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# GAUDIUM CRUCIS

*By the Same Author :*

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A PANEL FROM THE WOODEN DOORS OF S. SABINA, ROME.  
FIFTH CENTURY.

[See p. x.]



# GAUDIUM CRUCIS

*A Meditation for Good Friday*

UPON

THE SEVEN WORDS FROM  
THE CROSS

BY

WALTER ✓ LOWRIE, M.A.

ASSISTANT MINISTER AT EMMANUEL CHURCH, BOSTON

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TO  
PAUL VAN DYKE  
IN MEMORY AND PLEDGE  
OF A PRECIOUS FRIENDSHIP



## PREFACE

**I**T is almost superfluous to say that these meditations are not presented in suitable form and compass for use in the church at the three hours' devotion on Good Friday. They are designed for private use, and chiefly for persons who are prevented from attending a public service. It is hoped, however, that the clergy may find here suggestions for their discourses. The greater part of the matter has actually been used by the Author for his Good Friday meditations. But the studies which are here offered are not appropriate to Good Friday alone; they touch, on many sides, the profoundest problems of the Christian faith; and, apart from the literary setting in which they are here introduced, they are relevant to many another season of the Church year.

The book is not a mere monograph upon "The Joy of the Cross," though this title indicates a predominant and pervading theme,—one which is too commonly ignored, and upon which it is always wholesome to reflect.

Many and various subjects have crept into this book which were no part of the original plan; for the writing of it proved a suggestive opportunity for an essay in *unsystematic* theology, — a sort of theology which is now needed, and which alone is now possible. Those problems in particular which are forced upon us by the suffering and death of Christ cannot profitably be contemplated except with such sympathy as this time and this mode of treatment engender. “The freezing reason’s colder part” is never so inept as when it is applied to Christ’s suffering death. We cannot afford to treat this tragedy only as a formal topic in a logical system.

The larger aim explains the greater size of this book, which is at the same time more concise, and perhaps more technical, than the title might lead one to expect.

The Author has endeavored to gather together, and present here in popular form, — unsystematically, yet not without consistency and precision, — some of the latest and most reliable results of gospel study. In a few cases authorities are expressly cited, for the sake either of justifying the Author from the reproach of originality, or of supplying proof which cannot readily be introduced in a popular work.

It may not be impertinent to remark that this

book is written from the standpoint of modern historical scholarship. It may therefore appeal to some who are repelled by the dogmatic attitude. May it also confirm them in the faith that JESUS IS THE LORD.

W. L.

KEENE VALLEY, IN THE ADIRONDACKS,  
September, 1904.

## NOTE ON THE FRONTISPIECE

THE substance of what I have endeavored to say in this little book with regard to the significance of the Cross in our Christian meditation is expressed graphically to the eye in the frontispiece, which represents a small panel from the wooden doors of the Church of S. Sabina at Rome, executed probably at the beginning of the fifth century. The theme is unique in Christian art, but it is thoroughly consonant with early Christian ideals. To us the ideal and the manner of its presentation are alike strange, and require a word of interpretation.

The Church is symbolized by a veiled woman in the attitude of prayer. She gazes upward at the Cross, which the Apostles Peter and Paul hold before her eyes (see Gal. iii. 1). They hold it not straight before her, as though it were level with her attainment, but above her at their utmost reach, as the highest object of her aspiration. The Cross here is the equal-armed Cross which had long been associated with the triumph of Christ's faith, and it is framed in a wreath or crown, — the Crown which is for evermore associated with the Cross. The singular thing is that the staff of the Cross is elongated upwards as by a tongue of flame. It points beyond the sun, the moon, the stars, and the vault of heaven to Christ, ascended, glorified, triumphant. The gaze of the Church is not to rest upon the Cross, but is directed through it to the Lord of glory, the *Alpha* and *Omega*, from beneath whose feet issues the fourfold river of life, who is glorified by the four angelic beasts of the Apocalypse, and stands in an attitude of more than royal grace, the teacher and the ruler of the world. The mystic scroll which he holds in his left hand bears the Greek letters which spell IXΘΥC "fish," and taken as an acrostic read, JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, SAVIOUR.

The design which decorates the cover of this book is copied from a beautiful stone relief of the fourth century, now in the Lateran Museum. It is to be noted that this represents the Cross as well as the Monogram of Christ, and is well-nigh the only form in which the Cross was depicted for a century or more after Constantine.



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# GAUDIUM CRUCIS

## FOREWORD

### THE SYMBOL OF OUR FAITH IS A CROSS—NOT A CRUCIFIX

**W**E dare not forget to-day that we venerate an empty Cross: it is empty forever of that Burden which once hung there, tortured, dying, dead; and banished, too, is that blankness of despair, that sad dismay and disillusion with which it was veiled until the first Easter morning. The Cross—not the Crucifix—is the symbol of Christianity. *An empty cross*

The tomb also is empty. We worship a risen Christ, an ascended Lord. Not *even* upon this day dare we say “It is Christ that died,” without adding with St. Paul, “Yea rather, that was raised from the dead.”<sup>1</sup> We should be false to the solemn sincerity of this memorial day if, with histrionic artifice, we should pretend to sorrow as the friends of Jesus once sorrowed when they had no hope,—as the Mother sorrowed, and St. John, *An empty tomb*

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 34.

or those others who forsook and fled, who *had* “hoped,” but could hope no more, “that it was he which should redeem Israel.”<sup>1</sup>

*Impotence  
of the  
human  
under-  
standing*

To-day, it is true, we dwell especially upon the act of sacrifice and upon Christ as Victim. And it is not strange if we find ourselves impotent — I do not say, to compass by the intellect this mystery, but — to rise in *feeling* to the height of this tragedy. As we have felt, or failed to feel, upon the Athenian acropolis, on the field of Marathon, or at Rome, so now upon Mount Calvary. Our human sensibilities, once pressed beyond their meagre range, recoil, react; and we stand futile, dumb, indifferent before what most should move us to wonder, joy, or grief. So stood St. John beside the Cross, replete with too much woe, as he is represented with just feeling in a famous picture of Munkacsy’s, — the Beloved Disciple himself, and beside the Cross, yet as remote in spirit from that tragedy as those others who “forsook and fled.” So we stand to-day. It is unavailing, it is worse than in vain, for us to strive to harrow up our feelings by the rehearsal of every wound of Jesus. The desire to put our finger into the prints of the nails and our hand in his side<sup>2</sup> is in us, as in St. Thomas, a sign of our unbelief in the spiritual Christ, “the Lord who is the Spirit.”<sup>3</sup> The risen Christ we may

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 21.

<sup>2</sup> John xx. 25.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 18.



no longer call "Rabboni," — therefore he saith, "Touch me not."<sup>1</sup>

We do not forget that men need the fire of *Restraint in depicting Jesus' sufferings* strong emotion to fuse their good intentions into an effective resolution. But we also may not forget, what the sober traditions of our race and of our Reformed religion should teach us, that the divine sacrifice is not made more significant by frantic effort to taste the details of slaughter. This indulgence and profanation is forbidden us, not only by *our* traditions, but by all that is sincerest, strongest, and most primitive in the example of the Church universal.

Few pictures of Fra Angelico's are better *Fra Angelico's Crucifixions* known than two Crucifixions in the convent of San Marco. Why is it that in both of them the pious friar has sketched the Burden upon the Cross so crudely that the eye cannot dwell upon it, but is forced to sink to the figures below, upon which he has expended the utmost of his art? It is because *he* knew that this mystery is not to be apprehended by fixing it with a bold gaze and steadfast stare; but with half-averted eye, as one sees best the faintest stars. And so the painter bids us read its meaning in the upturned face of Dominic, or — in the greater fresco of the chapter room — in the lives of the monks and martyrs of all ages grouped beneath the Cross.

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 16, 17.

*The Cross  
in the  
early  
Church*

Fra Angelico is here true to the spirit, though he breaks the letter of the primitive precept which forbade any representation of the Crucified. This anniversary of Christ's sacrifice was worthily celebrated for nearly six hundred years before any one presumed to depict the Crucifixion; and not for several centuries more was there tolerated such a thing as the representation of a suffering, a naked, a dead Christ. Even the Cross itself was never pictured to the eye during the first three centuries, and when it emerged in Christian use it was not in its realistic form, as the instrument of death, but as the symbol of victory and as the tree of life.

*Good  
Friday  
a festival*

Even this day is a *festal* day, upon which we commemorate not so much the death of Jesus as the work of our redemption. Or is it only in irony that we call it *Good Friday*; and does there still cleave to it in our minds the notion of ill luck, as though to-day a work had been unpropitiously commenced rather than victoriously accomplished?

*Humilia-  
tion and  
exaltation*

The crucifixion and death of Christ may justly be regarded as the lowest step of his humiliation. So St. Paul regards it. Yet he never for a moment forgets that "he that descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things."<sup>1</sup> And in the second

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 10.

chapter of his Epistle to the Philippians, where he most expressly develops the theme of Christ's humiliation, he also most expressly notes that this lowliest step proved *the* way to glory. Jesus made the vast descent from heaven to earth, from creator to creature; and again within the human sphere he descended to the lowliest human condition, to death itself, the common humiliation of men, and that in its uncommon and most shameful form—upon the cross. But this lowest step brings us with the full force of moral demonstration to the triumphant “*Wherefore* God also highly exalted him”; and that name which has been made glorious above every name is chiefly glorious because it is the memorial of his humiliation and the symbol of his loving service.

