

# ***HISTORY AND JUDGMENT***

## **Study 10**

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If we don't change our course, we'll end up where we're headed.  
— Chinese proverb

Down one road lies disaster, down the other utter catastrophe. Let us hope we have the wisdom to choose wisely. — Woody Allen

Perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment (1John 4:18b).

## **YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW**

In our reading of *The Justification of God*<sup>1</sup>, from 1917, it is important that we distill the wisdom P.T. Forsyth imparts, and give application to the unique circumstances of our own day. Theology is best when it is doxology.<sup>2</sup> Praise to God – in thinking and serving anew amidst today's world - is the life we are called to share in. Forsyth saw the necessity of engaging in public affairs:

It has always been the bane of theology when it has been isolated from the course of public affairs, and left neutral to the issues of history – when it has been otherworldly.<sup>3</sup>

Take one example: oil consumption is one of our many pressing global problems – where injustice, politics, greed and war, are very real factors to reckon with.

*March 31st, 2008* "It's no secret anymore that for every nine barrels of oil we consume, we are only discovering one." - *The BP Statistical Review of World Energy*. The world is addicted to oil. In just 8 years, it's projected the world will be consuming nearly 50,000 gallons of oil every second. By that time, the world won't be able to meet the projected demand... for one simple reason: We're using up oil at breakneck speed.<sup>4</sup>

Investors are advised to put their hopes and dollars into a variety of other forms of energy stocks, including solar power, steam-engines (water), nuclear fuel, and so on. But can a sage of yesteryear, like P.T. Forsyth, be of any use to us at this point? These were not his issues. Does his theology – his thought and Word concerning God carry any weight here? We say, 'yes, it certainly does'. Thoughtfulness, trust, prayer and a working theodicy, are meant to serve us well, as we address the crisis in life and any overwhelming set of worldwide, or local circumstances in which we find ourselves placed.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: To order a copy of Forsyth's book - <http://www.newcreation.org.au/books/covers/209.html>

<sup>2</sup> Doxology – i.e. Praise to God (from Greek words, 'doxa' (glory) and 'logos' (word) - word of glory!

<sup>3</sup> P. T. Forsyth, *The Justification of God*, NCPI, 1988, p. 188

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.energyandcapital.com/>

## FACING A FOREBODING FUTURE WITHOUT FEAR

Fear of what may happen in the future *affects* the way we live out our lives. Fear itself produces certain *effects* in the course of history. Self-preservation, greed, fear of other nations, cultures and of people generally; fear of engaging in community life, turning in upon oneself<sup>5</sup>, the quest for meaning (in all the wrong places), the pursuit of a self-styled happiness, frustration and anger at the inability to achieve personal goals, and various reckless and harmful forms of personal and community abuse, hastening onwards unabated – such issues are very much the staple diet of many of today's people. Underneath it all is the lifelong *fear of death* (Hebrews 2:15).

Undoubtedly the scientific, industrial and political search for practical and appropriate solutions must continue. But can overwhelming concern with such fear, be the wisest, and most urgent of pursuits? Proverbs 9:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding". In his writings, Forsyth has been calling his readers to *unearth more* in the cross of Christ, than they have previously seen or known. Within *our current history*, we need to see the outworking of the cross as it bears upon the issues and thinking of all people within our global village:

The non-intervention of God bears very heavy interest, and He is greatly to be feared when He does nothing. He moves in long orbits, out of sight and sound. But He always arrives. Nothing can arrest the judgment of the Cross, nothing shake the judgment-seat of Christ. The world gets a long time to pay, but all the accounts are kept—to the uttermost farthing. Lest if anything were forgotten there might be something unforgiven, unredeemed, and unholy still.<sup>6</sup>

God has acted in human history, in grace, in Jesus Christ. The persistent deafness of the world to God, and to the redeeming message of the gospel is the reason for so much fear. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love (1 John 4:18). Unbelief in the gospel, and the refusal of Love's given solution weighs heavily upon the global conscience, as also upon the national conscience, and of course, the personal conscience.

