

there must be a correlation of at least three kinds of endeavour—that which aims at the improvement of the organism or breed (Eugenics), that which concerns itself with the amelioration of the environment (Eutopias or Euthenics), and that which takes to do with the betterment of functions, especially occupations (Eutechnics).

The inheritance is the seed-corn; 'nurture' in the widest sense is the soil and the sunshine, the wind and the rain. Nurture can create nothing, but without it nothing can develop aright. We cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, but we may trade with our talent so that it become five, or perhaps even ten talents.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF ROMANS.

ROMANS XI. 33.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past tracing out!

1. In these words the Apostle, carried along by the force of the survey which he has been taking of God's purposes and manifestations of grace, expresses the adoration, both confident and joyful, which it awakened. It was not some single aspect of the subject, not even one of the great conclusions to which it led, that produced this exaltation of spirit, but rather the total impression made upon him as he reviewed the manifold wisdom of God in creation, providence, and grace.

2. There is an intensely modern note in the passage. It shows the workings of a mind which felt as we do 'the burden of the mystery of all this unintelligible world,' and yet found rest in the intuitions of faith. That is a characteristic of the sacred writers. The Bible is never aloof from the conflicts of man's soul; never delivers its revelations as occult oracles which demand a blind acceptance. As it spoke to men in ancient time by living words which found an echo in their hearts, so in its later unfoldings of God's will it keeps itself in close touch with man's spirit, and, as in our text, is adapted to the movements of thought and the new problems which face us to-day. And when in the centuries to come science shall have made surprising discoveries far in advance of anything now attained, and the developments of Providence in the history of mankind shall have introduced new wonders in God's ways, the old words of the Bible will have lost none of their significance, but will only have received fresh and more forcible illustration: 'O the depth of the riches both of the

wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past tracing out!'

I.

THE RICHES OF GOD'S GRACE AND WISDOM.

The Apostle has already expounded God's plan and method of grace, and has traced its working in the call of Abraham, and the opening of the door to the Gentiles. It is the greatness of the grace and wisdom revealed in the Divine dispensations that now fills his mind. But expression fails him; for words are always too poor to convey our deeper thoughts and emotions; there is in them an incommunicable element which baffles all our efforts at uttering it. We are obliged to fall back upon imagery, using the things of earth and sky as symbols of the ineffable and unseen.

1. The riches of God's grace and wisdom are seen in *the obstacles which had to be overcome in effecting man's redemption*. These obstacles are only partly known to us. Some are hinted at in Scripture, but nowhere fully unfolded. It is only by the use of a reverent imagination that we can obtain insight into them, or even discover them. But that man's sin created what, speaking after the manner of men, constituted a great problem, is sufficiently obvious. Sin had to be condemned, and yet the sinner forgiven and saved. The interests of righteousness affecting both God and man had to be maintained, and yet love accomplish its perfect work. God's own nature had to be satisfied—a thought which brings us up to the deepest mystery. But these and all other difficulties were overcome, and the Cross of Jesus Christ at once reveals the freeness of God's mercy, and asserts the claims of the Divine Law in a way which has

deepened man's sense of sin, fostered his aspirations after spiritual attainments, and bound him with gold chains about the feet of God.

I have now preached for forty-three years and have been a professor of theology for more than twenty, and I find every year how much grander the Gospel of the grace of God becomes, and how much deeper, vaster, and more unsearchable the religion of Christ which it is the function of theology to explore.¹

2. The riches of God's grace and wisdom are seen in *the forbearance of God with man's perversity*. It might have been thought that overtures by God to sinful men would not only be met with instant response, but would be received with inexpressible gratitude. But nothing has been more astonishing than man's persistent revolt from God. Wisdom has warned and love has entreated in vain. The gospel, in spite of its impressive message, its self-evident truth, and its gracious invitations, has been treated with indifference by the vast majority of each succeeding age. Yet God has not withdrawn His gospel; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

