock alike our reason and our conscience? Or shall we say with St John and with St Paul, that if men can be so good, God must be infinitely better; that if man can love so much, God must love more; if man, by shaking off the selfishness which is his bane, can do such deeds, then God, in whom is no selfishness at all, may at least have done a deed as far above theirs as the heavens are above the earth? Shall we not confess that man's self-sacrifice is but a poor and dim reflection of the self-sacrifice of God, and say with St John, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins;" and with St Paul, "Scarcely for a righteous man would one die, but God commendeth His love to us in this, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"? Shall we not say this: and find, as thousands have found ere now, in the Cross of Calvary the perfect satisfaction of our highest moral instincts, the realization in act and fact of the highest idea which we can form of perfect condescension, namely, self-sacrifice exercised by a Being of whom perfect condescension, love and self-sacrifice were not required by aught in heaven or earth, save by the necessity of His own perfect and inconceivable goodness?

We reverence, and rightly, the majesty of God. How can that infinite majesty be proved more perfectly than by condescension equally infinite? We adore, and justly, the serenity of God, who has neither parts nor passions. How can that serenity be proved more perfectly, than by passing, still serene, through all the storm and crowd of circumstance which disturb the weak serenity of man; by passing through poverty, helplessness, temptation, desertion, shame, torture, death; and passing through them all victorious and magnificent; with a moral calm as undisturbed, a moral purity as unspotted, as it had been from all eternity, as it will be to all eternity, in that abysmal source of being, which we call the Bosom of the Father? It is the moral majesty of God, as shewn on Calvary, which I uphold. Shew that Calvary was not inconsistent with that; shew that Calvary was not inconsistent with the goodness of God, but rather the perfection of that goodness shewn forth in time and space: then all other arguments connected with God's majesty may go for nought, provided that God's moral majesty be safe. Provided God be proved to be morally infinite—that is, in plain English, infinitely good; provided God be proved to be morally absolute—that is, absolutely unable to have His goodness affected by any circumstance outside Him, even by the death upon the Cross: then let the rest go. All words about absoluteness and infinity and majesty, beyond that, are physical—metaphors drawn from matter, which have nothing to do with God who is a Spirit.

But God's infinite power too often means, in the minds of men, only some abstract notion of boundless bodily strength. God's omniscience too often means, only some physical fancy of innumerable telescopic or microscopic eyes. God's infinite wisdom too often means, only some abstract notion of boundless acuteness of brain. And lastly—I am sorry to have to say it, but it must be said,—God's infinite majesty too often means, in the minds of some superstitious people, mere pride, and obstinacy, and cruelty, as of the blind will of some enormous animal which does what it chooses, whether right or wrong.

If the mystery of the Cross contradict any of these carnal or material notions, so much the more glory to the mystery of the Cross. One spiritual infinite, one spiritual absolute, it does not contradict: and that is the infinite and absolute goodness of God.

Let all the rest remain a mystery, so long as the mystery of the Cross gives us faith for all the rest.

Faith, I say. The mystery of evil, of sorrow, of death, the Gospel does not pretend to solve: but it tells us that the mystery is proved to be soluble. For God Himself has taken on Himself the task

of solving it; and has proved by His own act, that if there be evil in the world, it is none of His; for He hates it, and fights against it, and has fought against it to the death.

It simply says—Have faith in God. Ask no more of Him—Why hast Thou made me thus? Ask no more—Why do the wicked prosper on the earth? Ask no more—Whence pain and death, war and famine, earthquake and tempest, and all the ills to which flesh is heir?

All fruitless questionings, all peevish repinings, are precluded henceforth by the passion and death of Christ.

Dost thou suffer? Thou canst not suffer more than the Son of God. Dost thou sympathize with thy fellow-men? Thou canst not sympathize more than the Son of God. Dost thou long to right them, to deliver them, even at the price of thine own blood? Thou canst not long more ardently than the Son of God, who carried His longing into act, and died for them and thee. What if the end be not yet? What if evil still endure? What if the medicine have not yet conquered the disease? Have patience, have faith, have hope, as thou standest at the foot of Christ's Cross, and holdest fast to it, the anchor of the soul and reason, as well as of the heart. For however ill the world may go, or seem to go, the Cross is the everlasting token that God so loved the world, that He spared not His only-begotten Son, but freely gave Him for it. Whatsoever else is doubtful, this at least is sure,—that good must conquer, because God is good; that evil must perish, because God hates evil, even to the death.

SERMON II. THE PERFECT LOVE

1 John iv. 10

> Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

This is Passion-week; the week in which, according to ancient and most wholesome rule, we are bidden to think of the Passion of Jesus Christ our Lord. To think of that, however happy and comfortable, however busy and eager, however covetous and ambitious, however giddy and frivolous, however free, or at least desirous to be free, from suffering of any kind, we are ourselves. To think of the sufferings of Christ, and learn how grand it is to suffer for the Right.

And why?

Passion-week gives but one answer: but that answer is the one best worth listening to.

It is grand and good to suffer for the Right, because God, in Christ, has suffered for the Right.

Let us consider this awhile.

It is a first axiom in sound theology, that there is nothing good in man, which was not first in God.

Now we all, I trust, hold God to be supremely good. We ascribe to Him, in perfection, every kind of goodness of which we can conceive in man. We say God is just; God is truthful; God is pure; God is bountiful; God is merciful; and, in one word, God is Love.

God is Love. But if we say that, do we not say that God is good with a fresh form of goodness, which is not justice, nor truthfulness, nor purity, bounty, nor mercy, though without them—never forget that—it cannot exist? And is not that fresh goodness, which we have not defined yet, the very kind of goodness which we prize most in human beings? The very kind of goodness which makes us prize and admire love, because without it there is no true love, no love worth calling by that sacred and heavenly name? And what is that?

What—save self-sacrifice? For what is the love worth which does not shew itself in action; and more, which does not shew itself in Passion, in the true sense of that word, which this week teaches us: namely, in suffering? Not merely in acting for, but in daring, in struggling, in grieving, in agonizing, and, if need be, in dying for, the object of its love?

Every mother in this church will give but one answer to that question; for mothers give it among the very animals; and the deer who fights for her fawn, the bird who toils for her nestlings, the spider who will rather die than drop her bag of eggs, know at least that love is not worth calling love, unless it can dare and suffer for the thing it loves. The most gracious of all virtues, therefore, is self-sacrifice; and is there no like grace in God, the fount of grace? Has God, whose name is Love, never dared, never suffered, even to the death, in the mightiness of a perfect Love?

