

Good Friday Three Hours Devotion

I: The Story of the Trinity

When I was a boy I used to worry about a strange mixture of things. Of course, growing up in Yorkshire meant I worried ceaselessly about cricket. Then one Good Friday I found something new to worry about. I think I was about nine. My parents were not religious but they worked on the principle of *Do as we say and not as we do* and so for the good of my soul – and for their own peace and quiet – they sent me across the road to the Methodist Chapel.

There I learnt many things. I imbibed the convoluted non-conformist style of praying in which the Minister is always extraordinarily reticent in his petitions. Instead of asking for anything outright – be it righteousness or fine weather for the Sunday School outing to Pateley Bridge – it was always *Dear loving Heavenly Father, we WOULD ask thee*. And you felt like saying, *Well you WOULD, would you? So get on with it*. I was taught also that prayers should not be hidebound and fossilised like the ones in the Anglican Prayer Book, but spontaneous and from the heart. So we had extempore prayer. It was puzzling to discover that this spontaneity always took the form of the same sequence of words.

But that Good Friday in 1951 the Minister was preaching very movingly on the Crucifixion. He ended with the words *And so Christ was laid in the tomb*. He had spent considerable time telling us that Christ was God. And so, being a stropky oik, I wondered if God was in the tomb, who was looking after the world. It was a childish thought. But still it leads to useful meditation, for it leads us to the doctrine of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

On this most solemn day in the whole Christian Year we naturally turn in our imagination and prayers to the suffering of Jesus. But for a moment, expand that imagination and think for a while of the suffering of the Father who gave his only begotten Son for us men and our salvation.

And the mind stretches back into the Old Testament. And we remember how God told Abraham to take his son Isaac and sacrifice him. *And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son*. But then *The angel of the Lord said, Lay not thy hand upon the lad. And Abraham lifted up his eyes and behold a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the lamb and offered him up...*

So Abraham has his son alive. But God gives his own Son up to death for us. And God's agony in this is everlasting for, being God, he knows for all eternity that this offering must be made. There was an agony of the Son of God on Good Friday. But let us not forget the agony of the Father.

The Holy Ghost was the means by which Jesus was conceived. The Holy Ghost descended upon him like a dove at his baptism. Where do we imagine the Holy Ghost on Good Friday? I think He was in the darkness that covered the whole land from the sixth hour to the ninth hour. I think He was in the anguish of that terrible cry *Eli Eli lama sabbachthani*.

The creation, redemption and sanctification of the world is the work of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. There is darkness today, a threefold darkness. But even in the darkness there is thanksgiving and satisfaction. The miraculous wonder of our salvation has been accomplished. It is proclaimed from the Cross: *It is finished!*

Our task is to realise this and to make this salvation our own; make it real in our hearts and minds. This is what we are bidden to do in a fine poem by Edith Sitwell written during the Blitz:

Still falls the Rain -
Dark as the world of man, black as our loss -
Blind as the nineteen hundred and forty nails
Upon the Cross.

Still falls the Rain
With a sound like the pulse of the heart that is changed to the hammer-beat
In the Potter's Field, and the sound of the impious feet

On the Tomb: Still falls the Rain

In the Field of Blood where the small hopes breed and the human brain
Nurtures its greed, that worm with the brow of Cain.

Still falls the Rain
At the feet of the Starved Man hung upon the Cross.
Christ that each day, each night, nails there, have mercy on us -
On Dives and on Lazarus:
Under the Rain the sore and the gold are as one.

Still falls the Rain -
Still falls the Blood from the Starved Man's wounded Side:
He bears in His Heart all wounds - those of the light that died,
The last faint spark
In the self-murdered heart, the wounds of the sad uncomprehending dark,
The wounds of the baited bear -
The blind and weeping bear whom the keepers beat
On his helpless flesh... the tears of the hunted hare.

Still falls the Rain-
Then - O Ile leape up to my God: who pulles me doune---
See, see where Christ's blood streames in the firmament:
It flows from the Brow we nailed upon the tree Deep to the dying, to the thirsting heart
That holds the fires of the world - dark-smirched with pain
As Caesar's laurel crown.