I believe that love and righteousness and justice in God mean exactly the same thing, namely, a desire to bring His whole moral creation into a participation of His own character and His own blessedness. He has made us capable of this, and He will not cease from using the best means for accomplishing it in us all. When I think of God making a creature of such capacities, it seems to me almost blasphemous to suppose that He will throw it from Him into everlasting darkness because it has resisted His gracious purposes towards it for the natural period of human life. No, He who waited so long for the formation of a piece of old red sandstone will surely wait with much long-suffering for the perfecting of a human spirit.²

3. The riches of God's grace and wisdom are seen in what have been called *the surprises of history*. Many of these occurred in the history of Israel, the exodus from Egypt, the entrance upon Canaan, the return from the Babylonian exile. Each of these was the effectual working of God on their behalf, and secured results which pointed forward to the establishment and extension of Christ's Kingdom.

God's dealings with those nations where the Christian Church has been planted have been signalized by equal manifestations of His interposing mercy. In periods of depression and even of unfaithfulness God's set time for favouring her has

¹ Principal Cairns, in *Life*, 749.

² *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, ii, 242.

come, and she has been started upon a new epoch of prosperity and progress.

About four hundred years after Jesus Christ was here on earth the Goths burst down upon ancient Rome, and every one thought that the end of the world had come, that all civilization was swept away. But what happened? The little despised Christian Church rose to the occasion and converted the conquerors of Rome. The vigorous life of Christian Europe is due to the conversion of the Goths, after they had burst upon Rome and swept away civilization. What was regarded as a wholesale calamity was a blessing in disguise, and Europe is richer to-day for the influx of the wild tribes of the north.

Take another surprise of history. I dare say I am speaking to many who used to come and argue with me in Bethnal Green or Victoria Park. If so, there are some here who want convincing proof that there is a wise and righteous God. Sometimes we think it does not look as if there was. But is it not a matter of history that 'righteousness exalteth a nation'? Why is it that every nation that has been righteous and kept its family life pure, that has looked after its children, that has not become luxurious and effete, that has retained the simple virtues of courage, patriotism, and self-reliance, has remained, whilst those which have become corrupt and have misused marriage have gone down? As Keble says in the *Christian Year*:

One by one
They tower and they are gone,
Yet in the Prophet's soul the dreams of avarice stay.

Why should they do so unless behind history is a righteous and wise God, who, though He hides Himself, slowly works out His righteous purpose in the world.³

4. May we not also find examples of the riches of God's grace and wisdom in *the lives of His servants*? Every biography of good men is a record, full of instruction, of God's overruling Providence. He leads us, even the humblest of us who love His name, by paths that we had not known, and makes darkness light before us, and crooked places straight. Often by simple and unexpected ways God appears for us in some extremity, and out of evil educes good.

That is a striking story which is told of Francis Nola, who lived in the early days of Christianity when persecution was rampant. In consequence of his piety and devotion the attention of the authorities was directed to him, and they took steps for his arrest and imprisonment. But he escaped out of their hands, and finding himself in a wild district with rocks and caves, sought shelter in one of them, and, having commended himself to God, awaited the issue. By and by a spider began to weave its web across the mouth of the cave. Nola watched it with much interest as it performed its task, until it had brought the web to perfection. It was that web which saved his life; for his pursuers on reaching the spot,

³ A. F. Winnington Ingram, *The Call of the Father*, 42.

concluding from the web that Nola could not be inside, passed the place, and pursued their search elsewhere. Afterwards Nola, speaking of the event, said, 'If God be for us, a spider's web is strong as iron gates and castle walls.'¹

II.

THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S WORKINGS.

