

GOD EVERYWHERE

“*Weary, faint and sore*”; this is the natural result of our conflict with the evil of the present state. It comes upon us all because of weakness. With the physical strength of the incorruptible nature, conflict would not be so painful, it might even be exhilarating. With the actual nature we have, the labour is difficult, the fight is hard. We need the renewal of strength that comes with the renewal of acquaintance with the great things of God. We get this renewal of acquaintance in the collective participation of the bread and wine in which the Lord has asked us to unite in remembrance of him. It is of the first importance that we look at these things as they are in themselves, rather than as they may seem to the dim and limited eye of man. It is not looking at these things as they are in themselves to think of mere “doctrines,” as we call formulated points of truth. That man is mortal, that Christ died for sin, that the Kingdom is coming, is but the outer vesture of truth that roots in God. Our particular vocation as men and women called to be saints is to grow in that knowledge and love of God which is the first principle of all spiritual life. We must more and more aim to look from the point of view supplied in the Bible, because in the end this will turn out the only true and permanent point of view. That point of view is God. Human things do not lead us here. The Bible never leads us anywhere else. It might be compared to a great wheel of which every part of the circumference leads by a straight line to the centre. If it gives us creation, it shows us God as the pre-existing Creator. If it shows us Israel marching out of Egypt, it is that God who brings them out may be visible. If it detail the system of law and worship, promulgated in their midst by Moses, it is God we see in every enactment, even as we see Him represented in the tabernacle of the congregation in the midst of the assembly. If we look at Israel’s history, it is God obeyed if they are prosperous, and God set aside and angered if the tide of adversity sweeps in. If it is Christ we look at, who but God in him who said,

“*He that seeth me, seeth Him who sent me.*”

If the apostolic labours strike attention, it is as that of men who say—

“*Be ye reconciled to God.*”

Even the misery of man upon the earth tells us of God, for it is the work of Him who hath subjected them to vanity because of disobedience and neglect. If we cast our eye forward to the promised age of glory, it is the “*tabernacle of God with men*” and the glory of God filling the earth that banishes grief and tears. It is God wherever we look in the Bible. In this respect the Bible differs from all other books; and where it works effectually, it produces men different from all other men in producing men who have the fear of God before their eyes and His love in their hearts all the day long. This is the standard to which the Gospel invites us. To the Bible’s type and model we must conform if we are to become incorporate at last in the House of Yahweh that is to be established in the whole earth. Men of any other type would neither be fit for, nor at home in, the state of things that is to prevail upon the earth in that happy day. In that state of things, the glory of God will be the first sentiment and the highest pleasure and the rallying point of all occupations, “*even as it is in heaven,*” and even as it was with David, the man after God’s own heart, whose Spirit-inspired Psalms give us the right cue in this matter. These Psalms are far from being the mere homilies and moral dissertations that are associated in the popular mind with religious writings. The spirit of morality, so called in the world’s talk, and the spirit of these Psalms, are two totally different spirits. Popular morality is a poor and colourless thing. It amounts to no more than a tolerable decency in our behaviour towards man. Godly men behave well towards man, but this is only an ingredient in their godliness. Their godliness consists mainly of their own state of mind towards God. Him they fear, love and worship as the first attitude of their mental being. He is the sun of their heavens. David is their type in this respect. He was a man after God’s own heart, grievously though he erred in the matter of Uriah’s wife. His Psalms give us the right guidance. They furnish a true test. The merely natural man finds nothing in them to his liking. They have no charm. He wonders what people see in their simple phraseology. They are sweetness itself to the childlike men with whom the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom.

Let us refresh ourselves in the Psalms read this morning. Let us measure ourselves and correct ourselves by them. Let us examine ourselves in their light as those who are seeking to walk as children of the light. How full they are of God. The very first verse strikes the chord three times.

“Praise ye Yahweh: praise ye the name of Yahweh: praise Him, O ye servants of Yahweh.”