Then sounds the voice of One who like the heart of man
Was once a child who among beasts has lain -
"Still do I love, still shed my innocent light, my Blood, for thee."

II: The Blessed Virgin's Story

There are other characters in the story of Good Friday. There is Mary his Mother standing, as St John tells us, by the foot of the Cross. *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*. Her suffering, a mother's suffering at the agony of her child, is perhaps the hardest to contemplate. John Donne wrote a beautiful poem: *Upon The Annunciation and Passion Falling on the Same Day*. John Donne therefore asks us to picture Mary the Mother of Jesus at the Annunciation with the Angel Gabriel and now again at the Crucifixion:

*She sees at once the virgin mother stay
Reclused at home, public at Golgotha,
Sad and rejoiced she's seen at once, and seen
At almost fifty and at scarce fifteen.
At once a son is promised her, and gone,
Gabriel gives Christ to her, he her to John;
Not fully a mother she's in orbity
At once the receiver and the legacy.*

When we hear these words, when we see her there at the Cross, watching her Son die, how can we imagine the depth of her agony? Is there any agony worse than glory turned to dust? As Donne says, she was *scarce fifteen* when she received that shocking visitation from the Archangel. Forget the pretty Christmas card pictures. It would not have been pretty. Supernatural visitations are terrible happenings. The Archangel was not the fairy at the top of the Christmas tree.

And yet she obeyed – instantly and said: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word*. And then remember what Simeon said to her in the temple: *Yea a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also*. These were the promises made to that young girl right at the start: that she would share in the work and sufferings of her Son.

And we think of the beginning of that work and the first joyful miracle at the marriage in Cana of Galilee and the water into wine. Do you remember his words to his Mother then? *Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come*.

But his hour has come now, on the Cross. And his Mother is there again looking upon his pierced hands and his pierced feet. And surely, as Simeon had said, a sword is piercing her heart also as she beholds him. At the marriage at Cana, Jesus's disciples were delighted to be there with him, enjoying the miraculous wine. Where are they today when Jesus has saved the best wine unto the last – the wine of his Blood? They have run away to save their skins, and only the faithful women stand by the Cross.

Mary is the new Eve. Where Eve made the first disobedience, Mary obeys. And through her obedience Christ is born and we have the Saviour to save us. But there were no guarantees. Not just any woman might have borne in her womb the Son of God. She was invited. She was asked. And she obeyed. For this glorious act of self-giving the church remembers her forever with joy and thanksgiving. She is the Mother of us all. *For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed*

But when she looks upon his bleeding Body now. What of those hopes she must have had when her child was born in Bethlehem? Had it all come to this – her Son’s brilliance his *growing in wisdom and stature and in the fear of the Lord*. A few brief years and he is brought into the dust of death.

There is a wonderful poem by Dorothy Parker:

*The things she knew, let her forget again –
The voices in the sky, the fear, the cold,
The gaping shepherds and the strange old men
Piling their clumsy gifts of foreign gold.
Let her have laughter with her little one:
Teach her the endless, tuneless songs to sing;
Grant her the right to whisper to her son
The foolish names one dare not call a King.
Keep from her dreams the rumble of a crowd,
The smell of rough-cut wood, the trail of red,
The thick and chilly whiteness of the shroud
That wraps the strange new body of the dead.
Ah, let her go, kind Lord, where mothers go
And boast his pretty words and ways, and plan
The proud and happy years that they shall know
Together, when her son is grown a man.*

And then in his last moments Jesus does something so tender, even from the Cross.

When Jesus therefore saw his Mother and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his Mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy Mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

The word Jesus uses, translated in our Bible as *woman*, is the same word he used at the marriage feast in Cana. And it is the usual Greek word for *Princess* or *Lady*

And there you have it. With those words we see Mary and the beloved disciple St John walking away from Golgotha *unto John’s own home*

III: The Story of Our Redemption

Whenever anyone starts to explain anything, I want to scream. Particularly when theologians try to tell me what the gospel *means*. It reminds me of another story. A young woman was sitting in a salon to listen to Beethoven play his *Appassionata* piano sonata. When he had finished this great performance, she went and asked him, *That's all very well Herr Beethoven, but what does it MEAN?* Whereupon Beethoven sighed vigorously, went and sat down and played the whole thing again.

