

up shall draw all things to me.' God has never changed his mind; sin has not forced him to adopt other tactics. This means that the whole of nature is formed according to a supernatural pattern—or, in other words, there is nothing in existence which does not bear some relation to this divine life and which speaks not only of itself but also of the redemption. God does not create the pebble and the peach, the electron and the eagle, with different unrelated acts of his will; he formed all these individual creatures in the Word, and in the Word who was made flesh. A mouse killed by an owl to feed its young is no mere incident in a nature red in tooth and claw; but speaks also of the death of that Word made flesh to feed all mankind. . . .

But the picture is already too full for one canvas. These general hints on the supernatural approach to the whole of reality may serve simply to prevent the reader from adding a layer of grace upon the natural world he has discovered for himself and to begin to discover how grace is indeed capable of perfecting all that he perceives, drawing it through Christ to God.



THE CONQUEST OF FEAR

W. E. ORCHARD, D.D.

THERE are some people who are said not to know what fear is. If there are any such, which is doubtful, they are generally to be found among those who do not think or have no imagination. Their very lack of fear often brings them into inescapable danger, and then they are surprised that they are not ready for death. It has been said that everyone is afraid; only the brave confess it.

There are certainly some people who are so timid in their disposition, or nervous in their temperament, that they are constantly tortured by fear. They are afraid of almost everything; they are afraid when they need not be; indeed they are afraid of things that do not even exist. Some are in such a state of fear, yet cannot tell precisely what it is that they are afraid of; it is fear they are afraid of, and of what they know not.

The truth is that man cannot but be a fearful creature, once he begins to think. He is cast into the vast machine of this world, a tiny frail creature, full of the possibilities of disease, pain and death, and the forces of nature often hostile, relentless and indiscriminating; not taking into account also the evil that other men wish him, or can do; and complete insurance against all these evils is in vain; that is if he is without a strong faith in God's providence. Many now-a-days do not believe in God or immortality, and so have no final protection or hope of fulfilment. Yet it is just these people who often seem to fear nothing; while those who do believe in God, are yet all their days beset with fears. For God does not promise to save us from those things that we most fear: illness, poverty, loss of a good reputation, and, as most often, the fear of death, which is always inescapable, or of what lies beyond it, which is uncertain. Those who have no religion say that they do not fear death, because they believe it means the end of everything. But then, what a tragic end to all the things we have striven for, if they include final happiness, satisfaction, fulfilment. And if it is only an eternal sleep;

'in that sleep of death what dreams may come', indeed, what everlasting nightmares: if the horrors of hell are not feared, still to live on without any comfort, or any end to being forever alone with ourselves, dissatisfied and with indescribable longings: that is hardly better.

Can nothing be done to cure the unhappy state of being afraid, for those at least who believe in God and have hopes of a blessed immortality? For such people it is often their temperament that is responsible. Temperament cannot be changed, and we have to live with it; but we can do something to work against it, or set up something to compensate for it; if only we could bring this fear under control. For it is often the case that fear not only brings constant distress, but it may even bring dislocation of the mind. Even if the fear is unconscious, it may come out in something quite foolish or disabling. Men of great physical courage are often moral cowards; and those who seem free from the usual fears, will be stupidly afraid of something of which no one should be afraid: such as cats, the dark, or being shut up within four walls. Or they may fear something at least unlikely, such as being buried alive; while the fear of death, and of what accompanies it, may make them so nervous about their health that they are known as hypo-

chondriacs; or they are always imagining the misery, pain, and loss that may accompany their end: inevitable, and so constantly anticipated and always feared.

If we turn to the Bible for help, there seems plenty of advice; for its writers knew well enough what fear is. There is hardly a single word that occurs more often; but the advice is not elaborated, or seems ambiguous.