To those who are out of harmony with the theme, this enthusiastic repetition will appear in the light of mere rhapsody. It is far from being so. It is the exaltation of reason in its highest discernments. The reason is stated in the Psalm. Not only is it that *“Yahweh is good”* but *“whatsoever Yahweh pleased, that did He in heaven and on earth, and in the seas and all deep places.”* Realise this. What can man do in heaven and earth? He can make a great racket with gun-powder or dynamite in the ears of his fellowman when it suits him in business or battle, and it seems a mighty affair for the moment, but, on the broad bosom of the earth, what is it? Go up in a balloon but a couple of miles, and you learn the puny nature of man’s utmost effort in the awful silence of space. His greatest deeds are more insignificant in their effects on the great globe than the depredations of the invisible mite on the cheese. But Yahweh can do what He pleases not only on earth but through the vast realms of heaven. How is this? The answer is given:

“Yahweh made the heavens.”

“Praise ye Him, sun and moon, praise Him all ye stars of light. Praise Him ye heaven of heavens, for He commanded and they were created. He hath also established them for ever and ever. He hath made a decree which shall not pass. He telleth the number of the stars: He calleth them all by their names. Great is Yahweh and of great power.”

“Great and terrible,” indeed, as Daniel said in his memorable prayer; terrible in the vastness of His being, terrible in the might of His power; terrible in the fulness of His presence which fills and embraces all space, so that in Him all live and move and have their being. Yet terrible again in the majesty of His concentrated presence, from which in the highest heaven the darting rays of His radiant Spirit penetrate to the utmost bounds of immensity.

“O Yahweh my God, Thou art very great. Thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment, who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain . . . who laid the foundations of the earth that it should not be removed for ever.”

Who can compare with Him? Then to think that *“Yahweh is good”* and that *“His mercy endureth for ever,”* is not the contemplation of His power and His everlasting days in this alliance with beneficence the fit inspirer of rapturous admiration and praise?

“He hath not dealt with us after our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities: for as the heaven is high above the earth so great is His mercy towards them that fear Him.”

If these things are true, does it not follow that *“it is a good and a pleasant thing”* to give thanks and to sing praises to His name? Will anyone dare to suggest that these things are not true? Is it not a matter of necessity that the formative energy at the centre from which the cleverly-constructed system of the universe has been evolved should concentrate in itself all the attributes of wisdom and goodness that we see in the evolved system?

“He that hath planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that hath formed the eye, shall He not see?”

Brethren, it must be so, and the Bible, and all that is connected with the history of Israel and the establishment of Christ’s name in the earth, is evidence that it is so. It is not an open—a debatable question. The scientific speculations of the age have banished God from the public mind and the public talk of England, still more from that which is private. The science is all right, but the speculations are wrong when they would exclude an adequate cause from the sublime phenomena, great and small, that we see. The scientific record, as the noting of God’s clever workmanship, is valuable enough, but the scientific inference that because God has so excellently constructed things as to make it unnecessary for Him to be always interfering, therefore He is not there, is quite too far down on the “Topsy” level of common sense. Modern wisdom has come to this: “I ‘specs they growed.” The words of Paul are still applicable to the wise of this world:

“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.”

Let us open our eyes and hearts to the great and terrible God that made heaven and earth. He is the all-sufficient explanation of all things and the full supply for all our needs. He is a fountain of unfailing comfort in the midst of the evil now temporarily brooding upon the earth; a Rock of Strength in the morass of human futility and weakness through which we have meanwhile to thread

our way; a Spring of unquenchable hope for the endless vistas of time that stretch before us in futurity. He is our Father in Christ, as well as our Creator in Adam. He is the Light of our lowly life as well as the Hope of immortality for the days to come. He is the Guide of our mortal footsteps as well as the Controller of the mighty movements that take place in the spangled heavens overhead. Shall we not praise and magnify His name—not only with the song of our lips but the obedience of our lives?

The Psalm says:

“The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands.”

This suggests something. Our God is not silver or gold. He is more real than silver and gold, for silver and gold are but the concretion of His invisible Spirit. Spirit is more real than all created things. It is natural folly to compare the cause of all things with anything caused. As Paul said to the men of Athens—

“Forasmuch as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver or stone, graven by art and man’s device.”

All substance of that kind is secondary. It depends upon the will of the first substance out of which all things have come, namely, Spirit, which is God. As Jesus said:

“God is Spirit.”

“By His Spirit, He hath garnished the heavens.”