There is no explanation of the story of our salvation, no explanation for the gospel. It is a story and it means what it says. Again, I'm often riled when clergymen who ought to know better come on *Thought for the Day* and offer their explanation of say the parable of the Good Samaritan. If there had been an explanation of it that could have gone further than the parable itself, then surely Jesus would have given us the explanation instead of the parable! These *Thoughtless Today* people then usually go on to say something like, *This was one of Our Lord's best parables*. And you feel like screaming into the wireless – *The others – weren't they much good then?*

The story of our salvation is a story. And stories have characters and action in them. A plot and a development. And when you read a story you just have to pay attention to the characters and the plot and you have the whole meaning of it without any additional explanation. Of course, you must concentrate. Are any of you like me – I fall asleep over a novel and have to read the same bit over again when I wake up to refresh my memory? So you have to concentrate and you have to bring your pictorial imagination to the various scenes in the story.

Just let me draw a few sketches then. The story of our salvation is a unity in itself. It has a beginning, a middle and an end. There are twists in the plot and sublime reversals. It starts with Adam who *heard the voice of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day*. And God's voice condemns Adam for his disobedience. Jesus is the second Adam and we hear his voice in the garden of Gethsemane – only he is not condemning but preparing himself in agony of bloody sweat to give his life for our sake.

Adam eats of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil – and that is the start of all our trouble. Christ's Cross is the Tree of Life and the cure of all our woes.

God gives his Commandments on the hill Mount Sinai and we are condemned because we break them. Christ gives himself on the hill of Calvary and we are saved.

God says *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain*. In other words, we must not blaspheme. Jesus, who is God with us, is actually convicted of blasphemy.

Adam was a gardener set by God to have dominion over all creation. After the resurrection Christ, the new Adam, appears to Mary Magdalene in the garden and the gospel tells us *She supposing him to be the gardener*.

Adam and Eve put on clothes to cover their indignity and to give them self-esteem. Christ is stripped of his clothes and put on the Cross. He is not esteemed, *He is*

despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him. He was despised and we esteemed him not.

The gospel story is all antitheses and reversals. *As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

God gave them Manna in the wilderness and they are dead. Christ gives us his Body and Blood and these are the tokens of eternal life.

I wonder if you have ever looked into the verses of Studdert-Kennedy, the Woodbine Willie Chaplain in the trenches of the First World War? These are not epic poems. He would never claim they are high art or great literature. But as there is said to be a potency about cheap music, so there is sometimes something very telling in words that are heartfelt – like these:

*I am no fool, I have my reasons for
This faith, but they are not the reasonings,
The coldly-calculated formulae
Of thought divorced from feeling. They are true
Too true for that. there's no such thing as thought
Which does not feel, if it be real thought
And not thought's ghost – all pale and sicklied o'er
With dead conventions – abstract truth – man's lie.
Upon this living, loving, suffering Truth
That pleads and pulses in my very veins,
The blue blood of all beauty, and the breath
Of life itself. I see what God has done,
What life in this world is. I see what you
See, this eternal struggle in the dark.
I see the foul disorders and the filth
Of mind and soul, in which men, wallowing
Like swine, stamp on all their brothers till they drown
In puddles of stale blood and vomitings
Of their corruption. This life stinks in places,
'Tis true, yet scent of roses and of hay
New mown comes stealing on the evening breeze,
And through the market's din, the bargaining
Of cheats, who make God's world a den of thieves,
I hear sweet bells ring out to prayer, and see
The faithful kneeling by the Calvary
Of Christ*

IV: The Minor Characters' Story

And then there are the little ones in the gospel, those who had their part to play in this eternal story. Think of the thieves on the other crosses – one is sorry for what he has done and the other merely curses everyone for his fate including God. And Jesus says to the penitent, *Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise.*

There is an old lost gospel called *The Acts of Pilate* and in it a touching legend about the penitent thief. It is set in the underworld, in hell:

After that voice there came unto us a man whose appearance was as that of a robber, bearing a cross upon his shoulder, who cried out and said, Open unto me that I may enter in! And Satan opened the gate unto him a little way and brought him into the house and shut the gate again after him. And all the saints saw him, that he shone brightly, and said unto him straightaway: Thine appearance is that of a robber: show us what it is thou bearest on thy back? And he answered humbly and said, Of a truth I was a robber altogether, and they hanged me on a cross with my Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most High Father. And at the last I have come here before Him. But be of good cheer, for he cometh after me immediately.