Plainly, therefore, St. John is in the right when he interprets the crucifixion of Christ, not as a humiliation, but as the conclusive and consummating glory of Jesus' revelation of the divine love.

There are two aspects which we may distinguish in the Crucifixion; but it is a dull and obtuse mind which must divide in order to distinguish. *St. Leo on the festival of the Passion* Must we have nothing but sorrow to-day and reserve all the joy for Easter? It was not so in the earliest time. In the beginning, this day of the Passion was also Easter Day, the Christian Passover, a single anniversary of the whole act of re-

demption. And even when the Sunday festival was distinguished from it, this Friday celebration did not for a long time lose all trace of its solemn gladness. It was the gloom of the Middle Ages which perverted it. We are more in harmony with the early than with the later Church of Rome when we appropriate the words of St. Leo, — Roman Pontiff and also Church Father, — which he uttered in a sermon upon the Passion, delivered on the Sunday which precedes this day: “Desired by us and dear to the whole world, the festival of the Sunday of the Passion is at hand which in the exultation of spiritual joys suffers us not to be silent.”

“Suffers us not to be silent.” These words suggest another paradox with which this anniversary confronts us, — not now the question whether grief or gladness, but whether speech or silence, best comports with the day. And so St. Leo pertinently goes on to say: “Wherefore, although it is difficult wisely, worthily, and aptly to discourse of this solemnity, nevertheless the priest is not free to deprive the people of the office of the sermon in respect to so great a mystery of divine mercy, since the very matter of it, unutterable as it is, bestows the faculty of speech, nor can that which is said be deficient, while it is never possible to say enough; — the senses labor, genius flags, eloquence fails; well it is for us that to

be duly sensible of the Lord's majesty is not required of us."

Standing to-day on Mount Calvary, we may well remember that heavenly voice which came to the disciples on the Mountain of Transfiguration, "This is my beloved Son, *hear him*." To-day we would listen to no other voice. If there must be a sermon, we had rather it were not quite a sermon, but something between speech and silence, — a meditation, but a meditation in which we all of us join, and in which, therefore, we need to be led by a common suggestion through the spoken word. To-day it needs no din of the voice to catch our ears, and no stirring appeal to touch our hearts, as in all the quietness of thought we listen to the Seven Words from the Cross. It is fanciful of us, I know, to take for our guidance just these seven "words" which we gather from the several Evangelists. But such chance guidance suits the mood in which we are fain to put away from us the rigor of logical system. When we stand before the incomprehensible we most are fain to symbolize, to speak as a child, with the implicit confession that we know only in part.

Again I say, we gaze to-day at a Cross which is not black with dread and disillusion, but radiant with a new teaching, a new hope, a new life; and we come in its light and peace to listen if the

risen Christ will speak some word to us from out the glory, "some sin uncloak, some stricter rule command."

We may take, as the motto of our whole meditation upon the Crucifixion, a word which St. John records as the foreword of the Passion, spoken in full prospect of the Cross :

NOW IS THE SON OF MAN GLORIFIED, AND  
GOD IS GLORIFIED IN HIM. — John xiii. 31.

# THE FIRST WORD

## MERCY

*And Jesus said:* FATHER, FORGIVE THEM ; FOR THEY  
KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO.

Luke xxiii. 34.

### THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO

**T**HIS word of Jesus, "they know not what they do," at once extenuates and condemns. Not know, when all their national history was a training for this sight? God had instructed them by all his prophets, "rising up early and sending them," as the striking Hebrew phrase puts it, and yet at this supreme moment it may be said of them, "they know not what they do." Is not this condemnation?

Condemnation the Jewish rulers might have accepted with composure from him whom they wronged; but this damning sentence uttered as an extenuating plea for mercy must have been unendurable. *They* not know what they did, when they were then in the act of accomplishing a long-cherished purpose, shrewdly planned and

*Condemnation  
and ex-  
tenuation*

*Popular  
view of  
Jesus' fate*

ably executed? Rather it is "this man" that knew not what he did. They have defeated his dream of being king, and all his other purposes of every kind are brought low in death.

Officially the rulers felt themselves offended by the superscription, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS," which Pilate insisted upon attaching to the Cross. They were willing, however, that Pilate should write, "*He said*, I am king of the Jews." They might well think that this manifest irony served only the more clearly to display the flagrant disproportion between the claim of power and the proof of impotence.

*Jesus  
steadfastly  
fulfilling  
his mis-  
sion.*

And the people — even such as had been attracted by his comfortable words, and impressed by the divine authority of his voice — even they judged him now by what is ever the crowd's secur-est warrant, — his failure: "He saved others; himself he cannot save."

Yet, all along, it was Jesus that was steadfastly accomplishing his mission, while the Jewish people, at cross-purposes with their prophetic hope, were accomplishing upon themselves an adverse and unlooked-for fate. Sheep they were, rending their shepherd; a nation crucifying their king. Not know what they did? — when Pilate himself put to them this very question, "Will ye crucify your king?" and their servile cry rang out, "We have



no king but Cæsar!" With that they repudiated, openly and wittingly, their claim of national independence; unwittingly they abjured the Messiah.

"And they cried out exceedingly, Let him be crucified"; and with that cry they raised Jesus to his throne. Again it was true of them that they knew not what they did.

Before this time Jesus had never announced expressly that he was Christ and King. Such an announcement was inexpedient so long as its real purport was sure to be misapprehended. And so, even when Jesus had led his Apostles to this grand discovery, he forbade them to publish it. It was not until this last hour that he could publicly appear as King. Even then he was not willing to assert what was still sure to be misconceived; but he was at the same time unwilling to disallow a claim which impending events were soon to reveal in its true character.

"Art thou a king then?" Pilate asks him. And Jesus replies, "*Thou sayest* that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."<sup>1</sup> This doubtless expresses St. John's interpretation of the function of the revealing Word. What is historically significant is the fact that Jesus, while he does not expressly dis-

<sup>1</sup> John xviii. 37.

avow the claim, only implicitly allows it, straight-way interpreting it in terms of a higher kingship than Pilate conceived. For to preach the truth is no part of the idea of an earthly kingship. And in fact, the substantial reality of this regal dominion over the minds of men Jesus might then claim as never before. As a preacher Jesus had never addressed such an audience: it was the world, Roman as well as Jew, — “for these things were not done in a corner.” Now that the clouds of misconception were about to be dissipated, he could claim an absolute and universal jurisdiction: “Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”

*King  
upon the  
Cross*

If, therefore, Jesus' throne was a pulpit, the Cross was throne and pulpit both. The whole shame of crucifixion lay in the publicity of its *exposition* of the crucified. But this very publicity constituted the glory of Jesus' Cross, where the divine love “made a show” of the despoiled powers of evil, “openly triumphing over them in it.”<sup>1</sup> When Jesus said, “And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto myself,” he was certainly thinking of his elevation to heaven, and of the power and dominion that were to be his upon his supernal throne, — thither he would draw men. But St. John can be convicted of no ineptitude when he interprets this word as a mysterious hint

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 15.

of the "manner of death he should die."<sup>1</sup> The Crucifixion was a lifting up. That was the essential shame of it. But it proved a lifting up to an incomparable dominance over the hearts of men.

The essential truth of St. John's interpretation of Jesus' answer to Pilate is attested by St. Matthew's Gospel. For the same question had already been put by Caiaphas. The word "Christ" is a figurative expression for king; the one word was natural to the Jew, the other to the Roman. Jesus' long silence before his accusers was finally broken when the high priest exclaimed, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ." Jesus answered, "*Thou* hast said it."<sup>2</sup> If he were to answer the question according to the meaning of the questioner, he could not say simply, *I am*; for what Caiaphas conceived the Christ must be — namely, an earthly potentate — that Jesus was not. Yet the claim that was to be his death warrant he could not now disavow. Therefore he replied, "Thou hast said it." Therefore, too, he introduces with an *adversative* particle what he has expressly to say about the sort of kingship his is. Jesus pro-

<sup>1</sup> John xii. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvi. 63, 64; cf. Mark xiv. 61, 62; Luke xxii. 67-69. Mark ignores the significance of Christ's half assent, while Luke seeks to render it intelligible by a paraphrase.

ceeded to supplement the half truth of Caiaphas' conception of the Christ with a notion which so vastly exceeded it that it must appear rather as a contrast than as a mere explication or addendum. "Nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." At this the high priest rent his garments, saying, "He hath spoken blasphemy." Blasphemy Jesus was adjudged to have uttered, not because he confessed to being the Christ, in Caiaphas' sense (for that was not a capital offence in Jewish law), but because he claimed a divine status; therefore the council exclaimed, "He is liable to the death penalty." With that sentence they thought to defeat an ambition after earthly rule (which he would not have), and they raised him to the transcendent dominion which he claimed. And they knew not what they did.

"Henceforth" is the word Jesus uses, — meaning, not at the end of the world, but "from this time on." In another place Jesus had said, "There are some of those standing here that shall not taste death till they see the Son of man entering upon his reign."<sup>1</sup> Jesus had no mind to claim the kingly title till he had entered upon his kingly estate and received the power which

*His reign  
began  
upon the  
Cross*

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi. 28.

matched his authority. The power which he “henceforth” exercised in the midst of his Church was proof of his exaltation. In one sense it is perfectly true to say that in the lowliness of his earthly ministry Jesus was not *yet* the Christ: he lacked the power and majesty of kingship; he had not yet entered upon his reign. None recognized this so clearly as Jesus. But it was the same Jesus that was to receive the dominion; and even while he was not manifested as king, or detected as such, his *right* to rule was ever the same. As Christ he was convicted by the council; as King he was condemned by Pilate; as King he was mocked by the soldiers; and the irony of the superscription designated him as King upon the Cross. Irony upon irony! He was King indeed. And they knew not what they did. This word sums up the tragic fate of the Jewish nation.

