

THE UPPER ROOM,
AND OTHER SERMONS DELIVERED
ON IMPORTANT PUBLIC OCCASIONS

BEING A FEW TRUTHS FOR THE TIMES.

BY THE RIGHT REV.

BISHOP RYLE, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF

"EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS," "KNOTS UNTIED," ETC., ETC.

"If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself
to the battle?"—1 Cor. xiv. 8.

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CHAS. J. THYNNE,
WYCLIFFE HOUSE, 6, GREAT QUEEN STREET,
LINCOLN'S INN, W.C.

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“LUKE, THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN.”¹

COLOSSIANS iv. 14.

THERE are two things in the title of this paper which I shall take for granted, and not dwell on them. One is, that Luke here mentioned is the same Luke who wrote the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, and was the friend and companion of St. Paul. The other is, that Luke really was a physician of the body. On both these points the consent of learned men, who have a right to command our attention, is almost universal. I shall rigidly confine myself to two remarks which appear to grow out of the subject. For it is a significant fact, I think, that the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who was ever ministering to men's *souls*, makes honourable mention of one who ministered to men's *bodies*.

I. I remark then, for one thing, that *one great feature of the Christian religion is the dignity and importance which it attaches to the human body*.

Many readers of this paper need hardly be reminded that some of the schools of heathen philosophers regarded the body with contempt, as a hindrance and not a help, a clog and a drag and not an aid, to the soul. Even those nations which paid most attention to the burial of the body when dead, like the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, knew nothing of a future existence of the body after death, even at the most distant period. The heroes described by Homer and Virgil, in the Elysian Fields, the supposed place of happiness after death, were only ghosts and airy figures, with nothing material about them. When St. Paul, on Mars Hill, spoke of the “resurrection of the dead,” we are told that “some mocked” (Acts xvii. 32.) Even Pliny, one of the most intelligent Latin writers, in his *Natural History*, says there were two things which were beyond the power of God,—one was to give immortality to mortals, and the other was to give bodily life again to the dead. (See Pearson on *The Creed*, vol. ii., p. 306, Oxford edition.)

Let us turn now to the Christian religion, and mark what a contrast it presents. Whether we look at its leading facts, or doctrines, or practical instructions for the present, or hopes for the future, *the human body* is continually brought to the front, and its importance magnified.

(a) Look, to begin with, at the great mysterious truth which lies at the foundation of our holy faith, *the incarnation of Christ*. When the Eternal Son

¹ The substance of this paper was originally delivered as a sermon in Liverpool Cathedral at the opening of the Annual Conference of the British Medical Association in Liverpool, on July 31st, 1883.

of God came down into this sin-burdened world, to bring redemption, and change the whole condition of our fallen race, how did He come? Not as a mighty angel or a glorious spirit, as we might have expected. Nothing of the kind! He took on Him a bodily nature, just like our own, sin only excepted. He was born of a woman as an infant, and had a body that grew and increased in stature as our bodies do,—a body that could hunger and thirst, and be weary and need sleep, and feel pain, and groan in agony and suffering, like the body of any one who reads this paper. In that body He condescended to tabernacle for thirty-three years, its members daily fulfilling the Law of God perfectly, so that in His “flesh” Satan could find nothing failing or defective (John xiv. 30).

(b) Look, in the next place, at the great cardinal doctrine of *Christ’s atonement*. That wondrous distinctive verity of our faith,—that solution of the problem, “how can sinful man have peace with God?”—is indissolubly bound up with Christ’s body. It was the death of that body on the cross which provided for fallen man a way of reconciliation with God. It was the precious lifeblood, which flowed from our Lord’s crucified body on Calvary, which purchased for us redemption from the curse of a broken law. In short, it is the blood of Christ’s *body* to which true Christians owe all their comfort while they live, and their hope when they die.

(c) Look, next, at the crowning facts of *Christ’s resurrection and ascension into heaven*. When our Lord came forth from the grave where Joseph and Nicodemus had laid Him, on the third day, He did not come forth as a spirit. To use the words of our Fourth Article, He “took again His *body*, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man’s nature.” In that body He was seen and touched by His disciples. In that body He spoke, and ate, and drank like ourselves. And, finally, in that body He ascended into heaven, and there sits till He returns to judge all men at the last day. We have a priest and advocate with the Father who has a *body*.

