

conceal the human appearance of the living creatures. On that one point Ezekiel is clear, though so obscure on all other points. This is what he says: "Out of the midst thereof"—that is, out of the midst of the fire—"came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man."

So the human form was there, easily and instantly recognized, notwithstanding all the surrounding, glorious obscurity. Does it not begin to appear that this human type is the ideal type, even among the highest of beings? There may be thrones, dominions, principalities and powers; and there may be striking features peculiar to each order; yet, the human may be the ideal form among them all.

I would add here the fact that the Son of God appeared in human form. There may be more in this than at the first glance appears. It may be that, as in the supposed case of angels, Jesus took the human form, because it was the necessary law of His being to take this special form, if He would transmute Himself into flesh at all. There may be such a close and essential relation between God and man, that the Godhead must take the human form, if He takes visible form at all. There may be in God potential manhood, expressing itself at times in human form.

I am touching reverently here on a great mystery; and I shall not follow it into further detail; I would merely notice the fact that the Son of Man expressed Himself in this way before the time, as well as at the time of His Incarnation. See how often He so appeared of old. You recall the case of that Man who wrestled with Jacob till the dawning of the day. Especially notice that wonderful appearance in the furnace of fire, when the astonished King saw four men walking through the flames unhurt; "and the form of the fourth," said he, "is like the Son of God."

Take along with this pre-incarnate appearances the fact that Jesus has the human form now in Heaven. In Apocalyptic vision John saw Him glorified. And so dazzling was the sight of His glory that John fell at His feet as dead. Yes, but singular to say, the manhood of Jesus was instantly discerned, notwithstanding all His superhuman glory. "I saw One," says John, "like the Son of Man." Yes; the human identity was there; Jesus is man forevermore. Have we not there a suggestion of a closer essential unity between the divine and the human than has usually been recognized?

But if God is so essentially identified with our humanity as I incline to believe, how does this idea comport with his relation to other worlds, and other supposed races of beings to whom we referred at an earlier stage. Does He not seem to make far too much of this little world of ours, and this little insignificant race?

No; the beauty of the theory is that it fits all races, and all worlds. If the human form is the typical form everywhere, that fact brings God into the same essential relation with all worlds as with our own. Every inhabitant of heaven, from whatever world he comes, will see in Jesus the glorified type of his own race. And so, this idea of the human form being the universal form, not only brings God into essential relation with ourselves, but it creates a bond of unity and brotherhood between ourselves and the dwellers in all other spheres, however widely soever those worlds may be scattered through universal space.

One thought I will add here, namely, that the human form is the most beautiful we have ever seen, or can conceive. So often, alas, we see this human body disfigured by toil, and sin, and care, that we forget how beautiful it is in its perfect state. But sometimes—as if to remind us of the Paradise we have lost, and the better Paradise we may regain—we do meet with a face and form of almost heavenly beauty, and when we do meet with such a face and form we feel that we have but one word to express our admiration of it; we say it is divine.

So we have occasionally a hint of the human face divine, and the human form divine. Such a vision of perfect form in its radiant, spiritual beauty, draws from us an involuntary sigh for the beautiful, better land. And there is a better land where the human form will attain its perfection of strength that shall never grow weary with service, and beauty that shall never grow dim with years.

Does Everything Happen for the Best?

It sounds pious to say that everything happens for the best. But it is not scriptural, and it is not true. Many things happen because of sin, and sin is never for the best. Paul says that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. But we are not therefore to suppose that God was dependent on sin for the manifestation of his grace. Of course nothing ever happens that defeats God's ultimate purposes. God is able to overrule all evil and accident to his own gracious designs. But evil is evil, and God does not cause it, or desire it, or need it.

Because of the rascality of a brother, a gentleman lost his money, and failed in business. That misfortune turned his attention to religious work, and he became a most devoted lay evangelist. He always said that his loss of money was really a blessing. But the wickedness of the brother was not a part of God's plan. Indeed that brother degenerated and lived an unblest life.

There are a great many bad things in this world for which God is not responsible, and which he does not desire. And in the wake of wickedness, partly connected with it oftentimes, is much sadness and sorrow. We must not ascribe all these calamities to God, and say, "Everything happens for the best." The Scripture does not say that all things are good, but that all things work together for good to them that love God. The world is not as God would have it. But God's power is such that he can bring his people to their highest development in the world as it is.

Leaving aside the mystery of the origin of suffering and evil, it is evident that they become servants in the hand of God for our moral training. What kind of a man could be produced in this way; let him have everything that he desires, let him succeed in all his undertakings, let people fulfil all their engagements with him, let him never suffer accident, never be disappointed, never be misunderstood, never be sick, never be wearied, never be overworked? It is evident that no man could be so shielded and pampered without becoming selfish, self-sufficient, unsympathetic, overbearing. It is the veriest truism that men must fight, and suffer, and wait, in order to be strong.

But while we may readily admit the general proposition that certain trials are necessary for the development of character, we see so clearly how our particular vexings and annoyances could have been avoided,

that we often fail to apply the principle in our own lives. The trouble that came last week, we argue, was not a part of our Christian discipline, because it was caused by the foolishness of such a one and by the wickedness of that other one, and the accident which happened was due to purely natural causes.

Yet it is part of the essential experience of life to meet the foolishness and wickedness of men, and to live among material conditions. God may not directly cause them or bring them. We may not be able to trace them all to their beginnings, and see how all might have been different. But God will be in them all if we are willing that he shall be. This blessed assurance for the Christian is that all of them may be helpful, and none of them harmful, and that all things may work together for his good.

Therein is the distinction between fatalism and faith. Islam is submission to faith: God's will is inevitable; man can only bow to it, and hope in the divine mercy. But virile Christian faith is far different. Here is a world of mighty forces, in which a man must do his best. He must study and strive, he must adapt himself to the material conditions in which he finds himself, for his fortune will depend largely upon his own efforts. Here, too, is a world of persons endowed with moral responsibility, who act and react upon one another. And the Christian must meet his fellow-men in a thousand varying relations. But God is with him in the midst of all, transforming every evil into spiritual blessing, bringing good out of every accident trouble and irritation, using every circumstance and situation that comes in the complex play of things and persons for the furthering of his high design that we shall be conformed to the image of his Son.

This noble faith is wonderfully pictured in the Book of Revelation. Whatever may be the details of interpretation of that difficult writing, its main thought is clear and beautiful. On the earth are persecutions and calamities, war and pestilence. There is all manner of iniquity. God is not the cause of it, but strange powers of wickedness disobedient to his will are. The dwellers on earth in the midst of the awful perplexities cannot see any sign that God is caring for them. But every chapter reveals that God is on the throne, and the Lamb is with him. Love is at the heart of the universe. And that Love is omnipotent, and seeth the end from the beginning. At last the end is revealed. Every evil vanishes, and the saints who have come out of the tribulation are seen to have been purified in the process, while a new earth reveals God's power to bring out all things well.

Everything does not happen for the best, but out of everything that happens God will bring the best to the soul that is believing and responsive.—Sunday School Times.

Presbyterian missionaries report that in Japan, Buddhism is studying and adapting Christian methods, forming Young Men's Associations, establishing great schools, inviting Christians and even missionaries to take their place among the lecturers to the students. The Buddhists are hoping to capture the secret of the energy and the power of Christianity. When they have found that secret they will no longer be Buddhists but Christians.

The way to preserve the peace of the church is to preserve the purity of it.