In the Scriptures we are constantly bidden not to fear. Christ often said to his disciples: Don't be afraid. We are not to fear what man can do to us, since the Lord is on our side. If God is our refuge then we shall not fear, though the earth should tremble about us, and the hills be cast into the depths of the seas. The Psalmist speaks of God as having delivered him from all his fears; and the New Testament speaks of Jesus's having become a sharer in our flesh and blood so that he might deliver them who through all their lifetime, through fear of death, were subject to bondage. It is said again, that God has not given us the spirit of fear to bring us into bondage; and it is perfect love which casteth out fear.

Yet at the same time we are bidden to fear God. 'The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom' is quoted over and over again. And it does not appear to mean that fear is only the beginning of wisdom, which greater wisdom would get rid of. For in Ecclesiasticus there is such praise of the fear of God that it is said to be both the fullness and the crown of wisdom. This is not only Old Testament teaching. In the New Testament we are bidden to fear God who can cast us into Gehenna. 'Yea I say unto you', says Christ, 'fear him.' Again we are bidden to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; we are told not to be high-minded, but to fear; and we are to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. It is in knowing the fear of God that we persuade men.

Something may explain this apparent contradiction in that both the Hebrew and the Greek tongues have many words for 'fear', while we have only one. The 'fear' of God, for instance, may perhaps be better translated by 'reverence'. It is well to have something that we surround in our minds with care; such as not using the name of God in vain, not making it the subject of jokes; but regarding God as so just, holy, and mighty that we must be careful never to offend him by irreverence or over-familiarity; and this especially as he always sees us, is ever present, and is one from whom we can never hide, or whom we cannot attempt to deceive.

If we feared God rightly, perhaps, we should fear nothing else. It is well thus to fear God because we know that he will certainly punish all sin and every wrong done. But this fear, which theologians call servile fear, though perhaps it may make us halt over the temptation to commit some sins, will never take us very far; and indeed is not true religion at all. For if we abstained from evil only because we thought God could punish us for it, if we ever doubted this, then we should give way to all kinds of sin and wickedness. Things are not wicked just because God has given us commandments against them; but because they are evil in themselves, and will only bring disaster upon us anyhow. But there is what is called 'filial fear'; which is rather the fear we have of losing our heavenly Father's favour, or the grace of his presence. There is what might be called 'saintly fear'; which is to abstain from all sin because God is so good, and we love his goodness; so holy that we cannot see him unless we are holy too; and not to see him would be a dreadful deprivation. At any rate we must not be so afraid of God that we fear to come near to him; for it is only he who is able to save us from all our fears.

All this, however, tells us rather what we are not to fear; but hardly how we are to get rid of our fears. Some of us seem to have been born with a nervous disposition; we are afraid and fearful by nature. This is a temperament which we can use for our good, and even to increase our success. Reasonable fear will make us take more care about anything we have to do; whereas others without such fear may never do anything so well, just because they are sure that they can do it with ease. It is well so to fear sin that we take care lest we fall in temptation, just through thinking that we could never fall into the sins which we condemn in others. 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' Even better, we should have such a hatred of sin that we take care never to go down any road that might lead us into sin; check the thoughts that can rise in all of us, not only against chastity, but against charity. It would be well not to imagine things done against us or dwell on real wrongs, or we may develop persecution mania, or get into the habit of thinking that no one cares for us. We know that God cares, and far beyond what anyone could. We may fear enough to take care against accidents, or disease; but not so much as to get too afraid of what may happen to us. It is one thing to take care before crossing the road, another to be so careful that we are afraid to cross at all.

Cardinal Bona in his *Guide to Eternity* recommends a good device for those who are full of fear as to what may happen to them. 'He that would deliver himself from the tyranny of fear, let him take it for granted, that what he fears will come to pass; and then let him enter into a computation upon the whole matter. Upon this deliberation, he will certainly find that the things he fears are nothing so terrible in themselves as in a false opinion of them.' If the worst happens, there will always be something left to us: the presence of God and the friendship of Christ and the comfort of the Holy Spirit. If they are estimated as real riches they will always be available. There was once a man who feared that he would come at last to the gutter, and be left without provision or friends to help. He made bare his fears to Christ, and received the reply: 'Don't be afraid. I am used to the gutter.' For there is an experience of God which can lift above all evils. Cultivate the presence of God when you are free to do so, and it will prove enough whatever betide. He has said: 'I will never, never leave you, and I will never, never forsake you.'

