

Lancelot Andrewes and THE CROSS

By Dr. Marianne Dorman

It is well known that Christ and His cross were never parted, but that all His life long was a continual cross. At the very cratch, His cross began. ... He was in the psalm of the Passion ... a morning hart, that is, a hart roused early in the morning; as from His birth He was by Herod, and hunted and chased all His life long, and this day brought to an end, and as the poor deer, stricken and wounded to the heart. This was His last, last and worst; and this we properly call His cross, even this day's suffering. To keep up then to our day, and the cross of the day.

SO PREACHED Lancelot Andrewes at the beginning of the 17th century, but those words are still very apt for us to-day, every day, but no where more suitable than during Passiontide.

Just as Andrewes pleaded with his King and Courtiers to gaze and gaze on Christ on His cross, so he invites us too in his extant Good Friday sermons. As we gaze upon a crucifix Andrewes indicated that it imparts two things. Firstly, the love of Christ. From the cross He taught, “greater love than this hath no man, but to bestow his life for his friends,” but His “love went further” as He lay it down for His enemies, including those “who sought His death” and “pierced Him”. Yet that great love stretched out on the cross, enduring “all those injuries even to the piercing of His very heart” was also for us. Secondly, our sins. The cause of those outstretched arms was the sin of mankind. “It was the sin of our polluted hands that pierced His hands”, and caused that blood to flow from His broken heart and wounded side. Our reflection should strike a “deeper degree” of remorse than ever felt before, and “make us cry out with St. Augustine, ‘Now sure, deadly was the bitterness of our sins, that might not be cured, but by the bitter death and blood-shedding Passion of the Son of God.’”¹

¹ *The Works of Lancelot Andrewes*, eds. J. Bliss & J. P. Wilson, 11 vols. LACT (Oxford, 1841-54), afterwards referred to as Andrewes, Vol. 2, pp. 129-31.

One of the features of Andrewes' preaching was his appeal to our senses to aid us in our meditations, never more apt than at Passiontide when Christ is presented "to our eye ... hanging on the cross" where "our sight then is Jesus, and in Jesus." A crucifix thus makes us "fix our eye, to keep it from straying, to make us look on Him full." Then "our own eyes are witness" to Christ's "bodily suffering". By contemplating on our Saviour's love we should recognise that we are delivered from the "evil of our present misery"; and restored "to the good of our primitive felicity."

There are two sights to see, "the sight itself" and "the sight of it". As we thus "behold" and "consider" we see "the grievousness of his sufferings" and the cause for such suffering. "Here is some spectacle to behold" to consider "the sufferings of Christ." "Our very eye will soon tell us no place was left in His body, where He might be smitten and was not." "For there was no part of him, neither skin, nor bone, nor sense, nor any part, wherein he was not stricken: His blessed body was an Anvile to receive all the stroaks that were laid on him." Indeed Andrewes insisted that it was only in the silence of fastening our eyes on a crucifix that we could "admire it, all our words will not reach it."²

Accordingly that piercing of His heart pricks ours if we allow the spear to "enter pass the skin", and it will enable us to behold His "heart of compassion and tender love, whereby He would and was content to suffer all this for our sakes." Yet not for us alone but for all "who sought His death" He was content "to be pierced for His piercers". Yet it is the "last part of His piercing" which Andrewes especially "commended unto our view". "'Here is love, love in the cross;' 'Who loved us, and gave Himself for us, a sacrifice' on the cross!" "If we look better upon Him, we shall see as much as the Centurion saw, that this party thus pierced, 'is the Son of God.'" Thus our beholding the cross should make us realize

² Andrewes, Vol. 2, pp. 147, 160-3; *Apospasmata Sacra: Or A Collection of posthumous and orphan Lectures: Delivered at St. Pauls and St. Giles his Church by the Right Honourable and Reverend Father in God Lancelot Andrews, Lord Bishop of Winchester* (London, 1657), afterwards referred to as *Apos. Sacra*, p. 641. *The Works of that famous and worthie Minister of Christ, in the Universitie of Cambridge, Mr. W. Perkins*, 3 volumes, (Cambridge, 1608), Vol. 1, p. 36. At his trial Laud stated that a crucifix was hung in the chapel at Whitehall every Good Friday for devotional purposes. W. Laud, *The Works of The Most Reverend Father in God William Laud D. D. Sometime Lord Archbishop of Canterbury* eds., J. Bliss & W. Scott, 9 vols., LACT (Oxford, 1847-1860), Vol. 5, p. 405.

