

MAN THE MAKER.

And the Lord God had planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning: wherein He placed man whom He had formed . . . to, dress it and keep it.

God the Lover and Creator made us in his own image and likeness, to be lovers and creators in our turn.

He made us to know him and love him and serve him; and since we are made in his image it is by knowing and loving and making that we serve. Knowing and loving are not means to making; making is the effect, expression and fulfilment of knowing and loving. Knowing is not the means to loving; knowledge of the right kind begets love and love begets knowledge. These three together form the footprint of the Trinity in the soul: without knowledge and love there is no life, without making there is no fullness of life.

God made us to know him and love him; and having made also a paradise of pleasure in the dressing and keeping of which we were to be makers, he meant us to know and love it too. But there are two sorts of knowledge: direct knowledge of things and indirect knowledge about things. The human mind tends to become jumbled, like an attic, with the latter; and to forget the former. We become knowledgeable; and cease to be seers. Then the soul withers. It is direct knowledge which begets and is begotten by love, and which makes us makers. But in this direct knowledge also there are many degrees of fullness and depth: and it begins to be full and deep only when in our knowledge and love of things we know and love God within them, for only then are their truth and goodness and beauty revealed. 'Love all God's creation, the whole, and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you perceive it you will begin to comprehend it better every day.' 'God is alike near in all creatures,' says Tauler, ' . . . and he knows God aright who sees him in all things.'

We are made not only to know and love but to serve at tables; not only to know and love God's garden but to dress it and keep it. To know and love things fully is to know and love things in and for God; to make things as we should is to make them in and for God, and out of the fullness of love and knowledge. Only when we see and love and make thus are we fully alive.

These three things are the substance of our lives. Making is meant to be, not the occupation of a leisure hour when work is done, but itself our life-work. There are endless ways and kinds of making, and we cannot limit the term to the making only of material things: there are tables and statues and ships, poems and songs, food and drink, clothes and clocks and candlesticks, but there is growth in wisdom also, there are the governance of cities and the building of human society, and these latter are forms of making too. But that one or other of these things should be our life-work is our birthright as human beings, for otherwise we are not fully alive. A world such as ours in this century, which robs millions of men and women of their birthright, which condemns them to labour which is not making at all, which herds them into slums that deny all that God intended when he planted the garden, and robs them of their faculty of vision by giving them in their childhood an education which teaches them to know facts but not to see things, and in their maturity the gifts of poverty and economic security so that their whole mind must be bent to the search for money for a meal—a world such as this is an attack on men's souls as well as on their bodies, an invitation not to life but death.

In what are called the ages of faith men lived in a God-centred universe. They had a right to be happy; but they knew that happiness is to be found only in the loving service of God and of men for God. They failed to live according to their faith; yet they were conscious of the divine order of things and it kept them humble and sane. But when those ages were over men rejected God and his order; they set themselves to build a man-centred world; they glorified humanity and spoke of serving it; but the human soul is not enough of itself to embrace humanity, and the man-centred world became a self-centred world in which each was for himself, and beauty was treasured not as God's gift for the happiness and reverence of all, but as man's property and utensil for the pleasure and aggrandisement of a few. The joy of creation was taken from the common man to become the elegant pastime of a privileged caste. The ugliness of urban England is a monument to the degradation to which the new world led.

The squalor and slavery went side by side with the triumphs and splendours of modern science. For that reason alone they were inexcusable. The inventive genius which produced the machine age, which achieved such great results at so terrible a cost and made Man the master of Nature but men the slaves of the machine, could have produced a different machine age, increasing instead of destroy-

ing man's power of creation, and diminishing instead of vastly multiplying the drudgery of life. It did not do so because initiative was directed to private profit without thought of the common good, to power without thought of truth and goodness and beauty, to self-worship instead of the worship of God. Within the last century the lot of the poor has indeed been improved in many ways beyond recognition; yet the root of the evil remains and will remain until the system itself is changed. Only by defeating the system can we defeat the attack upon the human soul, and win back our God-given right to know and love and create.

Drudgery is the wages of sin. 'Cursed is the earth in thy work; with labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life.' There has always been drudgery since the fall of man. The evil of the machine age is not that it produced drudgery, but that it multiplied it: that too often its labour-saving devices save labour for one by multiplying it for many; that things which before had been produced creatively and joyfully by men as their life-work are now produced uncreatively and joylessly by men who are slaves to the productive machines.

There are some who, in face of the slavery to which the machine has condemned so many, are tempted to regard all work done with the hands as good in itself. But with handwork as with machine-work, there is some which is creative and some which is drudgery. Creative work is good in itself because it is creative. Drudgery can be made holy because it is done for the love of God and men; it can be made beneficial for the soul as sickness or sorrow patiently borne can be good for the soul; but like sickness and sorrow it is in itself an evil, the fruit of sin. We do not oppose the attack upon the soul but surrender to it if we thus give away the whole cause for which we ought to be fighting. The inventive genius of man is God-given for the common good of humanity, that we should toil to increase our creativity and eliminate drudgery as we toil to eliminate disease.

But again there are some who hold that we ought not to try to eliminate drudgery or escape the wages of sin: we serve God by toiling with our hands as he told us, and we are only serving Satan if we try to make everything easy by using the machine. This is a naive and materialist reading of the Bible story. It is God's will for us, because it is our nature, which he made, that we should be creators. It is part of the curse that sin has brought upon us that creation is hard for us and attended with pain. It is part of the curse too that we should have need to toil uncreatively. But it is part of the curse also that we should toil in the sweat of our brow

to work out our redemption through the grace of Christ, to work out the redemption of work itself, and come nearer again to our true nature as creators. We shall never eliminate drudgery completely no doubt; for even if we eliminated bodily drudgery there would still be the drudgery of the mind. But it is important to distinguish between drudgery and hardship. Drudgery is evil; creation is good; hard work is either good or evil as it is involved in the one or the other. The hardness of drudgery wears down the soul; the hardness of creation stimulates and satisfies it. If we used our genius to plan our work well it would make it more and more creative; it would not necessarily make it less hard. Art involves hard training and discipline; for its perfection it involves above all the hard discipline of making the spirit open and submissive to ultimate goodness and beauty and truth. We are meant to be lovers and creators; but for man, to love and create is hard. And it is the curse that makes it hard.