P. T. Forsyth never wrote a book on the conscience, but few seem to have understood it better than he did. He said that conscience makes us man, makes us one, and makes us eternal. He appears to be saying that of all creatures man is endowed the conscience, and without conscience he is not truly man. He is also saying that it is one of the most dynamic factors common to every human being, and that transcending class, language, race and creed it gives us that by which we can understand humanity - at least on the moral level. That is why Forsyth also said, '*That which goes deepest to the conscience goes widest to the world*'. Nothing we do of right or wrong can relate only to this world, but to eternity, i.e. sin and wrongdoing meets its judgement in the eternal sphere, and not just in this world.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Martin Luther's definition of sin – 'to be turned in upon yourself'

<sup>6</sup> Forsyth, p. 207

<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey C. Bingham, *The Conscience, Conquering or Conquered?*, NCPI, Blackwood, 1980, 2001, p. xi

## THE CROSS: DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

People still discuss the cross of Jesus. They reflect on the meaning of it all.

While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them but their eyes were kept from recognizing him (Luke 24:15-16)

The Risen Jesus is present amidst the discussion, of life, and the cross, and its meaning, and it is He who interprets the things concerning himself, to those who need to know and to understand. Sharply admonished, new cross-insight evokes *great joy* (Luke 24:52).

Then he said to them. "Oh how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all the prophets have declared?" (Luke 24:25b)

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them all the things about himself in all the scriptures (Luke 24:27).

It is so important that we discuss the cross in our present-day context. There are five categories under which Forsyth discusses *History and Judgment*. Briefly, we note them:

### 1. Scriptural 2. Evangelical 3. Philosophical 4. Critical 5. Ironical<sup>8</sup>

#### 1. SCRIPTURAL

Forsyth points us to a Psalm often used in churches as a call to worship, to *sing a new song to the Lord*. Psalm 96 finishes with the theme of joy, as *all the trees of the forest sing for joy* (Psalm 96:13b) at the Lord's coming *to judge* the world with *righteousness*:

...and so God takes His own text, and preaches, to those that have ears to hear, judgment. His great sermons on crucial occasions are long, and deeply theological. Perhaps now we may grow in the mood to listen, and the skill to read His signs in the times. What is the Christian theology of public judgment? It is not great nations only, but modern civilisation that is at the bar. Does it stand before the judgment-seat of Christ?

In the Bible, in Christianity, the idea of judgment is not that of a remote and unearthly *dies iræ*<sup>9</sup>—a notion which has become a demoralising dream, withdrawing religion from the midst of life. Judgment is the visitation of a Saviour. It comes into affairs. It means less destruction than reconstitution. It has a note of joy in it, the joy of harvest.<sup>10</sup>

Once again, Forsyth reminds us that the judgment in history is one of *dilemma, choice and crisis*, and **not** that of *civilised progress* and development. Christ's death and resurrection is a movement, a build-up, to a crescendo of judgment, *closing one world, opening another*. He refers to the parable of the vineyard, and the last judgment being the last of a long train: *Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son'*

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<sup>8</sup> Forsyth, *The Justification of God*, p. 188-203

<sup>9</sup> *dies iræ* – the first words of a medieval Latin hymn describing the Last Judgment (literally 'day of wrath')

<sup>10</sup> Forsyth, p. 188-189

(Matthew 21:37). The final wicked deed of crucifying Jesus was the last judgment. 'But it always means the dawn of the kingdom more than the doom of the world.'<sup>11</sup>

## 2. EVANGELICAL

Forsyth has said, 'theology means thinking in centuries', and this he does himself, when he surveys the *Dark Ages*, noting the missing element of teleology,<sup>12</sup> and its detrimental effects through the course of history. Theology lost the sense of history.

It is the mark of the Dark Ages and the Churches millennial slumber that theology departed from its historic base and **lost the sense of history** (*my emphasis*) in the wilds of speculation. This base and this sense we are only now recovering for faith. The first Christian principle was right, whatever we think of its first form. High history is not possible without the teleology which a final judgment supplies for all other crises. And Christianity alone, by this article of faith, makes a history of the world possible. It restores theology to history, and history to theology.<sup>13</sup>

He also notes that excluding the idea of atoning judgment leads to indifference, apathy and disbelief of judgment, and a light sense of spiritual wickedness.

That indifference is the symptom of a state of things in which the Cross loses its searching and universal, its ethical and public quality, and comes to be admired as heroic sacrifice, or sweetened to the taste of the piety of religious groups.<sup>14</sup>

There is an enormous amount of pessimism among people today. Forsyth is right to note that *pessimism ...is erected into a creed upon the debris of the creeds of hope. So ends a religion of probabilities*. Uncertainty denies Christ's Victory. It fails to see Jesus' significance, in his death for decisive judgement. Unbelief in what God has done, results in pessimism. A pessimist, being one who always looks on the worst side of life!

