

CREATION AND RE-CREATION

There are three great stages in the story of God's Creation. And there are three great stages in the re-creation of all things by Christ.

And the re-creation of all things by Christ is like the first creation of all things by God.

Obviously, because Christ was the Son of God.

WHEN God created all things in His Wisdom, we are introduced to His work in three stages because we cannot understand all the works of God at once. So God instructs us about these elemental things which happened before men existed on this world, and He tells us that in the beginning of His creation He created the good things, the basic things, the things which could, as it were, contain all the other things that He wanted to make. On the first day He created the Light, and on the second day He created the Heaven, and on the third day He created the Earth and the Sea and all the things which grow on the earth. All these things are the good things. God said so and it is so.

Then there was the second stage in God's creation. God could have left these things to grow; the seeds of life were in the earth. They were given on the third day and all seems to be complete; but it was not enough for God. More than the seeds of life were needed for them to prosper. It was not good enough that they should be just good. Things need more than the seeds of life if they are to live; they need the blessing of God, if they are to be fruitful. The work of the second three days was the work of blessing what was already good. On the first day God created light, but on the fourth day He made the stars which shine in the light. On the second day God created the heavens, but on the fifth day He made the birds which fly in the heavens. On the third day God created the sea and the land, but on the sixth day He made the animals

which walk on the land. On the sixth day, also, God created man; but man was different from all the rest, because he was made in the image and after the likeness of God. In this second stage of God's creation, we are introduced to the idea of the divine blessing of creation and particularly does God bless man because man in particular must be fruitful. The Word of God is to tell us later on that the work of man in this world is to bring forth fruit a hundredfold and in patience. When God surveyed His work after the first three days He saw that it was good; but it was not good enough. When God surveyed His work after the sixth day, He saw that it was very good. A work is not very good in God's sight unless it has His blessing. But now God had blessed the world, and in particular He had blessed man.

If God had not created man, it would not have been good enough. Because man alone of all creatures can return and give back to God. When our Lord healed ten lepers, only one returned to thank Him. Scripture gives us our Lord's answer: 'There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger.' We are not told any more about the way our Lord said this, but we can guess. Only man can thank God. That is the pathos of this story. We are told about Christ's walking on the waters, and we are sure that He did not do this for any gain to Himself. Those who saw Him wondered at Him, as they did when He stilled the tempest at sea. Jesus worked miracles for men. God in the beginning created for man. The world of Nature was made for men, and only when God created man did He regard His work as complete. Then only was it very good. We must not limit the designs of God by the necessities of our finite minds. But it seems to be true, that creation would have been incomplete if God had not created man. Man is the crown of God's visible creation and God blessed man.

Man was made in the image of God, and man desires to be like to God.

We have already seen something of what is meant by this idea of blessing. It might almost be defined as the imparting of a special goodness into things, whereby things will fulfil their expectations and their capabilities. An imparting of a special goodness into man whereby man may understand the universe in which he exists, and the God who is his maker. We must be careful in describing what we mean by blessing to guard against a possible confusion of thought. Blessing is not the same as magic. All primitive peoples believed that there were forces about in the world, some working for good, others for evil. Magic consists in knowing that things of themselves have powers of good and evil, which if you could know, you could defy the gods and use them for your own advantage. The magician was a man who could capture these forces by his touch or by his gesture. But blessing was not like that. Blessing always referred back to God; it was something to do with creation, an extension of creation as it were. It was God's conservation at work.

But blessing did not only pertain to God. Man also blessed things; he would bless his crops, and he would bless his sons and his daughters. And sometimes one man blessed one thing and another man blessed another, and the second prevailed over the first. This was because the second was also blessed by God. Thus we read concerning the blessing of Jacob, who evidently regarded God's blessing as having prevailed:

‘ Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee,
And by the Almighty who shall bless thee,
With blessings of Heaven above,
Blessings of the deep that coucheth beneath,
Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.
The blessings of thy father
Have prevailed over the blessings of my progenitors . . . ’

(*Gen.* 49, 25).

There is a double process in man's blessing of things. On the one hand, man wants to be an instrument in com-

municating God's blessings, but there is another aspect. Man does not only want to further God's work, to continue it in his own way, as it were; he also wants to turn back to God and bless God. Both these aspects are present in the Old Testament. How often do we read of the son getting his father's blessing; it was the accepted thing to do, it was even regarded as an evil omen if this blessing were not granted. We have only to recall the story of Jacob and Esau.