We Christians say that He has. We say so, because it has been revealed to us, not by flesh and blood, not by brain or nerves, not by logic or emotions, but by the Spirit of God, to whom our inmost spirits and highest reasons have made answer—A God who has suffered for man? That is so beautiful, that it must be true.

For otherwise we should be left—as I have argued at length elsewhere—in this strange paradox:—that man has fancied to himself for 1800 years a more beautiful God, a nobler God, a better God than the God who actually exists. It must be so, if God is not capable of that highest virtue of self-sacrifice, while man has been believing that He is, and that upon the first Good Friday He sacrificed Himself for man, out of the intensity of a boundless Love. A better God imagined by man, than the actual God who made man? We have only to state that absurdity, I trust, to laugh it to scorn.

Let us confess, then, that the Passion of Christ, and the mystery of Good Friday, is as reasonable a belief to the truly wise, as it is comfortable to the weary and the suffering; let us agree that one of the wisest of Englishmen, of late gone to his rest, spoke well when he said, "As long as women and sorrow exist on earth, so long will the gospel of Christianity find an echo in the human heart." Let it find an echo in yours. But it will only find one, in as far as you can enter into the mystery of Passion-week; in as far as you can learn from Passion-week the truest and highest theology; and see what God is like, and therefore what you must try to be like likewise.

Let us think, then, awhile of the mystery of Passion-week; the mystery of the Cross of Christ. Christ Himself was looking on the coming Cross, during this Passion-week; ay, and for many a week before. Nay rather, had He not looked on it from all eternity? For is He not the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world? Therefore we may well look on it with Him. It may seem, at first, a painful bight. But shall it cast over our minds only gloom and darkness? Or shall we not see on the Cross the full revelation of Light; of the Light which lightens every man that comes into the world: and find that painful, not because of its darkness, but as the blaze of full sunshine is painful, from unbearable intensity of warmth and light? Let us see.

On the Cross of Calvary, then, God the Father shewed His own character and the character of His co-equal and co-eternal Son, and of The Spirit which proceeds from both. For there He spared not His only-begotten Son, but freely gave Him for us. On the Cross of Calvary, not by the will of man, but by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, was offered before God the one and only full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sin of the whole world. God Himself did this. It was not done by any other being to alter His will; it was done to fulfil His will. It was not done to satisfy God's anger; it was done to satisfy God's love. Therefore Good Friday was well and wisely called by our forefathers Good Friday; because it shews, as no other day can do, that God is good; that God's will to men, in spite of all their sins, is a good will; that so boundless, so utterly unselfish and condescending, is the eternal love of God, that when an insignificant race in a small and remote planet fell, and went wrong, and was in danger of ruin, there was nothing that God would not dare, God would not suffer, for the sake of even such as us, vile earth and miserable sinners.

Yes, this is the good news of Passion-week; a gospel which men are too apt to forget, even to try to forget, as long as they are comfortable and prosperous, lazy and selfish. The comfortable prosperous man shrinks from the thought of Christ on His Cross. It tells him that better men than he have had to suffer; that The Son of God Himself had to suffer. And he does not like suffering; he prefers comfort. The lazy, selfish man shrinks from the sight of Christ on His Cross; for it rebukes his laziness and selfishness. Christ's Cross says to him—Thou art ignoble and base, as long as thou art lazy and selfish. Rise up, do something, dare something, suffer something, if need be, for the sake of thy fellow-creatures. Be of use. Take trouble. Face discomfort, contradiction, loss of worldly advantage, if it must be, for the sake of speaking truth and doing right. If thou wilt not do as much as that, then the simplest soldier who goes to die in battle for his duty, is a better man than thou, a nobler man than thou, more like Christ and more like God. That is what Christ's Cross preaches to the lazy, selfish man; and he feels in his heart that the sermon is true: but he does not like it. He turns from it, and says in his heart—Oh! Christ's Cross is a painful subject, and Passion-week and Good Friday a painful time. I will think of something more genial, more peaceful, more agreeable than sorrow, and shame, and agony, and death; Good Friday is too sad a day for me.

Yes, so a man says too often, as long as the fine weather lasts, and all is smooth and bright. But when the tempest comes; when poverty comes, affliction, anxiety, shame, sickness, bereavement, and still more, when persecution comes on a man; when he tries to speak truth and do right; and finds, as he will too often find, that people, instead of loving him and praising him for speaking truth and doing right, hate him and persecute him for it: then, then indeed Passion-week begins to mean something to a man; and just because it is the saddest of all times, it looks to him the brightest of all times. For in his misery and confusion he looks up to heaven and asks—Is there any one in heaven

who understands all this? Does God understand my trouble? Does God feel for my trouble? Does God care for my trouble? Does God know what trouble means? Or must I fight the battle of life alone, without sympathy or help from God who made me, and has put me here? Then, then does the Cross of Christ bring a message to that man such as no other thing or being on earth can bring.

For it says to him—God does understand thee utterly. For Christ understands thee. Christ feels for thee. Christ feels with thee. Christ has suffered for thee, and suffered with thee. Thou canst go through nothing which Christ has not gone through. He, the Son of God, endured poverty, fear, shame, agony, death for thee, that He might be touched with the feeling of thine infirmity, and help thee to endure, and bring thee safe through all to victory and peace.

But again, Passion-week, and above all Good Friday, is a good time, because it teaches us, above all days, what it is to be good, and what goodness means. Therefore remember this, all of you, and take it home with you for the year to come. He who has learnt the lesson of Passion-week, and practises it; he and he only is a good man.

Nay more, Passion-week tells us, I believe, what is the law according to which the whole world of man and of things, yea, the whole universe, sun, moon, and stars, is made: and that is, the law of self-sacrifice; that nothing lives merely for itself; that each thing is ordained by God to help the things around it, even at its own expense. That is a hard saying: and yet it must be true. The soundest Theology and the highest Reason tell us that it must be so. For there cannot be two Holy Spirits.

Now the Spirit by which the Lord Jesus Christ sacrificed himself upon the Cross is The Holy Spirit.

And the Spirit by which the Lord Jesus Christ made all worlds is The Holy Spirit. But the spirit by which He sacrificed Himself on the Cross is the spirit of self-sacrifice. And therefore the spirit by which He made the world is the spirit of self-sacrifice likewise; and self-sacrifice is the law and rule on which the universe is founded. At least, that is the true Catholic faith, as far as my poor intellect can conceive it; and in that faith I will live and die.