Sometimes people are very afraid of failing in some task that they have undertaken. But if the task is committed to them by God, he will provide the strength and wisdom. In fact, fear of our ability will make us have all the more recourse to God; for our sufficiency is of God, said even the Apostle Paul. If we do fail in the eyes of others, he will not judge us by our attainments, so much as by the purity of our aims. Remember Newman; he has been called the Great Failure, but his failures have encouraged more than the easy success of many others.

Some people are afflicted with what is called an 'inferiority complex', which keeps them always aware of their failings, or of not being wanted, or thought much of. This is often nothing but inverted pride. It is what they want to be, or think they are, or ought to be reckoned or noticed, that is set up against their position, and it is this that makes them feel themselves incompetent or a failure. Humility would deliver them from this unhappy self-estimate. Without God we are nothing, and we can do nothing apart from Christ. This should compel us to look to God for help and to Christ for grace all the more; when we might accomplish much, or at least find out what we could do; and there is always something everyone can do if he does not aim too high or think too highly of himself. It was the man in the parable that had only

one talent who hid it in the ground. His master accused him of being insincere; for if he knew he was a hard master he should all the more have put it to a good use, so that he would have gained increase and thus earned praise from his master.

We may well fear that we shall prove unfaithful, lose our faith, or spoil our character, by some stupid choice or gradual incursion of sin; but probably more that we shall be condemned by others. For with the Lord there is mercy and with him is plenteous forgiveness. And even so it is all the more reason to take special care of the beginning of sin or weakness.

It is perfect love that can at last cast out all fear; for if we only love Jesus Christ for what he is, and love what he loves; if we correspond with the grace he offers, and if we meditate much upon his goodness, and on the help he promises, we shall fear the less. If we doubt the perfection of our love for him, as well we may, we can at least remember that his love for us is perfect, and the assurance of his perfect love for us will save us from many a fear.

It is the fear of death that haunts some people, and is the hardest to get rid of. In a way this is a perfectly natural fear; for death is something that is so unnatural that it ought never to have happened to man, who was created for immortality. Death is moreover something full of the unknown, and it may be this that terrifies. How death will come to us we do not know; and so fear the nature of its onset. But it may be sudden or it may come only when we have grown unconscious. There may be nothing to fear in the business of dying, because we may know nothing about it. We may of course fear long-drawn-out pain and growing weakness, and, at last, what has been so often described as the agony of dissolution, the horror of parting with life and the inevitable loneliness of our condition; because no one can help us, since no one has been through the experience himself before. Yet a great physician declared that he had seen many hundreds die, but had seen very few who were not glad to lay down the burden of their weakness and pain and so passed away as gladly as if they were falling asleep. A priest who had been so near death that his vestments had been brought out for his final clothing, and unexpectedly recovered, told a friend what he had experienced. He said that he had no vision of what was beyond the veil, nor had he seen any face, but he was quite unafraid because something

seemed to wrap him round with assuring calm and comfort. Many others, and sometimes with no great reputation for piety while they were well, have declared when dying that they had seen a vision of their friends, or angels, or even Jesus, come to welcome them. Pope Innocent III declared that every soul before it dies sees Christ crucified for him. And we can remember Christ's own words; that it would not be merely natural causes or any dark angel of death that will carry us off, but to those who are his, he has declared, 'If I go away I will come again and receive you unto myself.' It is he whom we shall all have to face at the last: our Friend, our Saviour and our Beloved Redeemer who loved us enough to die for us. Just the glory of his face, and then to be gathered to his arms.

But that is just where fear comes in again, and it is the final fear which nothing can entirely remove. Will Christ be willing to receive us at the last? Can we be sure that he will recognize us as his own? However devout we may have been, and however often we may have felt him to be near and smiling upon us, we cannot forget the awful warnings he gave to some who would claim that they had been so intimate with him on earth, that they had listened to him teaching in their streets, and had eaten and drunk with him (which looks very like good Catholics who have listened to sermons and gone to retreats, and have often received Holy Communion); and yet he declares he will say to some of these: 'I never knew you'.