that it was our sin which “gave Him these wounds”, but it was His love that “made Him receive them”. “So that He was pierced with love no less than with grief, and it was that wound of love [that] made Him so constantly to endure all the other.” There is no other “time wherein with such cheerfulness or fullness of faith we cry unto Him, ‘My Lord and My God,’ as when our eye is fixed upon ‘the print of the nails, and on the whole in the side’ of Him who was pierced for us.” Such a sight “ought to pierce us with love too, no less than before it did with sorrow. With one, or with both, for both have power to pierce; but specially love, which except it had entered first and pierced Him, no nail or spear could ever have entered. ... ‘Look and be pierced with love of Him’ that so loved thee, that He gave Himself in this sort to be pierced for thee.” Thus the visual contemplation on Calvary should make our hearts be so pierced that it makes us lament and mourn for our sins. “Surely, the more steadily and more often we shall fix our eye upon it, the more we shall be inured; and being inured, the more desire to do it. For at every looking some new sight will offer itself, which will offer unto us occasion, either of godly sorrow, true repentance, sound comfort, or some other reflection, issuing from the beams of this heavenly mirror.”³

Undoubtedly Andrewes’ extant Good Friday sermons are icons of the suffering Christ. How much the visual impact of the crucifixion meant in Andrewes’ own life was reflected in the opening of his 1605 sermon. It is a “view” that we should contemplate “all our life long”, and it “ought to be frequent with us” as “blessed are the hours that are so spent!” If any time more than another justified looking upon Jesus it is on Good Friday as on “this day are our ears filled full with Scriptures about it”. Although “on other days we employ our eyes otherwise, yet this day at least we” should “‘cast our eyes from other sights,’ and fix them on this object, it being the day dedicate to the lifting up of the Son of Man on high, that He may draw every eye unto Him.” There is indeed no other time “with such cheerfulness or fulness of faith we cry unto Him, ‘My Lord and My God,’ as when our eye is fixed upon ‘the print of the nails, and on the hole in the side’ of Him who was pierced for us. ... And believing this of Him, what is there the eye of our hope will not look for from Him?” Furthermore by looking upon Him who loves us, it affirms what

³ Andrewes, Vol. 2, pp. 129-133, 154.

the Scriptures tell or promise of Christ, and therefore strengthens our belief.⁴

Even the texts Andrewes took for his Good Friday sermons appealed to the senses: ““And they will look upon me whom they have pierced;” ““Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?”” and ““Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith.”” The Court sermon of 1604 and an undated one at St. Giles’ have the same text, and in context were remarkably similar. In all his extant Passion sermons he emphasised that for the image of the crucifix to be truly effective it is not enough to “behold” Him with the natural eye, but we must also “consider” with the “eye of our mind which is faith; ... and our looking to Him here, is our thinking on Him there; on Him and His Passion over and over again, ‘till He be as fast fixed in our hearts as ever He was to His cross,’ and some impression made in us of Him, as there was in Him for us.” In this contemplation we shall enter “even into the inward workmanship of it, even of His internal Cross, which He suffered, and of His entire affection wherewith He suffered it.”⁵

In our viewing Andrewes also resorted to the mediæval “window” imagery of St. Bernard as a source for reflection on the dying Christ, ““The nails and spear-head serve as keys to let us in”” and to look closer “into the palms of His hands, wherein saith [Isaiah], He hath graven us, that He might never forget us.” When we “look into his side,” in the words of St. John we shall see it is ““opened”” for us. Through that opening we may look into His heart that is full “of kindness and compassion that would endure to be so entreated. Yea, that very heart of His, wherein we may behold the love of our salvation to be the very heart’s joy of our Saviour.”⁶

For Christ pierced on the cross is *liber charitatis*, ‘the very book of love’ laid open before us. And again, this love of His we may read in the cleft of His heart. Says St. Bernard, ‘the point of the spear serves us instead of a key, letting us through His wounds see His very heart,’ the heart of tender love and most kind compassion, that would for us endure to be so entreated.” Such a sight “ought to pierce us with love” of Christ, and to love as Christ.⁷

⁴ Ibid., pp. 120, 133.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 119, 138, 158, 177-8.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 178-9.

⁷ Ibid., p. 132.