There are those who, now-a-days, will laugh at such a notion, and say—Self-sacrifice? It is not self-sacrifice which keeps the world going among men, or animals, or even the plants under our feet: but selfishness. Competition, they say, is the law of the universe. Everything has to take care of itself, fight for itself, compete freely and pitilessly with everything round it, till the weak are killed off, and only the strong survive; and so, out of the free play of the self-interest of each, you get the greatest possible happiness of the greatest possible number.

Do we indeed? I should have thought that unbridled selfishness, and the internecine struggle of opposing interests, had already reduced many nations, and seemed likely to reduce all mankind, if it went on, to that state of the greatest possible misery of the greatest number, from which our blessed Lord, as in this very week, died to deliver us. At all events, if that is to be the condition of man, and of society, then man is not made in the likeness of God, and has no need to be led by the Spirit of God. For what the likeness of God and the Spirit of God are, Passion-week tells us—namely, Love which knows no self-interest; Love which cares not for itself; Love which throws its own life away, that it may save those who have hated it, rebelled against it, put it to a felon's death.

My good friends, instead of believing the carnal and selfish philosophy which cries, Every man for himself—I will not finish the proverb in this Holy place, awfully and literally true as the latter half of it is—instead of believing that, believe the message of Passion-week, which speaks rather thus: telling us that not selfishness, but unselfishness, mutual help and usefulness, is the law and will of God; and that therefore the whole universe, and all that God has made, is very good. And what does Passion-week say to men?

> "Could we but crush that ever-craving lust
> For bliss, which kills all bliss; and lose our life,
> Our barren unit life, to find again
> A thousand lives in those for whom we die:

So were we men and women, and should hold
Our rightful place in God's great universe,
Wherein, in heaven and earth, by will or nature,
Nought lives for self. All, all, from crown to footstool.
The Lamb, before the world's foundation slain;
The angels, ministers to God's elect;
The sun, who only shines to light a world;
The clouds, whose glory is to die in showers;
The fleeting streams, who in their ocean graves
Flee the decay of stagnant self-content;
The oak, ennobled by the shipwright's axe;
The soil, which yields its marrow to the flower;
The flower which breeds a thousand velvet worms,
Born only to be prey to every bird—
All spend themselves on others; and shall man,
Whose twofold being is the mystic knot
Which couples earth and heaven—doubly bound,
As being both worm and angel, to that service
By which both worms and angels hold their lives—
Shall he, whose very breath is debt on debt,
Refuse, forsooth, to see what God has made him?
No, let him shew himself the creatures' lord
By freewill gift of that self-sacrifice
Which they, perforce, by nature's law must suffer;
Take up his cross, and follow Christ the Lord."

And thus Passion-week tells all men in what true goodness lies. In self-sacrifice. In it Christ on His Cross shewed men what was the likeness of God, the goodness of God, the glory of God—to suffer for sinful man.

On this day Christ said—ay, and His Cross says still, and will say to all eternity—Wouldest thou be good? Wouldest thou be like God? Then work, and dare, and, if need be, suffer, for thy fellow-men. On this day Christ consecrated, and, as it were, offered up to the Father in His own body on the Cross, all loving actions, unselfish actions, merciful actions, generous actions, heroic actions, which man has done, or ever will do. From Him, from His Spirit, their strength came; and therefore He is not ashamed to call them brethren. He is the King of the noble army of martyrs; of all who suffer for love, and truth, and justice' sake; and to all such he says—Thou hast put on my likeness, and followed my footsteps; thou hast suffered for my sake, and I too have suffered for thy sake, and enabled thee to suffer in like wise; and in Me thou too art a son of God, in whom the Father is well pleased.

Oh, let us contemplate this week Christ on His Cross, sacrificing Himself for us and all mankind; and may that sight help to cast out of us all laziness and selfishness, and make us vow obedience to the spirit of self-sacrifice, the Spirit of Christ and of God, which was given to us at our baptism. And let us give, as we are most bound, in all humility and contrition of heart, thanks, praise, and adoration, to that immortal Lamb, who abideth for ever in the midst of the throne of God, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, by Whom all things consist; and Who in this week died on the Cross in mortal flesh and blood, that He might make this a good week to all mankind, and teach selfish man that only by being unselfish can he too be good; and only by self-sacrifice become perfect, even as The Father in heaven is perfect.

SERMON III. THE SPIRIT OF WHITSUNTIDE

Isaiah xi. 2

> The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him; the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

This is Isaiah's description of the Spirit of Whitsuntide; the royal Spirit which was to descend, and did descend without measure, on the ideal and perfect King, even on Jesus Christ our Lord, the only-begotten Son of God.

That Spirit is the Spirit of God; and therefore the Spirit of Christ.

Let us consider a while what that Spirit is.

He is the Spirit of love. For God is love; and He is the Spirit of God. Of that there can be no doubt.

He is the Spirit of boundless love and charity, which is the Spirit of the Father, and the Spirit of the Son likewise. For when by that Spirit of love the Father sent the Son into the world that the world through Him might be saved, then the Son, by the same Spirit of love, came into the world, and humbled Himself, and took on Him the form of a slave, and was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.

The Spirit of God, then, is the Spirit of love.

But the text describes this Spirit in different words. According to Isaiah, the Spirit of the Lord is the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of Counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord—in one word, that I may put it as simply as I can—the spirit of wisdom.

Now, is the spirit of wisdom the same as the spirit of love?

Sound theology, which is the highest reason, tells us that it must be so. For consider:

If the spirit of love is the Spirit of God, and the spirit of wisdom is the Spirit of God, then they must be the same spirit. For if they be two different spirits, then there must be two Holy Spirits; for any and every Spirit of God must be holy,—what else can He be? Unholy? I leave you to answer that.

But two Holy Spirits there cannot be; for holiness, which is wisdom, justice, and love, is one and indivisible; and as the Athanasian Creed tells us, and as our highest reason ought to tell us, there is but one Holy Spirit, who must be at once a spirit of wisdom and a spirit of love.

To suppose anything else; to suppose that God's wisdom and God's love, or that God's justice and God's love, are different from each other, or limit each other, or oppose each other, or are anything but one and the same eternally, is to divide God's substance; to deny that God is One: which is forbidden us, rightly, and according to the highest reason, by the Athanasian Creed.

But more; experience will shew us that the spirit of love is the same as the spirit of wisdom; that if any man wishes to be truly wise and prudent, his best way—I may say his only way—is to be loving and charitable.

