

ing its professed enemies our surest friends, but by its steadfast and outspoken defence at the sacrifice of every temporal interest, even, if need be, life itself.

A TREATISE ON THE INEFFABLE MYSTERY OF OUR REDEMPTION

By

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(Translated by a Nun of Stanbrook).

CHAPTER VI (cont.).

2.

The glories of Divine goodness shown in this work of our Redemption.

These foundations having been laid, we will begin to explain how divine goodness shows forth in our Redemption. We said that it is the nature of goodness to communicate itself to all things; that is, with regard to men to make them good and happy. We said that the highest grade of goodness was to suffer in order to make others good, and the greater the suffering, the higher the grade of goodness. Therefore the Son of God, desirous of making us good and happy like himself, saw that there was no other means under heaven more effectual than that he should descend to earth, clad in human flesh, and suffer in it death and Passion for the sake of the inestimable fruits that would result for us, and the splendid example it would give us in all the virtues, besides the immense and precious graces it would gain for us. Seeing this, our Lord, overcome by the power of his love and desire, thought nothing of the heavy burden he was taking on him, but only of our remedy. This reveals how immense was the goodness in offering to undergo such severe trials and to give his life for that cause. For, as our Saviour said: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." We can say that there is no stronger proof of goodness than that a man should die to make others good, especially when his death entails so many insults and torments.

Let us then consider the immensity of the trials and torments undergone by our Saviour and all the circumstances of this sacred Passion, such as the dignity of him who suffered, the unworthiness of those for whom he suffered, and the manner and cause of his tortures, for these details taken together manifest the grandeur of his Passion. We spoke of this in the *Book of Prayer and Meditation*, but will treat of it briefly here, for in each detail the devout soul finds material to nourish the spirit and arouse devotion.

Firstly, as regards the dignity of him who suffered, let man raise his eyes and consider the sublimity and sovereignty of the

Lord who is praised by the stars of the morning, at whose beauty sun and moon marvel, before whom the columns of the heavens tremble, whom the angels praise, the Dominations adore, the heavenly Powers quiver, who sits upon the Cherubims (*Dan.* 3, 55), gazes on the abysses, and as the Prophet says, "Hath poised with three fingers the bulk of the earth" (*Isaias* 40, 12); whose riches, whose glory, whose majesty, are so vast that the whole world and a thousand more worlds that he might create would be no more before him than a drop of morning dew, as the wise man said. (*Sap.* 11, 23). For it is he only who exists of himself, without dependence on any other being, and all else exists solely by his will.

After having raised our eyes to heaven let us lower them to consider what this great Lord suffered for us. The holy Doctors of the Church declare concisely that the tortures endured by the Saviour were the most severe that have been, or ever will be suffered, setting aside those of the other life, which belong to another state. As evidence of this, they speak of the sweat of blood, a thing never seen before in this world. It is their conclusion after weighing each circumstance of the sacred Passion, that Christ's agony lacked all consolation, divine or human. This cannot be said of the martyrs who knew that after their last gasp, their crown was prepared for them, which gave them great courage and joy. The Apostle showed that he rejoiced in his trials when he says, "I am filled with comfort; I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation." (*II Cor.* 7, 4). But our merciful Redeemer chose to lack this solace. That this was so is clearly proved, for he elected by his own free will to endure all the pains and insults inflicted on him, and before he suffered them, he saw them, accepted them, and offered them for our salvation to his Father.

How, then, could he seek for consolation and kindness to mitigate the pains he willed to suffer? That would have been to will to suffer and not to suffer, which is impossible. His last plaintive words with which he ended his life on the cross, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" tell us this.

To his other tortures was added the delicacy of his most sacred body, which, being formed by the Holy Ghost was, therefore, more finely organised than any other. Hence its exterior and interior senses were more lively and sensitive, being the most perfect. Christ's flesh was also wholly virginal, taken from the most pure womb of Our Lady, therefore more tender, delicate and sensitive to pain. For the soul that seeks to realize the poignancy of this, that it may thus rise to some understanding of divine goodness which offered itself to such torments for us, Saint Bonaventura gives this as spiritual advice to devotees of the Sacred Passion; to take a discipline that hurts but does not injure, and learn from this how far more the most high Son of

God suffered for him. In this document the Saint also shows the marvellous courage of the martyrs and the terrible sufferings they endured.

The immensity of these pains seems on a level with the outrages and ignominy with which the Saviour was mocked and derided, led handcuffed along the public streets and buffeted. His face was veiled and spat upon, he was struck, buffeted, mocked, robed now in white, now in crimson garments, the soldiers jeering at him meanwhile as a mock king. He was cruelly scourged, condemned to an ignominious death, Barabbas was preferred to him, He was proclaimed as malefactor in the streets and finally crucified between two thieves. He was stripped in the sight of all the people, of his most holy Mother and of all his friends and neighbours, who wept bitterly, while his enemies laughed, jeering and triumphant.

What could be more wonderful than to see the supreme Majesty which the angels worshipped in heaven so jibed at and outraged on earth? What more marvellous than that he should bear such torments and close the door against all relief and consolation that might have come to him from heaven or earth? Or that this Lord should have willed to unite to himself a mortal, passible nature, so that he could endure torment in it, which he could not do in his own? And above all, that *he*, the one offended against, should profer peace to the culprits and offer them the satisfaction he made for the guilt, taking on himself the penalty? Who has ever seen or heard of anything so wonderful or noble?

Let the devout soul see what a vast ocean of goodness and love is offered to it here, in which it may float, and dive into the abyss of such great marvels. For as I said, he who would fathom the grandeur of this supreme goodness must turn his eyes from all created goodness lest he should compare it with this. Let him always remember that as the human mind fails when it considers deeply the works of God's omnipotence, as shown in the creation of the world and the general resurrection, it is only reasonable that it should fail in understanding the works of his goodness, for his goodness equals his wisdom and his power and he wishes to be known for them all.

(To be continued).

REVIEWS

THE FRIENDSHIP OF CHRIST. By The Rev. Canon Charles Smyth. (Longman's; 2/6).

"The need to know Christ as a real person is a need that only Christ can satisfy". That is Canon Smyth's first postulate and his book only claims to be a signpost pointing along the road that will lead to Christ; yet it is more than that: it shows us how, once on that road, we can keep to it and, given divine grace, can