

Anarchism and Atheism¹

A Sermon on the Death of President McKinley

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"Behold, I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."—Gal. vi.
"No man can serve two masters."—Matt. vi., 24.

SO the Epistle ended, and so began the Gospel which never ends, at our celebration of the Holy Communion this morning. The marks in the body which the Apostle bore were the stigmata, not printed in an ecstatic imagination, but burned in and stamped indelibly, first by the blinding light which burned its way through darkened eyes to illuminate his soul, then by the baptism which enrolled him in the company of believers, and then by the stripes and rods and stones of his long-suffering ministry of Christ. And these stigmata, these marks of the Lord Jesus, sealed him, as slaves and soldiers were branded in his day, as the soldier and servant of Christ. And when the Gospel takes up this same thought, with the words, "No man can serve two masters," it is not merely a rebuke of the futile attempt which men make in their double lives to be servants of Christ and at the same time servants of the god of this world; it is, before that and more than that, the statement of a great fact, that all life is service, that every man has some master, that the whole thought of riddance from rule, and abolition of authority, and destruction of government, and escape from law, and independence in the sense of freedom from control, is godless and unhuman and idiotic and impossible. And this is the mad conceit of Anarchy.

Brethren and friends, the shadow and sorrow, the suspense and shame, which darkened all our hearts a week ago, lifted a little while like the cold gleam of a treacherous sunrise in winter, have deepened into the blackness of this inexplicable and almost intolerable grief. It is a darkness with two shades of black in it—the mourning for our loss and the impenetrableness of the mystery of it. We seem

to have "come to a mount that burns with fire, and unto blackness and darkness and tempest," but there is "the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words" which it becomes us to hear and heed.

What does it mean that the powers of evil have prevailed; that a life on which seemed to hang the destinies of a nation has been given over into the power of a fanatical fury; that a cowardly and cruel act of treachery has wrought its wicked will? What does it mean that the supplications of millions of people have fallen upon a deaf ear; that in the storm and stress of all our anxieties and fears the Master seemed to be "asleep on a pillow" and to "care not if we perish"? There are three answers. First, that there is no God, but only fate and chance—cruel, immovable, careless, and jeering at human life. Secondly, that there is no power in prayer. And then one other: that God's ways are not as our ways, nor our thoughts as his thoughts. "This is God's way," that Christian hero said as he lay dying; "His will be done."

I begin here, because the whole question begins here. The doubt, the distress, the impatience, the resistance which rise up and trouble our hearts, are in themselves symptoms of intellectual and spiritual anarchy. This is the Anarchist's first thought. Before he has hatched his plots of foul conspiracy against earthly government; before he has defiled the air of heaven with the bombast and bitterness of his contempt of human authority; before he has lifted his treacherous hand against the civil magistrate, or laid his underground mines to break up social order, he has dethroned God. He is an atheist before he is an Anarchist; he is an Anarchist because he is an atheist. With the resistless force of the progress from a premiss of unbelief to a conclusion of crime, the unrelenting and infernal logic runs—there is no God to ordain powers, there are no powers ordained of God,

¹ Preached in the Church of St. Mary by the Sea, North-east Harbor, Me., on Sunday, September 15.

there are no powers at all. And, to-day, until we are willing to bow down in silent submission underneath the crushing of this blow; till, through all the stunned astonishment of its recent falling, we are content to sit silent in the dust; till, with no shadow of question, we acknowledge God's presence and God's providence behind and in and over all, we are on the side of "the lawless and the profane," the libertine, the Anarchist, and the assassin. "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth," "King of kings and Lord of lords." "He ruleth over all from the beginning." "The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient; He sitteth between the cherubim, be the earth never so unquiet."

We stand almost aghast with fear lest the strong impulse which flung this Nation on its knees a week ago, lest the uplifting of those days of hope which seemed an answer to the whole world's prayer, now that the words of our supplication seem thrown back upon our hearts like the mocking echo from the hard rock, now that the gift which was almost ours has been taken away—one fears lest, like the sweep of a retreating tide, all this should react into distrust and denial, and the dethroning of God from our hearts. This would be the childish pettishness of rebellion which refuses the discipline of the father's hand. The manhood of real and robust faith *knows* that because the event has issued from the will of Him in whom all power mingles with all wisdom and all love, therefore He has given us, not what we longed and hoped for, but what was right for us to have, and the lesson lies for us to learn and publish and proclaim, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him right." Wonder and grief and sense of personal bereavement we must feel, every one, but not doubt, not distrust, not denial. Just because of its impenetrableness, because of its inexplicableness, because of its unintelligibility, it must be from Him. "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself," and yet thou art "the God of Israel, the Saviour." God save us from the spiritual anarchy of the atheist, the agnostic, the unbeliever, who saith "in his heart, There is no God."