1. All that we see with our senses comprehends a boundary which is as nothing compared with that which lies beyond. Even the wide sweep of the telescope bringing within the range of our vision millions of stars and planets revolving in illimitable space, does but touch the skirts of God's universe. In the same way the revelation of God's wisdom in providence and redemption gives us only a glimpse into the riches of the grace embodied in Christ Jesus our Lord. We see God's grace in Christ, and adore it, but what we do not see far exceeds it. There are depths we can never explore. The hidden part of God's ways are past tracing out. And yet we—His children—have thought to fathom the ways and wisdom of God by our ways and our wisdom, thinking that our little minds could encompass and set bounds to the Infinite Mind. Can the ant crawl up into the brain of man to see man's world as man sees it? Yet has man, whose whole world is, in the eyes of God, but as one ant in a universe, thought to creep into God's brain, to think as He thinks, to see as He sees, and to judge the Omnipotent by man's little laws.

When we come to such questions as 'How do you explain the Jamaica earthquake?' or 'What are you to say when the young wife loses her life in child-birth?' I throw myself back on the wisdom of God, which has been shown in history, in nature, and in human nature. I do not pretend to explain everything. Christ said, 'I have many things to tell you, but ye cannot bear them now.' I see that it is not a good thing to erect buildings in an earthquake zone; that it may be best for us to suffer cholera until we can find out the cure; that not to let fire burn would injure us more than the carrying out of natural law; that to interfere with the law of gravitation to stop an accident would be breaking down the laws of God; but I do not pretend to understand why any particular person at any particular time is taken away. I fling myself on the wisdom of God. There are a place and a work for them in the other world, and God knows why they have gone at that particular time.²

2. Our proper attitude to these deep things of God should be that of reverent and inquiring faith. We speak sometimes of the 'wonders of the cross,'

¹ S. G. Woodrow.

² A. F. Winnington Ingram, *The Call of the Father*, 47.

and the sentiment of wonder well becomes us. The Bible uniformly presents Divine truths so as to awaken man's wonder, lifting the veil but for a moment, and then leaving us to imagine what is on the other side; and in its records of the blessed life giving us glimpses of Him who is both human and Divine which only half-reveal Him to us. Its aim is, all through, to lead us to such subjects as the soul, and God, and the eternal world, and sin, the great mystery and root of mysteries, and the marvellous remedy which has been provided for it in the descent of the Divine nature to the human, that great mystery of godliness, 'God manifest in the flesh.' These are the subjects of never-dying interest round which the thoughts of man can never cease to revolve, because they touch his deepest nature and affect his everlasting destiny. If the 'powers of the world to come' have anything in them to excite wonder and awe, the Bible, beyond all other books, holds them in its hand.

The Bible is not a thing to be worshipped. A savage might bow down to a telescope, but an astronomer knows better. The way to know it is to use it. It is not to be looked at, but to look through. To bind a Bible beautifully, to lift it reverently, to speak of it with admiration, to guard it with all care, is not at all to the point. Look through it. Find God with it. See what God was to the men of the Bible, and then let Him be the same to you. See the proofs of His power, and prove that power for yourself in yourself. Search the Scriptures for the testimony of Jesus, and honour them by being an honour to the one they reveal.³

3. But though God's judgments and ways are beyond our power of understanding, let us not forget that they are the outcome of His infinite wisdom and knowledge. Resting in that assurance we shall not stumble at His ways; but, our trust in God gaining ever new strength, we shall go bravely forward to meet whatever lies before us.

The Anniversary Address of the President of the Geological Society of London (Professor William Whitehead Watts), nearly two years ago, was upon the 'Coal Supply of Britain.' Reference was made to the Royal Commissions of 1866 and of 1901. These both show that the problem is becoming very serious for the future of the country. In 1901 it was estimated that there are one hundred thousand millions of tons in 'proved' fields, and forty thousand millions in 'unproved' fields. According to different tables prepared giving the estimated increased consumption of coal, through the future years, the supply will probably be exhausted between 2130 and 2200 A.D.