The experience of the apostles proves it. They were, I presume, the most perfectly loving and charitable of men; they sacrificed all for the sake of doing good; they counted not their own lives dear to them; they endured—what did they not endure?—for the one object of doing good to men; and—what is harder, still harder, for any human being, because it requires not merely enthusiasm, but charity, they made themselves (St Paul at least) all things to all men, if by any means they might save some.

But were they wise in so doing? We may judge of a man's wisdom, my friends, by his success. We English are very apt to do so. We like practical men. We say—I will tell you what a man is, by what he can do.

Now, judged by that rule, surely the apostles' method of winning men by love proved itself a wise method. What did the apostles do? They had the most enormous practical success that men ever had. They, twelve poor men, set out to convert mankind by loving them: and they succeeded.

Remember, moreover, that the text speaks of this Spirit of the Lord being given to One who was to be a King, a Ruler, a Guide, and a Judge of men; who was to exercise influence over men for their good. This prophecy was fulfilled first in the King of kings, our Lord Jesus Christ: but it was fulfilled also in His apostles, who were, in their own way and measure, kings of men, exercising a vast influence over them. And how? By the royal Spirit of love. In the apostles the Spirit of love and charity proved Himself to be also the Spirit of wisdom and understanding. He gave them such a converting, subduing, alluring power over men's hearts, as no men have had, before or since. And He will prove Himself to have the same power in us. Our own experience will be the same as the apostles' experience.

I say this deliberately. The older we grow, the more we understand our own lives and histories, the more we shall see that the spirit of wisdom is the spirit of love; that the true way to gain influence over our fellow-men, is to have charity towards them.

That is a hard lesson to learn; and those who learn it at all, generally learn it late; almost—God forgive us—too late.

Our reason, if we would let the Spirit of God enlighten it, would teach us this beforehand. But we do not usually listen to our reason, or to God's Spirit speaking to it. And therefore we have to learn the lesson by experience, often by very sad and shameful experience. And even that very experience we cannot understand, unless the Spirit of God interpret it to us: and blessed are they who, having been chastised, hearken to His interpretation.

Our reason, I say, should teach us that the spirit of wisdom is none other than the spirit of love. For consider—how does the text describe this Spirit?

As the spirit of wisdom and understanding; that is, as the knowledge of human nature, the understanding of men and their ways. If we do not understand our fellow-creatures, we shall never love them.

But it is equally true that if we do not love them, we shall never understand them. Want of charity, want of sympathy, want of good-feeling and fellow-feeling—what does it, what can it breed, but endless mistakes and ignorances, both of men's characters and men's circumstances?

Be sure that no one knows so little of his fellow-men, as the cynical, misanthropic man, who walks in darkness, because he hates his brother. Be sure that the truly wise and understanding man is he who by sympathy puts himself in his neighbours' place; feels with them and for them; sees with their eyes, hears with their ears; and therefore understands them, makes allowances for them, and is merciful to them, even as his Father in heaven is merciful.

And next; this royal Spirit is described as "the spirit of counsel and might," that is, the spirit of prudence and practical power; the spirit which sees how to deal with human beings, and has the practical power of making them obey.

Now that power, again, can only be got by loving human beings. There is nothing so blind as hardness, nothing so weak as violence. I, of course, can only speak from my own experience; and my experience is this: that whensoever in my past life I have been angry and scornful, I have said or done an unwise thing; I have more or less injured my own cause; weakened my own influence on my fellow-men; repelled them instead of attracting them; made them rebel against me, rather than obey me. By patience, courtesy, and gentleness, we not only make ourselves stronger; we not only attract our fellow-men, and make them help us and follow us willingly and joyfully: but we make ourselves wiser; we give ourselves time and light to see what we ought to do, and how to do it.

And next; this Spirit is also "the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord." Ay, they, indeed, both begin in love, and end in love. If you wish for knowledge, you must begin by loving knowledge for its own sake. And the more knowledge you gain, the more you will long to know, and more, and yet more for ever. You cannot succeed in a study, unless you love that study. Men of science must begin with an interest in, a love for, an enthusiasm, in the very deepest sense of the word, for the phænomena which they study. But the more they learn of them, the more their love increases; as they see more and more of their wonder, of their beauty, of the unspeakable wisdom and power of God, shewn forth in every blade of grass which grows in the sunshine and the rain.

And if this be true of things earthly and temporary, how much more of things heavenly and eternal? We must begin by loving whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, honest, and of good report. We must begin, I say, by loving them with a sort of child's love, without understanding them; by that simple instinct and longing after what is good and beautiful and true, which is indeed the inspiration of the Spirit of God. But as we go on, as St Paul bids us, to meditate on them; and "if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, to think on such things," and feed our minds daily with purifying, elevating, sobering, humanizing, enlightening thoughts: then we shall get to love goodness with a reasonable and manly love; to see the beauty of holiness; the strength of self-sacrifice; the glory of justice; the divineness of love; and in a word—To love God for His own sake, and to give Him thanks for His great glory, which is: That He is a good God.

This thought—remember it, I pray—brings me to the last point. This Spirit is also the spirit of the fear of the Lord. And that too, my friends, must be a spirit of love not only to God, but to our fellow-creatures. For if we but consider that God the Father loves all; that His mercy is over all His works; and that He hateth nothing that He has made: then how dare we hate anything that He has made, as long as we have any rational fear of Him, awe and respect for Him, true faith in His infinite majesty and power? If we but consider that God the Son actually came down on earth to die, and to die too on the cross, for all mankind: then how dare we hate a human being for whom He died: at least if we have true honour, gratitude, loyalty, reverence, and godly fear in our hearts toward Him, our risen Lord?

Oh let us open our eyes this Whitsuntide to the experience of our past lives. Let us see now—what we shall certainly see at the day of judgment—that whenever we have failed to be loving, we have also failed to be wise; that whenever we have been blind to our neighbours' interests, we have also been blind to our own; whenever we have hurt others, we have hurt ourselves still more. Let us, at this blessed Whitsuntide, ask forgiveness of God for all acts of malice and uncharitableness, blindness and hardness of heart; and pray for the spirit of true charity, which alone is true wisdom.

And let us come to Holy Communion in charity with each other and with all; determined henceforth to feel for each other and with each other; to put ourselves in our neighbours' places; to see with their eyes, and feel with their hearts, as far as God shall give us that great grace; determined to make allowances for their mistakes and failings; to give and forgive, live and let live, even as God gives and forgives, lives and lets live for ever: that so we may be indeed the children of our Father in heaven, whose name is Love. Then we shall indeed discern the Lord's body—that it is a body of union, sympathy, mutual trust, help, affection. Then we shall, with all contrition and humility, but still in spirit and in truth, claim and obtain our share in the body and the blood, in the spirit and in the mind, of Him Who sacrificed Himself for a rebellious world.