God save us from this other anarchy of men who call themselves and count themselves above and beyond and independent of authority and law. We picture to our-

selves an Anarchist in the unlovely personality of man or woman plotting, scheming, conspiring in the dark, or blatant and bitter in their denunciation of all government; cruel and stealthy and deadly, with the trail of a serpent and the tread of a tiger, and the snapping and snarling of a mad dog—unsexed women and dehumanized men; and such he is, such she is, in the finished development of their rabies. But the incipient stage, the embryonic beginning of all this, bears such faint and far-away resemblance to its outcome that we fail to detect the symptoms in ourselves. I have spoken here, I think none too strongly, of the too prevalent tendency in our time to violent personalities of speech; presuming to assign motives, to condemn character, and to assail the individual under pretense of criticising methods and opposing policies. There can be no question but that in an atmosphere of embittered violence the murderer gets the inspiration which chooses a bullet or a dagger instead of the weapons of "tongues which are spears and arrows and sharp swords." Out of the reek of all this licentious and unbridled speech come the spawn and the sputum of the Anarchist and the assassin. But when we are seeking to heal disease, to eradicate evil, we have need to get at the roots and germs, and I am constrained to look for these in earlier lives and quieter places than in the grown-up censoriousness of self-conceit and unbridled partisanship, or in the halls of public harangues and the offices of the public press. I am compelled to look for them in the attitude of the nineteenth-century childhood and the atmosphere of the nineteenth-century home. It must, it seems to me, begin with us elders. Parental indulgence, parental indifference, parental impatience, parental inconsistency; the inconsiderateness with which we let our uncontrolled tempers, our unbridled tongues, our unguarded actions, betray the unreality of our own characters in which we are proposing to mold the clay of childhood in its plastic time; the proxy bringing up of children, because fathers are too busy and mothers too lazy to watch over them themselves; the homes which are merely houses to sleep in and to eat in, but not to live the common life in, with its shared

interests, its divided duties, its common joys and sorrows and concerns; the envies and rivalries and strifes for position, the utter earthliness of aims and ambitions, of training and example; the unblessed food, the ungathered family for prayer, the uncertainty and variableness of discipline; and the stigma, in the base counterfeit sense of the modern use of the word, the stigma set on homes by the disgrace of divorce. Oh, what a stern protest such a married life as that of the dead President lifts up against the criminal cowardice or the incontinence of men who use the misfortune of a woman or the misery of a misfitting marriage as the excuse for synchronous or successive polygamy! And then, on the other hand, in the child of to-day, pertness and impertinence, discourtesy and disrespect and disobedience, resistance of control, either in open rebellion or in the evasions of deceit, questioning and criticising and self-assertion as the habit of its mind. What are we breeding, brethren, in these caricatures of home, if not the very contempt for authority—which too often makes itself contemptible by its inconsistencies—which is the source and spring and “root of bitterness,” from which flow and grow the spirit of insubordination which disturbs the governments of the world? Is it not time to hark back to God’s old commandment and say to the child, “Honor thy father and thy mother,” and to plead with fathers and mothers to make themselves honorable to their children? Have we not need, if we would cure this frightful evil and arrest this threatening destruction of all that makes society safe, life sweet, and authority secure, to pray, “O Lord, turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers,” and “Smite not the earth with the curse” of disobedience and lawlessness and disorder and misrule?

I am intensely impressed with the unfairness of using the house of God, and the unfairness of using the liberty of preaching, for the eulogies of men living or dead, or for the utterance of the personal opinions of the preacher upon controverted points; but I am sure you will accord me the right of saying that it would be easy for me, if I were speaking in a place of civic gathering, to use the language of supreme admiration, not only for the pub-