For despite some who have claimed to be saved for ever, or because of their belief in Christ and some actual experience of salvation believe themselves safe, it is Catholic teaching that, apart from a special revelation, which has been given to very few, there is no final assurance of salvation. Indeed, some great saints have not only had no such assurance, but, on the contrary, have seemed to despair of their final salvation. And some lesser souls have been sure that they are already lost. What could relieve such of their unhappy fears or conditions? There may be something pathological about such fears which a skilled director might have dispelled. But it can also be counselled, with St Peter, that we should 'give all diligence to make our calling and election sure'; and if it is only the Vulgate that adds, we should do this by good works, it is good advice. Then we can take care to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned. For it was just for

the neglect of doing these things, and so having failed to discern Christ in his poor and needy, that he condemned some to the everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels.

It can be said, objectively, that when all this has been done, and all precautions taken, it is rather for those who have despaired, because they know what is demanded by holiness even to see the Lord, than for those who are confident about their salvation, that we may feel most assured.

At least we can commend to all such that there is a half-way house between confidence and despair; namely, hope; and with that we must be content. It is the merciful Lord who will judge us, and we trust solely in his atoning love; and unless we have wilfully deceived ourselves, we can hope that the sight of Christ crucified for us, but now glorified, will awaken in us such penitence and trust that although we shall see him, not as we have imagined, but as he is, then we shall not dread him so much as to flee from him, but desire him so much as to fly 'to the dear feet of Emmanuel', and pray to be made like him, even if we are only to lie at his feet, 'consumed, yet quickened by the glance of God'.

John Donne could write:

I have a fear of fear, that when I've spun
 My last thread I shall perish on the shore.
 But swear by Thyself, that at my death Thy Son
 Shall shine, as he shines now and heretofore;
 And having done that, Thou hast done:
 I fear no more.

Christ is always the same, yesterday, today and for ever, and will fulfil his promise that 'he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out'.

Or, if as some good Catholics are accustomed to do, they fear they may have to undergo some long term in purgatory before they are fit to go to live with Christ in heaven; then why do they not take pains more to make their penitence deep and show their love more real? For purgatory is only for deficiencies in penitence for our sins and love for God; and especially seeing that it has been said that one act of contrition would take anyone right through purgatory altogether. Surely if we fear above all things being absent from Christ, and being so ashamed of not loving him enough, our humility would be better expressed, in the words of Christina Rossetti:

Give me the lowest place: not that I dare
 Ask for that lowest place; but Thou hast died
 That I might live and share
 The glory by Thy side.

Give me the lowest place; and if for me
 That lowest place too high, make one more low
 Where I may sit and see
 My God, and love Thee so.



THE MASS AND OUR DAILY LIVES

DENIS FORBES

LIVING, as many Catholics today are forced to do, in what might almost be called a pagan atmosphere, it is not perhaps surprising to find that some awkward paradoxes have grown to become quietly accepted. One such detail of Catholic life, which for many people goes unnoticed, is the fact that the sacrifice of the Mass has come to mean little or nothing in relation to our everyday lives. There is a terrifying separation between ourselves, our actions, and the source of all aid and strength, the Mass. For a large number of Catholics, Sunday is the only day of the week when they can hear Mass. For six other days they must live and work in machine-shops and offices where often Christian ideals are openly considered weak, insufficient and out-dated. Often Catholics must experience that sinking feeling when the conversation focuses on some one of their beliefs and they hear the comments and jibes of people who very often know little about what they are criticizing. At these times, most Catholics must feel the need for some source of strength and encouragement to help carry them through. Yet they will look usually to every other source except the one instituted for this very purpose—the Mass.

The effect of a highly mechanized and scientific economy upon the lives of ordinary working people is to dull and deaden their appreciation of the simple and therefore beautiful things God has given to the world. There is little time to spare for the appreciation