#### FATHER, FORGIVE THEM

Ignorance is sin, and it exacts its own proper penalties. But it is not in itself a mortal sin: *Venial and mortal sins* there is hope for those who “know not what they do.” The Old Testament already made a distinction of a sort between venial and mortal sin. The latter was called sinning “with a high hand,” — that is, with clear, resolute purpose of rebellion against God. We may detect a reflection of this

in that word of Jesus, where he says, "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man [perhaps he means here *man*, simply], it shall be forgiven him ; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come."<sup>1</sup> This stern saying Jesus uttered in holy wrath. For there were some that had seen in him the spirit of divine power and beneficent love, — healing the sick, casting out devils, raising the dead, — and that good Spirit, the giver of life, they had called Beelzebub.

*Sinning in  
ignorance*

Among the many that actively abetted or unprotestingly witnessed the Crucifixion there were doubtless some who saw the vision of divine holiness and love, and hated it because they loved the darkness. But there were more who knew not what they did. Was there such an one there, may we suppose, as Saul of Tarsus, a lover of righteousness, though not according to knowledge, from whose eyes the scales had not yet fallen? If not he himself, there were doubtless others about the Cross who had been indifferent or hostile to Jesus, yet became bondservants of Jesus Christ. We remember that hitherto even "his brethren" did not believe in him. For the Jews as a people, does not our Lord's petition give fundament for Browning's apology? —

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xii. 32 ; cf. Luke xii. 10 and 1 John v. 16.

“Thou ! if thou wast he, who at mid-watch came,  
 By the starlight, naming a dubious name !  
 And if, too heavy with sleep — too rash  
 With fear — O thou, if that martyr-gash  
 Fell on thee coming to take thine own,  
 And we gave thee the Cross, when we owed thee  
 the Throne —

“Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus.  
 But, the Judgment over, join sides with us !”

The Son of man acknowledged no personal enemies. And “Jesus Christ, yesterday and to-day the same — and forever,” counts only those his foes who hate righteousness and the Spirit of it. Such there are. But more there are who “know not what they do.” *Forgiveness for the Jews*

“The sign of Jonah the prophet,” to which Jesus once appealed,<sup>1</sup> signified in the first instance the unexpected repentance of the Gentiles ; but, above and beyond that, it bears enduring testimony to the incalculable mercies of God, to Gentile as well as Jew, but to Jew as well as Gentile. Hear what St. Paul, addressing the Gentiles, says of the Jews :<sup>2</sup> “For if thou wast cut out of that which is by nature a wild olive tree, and wast grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree : how much more shall these, which are the natural branches, be grafted into their own

<sup>1</sup> Luke xi. 29-32.

<sup>2</sup> Romans xi. 24, 12, 15.

olive tree?" "Now if their fall is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?" "For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what the receiving of them, but life from the dead?"

*By his  
own for-  
giveness  
Jesus con-  
firms his  
precepts*

With this word of personal pardon Jesus seals with a solemn *Amen* some of his hardest precepts, — which we are fain to interpret away, or to regard as sheer counsels of perfection, but which *he* announced as the mere condition of participation in his kingdom. Think of the implication of that prayer which he has taught us to take upon our lips: "Father, forgive us, as we forgive." With this word Jesus introduces a new note into human life, — not absolutely new, yet *so* new that it can be contrasted with all that was recognized as duty by "them of old time": "*But I* say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you: that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."<sup>1</sup> Such precepts would remain forever too hard for us, were it not — as the First Epistle of Peter says<sup>2</sup> — that "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow in his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 44, 45.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 21-23.



reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not."

"Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful."<sup>1</sup> A new note this in human life, far yet from being predominant, but throughout the world it sounds increasing like a bell. St. Stephen, who was the first to suffer in the likeness of his Lord, showed also a heart attuned in harmony with his when he cried, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."<sup>2</sup> Nor do we need to look back to stories of ancient saints for instances of men who beneath the cross have found power even to forgive their enemies.

JESUS REIGNS FROM THE TREE — AND AN ACT OF ROYAL CLEMENCY IS HIS FIRST WORD.

<sup>1</sup> Luke vi. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Acts vii. 60.

## THE SECOND WORD

### SALVATION AND JUDGMENT

*And one of the malefactors which were hanged with him railed on him, saying, Art thou the Christ? Save thyself and us. But the other answered and rebuking him said, Fearest thou not God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation, and we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said, Jesus, remember me when thou enterest upon thy reign. And he said unto him: VERILY I SAY UNTO THEE, TO-DAY SHALT THOU BE WITH ME IN PARADISE.*

Luke xxiii. 39-43. Cf. Mark xv. 32; Matt. xxvii. 44.

#### A COMFORTABLE WORD

*To die is  
to be with  
the Lord*

**T**HIS is a comfortable word which Jesus spoke to the dying thief. It carries also to us the glad assurance that in the moment of death we may expect — after no long waiting, but as it were “to-day” — to be with him. In whatsoever place it may be, enough to know that it is with him. There may await us a still fuller life beyond the resurrection: enough that at once we shall be with him. Whatever holy discipline may engage us in paradise, there shall be no dread waiting before we are with

the Lord. There is no fearful interval during which the human spirit, cast out of the body, "wanders in waterless places, seeking rest and finding none": but, as St. Paul says, we are of good courage, knowing that to be away from the body-home is to be at home with the Lord.<sup>1</sup> We have nowhere a more definite statement from Jesus about the life beyond death. It tells us little, but it tells us enough.

"When thou enterest upon thy reign," said the thief. "To-day," replied Jesus. We have nowhere else so definite a statement about the time when Christ shall receive his kingdom and begin to reign. We have seen that it could not be while he was hampered and humiliated by the restrictions of humanity in the flesh. We here learn that no sooner was he relieved of these restrictions than he entered upon his reign. Dear as the old relation was, when Jesus dwelt with his disciples in terms of social intercourse, it was replaced by a better, when he became the object of their religious faculty, defining and satisfying their yearning after intercourse with a supersensual society. When the Lord was apprehended as the Spirit,<sup>2</sup> his presence was experienced no longer merely with men but "in" them:<sup>3</sup>—*there* is where the kingdom of heaven is: *then* is when his

*Jesus' reign began with his death*

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 6-8.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18.

<sup>3</sup> John xv. 4, 5; xvii. 23.

true dominion began.<sup>1</sup> Jesus tells us very little about "the last things," either as they concern him or concern us, and much that we think we learn from him we learn only by gross literalism in interpreting his most figurative language.

*Faith,  
penitence,  
and for-  
giveness*

We speak of the "*penitent* thief"; but he is not so called in the Gospel, neither is there anything in the story to indicate such an experience as we associate with this word. True, he was doing penance, and that to the uttermost; and though he suffered it unwillingly, he yet acknowledged that it was "the due reward" of his deeds. But the same penance was exacted of the other thief, and it is implied that he too recognized it as condign. There is no doubt that Jesus' promise of blessedness implied the forgiveness of sin. It is also true that Jesus ever demanded repentance. It is therefore the more striking that he forgives sins without being asked. Whatever men asked trustfully of Jesus and importunately he was sure to give them. And so compassionate was he of their infirmities that, when through ignorance in asking they asked amiss, — craving bodily health when they most needed the healing of their souls, — he gave them unasked the greater boon with the less.

So it was with the man sick of the palsy.<sup>2</sup> It was only a mute appeal this man made even for heal-

<sup>1</sup> Luke xvii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Mark ii. 4, 5.

ing of the body. But louder than words spoke the faithfulness of his friends, who had overcome all obstacles to carry him into the house. Therefore "Jesus seeing *their* faith said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven" — which none of them had thought of asking. This is not the only man that has been saved by the faith of *others*. In any case it is faith that saves, not repentance. To a woman who showed the most extravagant signs of compunction and repentance Jesus said, "Thy *faith* hath saved thee." <sup>1</sup>

Repentance is a normal operation of faith, and in turn it is the birth-throe of a larger faith. But what Jesus values is not the process and the struggle, but the attainment. And this he counts most perfect in the child, where there is no struggle or process, but where faith is an intuition and trust an instinct. Moreover, though Jesus admired a great faith and desired a large faith, he exacted neither. What he did insist upon was a *whole* faith, though it were as small as a grain of mustard seed; and to that he responded — not with proportionate gifts, with small morsels of grace, but disproportionately — with his *whole* grace. The dying thief may have had a small faith, and a narrow faith, and a low sort of faith; but he assuredly had a whole faith, when he greeted Jesus upon the Cross as heir apparent to

*Whole  
faith  
answered  
by whole  
grace*

<sup>1</sup> Luke vii. 50.

a throne, — and in royal response Jesus gave him *all* that a subject can ask of a king.

### CHRIST AS SAVIOUR

*Last instance of Jesus' pastoral ministry*

Upon this word of pardon to the dying thief we must still linger long enough to note that it was the last instance in his earthly ministry of Jesus' direct and individual dealing with a sinful soul. The wonder of it is that neither his own agony, nor the task of accomplishing a universal redemption, could preoccupy his mind to the exclusion of one individual sinner's appeal.