Evangelical faith has no timidity, concerning the basic facts, even amidst many doubters.

For faith we must have facts, and facts eternal and sure. We must have a fact, which ensures all the future because it contains it, creates it, and gives us the final settlement of the moral soul in advance.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Facts Eternal and Sure***

For Christian faith ...that fact is Christ's Cross, as a greater fact than all history, for which now all history moves. He is the last judgment, yesterday, today, and forever, the goal and justification of all the devious, dreadful ways of earth. The deepest thing, whether in progress or catastrophe, is its contribution to His denouement.

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<sup>11</sup> Forsyth, *The Justification of God*, p. 189

<sup>12</sup> Teleology - we have previously discussed in Study 3 - *Towards the Certain Goal*.

<sup>13</sup> Forsyth, p. 190

<sup>14</sup> Forsyth, p. 190

<sup>15</sup> Forsyth, p. 193

Christ in His Cross is the theodicy of history, its crisis, its essential, and final, and glorious justice.

We noted in the previous study the importance, to our understanding, of Christ's Words from the cross - *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* (Matthew 27:46; Psalm 22) – the essence of these words really must be grasped. Geoffrey Bingham has written:

If he were not separated, then would sin have been really dealt with? If this alienation of the human spirit from God is the very essence of wrath, then was God's wrath really poured out on the Cross upon sin, and was it borne by Christ, if he were not forsaken? The answer must surely be, 'The wrath was poured out upon sin, and for man's sake he was forsaken'... What we fail to understand is the utter desolation that is indicated by the cry. If to be forsaken is the utterness of suffering (and it is), then he actually has to suffer this. If some special knowledge tells him he is not *essentially* forsaken, then he does not suffer to the full. Let us understand this: *he did suffer to the full*. Failure to understand this cry is failure to understand the terrible nature of sin and the high wrath of the eternal God, who must destroy evil by His burning action of holiness.<sup>16</sup>

Jesus must know and bear the dreadful anger of God upon all sin, once, for all. It is only as a person by the Spirit, sees these facts that they can be truly at peace.

He must, as man, be taken from the Holy Presence and go out into the place of the damned. He must suffer it all, or not at all.<sup>17</sup>

Leon Morris concurs regarding this actual fact of forsaken-ness. The meaning of Jesus words, are that *he was cut off from the Father*.<sup>18</sup>

Another scholar, R. W. Dale would never allow that Christ only *felt* forsaken. He said,

'I shrink from saying that even in my calmest and brightest hours I have a knowledge of God and the ways of God which is truer than Christ had, even in His agony. I dare not stand before His cross and tell Him that even for a moment He imagines something concerning God which is not a fact and cannot be a fact'.<sup>19</sup>

Forsyth alerts us to the wrecked world, where the mending requires something very deep:

Things are so profoundly out of joint that only something deeper than the wrecked world can mend them, only a God of love and power infinite, making his sovereignty good once for all, though mountains are cast into the sea. The only theodicy is not a system, but a salvation; it is God's own saving Act and final judgment, incarnate historically and personally. The Cross of Christ, eternal and universal, immutable and invincible, is the moral goal and principle of nations and

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<sup>16</sup> Geoffrey C. Bingham, *Christ's Cross Over Man's Abyss*, NCPI, Blackwood, 1987, p. 68

<sup>17</sup> Bingham, *Christ's Cross Over Man's Abyss*, p. 70

<sup>18</sup> Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1965, p. 45

<sup>19</sup> R. W. Dale, *The Atonement*, London, 1902, p. xli

affairs.

If it seem ridiculous to say that a riot and devilry of wickedness like war is still not out of the providence of Christ's holy love, it is because we are victims of a prior unfaith. It is because we have come to think it a theological absurdity to say that the Cross of Christ outweighs for God in awful tragedy, historic moment, and eternal effect a whole world ranged in inhuman arms. We do not really believe that it is Christ, 'crucified to the end of the world' (as Pascal says), that pays the last cost of war. That God spared not His own Son is a greater shock to the natural conscience than the collapse of civilisation in blood would be.