But also there is this other aspect which is also present. Man desires to bless God. What did this mean? In the concrete, it meant recognising God as the creator and the giver of all things. God was the giver of life itself, and so there arises in the mind the desire to recognise this gift. Life is a gift, life is a grace. We recognise this gift by thanking the giver, and so to bless God is to thank Him. We must not steal from God. Life belongs to God, we only have life because He gives it, and only as long as He gives it. So we bless God by our thanks. That is why in the New Testament the words for thanks and blessing are interchangeable, because we thank God when we bless Him. When man blesses God, blessing goes back to its source; it is part of the movement of all things back to God. When the angel Raphael made himself known to Tobias, the latter wanted to present the angel of God with some gifts in thanksgiving. But the angel answered: 'Bless ye the God of Heaven, give glory to Him in the sight of all that live, because He hath shown His mercy to you. For it is good to hide the secret of a king: but honourable to reveal and confess the works of God' (*Tobias*, 12, 6). This desire to thank God is a fundamental desire in unspoilt human nature; and the more a man possesses the grace of God, the more will he desire to bless his Creator.

Then there is the third stage in God's creation. This is the stage which God did not only bless but He also hallowed. The Sabbath Day was set apart as something holy,

dedicated to God and to His worship. All things can be blessed, but only certain things can be consecrated as the Sabbath was consecrated. What is the meaning of Scripture when it declares that God ceased from work on the Sabbath day? It is a strange use of language. Our Lord explains its meaning when He said: ' My Father worketh until now and I work ' (Jn. v, 17). God has stopped creating and conservation has begun. But not merely that. The work of God has begun too, and we have already seen what that work is. It is the work of God's Providence, particularly in respect of man, and that is what the Sabbath is for also. The Sabbath is created for man. It is the great opportunity for man to be able to speak with God his Maker. Just as all creation led up to the creation of man, so all creation is gathered up in man and given back to God on the Sabbath day. This is the greatest work because it is concerned with the salvation of man. A day when access to God was more possible than on other days, a day of prayer, a feast day, a day of great rejoicing.

It is concerned with that other great idea which runs all through the Bible, namely the transcendence of God. God is above this world of ours and of another order from this fleeting world of shadows, this unsubstantial world where all things pass away. And all creation shows forth the glory of God, but only from the outside. You are not seeing God when you love the Beauty of being and creation. You are only loving something outside God. Creation is but the outskirts of God's ways, we are told in the book of Job. So it is that the Sabbath becomes the symbol for all consecration to God, the symbol of all religion.

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The word Bethlehem means the ' house of bread,' and the Word made Flesh was born at Bethlehem. The Son of God came into this world to bear witness to His Father Who had created the World. He was sent by His Father as the greatest blessing of God to men. He came to ratify

all that God had done, and to carry on that work to its divinely intended perfection. To build upon the foundations laid by God in the Old Testament, to sanctify the nature of man with supernatural grace. The work of Christ, like the work of His Father in the beginning, can be seen in three stages.

There was the first stage when Christ ratified all those good things which God had created in the beginning. But now those good things have grown and have become all Nature and so our Lord approved of all Nature. He approved of the winds and the sea, He approved of marriage and of love, He approved of all those things which are the inheritance of human nature in its perfect state. That is why our Lord went to the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee, why He loved Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus, why He ate and drank even with publicans and sinners.

Then there was the second stage in the re-creation of all things by Christ. Our Lord did not only ratify the good things which He found in this world. There was more to do than that. He had to bless the world that He found He was living in, and it was a world that needed the blessing of God because it had spoilt His original blessing. So our Lord, in order to make the lives of men fruitful, had not only to bless men, but also He had first to heal them of their diseases. But our Lord came to do much more than that. He came to make the lives of men fruitful in a new sense, in a way that men knew nothing about. Our Lord submitted to the baptism of John, but only on condition that He could tell Nicodemus that unless he be baptised of water and the Holy Ghost, he should not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Our Lord went to the marriage feast of Cana with His Mother, but only in order that He should give a new meaning to marriage. Our Lord fed five thousand men with five loaves, but only in order to tell them afterwards that He had come to give them His Body to eat and His Blood to drink. Our Lord