*Jesus as pastor of souls*

*We* think chiefly of the indirect and universal significance of Jesus' ministry; but the Gospels represent him as a preacher of righteousness and salvation, directly and personally engaged in the cure of souls. In this aspect his ministry is comparable in kind with that of his disciples throughout all the Christian centuries. He is the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls.<sup>1</sup> He was a fisher of men before he enlisted Peter and Andrew in that calling.<sup>2</sup> How high a calling it is, we perceive most clearly from the fact that Jesus himself found in it his chiefest joy, and accounted it the highest performance of righteousness.

*His joy in preaching*

The joy which Jesus found in preaching the Gospel, and in witnessing its saving effects, is

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 25; Heb. xiii. 20; John x. 1-16.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. iv. 19; Mark. i. 17; cf. Luke v. 10.

shown in the first glad months of his public ministry in Galilee, when, in response to the urgency of the people clamoring to see him, he left the desert solitude with its divine companionship of prayer, and eagerly cried, "Let us go elsewhere into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth."<sup>1</sup>

This saying reminds us of Jesus' response to Pilate: "Thou sayest that I am a king: to this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."<sup>2</sup> The character of his kingship, as it was exercised in his earthly life, is expressed in the fact that he was a preacher. The preaching of the Gospel is a direct preparation for the kingdom, and although its work is accomplished unobserved, in the hearts of men, Jesus attaches to it a value hardly inferior to the ultimate manifestation of the kingdom in glory.

St. John is therefore justified in summing up the whole significance of Jesus in terms of the revealing Word. Nor does St. John suffer this lofty generality to obscure the fact of Jesus' joy in his personal and individual contact with men. The exclamation of Jesus by the well of Jacob sounds like a scrap from one of the Synoptic Gospels: "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto the harvest."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mark i. 35-38.

<sup>2</sup> John xviii. 37.

<sup>3</sup> John iv. 35.

We have here to observe especially that the joy which Jesus experienced in contemplating the ripening fruits of his husbandry was not prompted by thousands crowding to hear him, but by a chance conversation with one sinful Samaritan woman. The joy which that experience afforded him is expressed by the rapt absorption which rendered him indifferent to the food his disciples were fetching him, and by his enigmatic reply to them, "I have meat to eat which ye know not. . . . My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work."<sup>1</sup>

*Saving  
souls a  
work of  
righteous-  
ness*

Righteousness, in the broad sense in which Jesus understood it, did not mean the literal performance of legal precepts; it meant to do the will of God. God's will, as Jesus knew and revealed it, is that every man shall be saved. Therefore, to co-operate in saving men is the highest performance of righteousness for every child of God, and the highest privilege he can attain on earth.

*Relief of  
bodily  
ailments*

Jesus rejoiced in the relief of human distress in any form. We have no reason to suppose that he healed men of their bodily ailments only as a means to the healing of their souls. It is perfectly clear from the Gospels that his deeds of kindness were not prompted by any ulterior motive, but were the spontaneous expression of

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 31-34.



his love for men. It was *men* he would help,—men in the concrete, and not the loveless abstraction which we commonly denote when we say “souls.” He was prompted to help them in every distress, and was ready to employ any means in his power. Having resisted the temptation to perform miracles on his own behalf, he could not resist the impulse to exert his supernatural powers for the relief of others. This relief of bodily distress Jesus accounted a work of righteousness. The story of the Good Samaritan clearly reveals this estimate of deeds of kindness. But it is revealed no less emphatically with reference to his own acts. This appears from the conclusion of his argument with the Pharisees about the propriety of healing on the sabbath the man with a withered hand: “Wherefore it is lawful to do *good* on the sabbath day.”<sup>1</sup> This “wherefore” — we may further note — is deduced from the incomparable value of a *man*: “How much more then is a man of more value than a sheep!”

“It is not the will of my Father which is in heaven,” says Jesus, “that one of these little ones *Incomparable value of a human soul* should perish.”<sup>2</sup> Jesus was the first to recognize the incomparable value of every human soul. The individualism which distinguishes our Christian civilization is a consequence of his teaching. Personality first emerges into clear light when we

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xviii. 14.

recognize that every individual soul is an object of the heavenly Father's loving care. When Jesus says, "What doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?" he does not mean to emphasize the trivial thought, that one cannot enjoy the world he has gained, if his life be ended thereby. His emphasis lies rather upon the incomparable value of a human soul, and upon the glorious potentiality of self-realization as a son of God — which is forfeited by this paltry exchange. Hence the awful woe which he pronounces against whosoever shall cheat out of his eternal blessedness one human soul.<sup>1</sup> Hence, too, the terrible severity of self-discipline which he enjoins in view of the eternal prize.<sup>2</sup> Hence the joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.<sup>3</sup>

He who shares in the work of saving souls partakes of a heavenly joy. Such was the constant joy of Jesus amidst all the trials of his ministry, and the unexpected conversion of the dying thief afforded him surely a new joy in his passion.

#### CHRIST AS JUDGE

*The other  
cross*

It is a comfortable word which Jesus addressed to the dying thief. But beside this thought there emerges another of a very different complexion.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xviii. 8, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xviii. 12-14 ; Luke xv.

We have to remember that there were two crosses: "one on the right hand and the other on the left." There was a believing thief, but there was one also that "railed on him"; and to the word of grace on the one hand corresponds the silence of doom on the other.

These two crosses are an epitome of the world. *Two crosses an epitome of the world*  
There are innumerable points in which one man may differ from another; but fundamentally there are two kinds—those on the right hand, and those on the left. There is between them no sure mark of distinction which men can trace; but the difference is as deep as life. The difference awaits its revelation: the two walk side by side in the world, *and each alike bears his cross*—a burden, we are prone to forget, which no man may escape, though he may forbear to choose it; but to the one it is the gate of life, to the other the mere instrument of death. Between them, another cross bears the propitiation for the sins of the whole world—intended for all, available for all, though only one will accept it and the other rails.

What stranger paradox can there be than that Jesus hung upon the Cross at once as Victim and as Judge? He came to save the world; but his very coming constituted a judgment. St. John says: "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should

be saved through him.”<sup>1</sup> Yet Jesus says in the same Gospel: “For *judgment* am I come into the world.”<sup>2</sup> St. John himself, however, resolves the contradiction when he explains: “And this is the judgment, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.”<sup>3</sup> We loosely say that light makes shadows; whereas in fact it *makes* them not, but breaks up the one universal shadow of darkness, limiting the shadows which it defines, and really lightening by reflection where it seems to blacken by contrast. Light is beneficent altogether in its purpose and use, but it cannot shine in the world without revealing the darkness. That is St. John’s thought. The incarnate Word of God came with purpose all beneficent; but his coming could not but involve a test of hearts, inasmuch as it plainly put before men the choice which discovers the deepest depths of their nature. The word judgment may be used in either of two senses or in both. It may mean the process of discrimination resulting in division and segregation, like as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats, “the one on the right hand and the other on the left”; or it may denote the decisive verdict, the *sentence* of condemnation or acquittal. Judgment is the first and fundamental function of kings, and Jesus claimed it in its whole extent. To pronounce

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> John ix. 39.

<sup>3</sup> John iii. 19.

condemnatory judgment was not his purpose in coming into the world. But judgment was necessarily involved in his coming; the rejection of him in some sort forestalls the verdict of the last assize; and even here definitive sentence must sometimes be pronounced.

This is the meaning of the word of prophecy *“A stone of stumbling”* which Jesus himself cited and his disciples developed. “He was a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence,” “rejected indeed with men, but with God elect, precious, and made the head stone of the corner.” “For you which believe is the preciousness; but for such as disbelieve, . . . they shall stumble at the word.”<sup>1</sup> “Every one that falleth on that stone shall be broken to pieces; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust.”<sup>2</sup>

At the Cross was fulfilled the prophetic word of Simeon: “Behold, this child is set for the falling and rising up of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against; yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that the thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.”<sup>3</sup> Jesus himself said, “Happy is he who shall find no occasion of stumbling in me.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 4-8; cf. Isa. viii. 14, 15; xxviii. 16; Ps. cxviii. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xx. 18.      <sup>3</sup> Luke ii. 34, 35.      <sup>4</sup> Matt. xi. 6.

This double character of the Cross St. Paul also recognized: "For the word of the Cross is to them that are perishing foolishness; but unto us who are being saved it is the power of God."<sup>1</sup> Christ hung upon the Cross at once as Saviour and as Judge.

*Michael  
Angelo's  
Last  
Judgment*

We read that double office in Michael Angelo's picture of the last judgment. The general theme of the picture, and many of its details, were fixed by a tradition two hundred years older than this painter, and the whole spirit of it is strange and repellent to our age. But there is truth in it, and the truth is told with consummate power. It is the *crucified* Christ who comes upon the clouds to judgment, and the hand once pierced for the salvation of men is stretched forth with a gesture — we are at a loss to define what the gesture is. The general attitude is one which may be traced to the earliest art of the Church. Originally it represented the Teacher proclaiming the Gospel. In the early Middle Ages it was interpreted as an act of blessing. The later Middle Ages transformed it into a judgment of condemnation. But never before was this gesture depicted so equivocally as here: it represents the proclamation of that word which either saves or judges, according as men accept or reject it; it signifies at

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 18; cf. *vv.* 24, 25.

once blessing and ban ; with mysterious power it raises up to heaven, it also presses down to hell.