Again, Forsyth has nailed it. We too, in our day, *have come to think it a theological absurdity to say that the Cross of Christ outweighs for God in awful tragedy, historic moment, and eternal effect a whole world ranged in inhuman arms.* Theologians, preachers and churches – we have all too often failed to declare the whole counsel of God in this matter. We have been slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

For civilisation may deserve to collapse, if only because it crucified the Son of God, and crucifies Him afresh. But if God spared not His own Son, He will spare no historic convulsion needful for His kingdom. And if the unspared Son neither complained nor challenged, but praised and hallowed the Father's name, we may worship and bow the head.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. PHILOSOPHICAL

The Church, with a last judgment remote, and an individualist salvation by private bargain at hand, has much failed in relating the Cross to history. And in so far it has been untrue to its Bible.

If the Church fails to relate the cross satisfactorily to history, where does it fail?

The bane of popular Christianity is that it has severed the Cross from the moral principle for which the world is built, from the creative leaven in active things, and has made it a second best, a supplementary device for the rescue of a section of mankind who occupy to it a certain relation of greater or less piety. Salvation, the Church, the kingdom become but the proceeds from a good sale of the wreck of creation.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Creation – the key to open our understanding the Cross*

Do we know and proclaim the wonder and joy of creation, redeemed in Christ? This is essential wisdom, at the heart of the gospel (Ephesians 3:9). Creation, our home, is the dwelling place of God, in Jesus Christ. The cross is *not a supplementary device*. It is at

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<sup>20</sup> I believe it may have been David Brainerd, 1718-1747 (the missionary mentioned last week), who was able to praise and hallow the Father's name even as his own family members were murdered, as he was dragged in a tortuous manner across a prairie, for his testimony to Jesus; all in the service of bringing the gospel to the North American Indians in Delaware.

<sup>21</sup> Forsyth, p. 198

the heart of God's purpose for creation. All too often the Church has held an escapist theology – a dualist approach to creation - whereby physicality is seen as inferior to spirituality. Many consider this creation should be abandoned to the rubbish dump, while a redeemed section of humanity fly away, to some safer, more homely place, for eternity. Where does that thinking really connect with present history? It doesn't. As such, it is no real gospel, for creation in primary, and not salvation. *If creation fails, God fails.*<sup>22</sup>

Christianity does believe in a solution already real, however unseen. We now live amid the evolution of the final crisis and last judgment of the sempiternal<sup>23</sup> cross. All the moral judgment moving to effect in the career of souls, societies, and nations is the action of the Cross as the final, crucial, eternal Act of the moral power of the universe.<sup>24</sup>

We do well to recognise God's judgments taking place now. We may hold a general faith that there is a fundamental distinction between right and wrong. But we are given in Christ something far more decisive than that. A frame of mind of blessed assurance, and confidence arises because God is the decisive Judge. There is finality to this age.

It is well that we should know that, as men or nations, we are daily registering our own judgment in the character our conduct is laying down, that we are creating our own Karma, that we are writing two copies of our life at once—one of them, through the black carbon of time and death, in the eternal. And it elevates the whole conception of history to view it as at bottom the action, almost automatic, and therefore certain, of the divine judgment—so long as we can rise to think it is moral *action* with an end, and not incessant moral *process*.

All that is to the good. But the tendency is to lose, in the moral automatism, the sense of judgment as more than sure nemesis, as the work of a living and saving God who has already said His last and endless word in this kind. We tend to miss in judgment the incessant reaction of His personal and absolute holiness as the last creative power in all being, and the organising principle of its slow evolution through time. We are led to think more of the judgment than of the Judge. It then becomes hard, very often, to believe in judgment, or trace the justice at work at all. And we come out of the welter, perhaps, with little more at best than a general faith that there is a distinction between right and wrong, possibly even a fundamental one, but with no assurance which will win at last, whether the far end of it all will be a kingdom of God or a kingdom of Satan.<sup>25</sup>

The goal of creation, the regeneration, the new creation, the expulsion of all that is evil, the arrival of that which God always had in mind, gives present history deep significance. It is now the moment to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far-gone, the day is near (Romans 13:11b-12a).