SERMON IV. PRAYER

Psalm lxv. 2

Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come.

Next Friday, the 20th of December, 1871, will be marked in most churches of this province of Canterbury by a special ceremony. Prayers will be offered to God for the increase of missionary labourers in the Church of England. To many persons—I hope I may say, to all in this congregation—this ceremony will seem eminently rational. We shall not ask God to suspend the laws of nature, nor alter the courses of the seasons, for any wants, real or fancied, of our own. We shall ask Him to make us and our countrymen wiser and better, in order that we may make other human beings wiser and better: and an eminently rational request I assert that to be.

For no one will deny that it is good for heathens and savages, even if there were no life after death, to be wiser and better than they are. It is good, I presume, that they should give up cannibalism, slave-trading, witchcraft, child-murder, and a host of other abominations; and that they should be made to give them up not from mere fear of European cannon, but of their own wills and consciences, seeing that such habits are wrong and ruinous, and loathing them accordingly; in a word, that instead of living as they do, and finding in a hundred ways that the wages of sin are death, they should be converted—that is, change their ways—and live.

Now that this is the will of God—assuming that there is a God, and a good God—is plain at least to our reason, and to our common sense; and it is equally plain to our reason and to our common sense that, as God has not taught these poor wretches to improve themselves, or sent superior beings to improve them from some other world, He therefore means their improvement to be brought about, as moral improvements are usually brought about, by the influence of their fellow-men, and specially by us who have put ourselves in contact with them in our world-wide search for wealth; and who are certain, as we know by sad experience, to make the heathen worse, if we do not make them better.

And as we find from experience that our missionaries, wherever they are brought in contact with these savages, do make them wiser and happier, we ask God to inspire more persons with the desire of improving the heathen, and to teach them how to improve them. I say, how to improve them.

All sneers, whether at the failure of missionary labours, or at the small results in return for the vast sums spent on missions—all such sneers, I say, instead of deterring us from praying to God on this matter, ought to make us pray the more earnestly in proportion as they are deserved. For they ought to remind us that we possibly may not have gone to work as yet altogether in the right way; that there may be mistakes and deficiencies in our method of dealing with the heathen. And if so, it seems all the more reason for asking God to set us and others right, in case we should be wrong; and to make us and others strong, in case we should be weak.

We thus commit the matter to God. We do not ask God to raise up such missionary labourers as we think fit: but such as He thinks fit. We do not pray Him to alter His will concerning the heathen: but to enable us to do what we know already to be His will. And this course seems to me eminently rational; provided always, of course, that it is rational to believe that there is a God who answers prayer; and that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

Now the older I grow, and the more I see of the chances and changes of this mortal life, and of the needs and longings of the human heart, the more important seems this question, and all words concerning it, whether in the Bible or out of the Bible—

Is there anywhere in the universe any being who can hear our prayers? Is prayer a superfluous folly, or the highest prudence?

I say—Is there a being who can even hear our prayers? I do not say, a being who will always answer them, and give us all we ask: but one who will at least hear, who will listen; consider whether what we ask is fit to be granted or not; and grant or refuse accordingly.

You say—What is the need of asking such a question? Of course we believe that. Of course we pray, else why are we in church to-day?

Well, my friends, God grant that you may all believe it in spirit and in truth. But you must remember that if so, you are in the minority; that the majority of civilized men, like the majority of mere savages, do not pray, whatever the women may do; and that prayer among thinking and civilized white men has been becoming, for the last 100 years at least, more and more unfashionable; and is likely, to judge from the signs of the times, to become more unfashionable still: after which reign of degrading ungodliness, I presume—from the experience of all history—that our children or grandchildren will see a revulsion to some degrading superstition, and the latter end be worse than the beginning. But it is notorious that men are doubting more and more of the efficacy of prayer; that philosophers so-called, for true philosophers they are not—even though they may be true, able, and worthy students of merely physical science—are getting a hearing more and more readily, when they tell men they need not pray.

They say; and here they say rightly—The world is ruled by laws. But some say further; and there they say wrongly;—For that reason prayer is of no use; the laws will not be altered to please you. You yourself are but tiny parts of a great machine, which will grind on in spite of you, though it grind you to powder; and there is no use in asking the machine to stop. So, they say, prayer is an impertinence. I would that they stopped there. For then we who deny that the world is a machine, or anything like a machine, might argue fairly with them on the common ground of a common belief in God.

But some go further still, and say—A God? We do not deny that there may be a God: but we do not deny that there may not be one. This we say—If He exists, we know nothing of Him: and what is more, you know nothing of Him. No man can know aught of Him. No man can know whether there be a God or not. A living God, an acting God, a God of providence, a God who hears prayer, a God such as your Bible tells you of, is an inconceivable Being; and what you cannot conceive, that you must not believe: and therefore prayer is not merely an impertinence, it is a mistake; for it is speaking to a Being who only exists in your own imagination. I need not say, my friends, that all this, to my mind, is only a train of sophistry and false reasoning, which—so I at least hold—has been answered and refuted again and again. And I trust in God and in Christ sufficiently to believe that He will raise up sound divines and true philosophers in His Church, who will refute it once more. But meanwhile I can only appeal to your common sense; to the true and higher reason, which lies in men's hearts, not in their heads; and ask—And is it come to this? Is this the last outcome of civilization, the last discovery of the human intellect, the last good news for man? That the soundest thinkers—they who have the truest and clearest notion of the universe are the savage who knows nothing but what his five senses teach him, and the ungodly who makes boast of his own desire, and speaks good of the covetous whom God abhorreth, while he says, "Tush, God hath forgotten. He hideth away his face, and God will never see it"?

True: these so-called philosophers would say that the savage makes a mistake in his sensuality, and the worldling in his covetousness and his tyranny; that from an imperfect conception of their own true self-interest, they carry their philosophy to conclusions which the philosopher in his study must regret. But as to their philosophy being correct: there can be no question that if providence, and prayer, and the living God, be phantoms of man's imagination, then the cynical worldling at one end of the social scale, and the brutal savage at the other, are wiser than apostles and prophets, and sages and divines.

