**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**ISAIAH-002. THE STUPIDITY OF GODLESSNESS by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider."*

*Isaiah 1:3*

This is primarily an indictment against Israel, but it touches us all. Doth not know i.e. has no familiar acquaintance with; doth not consider, i.e. frivolously ignores, never meditates on.

**I. This is a common attitude of mind towards God.**

Blank indifference towards Him is far more frequent than conscious hostility. Take a hundred men at random as they hurry through the streets, and how many of them would have to acknowledge that no thought of God had crossed their minds for days or months? So far as they are concerned, either in regard to their thoughts or actions, He is a superfluous hypothesis. Most men are not conscious of rebellion against Him, and to charge them with it does not rouse conscience, but they cannot but plead guilty to this indictment, God is not in all their thoughts.

**II. This attitude is strange and unnatural.**

That a man should be able to forget God, and live as if there were no such Being, is strange. It is one instance of that awful power of ignoring the most important subjects, of which every life affords so many and tragic instances. It seems as if we had above us an opium sky which rains down soporifics, go that we are fast asleep to all that it most concerns us to wake to. But still stranger is it that, having that power of attending or not attending to subjects, we should so commonly exercise it on this subject. For, as the ox that knows the hand that feeds him, and the ass that makes for his master's crib where he is sure of fodder and straw, might teach us, the stupidest brute has sense enough to recognise who is kind to him, or has authority over him, and where he can find what he needs. The godless man descends below the animals level. And to ignore Him is intensely stupid. But it is worse than foolish, for

**III. This attitude is voluntary and criminal.**

Though there is not conscious hostility in it, the root of it is a subconscious sense of discordance with God and of antagonism between His will and the man's When we are quite sure that we love another, and that hearts beat in accord and wills go out towards the same things, we do not need to make efforts to think of that other, but our minds turn towards him or her as to a home, whenever released from the holding-back force of necessary occupations. If we love God, and have our will set to do His will, our thoughts will fly to Him, as doves to their windows.

It is fed by preoccupation of thought with other things. We have but a certain limited amount of energy of thought or attention, and if we waste it, as much as most of us do, on things seen and temporal, there is none left for the unseen realities and the God who is eternal, invisible. It is often reinforced by theoretical uncertainty, sometimes real, often largely unreal. But after all, the true basis of it is, what Paul gives as its cause, they did not like to retain God in their knowledge.

The criminality of this indifference! It is heartlessly ungrateful. Dogs lick the hand that feeds them; ox and ass in their dull way recognise something almost like obligation arising from benefits and care. No ingratitude is meaner and baser than that of which we are guilty, if we do not requite Him in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways, by even one thankful heart-throb or one word shaped out of the breath that He gives.

**IV. This attitude is fatal.**

It separates us from God, and separation from Him is the very definition of Death. A God of whom we never think is all the same to us as a God who does not exist. Strike God out of a life, and you strike the sun out of the system, and wrap all in darkness and weltering chaos. This is life eternal, to know Thee; but if Israel doth not know, Israel has slain itself.