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<sup>22</sup> See Geoffrey C. Bingham, *Creation and the Liberating Glory*, NCPI, Blackwood, 2004, p. 73

<sup>23</sup> *sempiternal* - having no known beginning and presumably no end; "the dateless rise and fall of the tides"; "time is endless"; "sempiternal truth"; enduring forever;

<sup>24</sup> Forsyth, p. 198

<sup>25</sup> Forsyth, p. 196

#### 4. CRITICAL

This section was particularly difficult for me to summarise. Forsyth makes reference to a famous phrase of the German philosopher and historian, Frederick Schiller: *Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht*. It means 'History is the true criticism and last judgment of the world'. Forsyth concurs that this 'is a great word'. But requests due caution:

But it may hide in it also a great fallacy. It may easily come to mean what is so false in recent pragmatism—that efficiency is the test of right, that only clear fitness survives, that nothing is to be held true till you see it works, that the only success is success. It does not do justice to the Christian idea.<sup>26</sup>

Many people, and politicians in particular are mere pragmatists: If something works, it must be right. The problem of this sort of thinking is that it leads us to see the world as simply an immediate 'cause and effect' environment. Here, the active role of God is almost *superfluous*. At best he becomes the Trustee of the moral order. People think of the world, then, as *detached* from God. Everything becomes relative. We speak of values, but there is no measuring stick. There is no longer any standard by which to measure whether things are improving or not. Life grows more complex... more busy, but more meaningless. Forsyth says: *It has nothing to crystallise on.*<sup>27</sup> Sounds hauntingly familiar. It describes much of our way of life, as it is lived in Australia, 2008, doesn't it?

The ethical process in mere history has no real closes. The books are never made up. To what does it all move?<sup>28</sup>

Forsyth saw the danger of this approach, outworking in WW1, and well in advance of WW2. Already there were loud political appeals to a tutelary God – a guardian spirit –, but entire silence about Christ, his judgment or His kingdom. The result is tribalism.

What is the end result of such an approach today? Multiculturalism, at its best can be colourful, joyful, varied and mutually enriching. But *mere* multiculturalism, as a stable way of structuring society and community, may be a very dangerous, or disastrous. It is a world-Christ who is given *for* all nations of the world - for the blessing of all peoples.

#### 5. IRONICAL

In many cases in life the important thing is not what is said but what is not said. That is what the experienced man is most concerned to interpret. That is what he comes either to distrust or to rely on most.<sup>29</sup>

This final section reminds me of a title '*Finally comes the Poet*', by Walter Brueggemann. Forsyth's dense theology becomes more like poetry. And we can grasp it!

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<sup>26</sup> Forsyth, p. 199-200

<sup>27</sup> Forsyth, p. 203

<sup>28</sup> Forsyth, p. 201

<sup>29</sup> Forsyth, p. 203

When we have to reckon men up, or to revise our interviews with them, we may attach most weight not to the words we heard but to the one remark we expected but it did not come.<sup>30</sup>

Forsyth then builds upon this point with an illustration from creation:

It is so in nature. The stillness of the night often seems more full and more impressive than the bustle of the day. Its calm is a rebuke, or at least a monition, to the day's passion and the day's haste; the repose is full of subtle question. So as we rise in the scale and business of life the silence may be more eloquent and even active than the sound; and more is meant by reserve than by response. The criticism by silence can be as severe as any.

And then come a series of great insights he has been building toward - God's laughter and smiles: (taking nothing from the seriousness of all our studies!)

God's judgment on things and in things is not absent because it is still, and it is not out of action because it is not obvious nor obtrusive.<sup>31</sup>

If God do not yet intervene on earth He sits in heaven—sits and laughs. And His smile is inscrutable, and elusive, only not cruel: the smile of endless power and patience, very still, and very secure, and deeply, dimly kind. The judgment of God can be as lofty and sleepless as the irony of heaven over earth, or the irony of history upon earth. 'Thou didst deceive me and I was deceived.'<sup>32</sup>

Heine<sup>33</sup> spoke daringly of the Aristophanes<sup>34</sup> of heaven. But that is not the smile that any Christian can see or credit over us. Yet it need not be either faithless or foolish to speak of the Socratic heavens. God seems so slow, so clouded, so fumbling in His ways; and His questions that do reach us seem so irrelevant, so naive—but they are so dangerous.

The powers that delay but do not forget are not simple, impotent, or confused as they tarry. If fire do not fall from the heavens they yet rain influence down. There is a world of meaning in their gaze upon men whom they do not yet smite.