And what of the centurion who at the foot of the Cross confessed *Truly this man was the Son of God.* By tradition, this soldier was called Longinus. He left the army and studied under the Apostles but was arrested and tortured in one of the persecutions. The authorities tormented him by forcing all his teeth from his mouth and cutting off his tongue. Despite these tortures, it is said that Longinus continued to speak clearly, then picked up a handy axe and smashed several pagan idols as the governor watched.

We are told that the relics St. Longinus are in the church of St. Augustine in Rome. His lance, the very weapon said to have pierced the holy body of Jesus, is said to be contained in one of the four pillars which surmount the altar in St. Peter's Basilica.

There is the legend of St Veronica the woman who wiped Jesus' brow on the way of the Cross. We don't know what her real name was, Veronica is merely a word made up out of the fact that the imprint of Jesus' face on the cloth as a genuine image, a real resemblance of Him – a Vere-onica, true icon. Another part of this legend says she was the woman mentioned in the gospel whom Jesus cured of the issue of blood. The woman who had exclaimed in her distress, *If I could but touch the hem of his garment.* And she does more than that now – she touches his face and comforts him.

The Cross itself has a tradition all its own and is said to have been discovered by St Helen, mother of the Emperor Constantine. I was for nearly fifteen years Vicar of St Helen's Church, Bilton-in-Ainsty near York where Constantine was crowned Emperor. Constantine had a famous vision of the Cross at the battle of Milvian Ridge and in thanksgiving for victory turned the empire to the Christian faith.

In that old gospel again *The Acts of Pilate* there is another legend about the Cross and it goes like this:

Then all the saints of God besought the Lord that he would leave the sign of victory – even the holy Cross – in hell, that the devils angels might not be able to drag into hell

any of those sinners whom the Lord had absolved. And so it was done. And the Lord set His Cross in the midst of hell which is the sign of victory and it shall remain there forever.

Do we ever wonder what became of Pontius Pilate? Quite a bit is known about him apart from the trial of Jesus. He is mentioned in St Luke's gospel as the governor who caused a bloody riot by allowing the image of the emperor Tiberias to be set up in the holy places in Jerusalem – this is the *abomination of desolation* spoken of in the gospels. Pilate was said to be a cruel man and incompetent and that his end came when he was summoned to Rome by Caligula who had lost patience him. And that he escaped execution only by committing suicide. But there is a tradition which goes right back to the second century which has him and his wife Claudia Procula becoming Christians.

And the last act is the taking down from the Cross. The marvellous poet and priest R.S. Thomas imagines Calvary deserted and only the Cross of Christ remaining on that hill:

Not the empty tomb but the uninhabited Cross.

Look long enough and you will see the arms put on leaves.

Not a crown of thorns, but a crown of flowers haloing it, with a bird singing as though perched on paradise's threshold

Another poet Charles Sisson meditates on Good Friday and says (of all that can be said about Christ):

What is astonishing is that he came here at all – where no one ever came voluntarily before.

V: the Story of Judas

You have perhaps seen articles in the press recently about a newly discovered Gospel of Judas. It is very interesting and contains some real religious substance – unlike *The Da Vinci Code*. But speculation about the character of Judas has been going on since the first Good Friday. I have a personal interest in it.

About twelve years ago I was browsing through some theological dictionaries looking for information for a sermon I was preparing. You know what that's like. It's like opening the English dictionary to find the meaning of a word and stumbling across so many other words that are more fascinating, so that you end up forgetting the word you were looking for in the first place.

I can't remember now what I was looking for, but I came across the word *Cainites*. And I discovered the remarkable fact that the Cainites were a people living in southern Judea not long after the time of Christ. And they revered Judas Iscariot as their Patron Saint. I was puzzled. How could anyone revere Judas? I was intrigued and I did a lot more reading. The result was that over the next two years or so I wrote as an historical novel the story of Judas as seen through the eyes of the Cainites. I'm still trying to find a publisher for this novel, by the way. Perhaps all this recent publicity will help!