(d) Look, next, at the *practical precepts and exhortations* which the Apostles are continually pressing on us in the New Testament. Mark how frequently they speak of the body and its members as “instruments of righteousness,” as a part of the Christian’s nature requiring his constant care, and as a means of exhibiting his sanctification and holiness. “Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.”—“Glorify God in body and spirit, which are His.”—“I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless.”—“Present your bodies a living sacrifice.”—Let “Christ be magnified in my body.”—Let the “life of Jesus be manifest in our mortal flesh.”—We shall “receive the things done in the body.”—Where, indeed, and how, could the graces of temperance, soberness, chastity, and self-denial be shown forth

except in and through the body? (Rom. vi. 13; 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; 1 Thess, v. 23; Rom. xii. 1; Phil, i. 20; 2 Cor. iv. 11; 2 Cor. v. 10.)

(e) Look, finally, at that grand distinctive hope which sustains the Christian amidst the deaths, and funerals, and pains, and partings, and sufferings of this world. That hope is *the resurrection of the flesh after death*. Our bodies shall live again. The grave cannot hold them. We part from those who fall asleep in Jesus in the blessed confidence that we shall meet and see them again, better, stronger, more beautiful than they ever were upon earth. For ever let us thank God that the glorious gospel which we profess to believe makes provision for our bodies as well as our souls.

But, after all, the importance which Christianity attaches to the body is not one whit greater than that which is continually attached to it by the children of this world. It is easy to sneer at the simple facts and doctrines of Christianity, and to talk great swelling words about “mind,” and “thought,” and “intellect,” and “reason.” But there is no getting over the broad fact that it is the *body* and not the mind, and the wants of the body, by which the world is governed.

Statesmen and politicians know this full well, and often to their cost. Their tenure of office depends in great measure on the contentment of the people. And who does not know that nothing creates popular discontent so much as high prices of corn, and general dearness of food for the *body*?

Merchants and ship owners, of all men in the world, ought to know the importance of the body. Corn, and meat, and sugar, and tea, to feed the body,—cotton and wool to clothe the body,—what are these but the very articles which create the main portion of the commerce, and carrying trade, and business of a nation?

It would be waste of time to multiply arguments on this subject. In the face of such facts as these, it is the highest wisdom, both in the Church and the State, never to forget the importance of the body. To promote cleanliness, and temperance, and social purity,—to aim at the highest standard of sanitary arrangements,—to encourage every movement which can increase the health and longevity of a people,—to provide as far as possible good air, good water, good dwellings, and cheap food for every man, woman, and child in the land,—these are objects which deserve the best attention both of the Christian and the man of the world.

There is a mine of deep truth in the saying, “*Sanitas sanitatum: omnia sanitas.*” Whatever students and bookworms and philosophers may please to say, there is an indissoluble connection between the bodies and minds and souls of mankind. You cannot separate them. Not one of the three can be safely neglected. The Church, which only cares for saving souls, and the State, which only cares for educating minds, are both making a vast mistake.

Happy is that country where body, soul, and mind are all cared for, and a continual effort made to provide for the health of all three.

II. The other remark which I wish to make is this: *Observe the honour which our Lord Jesus Christ has put on the medical profession.*

It is a noteworthy fact, to begin with, that one of the four men whom our Lord chose to write the Gospels was a “physician.” Not only does ecclesiastical history, with almost entire harmony, tell us this, but there is strong internal evidence in St. Luke’s writings to confirm it. An ingenious writer has lately published a book which proves that many Greek phrases and expressions used in the third Gospel and the Acts are thoroughly medical, and such as a physician of that age would use in describing the symptoms of disease, or of returning health. In short, there is little room for doubt that out of the twenty-seven books which make up the little volume of the New Testament, two of the longest come from the pen of a medical man.

But, after all, there is another fact of even deeper significance which demands attention. I refer to the very large number of the cases of sickness and disease which our Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to heal during the period of His earthly ministry. No doubt, if He had thought fit, He could have shown His Divine power, and proved His Divine mission, by miracles like the plagues of Egypt, by calling fire from heaven like Elijah, by causing the earth to open and swallow up His enemies, as Dathan and Abiram were swallowed up in the wilderness. But He did not do so. The great majority of His wondrous works were works of mercy wrought on the suffering *bodies* of men and women. To cure the leprous, the dropsical, the palsied, the fevered, the lame, the blind, was the continual labour of love of Him who was “God manifest in the flesh.” To use the deep and mysterious words quoted from Isaiah by St. Matthew, “Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses” (Matt. viii. 17).