Andrewes extended this window imagery in another Passion sermon. “Our friends will open their doores to us, that we may come in, their garners that we may fill our sacks, their cellars that we may taste their wines, their purses to lend us money, but did you ever read of a friend that would open his whole heart, nay that would dye for another?” Yet Christ died so that “we may look through the doore of his sides and see his bowels of loveing kindnesse, heart of compassion, moveing and stirring, yerning upon us.” In response to this, “shall not our [hearts] move and stir?” asked this divine.⁸

In all these sermons Andrewes’ appeal to the visual left nothing to the imagination as he described the passion in gruesome and gory details. The shedding of “*Sanguis Jesu*” was not only at Golgotha, “for the blood of the Cross was not only the blood of Golgotha, but the blood of Gabbatha too.” Here “All rigour, all cruelty was shewed to Him, to make His pains the more painful” as “they rent His body with the whips ... [and] gored His head with the thorns.” Indeed “they did not put on His wreath of thorns, and press it down with their hands, but beat it on with bats, to make it enter through the skin, flesh, skull, and all” and they “ploughed His back, and made’ not stripes, but ‘long furrows upon it.’ ... This is *sanguis crucis*.”⁹

His description of what the word *crucifix* should conjure in our minds was grotesquely descriptive. “The word crucifixe is applied to denote unto us, the tormenting and torturing of a man upon a frame of wood erected in the form of a crosse, where 1st He was miserably racked, his body drawn out to that length and breadth that you might view every joynt, count every ribb, number every bone in his body”, as expressed in the twenty second psalm. “In this great extremity he was nayled to the tree [through] each hand, [through] the palm of the hand”, that point where “the joynts and sinews” meet and therefore most sensitive, making the wounds so painful. There was also “a hedge of wood made to stand upon, not for ease but torment, that after they had stretched his body at large, as much as will and malice could devise, they might naile his feet down to that board, fasten him at length, and keep him in the same extremity of torment.” Here our Saviour hanged “for six long houres upon the rack for our redemption, ... and all hat time he

⁸ Ms. 3707, p. 168.

⁹ Andrewes, Vol. 2, pp. 167, 169-70.

was in full and perfect sense” as manifested with His loud cry before He died.¹⁰

The sense of sight was not the only sense to which Andrewes appealed to, to contemplate the Passion properly. The sense of smell was also meaningful. Thus Golgotha was not only “an unpleasant, unsavoury place, unpleasant to the eye,” for here were the skulls of the crucified, but it was also “unsavoury to the nostrils” as “putrid limbs of malefactors” rotted there. It was to such a foul place our Lord was brought after he had been spared “no disgrace or cruelty as they led him to it; and he watering the stones and pebbles in the streets with his own blood”, so that those who did not witness His passing could trace “him by his scattered blood from the Town-hall to the place of Execution.”¹¹

As always with Andrewes, meditation called for some response on our part, and so time spent at the foot of the cross has to lead to some fruits. “Shall we always receive grace, even streams of grace issuing from Him Who is pierced, and shall there not from us issue something back again, that He may look for and receive from us that from Him have, and do daily, receive so many good things?” Those fruits, “if love which pierced Him have pierced us aright”, will be abundant in love and thankfulness to Him.

So our dearest Saviour's wounds bestowed precious gifts to all mankind until His coming again when His heart was pierced “and His side opened”. From his side came water and blood: water “‘for sin and all for uncleanness;’ of the fullness whereof we all have received in the sacrament of Baptism, and blood, ‘precious blood ... which was shed for the remission of sins’ and given to us in ‘the cup of salvation’”. It is this blood that “we may receive this day; for it will run in the high and holy mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ. There may we be partakers of the flesh of the Morning Hart, as upon this day killed.”¹²

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 166-7. In his 1605 Court sermon, Andrewes declared that “I have heard it avowed of some that felt it to be a pain scarce credible. But the hands and feet being so cruelly nailed, parts of all other most sensible by reasons of the texture of sinews, there in them most, it could not but make His pain out of measure ... [that] the heathen man [said] ‘that the most sharp and bitter pains of all other have their name from hence and are called *cruciatius*’ pain like those of the cross.” Andrewes Vol. 2, p. 170.

¹¹ Ms. 3707, p. 166.

¹² Andrewes, Vol. 2, p. 133.

There are also other inestimable benefits that come from His “incomparable love” on Good Friday. “By His stripes we are healed, by His sweat we refreshed, by His forsaking we receive grace.” Although this day for Christ was “the day of the fierceness of God's wrath”, for us it is “the day of the fullness of God's favour, as the Apostle [Paul] calls it, ‘a day of salvation’”, and so it be truly called “a good day, a day of joy and jubilee. For it does not only rid us of that wrath which pertains to us for our sins; but further, it makes that pertain to us whereto we had no manner of right at all.”

So on this day “we are restored from our exile, even to our former forfeited estate in the land of Promise.” Not only is Christ's death the sacrificial death demanded in justice by His Father, but it is also the blood of the paschal lamb”, and therefore “the destroyer passes over us, and we shall not perish and even be brought to a far better place “than the estate our sins bereft us”. Our bequeath from Christ on the Cross is our “heavenly inheritance”.¹³

Let us follow Andrewes' advice: it is a “view” that we should contemplate “all our life long”, and it “ought to be frequent with us” as “blessed are the hours that are so spent!” Amen.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 153-4.