Even in his earthly life Jesus inspired wonder, awe, and fear. Not the multitudes only, but his most intimate companions, were frequently astonished at him and afraid. This impression was due first of all to the miraculous and superhuman element in Jesus' deeds.<sup>1</sup> In this case it was akin to the fear of ghosts or angelic apparitions.<sup>2</sup> But awe and fear were inspired also by what was purely human in Jesus' character and behavior, especially by the authority and strangeness of his teaching.<sup>3</sup> In the Gospels we have a sufficient clue to determine what it was in Jesus' teaching which so strangely affected the hearers. For example, the disciples, poor men as they were, were thrown into consternation by Jesus' uncompromising condemnation of riches.<sup>4</sup> When he began to hint more and more plainly of his approaching death, his words proved terrible to the disciples, and they feared to question him farther.<sup>5</sup> It was the severe and unworldly side of Jesus' teaching which remained

<sup>1</sup> Mark ii. 12 ; iv. 41 ; v. 15, 17, 33 ; vi. 50 ; vii. 37 ; Luke v. 8 ; vii. 16 ; Matt. xvii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xiv. 26 sq. ; Mark xvi. 8 ; Luke ii. 9 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> Mark i. 22 ; xi. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Mark x. 26.

<sup>5</sup> Mark ix. 32 ; x. 32.

strange and terrible to his own, and proved repellent to the multitude. This trait was not due to any harshness of disposition, but to Jesus' perception of the incomparable majesty of God. His exalted idea of God explains that uncompromising *either* — *or* which was so terribly inconvenient to his hearers: either serve God or mammon; <sup>1</sup> either save one's life or lose it; <sup>2</sup> either confess Jesus or deny him. <sup>3</sup> This trait, which determines the whole plan of the Fourth Gospel, is not peculiar to St. John; but, as we see, it is confirmed in detail by the Synoptists. In view of the exalted sovereignty of God, Christ must be *either* Saviour *or* Judge, according to the attitude of those who hear him.

*Jesus  
upon the  
Cross is  
the touch-  
stone of  
all hearts*

Jesus was ever the touchstone for the trial of hearts; but he tried them never so infallibly as when he hung upon the Cross. He had always accounted men's attitude towards him the ultimate test of character; but never had the test cut so surely and so deep. Many had followed Jesus hitherto with false hopes of an earthly kingdom: now they must recognize perforce that his kingdom is not of this world, and that rule in his kingdom is exercised through service and sacrifice.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 24; cf. iv. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Mark viii. 35 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. x. 32 sqq.



Christ crucified is to-day again the touchstone of our hearts. Not once for all, but day by day is this test applied — so hard a thing it is to be a Christian! Each new choice must meet this test, and Christ be either our Saviour or our Judge.

JESUS REIGNS FROM THE TREE — AND THAT  
THRONE IS LIKEWISE HIS JUDGMENT SEAT.

## THE THIRD WORD

### LOVE

*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 the disciple took her unto his own home.*

John xix. 26, 27.

Sine me non valet, nec durabit amicitia;

Nec est vera et munda dilectio quam ego non copulo.

Thomas à Kempis.

### LOVE OLD AND NEW

*Why a  
new com-  
mand-  
ment?*

**M**OTHER ” and “son ” — both these words mean love; together they denote the family, the home. Love is an old factor in human life; it was “from the beginning,” before all human beginnings in fact; and the oldest love is mother-love. How then can Christ proclaim love as “a new commandment”?<sup>1</sup> Not only had love long been manifested in all the family relations, but it had long ago

<sup>1</sup> John xiii. 34.

transcended these limits and made itself felt in a broader social sphere. The very words in which Jesus summarizes the Ten Commandments, and which we introduce in our liturgy so emphatically as that which our Lord Jesus Christ saith, are so far from being new that they are cited literally from Deuteronomy and Leviticus.<sup>1</sup>

St. John noted this paradox, and in his Epistles *St. John solves the paradox* he plays upon these words "old" and "new." In his Second Epistle <sup>2</sup> he says, "Not as though I wrote to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another." In the First Epistle <sup>3</sup> likewise he denies that it is new, yet adds at once, "Again a new commandment write I unto you." He explains also the reason of its newness, though in figurative language which may not at once carry its meaning to the reader: "because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth." This means that in Christ there has come to us, and is coming, a new revelation of what love may be and is. In his Gospel, reporting the words of Jesus, St. John conveys to us the same meaning in more specific terms: "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another; *even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*"<sup>4</sup> This com-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxii. 37, 39; Mark xii. 30, 31; cf. Deut. vi. 5; Lev. xix. 18.

<sup>2</sup> 2 John 5.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John ii. 7, 8.

<sup>4</sup> John xiii. 34.

mandment of Jesus is new for a twofold reason : because it is formulated for a new relationship, the Christian brotherhood ; and because it is enjoined according to a new measure, “as I have loved you.” Jesus teaches his disciples that their love, like his, must transcend the limits of the narrower human relationships to which it had been confined, — the family, the clan, or even race and nationality, — and find its sphere in a universal society. Yet notwithstanding this increase of its objects love is to suffer no loss of its intensity ; for the constant measure of Christian love is Christ’s love, a new and loftier measure, love *in excelsis*, — for “greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”<sup>1</sup>

Thomas à Kempis says :

*Christ  
makes the  
old rela-  
tions sac-  
ramental*

“Without Me friendship is not firm or enduring ;  
Nor is there any true and pure love which I do not  
join.”

This does *not* mean that where we see love we may affirm it is no love because it is not in Christ. It means that where we see love we are to perceive a gift of God. And it means, moreover, that Christ raises to a higher potentiality even the old love which was displayed “from the beginning” in the sweet offices of friendship and the dear relationships of the family. Christ recognized

<sup>1</sup> John xv. 13.

the primitive relationships and the aboriginal love which cements them; he recognized fatherhood, motherhood, filial, fraternal, and conjugal love: but he did not recognize them simply as they were, and leave unchanged the constitutions of old time—he hallowed them, and raised them to the dignity of a sacrament, perceiving in them an outward and visible reflection of divine relationships.

Christ recognized the family and the family *Marriage* love. Marriage, in contradiction to all ancient law and custom, Christ pronounced indissoluble. Since Christ has raised all the commonest human duties to a sacramental dignity, we may properly say that the marriage blessed by him becomes a sacrament. It is no longer constituted by the will of the flesh, in carnal appetite; but undertaken with the resolute purpose of performing together, at whatever sacrifice, a social duty in the rearing of children, — primarily in the interest of the family, but ultimately in the interest of society at large, the State and the Church.

Christ recognizes the family love in all its varied *Family* relations; he hallows it and makes it new. But *love the law of the kingdom* in so doing he also breaks its exclusiveness. This new wine cannot be kept in old bottles; but in breaking the bottles Christ provides that not one drop of the precious liquor shall be lost. For he provides that this great force which has been de-

veloped in the narrower sphere shall henceforth be available for the broader relationship of the Christian brotherhood, the family of God. Love is not mere liking, and its limits are not set by mere kinship or likeness. Love is also something more than a pathological affection: in its highest forms it is an expression of the will, and hence it may be made the subject of a commandment. Such love as had hitherto been confined to the family, Christ made the law of his kingdom: hence the family becomes the pattern of the kingdom of God.

*Jesus' relation to his own family* It is instructive to inquire what was Jesus' relation to his own family. First of all we have the incident of his childhood related by St. Luke, when he seemed entirely forgetful of his earthly parents, who were seeking him for three days and finally found him in the temple. There was a note of surprise in the boy's answer to his mother's complaint: "How is it that ye *sought* me? did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"<sup>1</sup> For the unique Son of God, and for all God's sons, there are loftier obligations than that of filial obedience, and broader social duties than those of the family. But until such duties emerge, the family is the natural sphere of the child's life. And so it is said that he returned to Nazareth with his parents "and was subject unto them."

<sup>1</sup> Luke ii. 49.

When Jesus began his public ministry he broke off all relation with his family and was a man without a home, — contrasting himself in this respect even with birds and foxes.<sup>1</sup> When the early popularity of his preaching was past, and the clouds of opposition became ominous, the family authority was invoked; and perhaps there was some thought of using force, to bring him back to Nazareth and save him from public disgrace. Then Jesus publicly repudiated his family. Being told that his mother and his brethren were outside the crowded house in which he was teaching, and were seeking to enter and claim him, he replied, “Who is my mother and my brethren? And looking round on them which sat round about him, he saith, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”<sup>2</sup> Jesus taught his disciples that upon occasion they must make the same renunciation,<sup>3</sup> and a certain man who would follow him he forbade to return even to bury his father.<sup>4</sup> Jesus was already forming about himself a new family of those who were united in a common aim and service.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. viii. 20 ; Luke ix. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xii. 48–50 ; Mark iii. 33–35.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. x. 36, 37.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. viii. 21, 22 ; Luke ix. 59, 60.

*The  
brethren  
of Jesus*

Our Lord's brethren did not come to believe on him till after his resurrection, and we have no notice that Mary again appeared in his company till her mother-love brought her to the foot of his Cross. There Jesus, forgetful of himself, was concerned about his mother, and took measures to restore the family life which he had broken up and to fill the place which he was leaving. Such was his regard for the family.