touched the sick with His hands and cured them, but only as an outward sign of a new sacrament, whereby the sick should be anointed and receive a special grace which He should institute. This then is the second stage in the work of the Son of God; it was the giving of another blessing to the outward things that we could touch and feel and see. They must be fruitful as a result of God's blessing, but their fruitfulness this time is not the mere fruitfulness of material expanse, but the material expanse is the sign, the outward sign of an interior fruitfulness which we cannot see, but which we believe in on the Word of Jesus Christ. In the first creation we said that God had created the world of Nature for the glory of man and for man to live in and use. Now the Son of God is showing us how God's first plan was to be developed: now Nature is to be used in another way as an instrument in the sanctification of man. The Sacraments show us the ultimate potentialities of matter in the plan of man's salvation.

Nevertheless, even in the Sacraments of the New Testament, matter does not cease to be matter. It does not lose its identity even in the service of God. Even though it be blessed, it remains what it is, something essentially of this order, of things which pass away. So there is a third stage in the work of Christ for the sanctification of men, and that is the stage which unites men to Him and therefore to His Father. This is the stage which corresponds to that third stage in the first creation of all things by God, when God took one day in the week, which He marked off from all the other days as something not only blessed, but also sacred and consecrated to Him. That was the Sabbath Day, when men could talk with God as their Friend.

Friendship means some sort of union and intimacy. And the friendship of God and man means some sort of union and intimacy. What was the intimacy which God created in the beginning? It was the Garden of Paradise where man could have access to God by grace. That means that

man was a real friend of God, and knew God even though the knowledge was by faith and not vision. Then, man fell into sin, and Paradise was no longer open for man. But God in His mercy did not withdraw Himself completely from man's knowledge and love. The Sabbath Day became from then onwards the great bridge between Heaven and Earth. It was the type of the privileges which man had lost, and the type also of a heaven which man still dimly hoped for. It was a bridge between God and man, the great opportunity which man still had and which he must still use if he is to get in any way into contact with His Creator. Hence it was, in a way, a day on which men looked for a sign from heaven and men continued so to look until Christ came and told them that He could give them living waters to drink, and bread to eat that would enable them to live for ever.

The Sacrament of the Eucharist was different from the other new blessings of God, just as the Sabbath Day and Paradise were different from the other blessings of God in the beginning. Because just as in Paradise God Himself could be found and loved with supernatural charity, and just as the Sabbath was consecrated to God in a special way so that its whole meaning is a divine meaning, and it has no merely natural meaning any more, so in the Eucharist, which is the Sacrament of Christ's Body, the bread is no longer bread, but has been changed into the Body of the Lord. In Baptism, the water which is used remains water after the sacrament, even though it be blessed water. But in the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, the bread and wine are no longer bread and wine after the consecration and blessing of the bread and wine. That is why the Eucharist is so different from all the other blessings of God-made-Man.

The Eucharist is, therefore, the culminating gift of God in a whole series of His blessings, the consummation of the Christian life on earth as it is called by many of the Fathers of the Church. This is so because by it the Body

and Blood of Christ remain on this earth and will so remain until the end of time to continue the work which He came to do, to give His Body as food for the whole world, that we might be incorporated into His divine life, which is the life of God Himself. The Eucharist is the greatest of the sacraments because it does not only cause grace in us, like the other sacraments, but it contains the Body and Blood of Christ. It is the greatest of the sacraments because by it man receives the greatest blessing of God, for he receives God Himself; and he worships God most perfectly in his Eucharistic worship, since here he blesses God by his thanksgiving. So here that double process which we found earlier on, when discussing the first blessing at the creation, is found at its highest: we thank God in our supreme act of thanksgiving by blessing the bread, because at the moment of blessing the bread it becomes the sacrifice of the Body of the Lord.

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THE WORKS OF DR. DARWELL STONE

THE passing of Dr. Darwell Stone may seem to many of us like the end of an epoch. It is less difficult to believe that he has been taken away from us than to believe that he was, even though in retirement and with failing health, so recently among us. He was, in a sense, the last of the Tractarians. Not that a younger generation of Anglican divines may safely build on foundations other than those which they, and he, have laid—it will be a bad day for Anglican theology if that should ever come to pass. Yet he was the successor of the Oxford Movement in a directness of line which it is hardly possible for a newer generation to follow. And that, in part, by reason of the