Professor Watts said: 'We are threatened with the exhaustion of our most valuable resources within a period

³ M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 37.

which may be two centuries or three, according to the rate at which the demand for coal happens to increase in the future. There is a possibility that our stock may be larger than we anticipate. . . . The geologist's share of the problem is to ascertain whether or no we possess other supplies of workable coal not included in the estimate of the Commissioners.¹

Every thoughtful man sees the seriousness of the problem, and yet there may be huge deposits still undiscovered. If all the researches of modern science have not penetrated the secret supplies of such a common thing entering into the services of our work-a-day life, if even here we see life's mysteries, then when we come to think of life in other phases, and of our relationship to the world of nature, and to God, we can only exclaim—

'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past tracing out!'²

Jean Paul Richter says: 'God called up from dreams a man into the vestibule of heaven, saying, "Come thou hither, and see the glory of My house." And to the servants that stood around His throne He said, "Take him and undress him from his robes of flesh; cleanse his vision, and put a new breath into his nostrils; arm him with wings for flight, only touch not with any change his human heart—the heart that weeps and trembles." It was done, and with a mighty angel for his guide, the man stood ready for his infinite

¹ Eric M. Ingamells.

voyage; and from the terraces of heaven, without sound or farewell, they wheeled away into endless space. Then came eternities of twilight that revealed, but were not revealed. To the right hand and to the left, toward mighty constellations, depth was swallowed up in height unsurmountable, height was swallowed up in depth unfathomable. Suddenly, as thus they rode from infinite to infinite; suddenly, as they tilted over abyssal worlds, a mighty cry arose—that systems more mysterious, worlds more billowy, other heights and other depths were nearing at hand. Then the man sighed, stopped, shuddered, and wept. His overladen heart uttered itself in tears; and he said, "Angel, I will go no farther. For the spirit of man aches under this infinity. Insufferable is the glory of God's house. Let me lie down in the grave, that I may find rest from the persecutions of the infinite; for end I see there is none." And from all the listening stars that shone around issued one choral chant, "Even so it is: Angel, thou knowest that it is: end there is none that ever yet we heard of." The Angel demanded: "And is this the sorrow that kills you?" But his voice answered that he might answer himself. Then the Angel threw up his glorious hands to the heaven of heavens, saying, "End is there none to the universe of God. Lo! also there is no beginning."

Mere infinity frightens the spirit; it is only from the teachings of revelation, and Christ as the manifested wisdom, power, and love of God, that the infinity of the Divine Being becomes a friend and not a fear to man.²

² C. Bentley Jutson.

The Revision of the Prayer-Book Psalter.

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MOST of those who have the interest of the Church of England at heart will have rejoiced to hear that the Archbishop of Canterbury has promised to appoint a committee to revise the Prayer-Book Psalter. But doubtless there will be a great difference of opinion as to the extent and the spirit in which the work should be carried out. Some, like the Bishop of Oxford, will desire to have corrected only such passages as can hardly in honesty be described otherwise than as nonsensical. They would fear to part with language which, partly from familiarity, partly from its real beauty, has for centuries become sanctified as the expression of spiritual devotion. Others would go to the opposite extreme and desire to have a revision as thorough and exact as scholarship can make it. These, of course, would be actuated mainly by a desire for truth and honesty. They would very naturally urge that Christian Churchmen use these

Psalms under the impression that they represent in English dress what the Hebrew prophets wrote, and that the P.V. is from this point of view often inaccurate and misleading. The question then arises, Is it possible to effect a compromise between these two points of view; in a word, to do justice to both? We believe it is. Broadly speaking, the principle upon which the committee, I believe, should go, should be to correct all serious mistakes of translation, while conserving, so far as possible, the familiar language of the Prayer Book. But even if they were so far agreed, such a general principle might be very differently interpreted by different members of the committee. I venture, therefore, as an old student of the Psalter, to make a few suggestions under different heads as to the way in which this delicate task might be approached. I will only add that for convenience' sake I have taken my examples chiefly