These men talk of facts, the facts of human nature. Why do they ask us to ignore the most striking fact of human nature, that man, even if he were a mere animal, is alone of all animals—a praying animal? Is that strange instinct of worship, which rises in the heart of man as soon as he

begins to think, to become a civilized being and not a savage, to be disregarded as a childish dream when he rises to a higher civilization still? Is the experience of men, heathen as well as Christian, for all these ages to go for nought? Has it mattered nought whether men cried to Baal or to God; for with both alike there has been neither sound nor voice, nor any that answered? Has every utterance that has ever gone up from suffering and doubting humanity, gone up in vain? Have the prayers of saints, the hymns of psalmists, the agonies of martyrs, the aspirations of poets, the thoughts of sages, the cries of the oppressed, the pleadings of the mother for her child, the maiden praying in her chamber for her lover upon the distant battle-field, the soldier answering her prayer from afar off with, "Sleep quiet, I am in God's hands"—those very utterances of humanity which seemed to us most noble, most pure, most beautiful, most divine, been all in vain?—impertinences; the babblings of fair dreams, poured forth into nowhere, to no thing, and in vain? Has every suffering, searching soul which ever gazed up into the darkness of the unknown, in hopes of catching even a glimpse of a divine eye, beholding all, and ordering all, and pitying all, gazed up in vain? For at the ground of the universe is "*not a divine eye*, *but only a blank bottomless eye-socket*;" [2] and man has no Father in heaven; and Christ revealed Him not, because He was not there to reveal; and there was no hope, no remedy, no deliverance, for the miserable among the sons of men?

Oh, my friends, those who believe, or fancy that they believe such things, must be able to do so only through some peculiar conformation either of brain or heart. Only want of imagination to conceive the consequences of such doctrines can enable them, if they have any love and pity for their fellow-men, to preach those doctrines without pity and horror. They know not, they know not, of what they rob a mankind already but too miserable by its own folly and its own sin; a mankind which, if it have not hope in God and in Christ, is truly—as Homer said of old—more miserable than the beasts of the field. If their unconscious conceit did not make them unintentionally cruel, they would surely be silent for pity's sake; they would let men go on in the pleasant delusion that there is a living God, and a Word of God who has revealed Him to men; and would hide from their fellow-creatures the dreadful secret which they think they have discovered—That there is none that heareth prayer, and therefore to Him need no flesh come.

Men take up with such notions, I believe, most generally in days of comfort, ease, safety. They find the world so well ordered outwardly, that it seems able enough to go on its way without a God. They have themselves so few sorrows, struggles, doubts, that they never feel that sense of helplessness, of danger, of ignorance, which has made the hearts of men, in every age, yearn for an unseen helper, an unseen deliverer, an unseen teacher.

And so it is—and shameful it is that so it should be—that the more God gives to men, the less they thank Him, the less they fancy that they need Him: but take His bounties, as they take the air they breathe, unconsciously, and as a matter of course.

And therefore adversity is wholesome, danger is wholesome; so wholesome, that in all ages, as far as I can find, the godliest, the most moral, the most manful, and therefore the really happiest and most successful nations or communities of men, have been those who were in perpetual danger, difficulty, struggle; and who have thereby had their faith in God called out; who have learned in the depth, to cry out of the depth to God; to lift up their eyes unto the Lord, and know that their help comes from Him.

I know a village down in the far West, where the 121st Psalm which I just quoted, was a favourite, and more than a favourite. Whenever it was given out in church—and the congregation used often to ask for it—all joined in singing it, young and old, men and maidens, with an earnestness, a fervour, a passion, such as I never heard elsewhere; such as shewed how intensely they felt that the psalm was true, and true for them. Of all congregational singing I ever heard, never have I heard any so touching as those voices, when they joined in the old words they loved so well.

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[2] J. P. Richter.

Sheltered beneath the Almighty wings
Thou shall securely rest,
Where neither sun nor moon shall thee
By day or night molest.
At home, abroad, in peace, in war,
Thy God shall thee defend;
Conduct thee through life's pilgrimage
Safe to thy journey's end.

Do you fancy these people were specially comfortable, prosperous folk, who had no sorrows, and lived safe from all danger, and therefore knew that God protected them from all ill?

Nothing less, my friends, nothing less. There was hardly a man who joined in that psalm, but knew that he carried his life in his hand from year to year, that any day might see him a corpse—drowned at sea. Hardly a woman who sang that psalm but had lost a husband, a father, a brother, a kinsman—drowned at sea. And yet they believed that God preserved them. They were fishers and sailors, earning an uncertain livelihood, on a wild and rocky coast. A sudden shift of wind might make, as I knew it once to make, 60 widows and orphans in a single night. The fishery for the year might fail, and all the expense of boats and nets be thrown away. Or in default of work at home, the young men would go out on voyages to foreign parts: and often never came back again, dying far from home, of fever, of wreck, of some of the hundred accidents which befal seafaring men. And yet they believed that God preserved them. Surely their faith was tried, if ever faith was tried. But as surely their faith failed not, for—if I may so say—they dared not let it fail. If they ceased to trust God, what had they to trust in? Not in their own skill in seamanship, though it was great: they knew how weak it was, on which to lean. Not in the so-called laws of nature; the treacherous sea, the wild wind, the uncertain shoals of fish, the chances and changes of a long foreign voyage. Without trust in God, their lives must have been lives of doubt and of terror, for ever anxious about the morrow: or else of blind recklessness, saying, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Because they kept their faith in God, their lives were for the most part lives of hardy and hopeful enterprise; cheerful always, in bad luck as in good; thankful when their labours were blest with success; and when calamity and failure came, saying with noble resignation—"I have received good from the hand of the Lord, and shall I not receive evil? Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

It is a life like theirs, mixed with danger and uncertainty, which most calls out faith in God. It is the life of safety and comfort, in which our wants are all supplied ready to our hand, which calls it out least. And therefore it is that life in cities, just because it is most safe and most comfortable, is so often, alas, most ungodly, at least among the men. Less common, thank God, is this ungodliness among the women. The nursing of the sick; the cares of a family, often too sorrows, manifold and bitter, put them continually in mind of human weakness, and of their own weakness likewise. Yes.