We should not think of the curse and the hardship as a punishment for evil imposed from without, as a child is deprived of a pleasure because it has been disobedient. The hardship is part of the evil itself, as pain is part of a disease. Heaven is perfect oneness with God: hell is complete separation from God, frozen isolation in selfhood, the impossibility of meeting and touching God. Sin wrenched and disrupted the divine order; separated being from Being; closed man and nature in upon themselves and in disharmony among themselves so that the thorns and thistles which, as Augustine says, were meant to feed the beasts without hurting man, became his enemies, and the brotherhood of men themselves was replaced by the strife of Cain. But the disharmony within creation was the effect of its separation from God: that man and all creation with him was lost from God and alone, is the essential meaning of sin. It is the essence also of the hardship of life. To love and create is hard for man because of his isolation from God. 'Is not the heart of man an abyss?' says Augustine. We may turn away from the abyss and refuse to see it, and distract ourselves with easy pursuits on the surface of life as the humanists did; we may have a good time, but we shall not be happy. There is no happiness until the abyss of the heart has been filled; and only the Infinite can fill it. If we make toys within a man-centred universe we avoid hardship; we cannot avoid hell. But if we set out to grow to our full stature, to see and love the whole of reality and not merely its surface and to create in oneness with God, then we shall know the real toil of creation, the toil of re-birth, apprenticeship and struggle. There is toil attached

to the exercise of every craft; but it is child's play compared to this struggle of the heart to end its isolation and regain the source of its vision and power. This is the greatest burden which sin has brought upon us and which is with humanity till the end. We need have no scruple then if we can lessen the volume of drudgery in the world; on the contrary, that we should do so is part of our destiny as fallen but redeemed men; for even if we succeeded in freeing ourselves from all work that is uncreative we should still be living within the shadow of the curse: we should still find God, and therefore the depth and grandeur of creation, only in the sweat of our brow.

But there are some again who hold that work is always and inescapably drudgery; and that all we can do is to reduce as far as possible the time we need to give to it, and find an outlet for creative needs and capacities in our leisure hours. If this means that we should willingly restrict our making to a secondary plane it is a betrayal of our heritage. It might indeed be that in a well planned mechanical age the necessary drudgery could be reduced to the proportion of an hour or so in the day, and that having all taken our share in this we should then be free to set ourselves to creative pursuits. But these, if they were worth while, would have all the hardness of creative work; and it would then be these and not the drudgery which would be our life-work. Leisure in its proper sense is essentially a secondary element in life; its whole purpose is to offset our main creative work, to keep us from becoming tired and stale; it should itself be largely creative—there is something wrong about a world in which leisure is devoted exclusively to passive amusement—but it is of its nature subordinate to the main work of creation round which our lives ought to be built.

There are some who of their own free will relinquish a part of their birthright in order to serve God and their fellow-men more fully: who willingly accept the degradation of industrial drudgery that they may help redeem it. They are sharing in the redemptive activity of Christ. They are fulfilling in a sacrificial way the task of the 'common priesthood of the laity': that task which the sacrament of Confirmation lays upon the Christian and empowers him to carry out, the task of helping to bring God to the world and the world to God, going down from the altar as God-bearers into the world that it may be blessed by the grace and power and glory of the Sacrifice they have been offering. To take upon oneself the cross of industrialism in order to redeem industrialism, never acquiescing in its evils but suffering under them with others in order to destroy them with others, is indeed to turn drudgery into creation on a higher plane, for it is

to play a great part in the work of re-building the world for God. The Church of to-day has lost the mass of the workers; if they are to be won back it will surely be most of all through this creative prayer and sacrifice of the workers.

'The Lord God had planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning.' We are still called to a creative life, though the garden is no longer a paradise of pleasure and thorns and thistles distress us. But we are called to be creators not to our own glory but to God's. There is no great art without reverence; the deepest things are revealed only to those whose life is worship. The carpenter who loves his wood, who can tell one kind from another by the feel of it in his hands and who treats it tenderly with understanding and love of its character, will be a good artist; but to be a great artist he must do more than that. He must have vision and power of expression; but again to be a great artist he must have more than that. He must be a contemplative; his vision must reach to the heights of heaven and the depths of the human heart; wherever his hand touches and his heart feels he must touch and feel Infinity. Then his vision and his work will be full and rich and lasting, because he will have filled the emptiness of the abyss and his work will be worship. To all of us the same applies, no matter what our life-work. We may be weak in vision or in the power of expression; but at least we can learn to worship, and then there will be something of greatness in our work because there will be something of greatness in ourselves. To build monuments for man alone is to build in sands that perish; to build in worship is to build in imperishable stone a glory that will never pass away. If we are true to our destiny our creative work will be worship and our worship creative work; so we shall be doubly artists. Yet there is a third way also in which we are called to create and which includes these two; for if we share as we ought in Christ's redemptive activity we share in his re-creation of the world: we can be through our labours the living stones of that holy city the new Jerusalem of which the great voice spoke from the throne: 'Behold the tabernacle of God with men: and he will dwell with them . . . And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and death shall be no more . . . He that shall overcome shall possess these things.'

GERALD VANN, O.P.