

For Private Circulation only.

16 (*New Series*).

EDINBURGH, 25th March 1932.

REISSUED April 1966.

ADDRESS.

Good Friday Evening.

IN the Special Antiphon we have just offered, we cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God, Almighty God, "Eternal God, have mercy upon us miserable "sinners." It is incumbent on us ever to strive that the words we use express what is really in our hearts ; but especially on such a day as this, we should see that these words do in very deed express what each of us feels from the depth of the heart.

Once more we have as it were stood before the Cross, and have looked upon a picture dark and dreadful, and yet one which is bright with the prospect of victory. But at such a time our thoughts cannot dwell so much on the great results, as on the *sin* which crucified the Prince of Glory. As we gaze on this momentous sight, why should we feel moved to deep contrition? What is it that should make our hearts swell and even move us to tears? It is not mere emotion. It is not merely that our feelings are touched by the physical sufferings we behold. Dreadful these are indeed,—the scourging, the mockery, the crown of thorns, the hanging on the accursed tree. But many martyrs have endured similar torments. Nor is

it so much the patience of Him who suffers—though that also was manifested in all its fulness—of Him Who thinks of others even in this terrible hour more than of Himself, and Who asks for pardon for His murderers. All this will move us to deep pity and sorrow. But we do not contemplate simply a tragedy of human woe. This might only mean “to know Christ after the flesh,” and would leave us without the slightest feeling of self-reproach.

St Luke records that all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, *smote their breasts*, and returned. They perhaps did not understand why they did so, but as we look, can we, to whom such fuller knowledge and such clearer light have been vouchsafed, can we forbear from smiting our breasts?

“Truly this was the Son of God,” cried the Roman soldier. It *is* the Son of God indeed, who having become man, now sinks in death. The fact itself is awful. The explanation of it is not less awful—He died to take away *our* sins. We cannot in one sense explain it. Who can understand the awful reality of the sinfulness of sin or the necessity for an expiatory sacrifice? There is the problem. How can God be just and at the same time be the justifier of the creature who has sinned? Do we not to-day contemplate the solution of this problem? On one hand we see the inflexible severity of God’s holy law which the righteous judge will not arbitrarily annul. “If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.” But it was *not* possible. It is appointed unto men to die because of sin. Even

He, the Son, being very man, must die unto sin once. On the other hand, we see One Who, by His voluntary surrender to the law, magnifies it and makes it honourable. He, Who had no obligation to come under our conditions, has, by obedience unto death, set men right with God. Man's debt has been more than paid, and all men may now profit by the merit of the work wrought out in manhood by God's Eternal Son.

And so, He died for *our* sins. Whatever other elements of Divine love and wisdom His death may comprise, it was assuredly a sacrifice for sin—vicarious, expiatory. Once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

O the pity of it, that it should be needful thus to insist on the elementary lesson of the Cross! But so it is. We all know how lightly the truth is regarded, and how in so many cases every trace of expiation is eliminated from the reconciling work of our Saviour, except by way of illustration or metaphor. As many of you may have observed, attempts have recently been made in certain quarters to see how the Creed of the Church could be so simplified as to contain only what is regarded as *essentials*, and so avoid controversies in the Church, and help to keep her children from falling away from her. In all the statements that have been made to this end, we cannot trace a single reference to the Passion and Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How many are the efforts that are made—as it

is called—to purify men's lives, to give them greater scope for development, to lift them up to so-called higher planes? but all without the sprinkling of the blood. We are come, the Apostle declares “to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh “better things than that of Abel.” Abel's blood cried for vengeance on the sinner. The blood of Jesus proclaims that the sinner may be forgiven. The subtle lie of the enemy is that propitiation was necessary *to make God love us*. The blood of God's dear Son declares that *because* God loved us, and *because* sin must be expiated, therefore the Father sent the Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

If therefore we are tempted to think lightly of sin, or to give way easily to it, let us look at it in the light of the Passion of Jesus. Let us measure the enormity of sin, by the greatness of the propitiatory sacrifice. We live in a day when sin of all kinds, even the most heinous, is as it were winked at, and even its existence denied. Things which should not even be named among them are made the subject of jesting among Christian men. But it is not sufficient to speak of the evil around us. We require to repent of our own personal share in it, and beseech God to give us such a view of sin as He has, that we may ever abide under that fountain for sin and uncleanness which as on this day was opened.

We may think of the guilt of those who have crucified the Saviour, of His own people of the House of Israel who clamoured for His crucifixion, of the Roman governor who gave judgment against Him,

of the Apostle who betrayed Him, and of the one who denied Him. Let us not attempt to assign the guilt. Let us not so much turn back to those of our Lord's day or of any previous generation. Let us rather see that we look not away from ourselves to find the cause of His agony this day. Let us each one look into the depths of his own soul to find the reason of the shedding of His most precious blood, that it was *our* sins which nailed Jesus to the accursed tree. Then will the words we have uttered this day be from contrite hearts, when we said before Him, "O Lord we behold Thy sufferings
 "and we mourn ; our eyes, our eyes run down with
 "tears ; we weep in the bitterness of our souls, for
 "Thou wast wounded for our transgressions, Thou
 "wast bruised for our iniquities."

It has been indicated that there will come a day when the Church Catholic on earth shall, by the mercy of God, be brought to remembrance from whence they have fallen and shall repent, when like Israel of old on the Day of Atonement, they shall cry, "We have sinned with our fathers, we
 "have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly." Does not this really seem to be the only course to follow in the Church's present time of trouble and perplexity ? For such a condition we may well pray. But not in the spirit of the Pharisee, thanking God that we are not as others. Let us rather seek to be the first in true humiliation and confession.

And so let us rest, humbly yet firmly, on all that has been done for us and for all mankind, by the Passion, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus

our Lord. And amidst the great apostasy which prevails so largely even in the Church itself, an apostasy which is ever on the increase, let us be glad that there are many earnest and faithful ones in all the different sections of the Church who stand steadfast on these foundation truths, and whose hearts are grieved and sorely tried by the dishonour done to the name of Him whom they love so well. We are called to be of help to all our brethren. Surely here is an opportunity where all of us may do so, in however humble a way it may be done. Let us encourage any such, as we may have opportunity, to hold on to their faith in God their Saviour. Let us assist them to stand up for the true honour of His name. And this we shall be able to do as we ourselves are holding fast as for our very life ; and above and beyond all, as we are seeking to shew forth in our lives the great fact that God through His well beloved Son is in us of a truth.

If we are ever seeking to be of this spirit, God by His Holy Spirit shall uphold us in all the evil days that may yet remain before us ; He shall prepare us for His further work, whatever our part in it may be, and shall make us ready for that supreme moment when our Lord Jesus Christ shall come forth the second time, without sin, unto salvation.