It is sorrow, my friends, sorrow and failure, which forces men to believe that there is One who heareth prayer, forces them to lift up their eyes to One from whom cometh their help. Before the terrible realities of danger, death, bereavement, disappointment, shame, ruin—and most of all before deserved shame, deserved ruin—all the arguments of the conceited sophist melt away like the maxims of the comfortable worldling; and the man or woman who was but too ready a day before to say, "Tush, God will never see, and will never hear," begins to hope passionately that God does see, that God does hear. In the hour of darkness; when there is no comfort in man nor help in man, when he has no place to flee unto, and no man careth for his soul: then the most awful, the most blessed of all questions is: But is there no one higher than man to whom I can flee? No one higher than man who cares for my soul and for the souls of those who are dearer to me than my own soul? No friend? No helper? No deliverer? No counsellor? Even no judge? No punisher? No God, even

though He be a consuming fire? Am I and my misery alone together in the universe? Is my misery without any meaning, and I without hope? If there be no God: then all that is left for me is despair and death. But if there be, then I can hope that there is a meaning in my misery; that it comes to me not without cause, even though that cause be my own fault. I can plead with God like poor Job of old, even though in wild words like Job; and ask—What is the meaning of this sorrow? What have I done? What should I do? "I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me. Surely I would speak unto the Almighty, and desire to reason with God."

"I would speak unto the Almighty, and desire to reason with God." Oh my friends, a man, I believe, can gain courage and wisdom to say that, only by the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

But when once he has said that from his heart, he begins to be justified by faith. For he has had faith in God; he has trusted God enough to speak to God who made him; and so he has put himself, so far at least, into his just and right place, as a spiritual and rational being, made in the image of God.

But more, he has justified God. He has confessed that God is not a mere force or law of nature; nor a mere tyrant and tormentor: but a reasonable being, who will hear reason, and a just being, who will do justice by the creatures whom He has made.

And so the very act of prayer justifies God, and honours God, and gives glory to God; for it confesses that God is what He is, a good God, to whom the humblest and the most fallen of His creatures dare speak out the depths of their abasement, and acknowledge that His glory is this—That in spite of all His majesty, He is one who heareth prayer; a being as magnificent in His justice, as He is magnificent in His majesty and His might.

All this is argued out, as it never has been argued out before or since, in the book of Job: and for seeing so much as this, was Job approved by God. But there is a further question, to which the book of Job gives no answer; and to which indeed all the Old Testament gives but a partial answer. And that is this—This just and magnificent God, has He also human pity, tenderness, charity, condescension, love? In one word, have we not only a God in heaven, but a Father in heaven?

That question could only be answered by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Truly He said—No one cometh to the Father, but by me. No man hath seen God at any time: but the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath revealed Him. He revealed Him in part to Abraham, in part to Moses, to Job, to David, to the prophets. But He revealed Him perfectly when He said—I and the Father are one. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. Yes. Now we can find boundless comfort in the words, "Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost"—Love and condescension without bounds. Now we know that there is A Man in the midst of the throne of God, who is the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His character; a high priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, seeing that He was tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin.

To Him we can cry, with human passion and in human words; because we know that His human heart will respond to our human hearts, and that His human heart again will respond to His divine Spirit, and that His divine Spirit is the same as the divine Spirit of His Father; for their wills and minds are one; and their will and their mind is—boundless love to sinful man.

Yes, we can look up by faith into the sacred face of Christ, and take refuge by faith within His sacred heart, saying—If it be good for me, He will give what I ask: and if He gives it not, it is because that too is good for me, and for others beside me. In all the chances and changes of this mortal life we can say to Him, as He said in that supreme hour—"If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done," sure that He will present that prayer to His Father, and to our Father, and to His God and to our God; and that whatsoever be the answer vouchsafed by Him whose ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts, the prayer will not have gone up to Christ in vain.

And in such a case as this of missions to the heathen—If we believe that Christ died for these poor heathen; if we believe that Christ loves these poor heathen infinitely more than we, or than the

most devoted missionary who ever lived or died for them: shall we say—Then we may leave them in Christ's hands to follow their own nature. If He is satisfied with their degradation, so may we be?

Shall we not rather say—Their misery and degradation must pain His sacred heart, far more than our sinful hearts; and if He does not come down again on earth to help them Himself, it must be because He means to help them through us, His disciples? Let us ask Him to teach us and others how to help them; to enable us and others to help them. Let us pray to Him the one prayer which, unless prayer be a dream, is certain to be answered, because it is certainly according to God's will; the prayer to be taught and helped to do our duty by our fellow-men. And for the rest: let us pray in the words of that most noble of all collects, to pray which is to take refuge from our own ignorance in the boundless wisdom of God's love—"Thou who knowest our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking: Have compassion on our infirmities, and those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask, condescend to give us, for the worthiness of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

SERMON V. THE DEAF AND DUMB

St Mark vii. 32-37

> And they bring unto Jesus one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech Him to put His hand upon him. And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. . . . And they were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

Our greatest living philologer has said, and said truly—"If wonder arises from ignorance, it is from that conscious ignorance which, if we look back at the history of most of our sciences, has been the mother of all human knowledge. Till men began to wonder at the stratification of rocks, and the fossilization of shells, there was no science of Geology. Till they began to wonder at the words which were perpetually in their mouths, there was no science of Language."

He might have added, that till men began to wonder at the organization of their own bodies, there was no science of healing; that in proportion as the common fact of health became mysterious and marvellous in their eyes, just in that proportion did they become able to explain and to conquer disease. For there is a deep difference between the wonder of the uneducated or half-educated man, and the wonder of the educated man.

The ignorant in all ages have wondered at the exception; the wise, in proportion as they have become wise, have wondered at the rule. Pestilences, prodigies, portents, the results of seeming accidents, excite the vulgar mind. Only the abnormal or casual is worthy of their attention. The man of science finds a deeper and more awful charm in contemplating the results of law; in watching, not what seem to be occasional failures in nature: but what is a perpetual and calm success.

The savage knows not, I am told, what wonder means, save from some prodigy. Seeing no marvel in the daily glory of the sunlight, he is startled out of his usual stupidity and carelessness by the occurrence of an eclipse, an earthquake, a thunderbolt. The uneducated, whatever their rank may be, are apt to be more interested by the sight of deformities, and defects or excesses in nature, than by that of the most perfect normal and natural beauty.

Those, in the same way, who in the infancy of European science, thought it worth while to register natural phenomena, registered exclusively the exceptions. Eclipses, meteors, auroras, earthquakes, storms, and especially monstrosities, animal or vegetable, exercised their barbaric wonder. The mystery and miracle which underlies the unfolding of every bud, the development of every embryo, the growth of every atom of tissue, in any organism, animal or vegetable—to all this their intellectual eye was blind. How different from such a state of mind, that calm and constant wonder, humbling and yet inspiring, with which the modern man of science searches into the "open mystery" of the universe; and sees that the true marvel lies, not in the infringement of law, but in its permanence; not in the imperfect, but in the perfect; not in disease, but in health; not in deformity, but in beauty.