*John and  
Mary*

But why might not Mary live with the "brethren" of Jesus, who, if they were but her stepsons, were bound by law and duty to support her? That formed the natural family. Jesus, however, reckoned that the ties of a common faith and a common social purpose are stronger than the ties of kindred. "And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own *home*." The word *home* is not found in our Greek Gospel: the phrase there is simply "unto his own." But we rightly use in this place our strong English word; for where son and mother are is *home*.

*Children  
by adop-  
tion*

"Mother" and "son" are the words Jesus uses — and without doubt he uses them in no weak and unreal sense; they denote a sacred relationship (a family) which is established by mutual adoption. Jesus recognizes the family and he hallows it. But he recognizes that the profoundest sacredness of that relation is constituted, not according to the law of fleshly generation, but



according to the Spirit, by the will. Do you suppose that the sweet offices of motherhood and sonship were ever exercised more perfectly than by the Blessed Virgin and the Beloved Disciple? God may not give to every one of us children after the flesh, or he may take them away, as from that mother who wept by the Cross; but upon every lonely heart which is capable of the sacred fire of motherhood or fatherhood he lays the injunction: Behold, thy son! Would God there were no mother without a son! What Jesus here sets before us is a privilege as well as a duty. But "take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones"; "inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me." There are in this world so many lonely mother hearts; and in this same world so many sons without a mother, — little ones for whom Christ died, for whom the world prepares so many stumbling-blocks. There need be no mother without a son folded by the will into the holy sacrament of motherhood, sealed by the command of Christ. Would God there were no son without a mother! It is a duty which Christ sets before us, as well as a privilege.

I have said that the family is the pattern and norm of the Church. But we express Christ's meaning better when we say with St. Paul that the heavenly is the pattern of the earthly, and

*The ab-  
original  
father-  
hood*

that it is our heavenly "Father after whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named."<sup>1</sup> It is from him we have "received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba*, Father."<sup>2</sup> All men are called to the privilege of this adoption, but not all attain to it. Jesus himself contrasts "the sons of *this* age" with those that "are accounted worthy to attain to *that* age," who "are equal to the angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection."<sup>3</sup> Sonship implies likeness to the parent. To realize our likeness to the heavenly Father is the loftiest human achievement: it demands not only the highest love, but the broadest. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."<sup>4</sup>

“ *The  
royal  
law* ”  
*in the  
world*

We may take it that in his third word from the Cross our Lord enforces the fundamental law of his kingdom. There can be no doubt that

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xx. 34-36.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. v. 44-48.

Christendom has not yet realized this law. We display the old love, to our friends who love us, to our family and kindred ; but the broader love is not generally manifested, — least of all in the broadest relationships of political and commercial life. But if we ask the question, whether in the broadest relationships of life competition or co-operation best comports with the law of the kingdom, which is the law of family love, there can be no doubt about the answer. Competition of a sort, a generous emulation which quickens our best talents and brings into play our most abundant resources, there may be between mother and son even, between brother and brother, — *but not for bread*. But the law of love will not work in the world, men say. True, it will not work any man a temporal advantage so long as self-interest is a stronger and a commoner motive than love. But we may not therefore wait till all men shall have agreed together to act only according to this law ; for *it is already the law of the kingdom of God*. Can we not say as much as Plato says at the end of his sketch of an ideal republic? He admits the objection that no such state is to be found on earth. But he replies, “In heaven there is laid up a pattern of such a city, and he who desires may behold this, and beholding, govern himself accordingly. But whether there really is or ever will be such an one is of no importance

to him ; for he will act according to the laws of that city and of no other.”<sup>1</sup>

Thy kingdom come, O Lord, thy kingdom of love and brotherhood, when in every lonely little one the lonely mother will behold a son, in every weak one for whom Christ died a man will behold his brother, — on earth, as it is in heaven.

JESUS REIGNS FROM THE TREE — AND HIS  
THIRD WORD PROCLAIMS THE ROYAL LAW.

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, bk. ix. § 592.

## THE FOURTH WORD

### JOY AND SACRIFICE

*And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI? that is, MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?*

Matt. xxvii. 46. Quoted from Ps. xxii. 1.  
Cf. Mark xv. 34.

### THE JOY IN PASSION

**A**T this word we must pause as before the incomprehensible. Incomprehensible it is to us that the Son of God should ever be forced to utter this desolate cry. "We know but the outskirts of his ways."

But let us fix our attention upon what we can understand. And here let me suggest to you a profound truth which Dante, by a startling paradox, associates with this very cry. He represents the sufferings of purgatory as endured gladly in the strength of that desire which apprehends beforehand an assured blessedness, — symbolized here by the Tree of Life. So the sufferers say :

*Dante  
detects joy  
even in  
this word*

*Chè quella voglia all' arbore ci mena,  
Che menò Cristo lieto a dire, Eli,  
Quando ne liberò con la sua vena.*<sup>1</sup>

“ Because the like desire leads us to the tree,  
Which led Christ joyfully to cry, Eli,  
What time he freed us with his precious blood.”

It is true there was a joy in the very Passion itself. St. John perceived it, and whoso will may read it in his record. But Dante alone, with a poet's insight, has detected the joy of Jesus in this agonizing cry.

*Christ's  
joy ac-  
cording to  
St. John*

It is one of the striking characteristics of St. John's Gospel that it interprets to us the triumphant joy with which Jesus encountered the ignominy and suffering of his last mortal hours. St. John emphasizes this so strongly that he seems hardly to leave room for the veritable agony of mind which Jesus experienced at the prospect of death, according to the testimony of all the other Gospels. The note of joy runs through our Lord's prayer, and the long discourses which he held with his disciples the night in which he was betrayed. St. John alone has reported them. It comes to clearest expression when he says, “ If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I go unto my Father.”<sup>2</sup> We hear it

<sup>1</sup> *Purgatorio*, canto xxiii. lines 73-75.

<sup>2</sup> John xiv. 28.

finally even from the Cross in a word which John alone has recorded: "It is finished."<sup>1</sup> Throughout, it is the joy of labor accomplished, of duty done, of homesickness for the Father's house relieved — by going home.

This interpretation of St. John's, peculiar as it is, is substantially confirmed by the other Evangelists. For though the Synoptic Gospels give no hint of joy in their story of the Passion, they plainly reveal, in connection with an earlier experience, our Lord's heavenly homesickness. After the Transfiguration upon the mountain, wherein Jesus as well as his three closest companions had enjoyed a peculiarly exalted experience, he came down again to the world and its sordid cares, and straightway encountered faithlessness and impotence even in his disciples. He could not restrain then the exclamation: "O faithless generation! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you?"<sup>2</sup> This instance stands alone, yet it is sufficient to corroborate the essential truth of St. John's record. It may be that Jesus never again so plainly expressed his longing to finish his task and be at home. Yet the sympathy of a disciple could detect it, and what St. John has written for our learning is true to the deepest fact.

<sup>1</sup> John xix. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Mark ix. 19; Matt. xvii. 17; Luke ix. 41.

The first three Evangelists are concordant and consistent in representing that our Lord experienced up to the end a natural human shrinking at the thought of dying. They show, however, that he entertained this thought, and faced the prospect even of a violent and suffering death, from an early period of his ministry; and it was immediately after the Transfiguration that he began to prepare his disciples for it. But death is one thing, dying is another. In view of Jesus' nostalgia for the heavenly home, death could appear only as a release; and in the strength of this longing the dread of dying was half overcome. So our Lord's endurance of death is interpreted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, when it is said that Jesus "for the joy that was set before him endured the Cross, despising the shame."<sup>1</sup>

*Dante's  
meaning*

Such is precisely the meaning of Dante's phrase, *quella voglia* — "that desire." There is nothing new nor strange about his conception of the joy which shone through Jesus' suffering, except that he discovers it in this very word *El!* Certain it is that the mere exigencies of rhyme do not account for Dante's use of this unusual word; nor did he hit upon so strange a thought by any accident. He means something, — as you will be disposed to credit if you believe, as I do, that the true poets are the greatest teachers, by

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 2.



virtue of a deeper insight into human life. Our Lord himself was a poet of the Hebrew sort, and the greatest "maker" of them all. The word "poet" means maker; and the poet is so called, not because he makes verses, but because he creates thoughts and gives them a vehicle which carries them to all men. Where the genius of Dante leads the way we also may follow and apprehend the significance of his discovery.

I make, therefore, this scholium upon his verse. <sup>The word</sup>  
 In the first place, we must note that Dante dis- <sup>Eli</sup>  
 tinguishes. He does not affirm that there is any  
 gladness in the cry, "Why hast thou forsaken  
 me?" He finds it in the word *Eli* — twice  
 uttered, and emphasized as it is. It is true that  
 this whole saying is a literal quotation from the  
 Psalter. But to learn what Jesus means by it,  
 we do not need to inquire first what the Psalmist  
 meant. For the old Scriptures which Jesus takes  
 upon his lips acquire from him a new meaning.  
 And here, in particular, we shall discover, the  
 common name of Deity is freighted with an  
 expression of the inmost secret of Jesus' self-  
 consciousness.

Something strange there must have been in  
 Jesus' enunciation of this word *Eli*,<sup>1</sup> for the  
 people understood him to be calling upon Elijah.

<sup>1</sup> For the original form of the utterance see Dalman, *Die Worte Jesu*, pp. 42, 43.