Now why was this? Why did our Lord adopt this line of action, and habitually condescend to devote time and attention to the humbling and often loathsome ills to which flesh is heir? Partly, I believe, to remind us that He came to remedy the fall of man; and that of all the consequences of the fall, none cause so much trouble, and affect all ranks and classes of society so thoroughly, as sickness. But partly also, I believe, to teach Christians in every age, that to minister to the sick is eminently a work of mercy according to Christ’s mind. He that endeavours to check disease, to alleviate suffering, to lessen pain, to help the self-curative powers of nature, and to lengthen life, may surely take comfort in the thought, that, however much he may fail, he is at any rate walking in the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth. Next to the office of him who ministers to men’s souls, there is none really more useful and

honourable than that of him who ministers to the soul's frail tabernacle — the body.

He that thinks of these things will not wonder that the rise and progress of Christianity in every age has done much for the office of the physician. That nothing was known of medicine or surgery before the Christian era, it would be unfair to say. The names of Podalirius and Machaon in Homer, the better-known, less mythical name of Hippocrates (no mean observer of symptoms), are familiar to students. But it is a certain fact that the sick were never so systematically cared for, and the medical profession so honourably esteemed, as they have been since the Church of Christ leavened the world. The builders of the Parthenon and Colosseum built no infirmaries. You will find no ruins of hospitals at Athens or Rome. The infidel, the sceptic, and the agnostic may sneer at Bible religion if they please, but they cannot get over the fact that medical and surgical knowledge have always advanced side by side with the gospel of Christ. Clever and ingenious as the heathen inhabitants of India, China, and Japan are at this day, it is notorious that their acquaintance with anatomy and materia medica, and their treatment of bodily diseases, are beneath contempt.

Few of us, perhaps, realize what an immense debt we owe in Christian England to the medical profession. How much the comfort of our lives depends on it, and how vastly different is the condition of those whose lot is cast in a heathen country, or an uncivilized back settlement of a colony! He that has a good servant in his house, and a good doctor within reach, ought to be a thankful man.

Fewer still, I believe, realize what enormous strides medicine and surgery have made in the last two centuries, and are continually making in the present. Of course death still reigns, and will reign until Christ returns in glory. Kings and their subjects, rich and poor, all alike die, and will die until death is swallowed up in victory. And no marvel! The human body is a frail and delicate machine.

“Strange that a harp of a thousand strings should keep in tune so long.”

But that the duration of life in this age is greatly increased by the advance of medical science, and that many diseases are preventable, manageable, or curable, which were once always thought fatal, are facts entirely beyond dispute. Let any one read Baxter's semi-medical sermon in the *Morning Exercises*, and observe his receipts for hypochondria and dyspepsia, and then say whether he ought not to be thankful that he lives in the nineteenth century. The mere fact that our ancestors knew nothing of quinine, chloroform, vac-

cination, the carbolic spray, the stethoscope, the laryngoscope, the ophthalmoscope, or the right treatment of the lunatic, the idiot, the deaf and dumb, and the blind, is a fact that speaks volumes to any intelligent mind.

None, perhaps, have such constant opportunities of seeing the value of a medical man's services as Christian ministers. We meet them in sick-rooms, and by the side of death-beds, and we know the self-denying labour which their profession entails, and the ungrudging and often unpaid attention which the sick almost invariably receive at their hands.

There ought always to be the utmost harmony and friendly feeling between the two professions. The sick-room is the common ground on which they meet. On that ground they can greatly help one another. I think the minister of religion can help the medical man by teaching his patients the paramount importance of obedience to orders, of submission to advice, of attention to rules about diet and sanitary matters, and by encouraging patience and quietness of spirit. I am sure the doctor can help the minister by gently and wisely reminding those whose cases are past recovery, that it is their duty to accept the inevitable, that this life is not all, that they have souls as well as bodies, and that it is wise to look calmly at their latter end, and a world to come, and to prepare to meet God.

There is much in common in the two professions, the one in caring for men's bodies, and the other in caring for men's souls. We ministers cannot command success. Too often we visit in vain, exhort in vain, advise in vain, preach in vain. We find that spiritual life and death are in higher hands than ours. The doctor finds that under the most skilful treatment people will die, and we find that under the most faithful teaching many continue unmoved in conscience, and dead in sins. Like the doctor, we often feel our ignorance, cannot diagnose or discern symptoms, and feel doubtful what to say. Both ministers and medical men have great need to be clothed with humility. But I trust, to use the words which were placed on the tomb of Sir Henry Lawrence, we both "try to do our duty," and persevere. Duties are ours, but events are God's.

That there never may be wanting in Great Britain a continual supply of able, right-minded, faithful medical men, and that we who minister to the soul, and those who minister to the body, may always work harmoniously together, and help one another, is my earnest prayer.