It is neither a stony nor a bovine<sup>35</sup> stare.  
All the world is being summed up by that bland sky.  
Its light is invisibly actinic<sup>36</sup> on earth.

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<sup>30</sup> Forsyth, p. 203

<sup>31</sup> Forsyth, p. 203-204; the other quotes that follow are from pp. 204-207, formatted for ease of reading.

<sup>32</sup> Jeremiah 20:7 – Jeremiah's complaint against God.

<sup>33</sup> Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), a German poet who lived during the times of the French Revolution and the wars of Napoleon; his lyrics have inspired such composers as Mendelssohn, Schubert, and Schumann.

<sup>34</sup> *Aristophanes* - An Athenian playwright, some consider him the greatest ancient writer of satirical comedy. Surviving plays include: *The Clouds* (423) and *Lysistrata* (411).

<sup>35</sup> I think he means rather docile; certainly the stare of our brown-eyed Jersey cows was quite intelligent.

<sup>36</sup> *Actinic*: a display caused by chemical charges produced by radiant energy - especially in the visible and ultraviolet sector of the spectrum

What seems distance and irrelevance, weak and unweeting<sup>37</sup>, may well put us on our guard. The heavens are not so simple as they seem, nor is God so mocked as He consents to appear, and to appear for long. He gives our desire, and it shrivels our soul. Of our pleasant vices He is making instruments to scourge us. The passions, ambitions, and adventures of men go on to achieve their end through a riot of worldliness, wickedness, defiance, and guilt; but they are after all the levers for a mightier purpose than theirs, which thrives on their collapse. The wrath of man works the righteousness of God. Satan's last chagrin is his contribution to God's kingdom. The great agents of the divine purpose have often no idea of it. 'Cyrus, my servant.' [See Isaiah 45:1, 4]

One thing they do with all their might, but God accomplishes by them quite another. Julius Caesar never intended nor conceived the Roman Church; but it came by him, and he was murdered. His ambition was his death, but his great function was a thing vaster than the Roman Empire.

There is a certain truth (if we will be very careful with it) in the early Christian fantasy that Satan was befooled by the patient naïveté of Christ. That is the irony of history—when the very success of an idea creates the conditions that belie it, smother it, and replace it. Catholicism becomes the Papacy. The care for truth turns to the Inquisition. The religious orders, vowed to poverty, die and rot of wealth. A revival movement becomes a too, too prosperous and egoistic Church. Freedom as soon as it is secured becomes tyranny. Misfortune need not be judgment, nor need defeat; but victory may be. And defeat may be victory. The irony seems most cruel when it overtakes one who is the slave of no ambition but, like Socrates, is filled with the great idea, or like Christ with the Holy Ghost—men whose passion did not need to be overruled for the Kingdom of Heaven, but was purely and wholly engrossed with it. We are faced with the gigantic and ironic paradox of the Cross, which crushes the best to raise both them and the world.

If His words are acts, so is that slow smile. Heaven does not laugh loud but it laughs last—when all the world will laugh in its light. It is a smile more immeasurable than the ocean's and more deep; it is an irony gentler and more patient than the bending skies, the irony of a long love and the play of its sure mastery; it is the smile of the holy in its silent omnipotence of mercy. The stillness of those heavens that our guns cannot reach is not a circumambient indifference, it is an irony of the Eternal power in sure control of human passion, a sleepless judgment on it, an incessant verdict, very active, mighty, and monitory for those that have ears to hear—yea, very merciful. Greater than the irony in history is the irony over it. Great is the irony of persecution by the Church, of cruelty coming from culture, of corruption from the very success of purity, of a colossal egoism in the wake of much self-denial. But greater and other is the irony of those skies that look down on the whole earth and make its ironies little—look down, so inert yet so ominous, so still yet so eloquent, so vacant yet so charged with the judgment that the Cunctator Maximus is incessantly passing on man—penetrating by its slow insistence, wearing earth down with its monotone of doom. We have that sublime, and ironic, and ceaseless judgment in the irony of Christ before Pilate—all Heaven taking sentence from rude Rome, the chief outcast of the world judging the world with the last judgment of its God. ...He moves in long orbits, out of sight and sound. But he always arrives.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *Unweeting* - unwitting; not knowing; unaware; not intended

<sup>38</sup> Forsyth, p. 207