It is true that in our Lord's time the divine name, even in this its most generic form, was not uttered except in worship or in formal quotations from the Scripture. Jesus himself seems to have conformed to this practice. There may have been something startling, therefore, in hearing God's name twice shouted from the Cross; but, in worship, at least, this name was by no means unfamiliar to the Jews, and the rarity of its utterance does not explain their misunderstanding. What, however, if our Lord wreaked upon the expression of this well-known name the whole energy of that conflict of joy and agony which was within him, giving it utterance and accent such as had never been heard before, — would not that explain the people's bewilderment?

“*My  
God*”

But before we can understand this point, our own mispronunciation of the word needs to be corrected. It is true, I think, that in defiance of all authority, — even the handy authority of our “Teachers’ Bibles,” — we commonly pronounce it, *Éli, Éli* — my *God*, my *God*. So accenting the phrase, we are left without any clue to the misunderstanding of the Jews, and without any hint of a joy in Jesus’ passion. But if we pronounce the word as Dante rightly did, *Elì*, and recognize that the whole stress falls upon the personal pronoun *my*, which here appears as a suffix to the divine name *El*, we can understand, I think, how

Jesus may have thrown such an intensity of feeling into his utterance as to transform the word, and we can perceive that such an intense personal appropriation of God — *my* God, *my* God — is incompatible with utter defeat and complete desolation.

This interpretation might well appear fanciful, were it not that we can appeal to another passage of Old Testament Scripture which Jesus himself expressly interprets for us, and interprets precisely in this way. When the Sadducees sought to entangle him with sophistical questions about the future life, Jesus promptly solved their superficial problem by the simplest answer; but, not resting upon that, he offered bread to those that asked for chaff. So he continued, probing to the very heart of the question: “But as touching the dead, that they are raised; have ye not read in the book of Moses, in the place concerning the Bush, how God spake unto him, saying, *I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?* He is not the God of the dead, but of the living: ye do greatly err.”<sup>1</sup> This passage had never been used before as a proof of the resurrection from the dead. We may expect to find in Jesus’ interpretation something strikingly characteristic of his method of teaching. We certainly do not reach the height of its meaning

<sup>1</sup> Mark xii. 26, 27; cf. Matt. xxii. 32; Luke xx. 37, 38.

if we rest satisfied with the common explanation, which gathers, from the mere circumstance that God calls himself the God of the Patriarchs, the proof that they continue to *exist*, — because no such relation could subsist between God and non-existent beings. This does not suffice. For life, as Jesus conceived of it, is not the mere prolongation of existence, though it were prolonged forever; for him, life is a certain *sort* of existence, an existence which consists essentially in the enjoyment of fellowship with God. That this conception explains our Lord's thought here, will be made evident if we consider why he fixed upon this text. The mere wording of it does not suggest the thought of eternal life; it expresses merely the assurance that what God was to the fathers, that he will be to their children. If Jesus finds more in it than this, that *more* must have been furnished by his own religious consciousness, which everywhere determines for him his understanding of the Scriptures. The central fact in Jesus' consciousness was the experience of an incomparably close relation to God, — a transcendent relation, which was absolutely independent of all earthly conditions, and in which he was assured of participation in the divine life. If this personal relation to God was not brought about by earthly conditions, neither could it be dissolved by them; if it was a participation of the supernatural life

of God, it, too, must be supernatural and endless. It is generally recognized that the absolute necessity and certainty of "eternal" life was, for Jesus, an inevitable deduction from his consciousness of sonship. Because he knew God as *his* God, and recognized that his inmost life was a participation of God's life and being, he was assured that this life was indissoluble. That is precisely what he finds reflected in the expression "God of Abraham," and what he says with reference to this is merely a generalization of the fact which he recognized as the paramount experience of his own life. It is from his own consciousness he judges this passage, from his own consciousness he draws the consequences which are implied in the fact that God is some body's God.<sup>1</sup>

This consciousness, in which Jesus discovered the meaning of "eternal" life, the consciousness of personal *possession* of God, — this consciousness it was to which Jesus gave expression upon the Cross, triumphing even in the moment of his direst desolation, when he cried, "*My God! my God!*"

#### SACRIFICE

Nevertheless it was half a despairing cry — *The anguish of death*  
 "Why hast thou forsaken me?" It is in vain

<sup>1</sup> This paragraph I owe substantially to Haupt, *Die eschatologischen Aussagen Jesu*, p. 87.

we seek to banish the note of spiritual anguish from this cry: we might as easily ignore the physical anguish of the Cross. Success here would be not gain but loss. We find a deep significance in the fact that Jesus tasted death for every man; but he tasted it not if so be he contemplated it undismayed and drank its bitterest dregs with confidence unshaken. Rather may we say, in view particularly of this cry, that Christ's death was hardly a Christian death. The calmness of Christian death was, indeed, not possible till after Christ's resurrection.

*Additional  
pang in  
the death  
of the  
Christ*

There is an additional factor in Jesus' fear of death, which I forbore to mention when speaking of the natural shrinking from dying. There is one reason why death, to Jesus, was a sorer trial than to other men: that is, because of the very consciousness he had of being the Christ. Death is the common lot of men; but that the Christ should die—die, and his kingdom not yet established—what can be the meaning of that? With this problem above all others Jesus had to wrestle, from the moment he first perceived that a violent death at the hands of his countrymen lay squarely in the path of his duty, and not far off.

*Christian  
theology*

When we think of Jesus and his death, we too are compelled to face that problem, and it becomes in us the spur of all legitimate Christian

theology. Once recognize the reality of Jesus' divinity, and we are face to face with the question, *Cur Deus homo?* — why was God man? We recognize the full reality of his suffering death, and inevitably the question arises, Why should the Christ *die*? In other ways, surely, like Enoch or Elijah, he might have departed from the world. So long as these questions are asked, just so long shall we feel impelled to formulate a Christian theology; so long as our answer is inadequate, our theology must be incomplete. Our theology *is* incomplete: let it be so, and let us know it. The acknowledgment of God in Christ is the crowning achievement of faith. Beyond that we probe with our questions, but we expect in vain the conclusive answer. Well it is for us that we can stand upon this attainment. It is an attainment, however, which is not reached once for all by the Church as a whole, needing only to be passed on as a deposit of faith to successive generations. It is an attainment new in every age and to every individual disciple. Peter, the basic rock, and after him every "living stone" which is built into the fabric of the Church, makes confession of a truth which he has not received from without, but apprehended as the personal acquist of a moral experience. "No one can say, Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." The

dogmatist really depreciates the value of this confession when he makes it a means to an end, treating it as an inexhaustible premise for the deduction of endless syllogisms, seeking thereby to solve all questions in the world and out of it. From the height of this attainment we can look back upon many a question solved; but there are still more questions to face, unsolved and insoluble. Nevertheless we essay to solve them, and our success — is the distraction of Christendom into a hundred sects!

*The element of wonder in our faith*

To-day we are inclined to be less bold. We are growing as intolerant of irreverent assurance as ever the dogmatists were of reverent doubt. We are learning again that human knowledge begins in wonder and issues in — wonder. We dwell again with interest upon a saying long plausibly ascribed to Jesus (and revived now by a discovery of the past year): “Let not him who seeks [eternal life?] cease till he finds; and when he finds he shall be astonished; astonished, he shall reach the kingdom; and having reached the kingdom, he shall rest.”<sup>1</sup>

*Sacrifice as an explanation of Christ's death*

Such thoughts of the inadequacy of human knowledge and the impotence of the human understanding are never so much in place as when we contemplate the Cross of Christ. Yet one so-

<sup>1</sup> Second Oxyrhynchus Fragment of the Sayings of Jesus, r. 1; cf. Clement Alex., *Stromata*, v. 14:96.



lution there is of this mystery which we cannot ignore, since in it Jesus himself found solace: it is the thought of sacrifice.

Let us not think, however, that the idea of sacrifice is a solution which banishes all mystery. *Meaning of sacrifice*  
To say that Christ's death was a sacrifice, is not to define it in terms open and comprehensible to the human mind: it is merely to put a symbol in the place of mystery. Sacrifice is the most ancient symbol of man's longing for reconciliation with God, — of his recognition that a barrier exists, and of his belief that it can be removed. This earth furnishes us, through all the scales of being, with the stupendous mystery of life poured out for the life of others. Countless hecatombs of *unwilling* sacrifices attend the progress of the lower animals, and even here among the brutes mother-love provides the willing sacrifice. The perception of this fact is the root of all blood-sacrifice as men have practised it, and of all its ritual symbolism. Whatever of childish credulity there was in the early notions of sacrifice, whatever crudity or cruelty in the early cults, dishonoring to God and debasing to men, — all this was forever done away by the great prophets who made the notion of *moral* sacrifice a commonplace in Israel. The moral sacrifice is a freewill offering, not of another life for our own, but of our pleasure, profit, advantage of every sort, and of life itself even, for

the life of another. We speak only of what we see in the actual relations of human life, not of what we guess about God, when we say that such sacrifice as this is, in the strictest sense of the word, *vicarious*. Such social sacrifice, offered as unto God in the performance of our bounden duty and service, is, according to the Hebrew prophets, the *reality*, of which all ritual sacrifice is but the symbol. This theme was especially prominent in those books which were the favorite Scriptures of our Lord,—in the prophecies of Isaiah and in the Psalms. No other notion than this could have occurred to him when he was led to interpret his death as a sacrifice. It is true that the old forms of sacrifice still remained, but they remained simply as a symbol of a newly apprehended reality. Yet this reality itself becomes in turn a symbol of the incomprehensible when we endeavor to apprehend what may be its significance *in relation to God*.