What we do know – what is actually true and historical – is that the Cainites were one of many Gnostic groups around the Middle East at the time. Gnostics were religious and philosophical luminaries who claimed to be in the know. They were dualists – they believed that the universe is governed by two equal and opposite supernatural principles: light and darkness. If you ever go down into southern Judea, near the Dead Sea and the caves at Qumran where the Dead Sea scrolls were found, you can see why Gnosticism was popular. The climate. It is blindingly light by day and utterly dark at night. The Gnostics' extreme form of religion mirrored their environment.

They also believed that all material things, including the body and flesh, are bad; and that only spiritual things are good. They were apocalyptic. They believed that the end of the world was coming and that at the end a mysterious Divine Redeemer would appear from the realms of light, this world of material things would be destroyed and the true believers – themselves of course! – would all be transported to a spiritual heaven.

The Cainites believed that Judas Iscariot was the prophet of the Divine Redeemer. They thought that Judas saw Jesus as this figure. And Judas betrayed Christ in the belief that he would come down from the Cross and show himself to be the Divine Redeemer. Jesus did not do this, as we know. And Judas hanged himself out of disappointment. I think there may be something in all this.

But the Cainite religion – Gnosticism – is not something that was limited to one particular place and time. Gnosticism is an all-pervading heresy and it is a constant threat to the life and very being of the Church. G.K. Chesterton says the Church has nearly died from Gnosticism no fewer than five times. St Augustine dedicated his life to fighting it – in the form of the Manichees. It emerged again with the Cathars or Albigensians.

It awakened again in modern times at the Enlightenment in the 18th century. Gnosticism thrives wherever Puritanism thrives. It is a form of bloodless idealism – the notion that we can escape from the things of the flesh and retreat into the pure world of spirit. It is present wherever people are, in T.S. Eliot's words, *dreaming of systems so perfect that no one will need to be good*. Well, what's the fuss about? Gnosticism and Puritanism actually sound quite nice – and there is something of it in all of us, in the thought that we ought to deny the flesh and hold to things that are purely spiritual.

The trouble is that this is impossible – because we are creatures of flesh and blood and we live in a material world created by God. That's the important bit. The Bible tells us that the world was created good. You might think Good Friday is a violent story, but it's at Christmas that we read some of the most violent words in the whole of the New Testament. These are the opening words of St John's Gospel when he speaks of God and the world: *All things were made by Him and without him was not anything made that was made*. So important is this message that St John rams it home, repeating it in words of one syllable.

The Christian faith might seem superficially to have something to do with Gnosticism and pure spirituality. Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans thought so and they suppressed fleshly pursuits and even banned Christmas. But Puritanism and Gnosticism are the opposite and the enemies of Christianity. The Christian faith is the religion of the Incarnation – the putting into flesh. When God comes to redeem the world. He comes as a human child and today he dies in the flesh on the Cross. You could not have it more plainly than that. He leaves with us Sacraments which are holy things in material form.

In short, the Cainites' Judas was mistaken. Gnosticism is false. And like all perversions of the truth it is not merely harmless, but a lethal threat to the truth. Today we give thanks for the fact that to save us Jesus did everything that the Gnostics despise. *He came down from heaven...was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary...suffered under Pontius Pilate...was crucified, dead and buried. And the third day he rose again according to the scriptures...*

VI: Apologia Pro Vita Sua

When I was a teenager I went for a time to an evangelical prayer group and I was asked to give my testimony. I resisted this because it was too embarrassing. Well, I can put it off no longer, so with your permission I'll do it now. Perhaps it will encourage you. I only hope it doesn't put you off religion for good!

As a little boy I went three times on Sunday to the Methodist Chapel and got a prize every year for attendance. We were taught there by a real mixture of people. There was Mr Edwin Coates, the undertaker's assistant, who frightened us by telling us that Christ was coming back soon and would send small boys and girls to hell for...well, for doing things we barely understood but vaguely knew we shouldn't be doing anyway. When we moved up a class, we were taught by Mr George Jones who didn't know anything about religion but he had fought in Burma and knew everything about the Second World war. He told us about tanks and guns and blood and aeroplanes - and we loved it.