These words are true of all nature; and specially true, it seems to me, of our outward senses and faculties; true of sight, hearing, speech. The wonder, I think, with the wise man will be, not that there are deaf and dumb persons to be found here and there among us: but that the average, nay, the

majority of mankind, are not deaf and dumb. Paradoxical as this assertion may seem at first, a little thought I believe will prove it to be reasonable.

Whatever view you take of the origin of sight, hearing, voice, the wonder to a thoughtful mind is just the same; how, under the storm of circumstances, and through the lapse of ages, those faculties have not been lost again and again, by countless individuals, nay, by the whole species. For we must confess that those faculties are gradually developed in each individual; that every animal and every human being which is born into the world, has built up, unconsciously, involuntarily, and as it were out of nothing, those delicate and complex organs, by which he afterwards learns to see, hear, and utter sounds. Is not the wonder, that he should, in the majority of cases, succeed without any effort of his own?

And if I am answered, that the success is owing to hereditary tendencies, and to the laws by which the offspring resembles the parents, I answer: Is not that a greater wonder still? A wonder which all the discoveries of the scalpel and the microscope have been as yet unable, and will be, I believe, to the last unable, to unravel, even to touch? A wonder which can be explained by no theories of vibratory atoms, vital forces, plastic powers of nature, or other such phrases, which are but metaphysical abstractions, having no counterpart in fact, and only hiding from us our ignorance of the vast and venerable unknown. The physiologist, when he considers the manifold combination of innumerable microscopic circumstances which are required to bring any one creature into the world with a perfectly hearing ear, ought to confess that the chances—if the world were governed by chance—are infinitely greater in favour of a child's being born with an imperfect ear rather than with a perfect one. And if he should evade the difficulty; and try to explain the usual success by saying that nature is governed by law: I answer—What is nature? What is law? You never saw nature nor law either under the microscope. They too are metaphysical abstractions, necessary notions and conceptions of your own brain. You have seen nothing but the fact and the custom; and all you can do, if you be strictly rational, is with a certain modern school to say, with a despairing humility, which I deplore while I respect—deploring it because it is needless despair, and yet respecting it because it is humility, which is the path out of despair and darkness into hope and light—to say with them, "Man can know nothing of causes, he can only register positive facts." This, I say, is one path—one which I trust none here will tread. The only other path, I believe, is, to go back to the lessons which we ought to have learnt in our childhood, for those to whom the human race owes most learnt them thousands of years ago; and to ascribe the ever successful miracles of nature to a Will, to a Mind, to a Providence so like that which each of us exercises in his own petty sphere, that we are not only able to understand in part the works of God, but to know from the very fact of being able to understand them —as one of our greatest astronomers has so well said lately—that we are made in the image of God.

To say with the old Psalmist, that the universe is governed by "a law which cannot be broken:" but why? Because God has given it that law. To say "All things continue as they were at the beginning:" but why? Because all things serve Him in whom we live and move and have our being. To confess the mystery and miracle of our mortal bodies, and say with David, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made; such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me, I cannot attain unto it:" but to add the one only rational explanation of the mystery which, thank God, common sense has taught, though it may be often in confused and defective forms, to the vast majority of the human race in all times and all lands—that He who grasps the mystery and works the miracle is God; that "His eye sees our substances yet being imperfect; and in His book are all our members written, which day by day were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them."

And then to go forward with the Psalmist, and with the common sense of humanity; to conclude that if there be a Creator, there must also be a Providence; that that life-giving Spirit which presided over the creation of each organism presides also over its growth, its circumstances, its fortunes; and to say with David, "Whither shall I go then from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?

If I climb up to heaven, Thou art there. If I go down to hell, Thou art there also. If I take the

wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there Thy hand shall lead me; Thy right hand shall hold me still."

Yes. To this—to faith and adoration—ought right and reason to lead the physical philosopher. And to what ought it to lead us, who are most of us, I presume, not physical philosophers? To gratitude, surely, not unmixed with fear and trembling; till we say to ourselves—Who am I, to boast? Who am I, to pride myself on possessing a single faculty which one of my neighbours may want? What have I, that I did not receive? Considering the endless chances of failure, if the world were left to chance; and I may say, the absolute certainty of failures, if the world were left to the blind competition of merely physical laws, is it not only of the Lord's mercies that we are not failures too? that we have not been born crippled, blind, deaf, dumb—what not?—by the effect of circumstances over which we have had no control; which have been working, it may be, for generations past, in the organizations of our ancestors?

But what shall we say of those who have not received what we have received? What shall we say of those who, like the deaf and dumb, are, in some respects at least, failures—instances in which the laws which regulate our organization have not succeeded in effecting a full development?

We can say this, at least, without entangling and dazzling ourselves in speculations about final causes; without attempting to pry into the mystery of evil.

We can say this: That if there be a God—as there is a God—these failures are not according to His will. The highest reason should teach us that; for it must tell us that in the work of the Divine Artist, as in the work of the human, imperfection, impotence, disorder of any kind, must be contrary to the mind and will of the Creator. The highest reason, I say, teaches us this. And Scripture teaches it like wise. For if we believe our Lord to have been as He was—the express image of the Almighty Father; if we believe that He came—as He did come—to reveal to men His Father's will, His Father's mind, His Father's character: then we must believe that He acted according to that will and according to that character, when He made the healing of disease, and the curing of imperfections of this very kind, an important and an integral part of His work on earth.

"And they brought unto Jesus one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, and besought Him to put His hand upon him. And Jesus took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers into his ears; and He spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain . . . And they were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

Consider this story awhile. He healed the man miraculously, by means at which we cannot guess, which we cannot even conceive. But the healing signified at least two things—that the man could be healed, and that the man ought to be healed; that his bodily defect—the retribution of no sin of his own—was contrary to the will of that Father in Heaven, who willeth not that one little one should perish.

But Jesus sighed likewise. There was in Him a sorrow, a compassion, most human and most divine.

It may have been—may He forgive me if I dare rashly to impute motives or thoughts to Him—that there was something too of a divine weariness—I dare not say impatience, seeing how patient He was then and how patient He has been since for more than 1800 years—of the folly and ignorance of man, who brings on himself and on his descendants these and a hundred other preventible miseries, simply because he will not study and obey the physical laws of the universe; simply because he will not see that those laws which concern the welfare of his body, are as surely the will of God as those which concern the welfare of his soul; and that therefore it is not merely his interest but his solemn duty to study and to obey them, lest he bear the punishment of his own neglect and disobedience.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.