lic service but for the private character of William McKinley, for I have always revered and almost loved the man. I believe that in his administration he has had before his eyes the best interests of the American people, that he has been the lover and promoter of prosperity and peace, that he has risen beyond and stood above all personal ambitions, all petty purposes, all partisan aims, all political ends. There are some who count this debatable ground. The verdict will be given by posterity when the record of results has become history. To-day we stand to thank God for a man only less great than Lincoln—who was the greatest of Americans—whose life, in the fierce light that beats on thrones, stands pure and clean and white in all the virtues that become a man patient and faithful, with the courtesy and gallantry of a true gentleman, loyal beyond compare to the holy and tender offices of a husband, who has “wronged no man, who has corrupted no man, who has defrauded no man,” who has lived and died in the faith and fear and favor of God; whose first thought when the dastardly shot was fired that cost us his life was against violence toward the murderer, and then of consideration for his wife; whose last word was a triumphant sense of drawing nearer to God, to whom he had been near through all his life, and a quiet acceptance of this mysterious providence. “This is God’s way; His will be done.” “No man could live in the White House,” he said to me three years ago, “who did not trust in the providence of God;” and he kept that saying with the patience of the old patriarch Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him;” and he knows now, as we do not, “the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.” To-day there is a prince and a great man fallen in Israel, and, like Joseph’s mourning for his father at the threshing-floor of Atad, it is “a grievous mourning for the” people of America.

It seems a heartless thing and has a heartless sound, that old saying, “The King is dead, long live the King;” but it is a great fundamental truth which gives the lie to all the hopes and thoughts of Anarchists. We have realized it here to-day when we prayed for the President, meaning another man and another name.

It is easy for me, with all my heart and all my hopes, to say this prayer for Theodore Roosevelt, because I know the man and trust him and honor him and love him. Here again it is unfit and unfair for me to intrude my personal feelings and convictions upon you in this place. Out in the open of Western life, of service as Civil Service Commissioner, as Police Commissioner of the city and Governor of the State of New York, as soldier and as fighter, he has lived his brief and brilliant life, transparent as a crystal in its honesty and energy, before the eyes of all our people. Eager, impetuous, impulsive, intense, untiring, unguarded, it would be strange if there were not faults and flaws that men could find which are the defects of his virtues. But, be he what he may and think of him what you will, he has been called of God to be the ruler of this people, only indirectly by the popular vote, and in no Christian sense at all by accident, but with the most intense solemnity of circumstance. And I summon you to-day, not because he is the man he is, but because he is the President of the United States, to give him your hopes, your prayers, your expectations, if not yet your confidence; and, as you fear God, to honor him in his office and uphold him in the awful shock and suddenness of his high responsibility, remembering "whose authority he bears." Begin to-day with the warning in your ears, and let it ring

there as the sound of the waves in the sea-shell: "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." "Love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king."

Brethren, I bid your prayers to-day not only for this bereaved people, but for the lonely widow, lonely in an unwonted loneliness, of this murdered man; for the faithful surgeons who lavished love and skill to be dashed down to disappointment from the height of their hope; and for the wise and chosen counselors of the Cabinet, mourning the loss not only of their great leader, but of their beloved friend.

There is a body lying in Buffalo to-day, or perhaps passing on, as men bore Joseph's body of old, to its place of burial, which bears, not now for the first time, "the marks of the Lord Jesus." I count these cruel wounds that compassed his death more truly stigmata than those that dreamed themselves upon the hands of Francis of Assisi. Still more do I believe that, stamped and sealed into his character as a servant of God, as a good and righteous man, as a devout believer, as faithful unto death, are the marks of a true soldier and loyal servant of Jesus Christ, by which, in the day of the sealing of the servants of God, the Captain and the Master will know him, and own him as one to be made "ruler over many things" and to "enter into the joy of his Lord."

Methodists in Council

By the Rev. Jesse Bowman Young, D.D.

SIX hundred delegates, representing twelve Methodist denominations in America and as many more in other parts of the world, with an aggregate membership of perhaps nine millions—the exact data at this writing have not yet been tabulated—and a Methodist population of two or three times that number, are now in session in this great city of London, holding the third decennial Ecumenical Conference. The place where they assemble from day to day is full of inspiring suggestiveness and evangelistic associations—Wesley's Chapel in City Road, projected and built by him one

hundred and twenty-three years ago, and kept in constant use since that time by his followers. In recent years a fine bronze statue of Wesley has been erected in front of the building, and the interior has been renovated and beautified. Tablets, busts, and memorials of Wesleyan leaders adorn the walls, while the dust of the great Founder of Methodism rests underneath a simple shaft in the rear of the church. To his followers, and to many others who apprehend what his example and influence have done for our modern world, the place is fraught with sacred associations. Some phases of the