The organ was up at the front at the Chapel as it often is in such places, giving the impression that it is a huge engine of idolatry. And in front of it on a balcony sat the ladies' choir in their fluffed out finery, like drenched sparrows. It was murder. When we sat in the pews we had to stuff our fingers in our mouths to stop ourselves dying of the giggles. There was a very gentle and kind minister the Rev'd Charles Wheeler and, because he was gentle and kind and didn't think himself the centre of the universe, he was bullied by the pompous frosty Chapel Officers called deacons. Anyhow, when I was thirteen I read Bertrand Russell's *Why I Am Not A Christian* and declared myself an atheist. I never returned to the Chapel after that.

One day when I was fifteen, I was throwing a ball against the wall in the back streets of Armley, Leeds between the jail and the gas works when this man in a cassock approached me. I knew he was a priest from the Anglican high church of St Bartholomew's just up the road. That church was despised as the Scarlet Woman by the Chapel folk. They said the vestments were *satanic* and that they even had an idol of the Virgin Mary. Even in my teenage atheism, I thought an idol of a woman might be an improvement on an idol of an organ.

This man was Father Thornton, a curate. He said he wanted me to go to the Parish Mass on Sunday and – God knows why – I went. I was a bit late and, as I entered, the crucifer was already leading the choir up the north aisle and they were singing *Blessed City Heavenly Salem* to the miraculous tune by Henry Purcell. The accompaniment was on the mighty Schultze organ. Then came the clergy in their satanic vestments. I went to a pew. The music stopped and the words started. I remember in particular, *O God forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee*. That and the music were magic. I was hooked. I gave up being an atheist, got confirmed and told the curate I wanted to be a priest.

The Vicar, David Sillar, described me once openly as *a branch plucked from the burning*. St Barts became the centre of my existence. I remember especially when Father McCurry became Vicar we did the Way of the Cross – big Jack Windross carrying a real cross – round the streets of Armley one Good Friday. And the ordinary folk were amazed, appearing at upstairs windows to watch us. Even coming out and

joining in the hymns and prayers. Afterwards the church was filled with 800 people and we sang *O Sacred Head* and the day ended with the last chorus from *The St Matthew Passion* – which we shall hear again today.

Another year Father Sowerby put on a play, the cast stuffed with teenagers from the youth club. It was a passion play with Christ represented by a crown of thorns on a cushion in the middle of the lofty chancel – and a spotlight on it. And the music was Ben Britten's *A Young person's Guide to the Orchestra*. The play was called *The Verdict is Yours*. All the lines were *ad lib*, interrogation of witnesses. I was made to play counsel for the prosecution and I made Mary Magdalene cry – for real. And she's been making me cry ever since.

I wonder if you think this was all very emotional and aesthetic – all that colour, the intoxicating words, the sublime music? As if I'd not really become religious at all but sort of fallen in love with the sight and sound of religion? Well you know what the evangelicals say – *You must be born again*. And they are right. But that doesn't mean once and for all. It's poetic. It means *You must be born again and again and again...*

And that's how it's been with me. God keeps breaking into my life and saving me from myself. I've spent my life in chapels and churches. I've been a priest for thirty-five years in town, country, as a school chaplain, a university teacher of philosophy and theology, and now here in the City. And I keep falling away from the Christian faith and letting Christ down. But he has never let me down. The faith is always a dialogue, a discussion, even an argument.

But I have learnt one thing. It came upon me accidentally as these things do. And it is to do with metaphysics and philosophy. One day I twigged – or God shouted at me – that Aristotle, Aquinas, Heidegger and Wittgenstein – men from across the ages – agreed on one basic truth. And that is that there is Being before there is our perception of Being. In other words the existence of God is more certain than my existence.

Before this dawning truth I did what Charles Sisson describes when he says he became a Christian believer. He says *It was like giving myself up to the police*. And what about problems with belief? Charles Sisson expressed these laconically but with deadly seriousness when he said, *The only word that gives any difficulty in the Creed is "I"*

So today this Jesus who died for us asks us to give ourselves to Him. And if we do, then he will give himself to us. *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.*