

God made us as part of a Creation that was not only unfulfilled, but incapable of fulfilling itself. These words are St Paul's. Why did he do this?

The result was that human beings are full of dreams they can't achieve, longings that seem destined to be disappointed. So instead of living our lives on the crest of a wave, our character is a sort of overshadowed and questioning one, always wondering how to make our way. The explorers, the experimenters, the scientists, the poets and artists have all been at their greatest in this mode.

We've been thinking about enslavement in these last days. What makes you a slave is that you are possessed, body and soul, that your humanity is cancelled in favour of a function in someone else's life. When we force our delicate, desire-filled human nature into a job-description we are (in some degree) enslaving it.

How should we regard this conflict between the spiritual infinity of our soul, if you like, and the need to bring in a wage packet by giving our work and talent to some wretched job?

Remember the words of Paul: I quote them in full:

It was for no fault on the part of Creation
that it was made unable to reach its object;
it was made so by God.

When the Jew say to Jesus

We are the sons of Abraham: we have never been anyone's slave

they deny the very heart of their Jewish faith, which is that God liberated a people for himself from bitter slavery to Pharaoh. What is vital about our enslavement is not where it comes from, but how we get out of it. And we do this not by an exercise of our own power or ingenuity, but by a free gift of God. Because that unreachable desire of ours is nothing but the desire for the divine life itself, which only God can give. To know this forces us to seek God, and our seeking of him infallibly brings the gift he has promised to those who seek him: the Holy Spirit, which makes us his divine sons and daughters.

So the character of humanity, here below, is of a condemned man walking in the heart of the furnace *unharméd*, with, at his side, Another, who looks like a Son of the Gods.