This Spirit becomes His Word when set in formative motion by His will.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And by Him all things were made, and without Him was not anything made that was made.”

But are we to conclude that God, the invisible Spirit, is nowhere to be seen more palpably manifest than in this room, say, at this moment? The Spirit of God is here, but the glory of God that shone around about the frightened shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem and blazed in dazzling brilliance from the tabernacle of the congregation—that is not here. Is God only an invisible Presence, nowhere to be seen more directly than here? This would be a great and blighting mistake. It is excluded for ever by the case of Christ, who was the Word made flesh. See him when glorified, as by Paul near Damascus, *“a light above the brightness of the sun.”* How then of the Father? Greater glory still.

“He dwelleth in the light that no man can approach.”

Suppose we were to draw near to that effulgent glory, what should we see? Constituted as we are, we could, of course, neither approach, nor see if we approached; but suppose we were able to approach like the highest angels of his power, of whom Gabriel is one, what form should we see as the kernel of the glory? In pictures where the divine glory is the subject of representation, the form seen in the heart is a combination of Hebrew letters. We may be quite sure it is not this that we should see. The glowing kernel of Eternal Glory must have form; for everything that is an entitative something has form. It would be a form expressive of the highest wisdom, for, ramifying all through creation, we find the strictest correspondence between form and quality. There are endless forms. Which of them all could express intelligence? No geometrical form has this quality. The circle, the square, and the triangle are absolutely void of expression, so with all their combinations. What form among plants or minerals could express the divine attributes? We instinctively answer, Not one. There is only one form under the sun that comes near the aspect of divine intelligence, and that only in a few cases. It is the form affirmed in the scriptures to be the divine form—the form of man, who is *“made after the similitude of God,”* even the Father (James 3:9). This is the *“form of the sons of God”* (Dan. 3:25) and the form of the angels, who are also spoken of as *“the sons of God”* (Job 38:7). Their designation as sons would point to a Father-form, even He who *“dwells in light,”* and where lies the seat of that will power which through the Spirit has created all things, and from which the commandment *“comes forth”* to the angels for the execution of various purposes as in the case of Dan. 9:23. Here is the living God of Israel, the Creator of heaven and earth, With this in view, we can join in David’s words with fulness of meaning:

“To Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens,” and in the prayer that the Lord taught his disciples.

“Our Father who art in heaven.”

We seem to need a conception of this sort to obtain a proper objective for our prayers. It does not interfere with the sense of God’s presence when we remember that there is no distance to Spirit, and

that we are in an immediate touch with the Father at the furthest bounds of the universe as we could be near His glorious person. The marvels of electrical communication have enabled us to receive this.

This revelation of a personal Father gives also great point to David's contrast of Him with the idols of the heathen. He is the living God, whereas they have no life. He can do as He pleases in heaven and earth; they have done and can do nothing. They are destitute of any power, whereas Yahweh made the heavens.

"They have mouths but they speak not, eyes have they but they see not. They have ears but they hear not, neither is there any breath in their mouths."

The God of Israel is a contrast to them in all these particulars. It has staggered some that the Bible should attribute eyes and ears to God. It need not. The feeling of surprise arises from the tacit assumption that Eternal Power must be formless. This assumption is without foundation in reason. We cannot know what form Eternal Power ought to have. It may be anything so far as any necessity known to us is concerned. We have but to enquire what it is. The Bible revelation on the subject is full when all parts of it are put together; and it is beautiful. It is in perfect harmony with our mental constitution and the constitution of the universe. If the idea of His form brought with it the idea of His being what we are in detail—stomach, lungs, blood, muscles, etc., then, indeed, the idea would be repugnant and unreceivable. He is not *"an image made like to corruptible man."* He is the Spirit-form at the centre of the Spirit universal: Spirit corporealised; Spirit condensed; the glorious substantial nucleus of the eternal unity of eternal power, having a form which He has reproduced in myriads of sons throughout His universe. The earth will be peopled with a race of such by and by. Meanwhile she is travailing in birth, in much pain and much groaning.

"The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

Deliverance is at the door; and when it comes the sorrowing earth will no more remember her sorrow, for joy of the children born into the world—first born of water, as we have been: and then born of the Spirit as we hope to be in that happy day when sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

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