

## CHURCH THOUGHTS BY A LAYMAN.

## AN EASTER MEDITATION.

AS year by year passes and is absorbed into eternity as a rivulet ends its brief course in the ocean, one family after another is brought to the glory of Easter-tide with hearts bowed heavily by the gloom of recent bereavement. While for our loved and sainted ones we mourn, not as those without hope of heavenly re-union, we mourn still with anguish oftentimes keener than those who have not the consolations of Christian faith, nor the fortitude that the Divine Comforter imports.

The very elevation imparted by religion to social life, the softening of the heart without which piety is pretence, the breaking down of self indulgence by broadening our sympathies, the refining of our intellectual conceptions by perpetual contact with Divine teaching, all these influences leave humanity under the Gospel more capable of acute suffering from the afflictions of time and sense, than those whose lives revolve in the darker and narrower circle of Nature alone. A Christianity without an Easter-tide would indeed leave us of all beings the most miserable when stricken by the sorrows of bereavement. Our Father, the God of Love, the Comforter divine, the Christ who shared our infirmities, were there no resurrection of the dead, would constitute a Trinity of Molochs, hateful by their cruelty unspeakable. Revelation in opening out vistas of the eternal Paradise does no more than express and give testimony to a fact which is necessarily involved in the very conception of a God worthy the loving adoration of mankind. That men from amidst the darkness of paganism have projected this life in one form or other beyond the grave, merely evidences the universality of religious yearnings that were implanted when in His own image man was made by the Eternal. But in all these anticipations there was nothing to touch the heart into passionate longings for the blessedness of the future after life's fitful fever ceased, such as those which in all ages have thrilled souls, who by faith have caught glimpses of the glory to be revealed and given them, to know something of St Paul's exaltation, of which he said "whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell." Much less was there ought to give the purification of a new life to the moral nature by the seeds of immortality germinating as a promise and witness of the divine transformation of fallen man again into the image of God.

The Resurrection of Jesus was not the rising of a *soul* but of a human *body*, to eternalize the story of the Resurrection by denying this is not only rankest heresy but most miserable folly. If Jesus died not, as some one argued, then the whole gospel narrative is a mere romance and our Saviour on such a theory was a wicked imposter. So also if his body rose not, revived. If that is not true the Gospels and Christianity are instruments of Satan in deluding mankind. There is more involved in this bodily Resurrection than some fancy who regard religion as merely spiritual. The

*body* was the object crucified, the *body* was the object glorified in and by Resurrection. The very pith and essence of Christian teaching are destroyed by breaking the continuity of these facts. The sacrifice of a Will was not the sacrifice of a man, neither was the Resurrection of a spirit the rising again of a man. As a living divine says; "He takes upon Him our flesh which had been our ruin thro' its enticing pleasures, to be turned to our salvation by its pains. Through the body we know what pain is, in the body's ruin we know now what the cause of death signifies. It is this bodily pain, this bodily death, which He our Lord will endure, that those very pains which now devour us with a sense of their justice may become the full of sacrifice, the proof of fealty, the tokens of victory, the symbols of our repose in God, the holy sacraments of a restored Communion, of a recovered worship, of an unending thanksgiving. The body is once more the instrument of praise. That which was the fuel of wrath is itself—that very body and no other—transformed into the fuel of love."

If the Resurrection of Jesus' body was the sequel of His bodily crucifixion, so also will be our body's Resurrection if we be bodily crucified with Christ—crucified, that is in all phases of our mortal life that offend against Him into whose very Body we by Baptism are engrafted, and whose very life we share through the Sacrament whereby he feeds his flock. It may seem paradoxical but it is none the less true that modern Christians are in a certain sense too exclusively spiritual. They have commenced, and in some cases gone very far indeed, in separating the life of the body from Christ, while they imagine their souls to be in close communion with Him. Wretched delusion! It must vanish like a foul fog before the wind and sun, if the glory of Easter-tide teaching is realised. The soul of Christ died not, but now is Christ risen from the dead, the type of that redemptive life given to the body while mortal as a preparation for the glory that shall in it be revealed when it passes on to enjoy the eternal presence of Him who for evermore stands in highest Heaven, a lamb with wounded body, a lamb as it had been slain.

With Him are our beloved dead, with Him ere many Easter's come and go may it be ours to enter into the joy of eternal re-union in bliss with Jesus, and His, and ours.

## THE NEW REREDOS AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.

WHEN we first saw in a newspaper that the new reredos at St. Paul's Cathedral, London, had cost over \$100,000, we felt indignant at such waste over an ornament when the money was needed for missions. But it has been officially explained that the authorities have in hand a large fund given for the express and only purpose of decorating this Cathedral, and the reredos *simply took an accumulation of interest earned by this ornament fund*. Thus the reredos cost not a cent of money that could have been given to missions

without committing a fraudulent breach of trust. Our friends who have indulged in extravagant denunciations of the cost of the reredos should in all fairness publish this explanation. But those whose "reverence and affection" for the Church of England finds eloquent expressions at synod deputations, get hold of a fact like the cost of this magnificent reredos, and are still using it with great delight as a weapon for attacking the Church they, *in words*, so revere and love. There is an aspect of expenditure on works of this class which apologises for what at a superficial view seems waste. The reredos represents, by its total cost, over \$100,000, *money spent in wages*, paid to a number of laborers and artists, from the rough quarryman who dug the marble, the sailors who carried it from port to port, the dock laborers who handled it on arrival, the carters who bore it to the artists' studio, up to the refined and gifted designer and the skilled sculptors, by whom it was wrought from rough blocks of marble into a great work of art. The whole cost of the ornament has gone into the pockets of those who by this money have been enabled to provide for their families and meet higher calls. *Not a cent has been wasted, the money is all now in circulation* instead of being, as it was before the reredos was constructed, locked up in a bank. How a mercantile community whose every crumb of bread and butter would be swept away if the notions prevailed on which objections to the new reredos are based, can approve of such objections is not easy to understand. There have been exceptions taken to this work because of its containing figures and symbolic groups which rude, illiterate people, to whom all art is as mysterious as it is to oxen, fancy has some occult meaning of a Romanising character. Wisdom is justified of her children, and of and by them only. Men who are blind artistically should leave works of art severely alone, as their criticisms are merely a mode of manifesting their ignorance and callosity of soul. Sculpture is as free from any proselytising power as music. Pope's couplet expresses this freedom of art from any doctrinal significance well:

"On her white breast a shining cross she wore,  
That Jews might kiss and infidels adore."

We find Protestants of the most bigoted type using hymn tunes in worship that were composed to suit words expressing the worst phases of Popish superstition. Even love songs are taken for the sanctuary, a notable instance being the air to "Drink to me, &c.," which is commonly used for the hymn "There is a land of pure delight." Men can read a meaning into anything, just as Dick Whittington heard "Turn again Whittington," in the chime of Bow Bells. Those who see Popery in a group of marble statues see only their own perverse and diseased fancies projected into forms that the healthy eye regards utterly apart from any doctrinal aspect. They, too, who make sculpture or painting to be so potent an influence are extremely inconsistent. They belong to the "whitewash" school who

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