*Signifi-  
cance of  
Christ's  
sacrifice*

All sacrifice implies two parties and a victim. The end sought is atonement — that both may be *at one*. A new element emerges in the sacrifice of Christ, inasmuch as God himself takes a hand in it — not merely to receive, but to offer.<sup>1</sup> Here the double character of sacrifice becomes more evident: it contemplates an effect upon God, *and also upon men*. The barrier which divides has

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 32.

two aspects : on one side is God's unwillingness to tolerate sin ; on the other, man's hard unwillingness to repent.

The effect of Christ's sacrifice upon man's side is perfectly open and comprehensible to the human understanding. So long as we imagine a justly severe God awaiting in cold aloofness our dutiful return, we find in our hearts no place for repentance, though we may know the anguish of remorse. But when we know the *revealed* mystery of a Father who suffers in our fault, and is ready to meet more than half-way our return ; when we believe that " God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,"<sup>1</sup> — then we have found a solvent for the hardest hearts, the specific cure for impenitence.

But the effect of sacrifice upon God remains perfectly incomprehensible. This aspect of sacrifice is expressed by the word " propitiation."<sup>2</sup> But for us to accept this word in its literal interpretation, with all the crude original rudiments of the times of man's ignorance of God (as though it signified that a loving son must placate by his death the wrath of a too just father), would be a more horrible ineptitude than were we to take in a literal sense the words " ransom " and " redemption " — terms similarly applied to Christ's death

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19 ; cf. vv. 18, 20 ; also Rom. v. 10.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John ii. 2 ; iv. 10.

— as though they must signify to us that for the release of a captive from his conqueror, of a slave from his oppressor, Christ's blood was the price paid — to the Devil! All that we can surely know about this aspect of the mystery of Christ's death is what we profess in the Creed, that it was "*for us*"; — that as "he came down from heaven for us men and for our salvation," so also what he suffered in death "he suffered *for us.*"

*As interpreted by the Last Supper*

So much is revealed by Christ himself — and no more. These are the very words in which he explained to his disciples, so far as it was explicable, the mystery of his death. St. Paul and three of the Evangelists differ not a little in reporting the words which Jesus uttered at the Last Supper; but about these words of central importance there can be no doubt. To appreciate justly this occasion and the force of these words we must understand that what we now perform as the sacramental memorial of Jesus' death was first performed by *him* as a prophetic parable of his death impending — so closely impending that he could represent it as already accomplished. He who taught always by parables, here taught, by a parable in *act*, a truth so solemn that it hardly admitted of expression in speech. The dumb parable of the broken loaf needed only one interpreting word, "my body," — and Jesus' imminent

death stood revealed. The wine poured out is "my blood" — and with that the whole sad truth is told. But with one more word Jesus lightens the gloom — it is "for you." Not in vain is the Christ's blood spilled — but "for you." Hence it is that the disciples are to "eat" and "drink" — that is, appropriate this sign and know it as theirs.<sup>1</sup>

When Jesus said, "this is my blood," and "for you," it makes little difference whether he did or did not then expressly interpret it as the blood "of the covenant"; for if it was to be regarded as a sacrifice at all, it must of course be viewed somehow in the light of the ancient covenant sacrifices of Israel.

If already in that hour Jesus disclosed to his disciples that this blood was shed "for many," as some of the Evangelists affirm,<sup>2</sup> it is, at any rate, certain that what lay nearest to their comprehension and was uppermost in his heart was the thought that he was dying for *them*. Afterwards they could understand the broader thought; and as the circle of Jesus' friends grew, his disciples learned to confess: "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mark xiv. 22, 24; Luke xxii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvi. 28; Mark xiv. 24.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John ii. 2.

*Joy in  
sacrifice*

It was in this thought Jesus found a second occasion for joy in passion, — not now in his own behalf, as one confident of life *in spite of* death, and eager for return to the Father's house *even through* death; but now dying itself is illuminated by a purpose, being endured in behalf of his friends. It was strange, indeed horrible, that the Anointed of God should die; yet, dying, he knew that God was able to establish the kingdom. He had labored to prepare for it, but he had recognized from the beginning that it was not by human effort, and not even by the preaching or wisdom or might of the Messiah that the kingdom of God could be established, but only by a conspicuous divine intervention. And he knew that in this kingdom, when it should be established, the Father was able to raise him to kingly glory and dominion, even through death. The violent death, to which he was shut up by no physical necessity, which also he did not seek wantonly, but encountered inevitable in the path of duty, he recognized as the Father's will for him. He was assured therefore that God would accept his bounden duty and service, and, accepting him, would, for his willing sacrifice, accept also his friends. We may well believe that this thought assuaged even the poignant anguish of the cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" "Having loved his own which were in the world, he

loved them unto the end"; willingly he gave himself for them, and he gave himself unto the uttermost.

JESUS REIGNS FROM THE TREE — AND AS  
PRIEST-KING HE MAKES THERE A FULL,  
PERFECT, AND SUFFICIENT SACRIFICE, OB-  
LATION, AND SATISFACTION FOR THE SINS  
OF THE WHOLE WORLD.

# THE FIFTH WORD

## CONFIRMATION

*After this Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the Scripture might be accomplished, saith : I THIRST.*

John xix. 28. Cf. Ps. lxxix. 21.

### THE SCRIPTURES CONFIRMED BY THE CROSS

*Christ's  
sufferings  
not dwelt  
upon as  
suffering*

**I**T is a homely woe that is expressed by this word from the Cross, which St. John alone records. Such suffering as this indicates, even we can understand, who know not what it is to die. Yet even upon this suffering St. John does not dwell — and why should we? All the Evangelists, and St. John especially, give to the story of Jesus' death a place wholly out of proportion to their brief account of his life and ministry. This is proof of the high importance which the Apostolic Church attached to the Cross. It is therefore the more noteworthy that all the Evangelists, and especially St. John, refrain from any mention of suffering *merely as suffering* — it had a higher significance for them.



Here St. John mentions the cry of thirst only to note that its consequence, the giving of vinegar (which the other Evangelists also record),<sup>1</sup> was a fulfilment of Scripture.<sup>2</sup> He found the same significance in the fact that the soldiers cast lots for Jesus' cloak.<sup>3</sup> These are superficial coincidences; there is deeper meaning in the fact that the sacrifice of the true Paschal Lamb was performed according to the prescription of the ancient ritual — "not a bone of it shall be broken."<sup>4</sup> There is a mere verbal correspondence again in the piercing of our Lord's side;<sup>5</sup> but in the water and the blood which flowed therefrom<sup>6</sup> St. John discovered a profound emblem of the mission of the Messiah. How important this was in his regard, we see not only in the strong asseveration of verse thirty-five, but in the fact that he recurs to it again in his First Epistle.<sup>7</sup> It was emblematical of the fact that Jesus came, not like the Baptist, with only a preparatory purification by water, but as the Messiah, "with the water and with the blood." When St. John expressly notes the fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy, "They shall look

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvii. 48; Mark xv. 36; Luke xxiii. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm lxix. 21.

<sup>3</sup> John xix. 23, 24; Ps. xxii. 18.

<sup>4</sup> John xix. 36; Ex. xii. 46.

<sup>5</sup> John xix. 34, 37; Zech. xii. 10.

<sup>6</sup> John xix. 34, 35.

<sup>7</sup> 1 John v. 6-9.

on him whom they pierced," there can be no doubt that he had in mind the passage which immediately follows it: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness."<sup>1</sup> Water is the obvious and universal symbol of purification, but the deepest symbol of purification from sin is blood, and this represents the very essence of the sacrificial idea. When the Baptist discriminates his ministry from that of Jesus, and points to *him* as "the Lamb of God,"<sup>2</sup> he implicitly refers to the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, the prophecy of the suffering Messiah, who by his death makes atonement for the people. It was thus that Jesus came in fulfilment of prophecy; with the water of baptism he brings also the blood of atonement and the gift of the Spirit.<sup>3</sup> Hence the significance of the three witnesses, "the Spirit, and the water, and the blood," which agree in one witness, the witness of God concerning his Son, who comes in fulfilment of prophecy.<sup>4</sup>

It is thus that St. John delights to find the Scriptures confirmed by the event, the event explained by the Scriptures.

<sup>1</sup> Zech. xiii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> John i. 29.

<sup>3</sup> John vii. 37-39.

<sup>4</sup> See my *Doctrine of St. John*, pp. 154, 155.

St. John is a pre-eminent instance of that type *Symbolism* of mind which delights in symbolism. All Christians are not so constituted. There has ever been a class of common-sense people who have no appreciation of the symbolical. Perhaps they have never been so numerous as to-day, and never so much inclined to condemn in others what they do not enjoy for themselves. They might justly repudiate symbolism if they were right in thinking that it usurps the place of sober reason and argument. But, in truth, symbol, emblem, and allegory are not argument, but a play of the fancy around a fact which has already been accepted with conviction. These treasures which St. John gathers upon the shore of the infinite mystery—be they pebbles or pearls—are not proof to him or to us that Jesus is the Christ; but once we have accepted him as Lord, upon deeper grounds than we can marshal before our consciousness, we too find ourselves playing like children with the trifles which suggest a greater truth than we have grasped. If not one sparrow falls without our Father, and the very hairs of our head are all numbered, the death of the Messiah must have significance in every detail—if only we could find it! And so we build with “gold, silver, hay, stubble,” while well we know that the foundation, though out of sight, is of adamant.

*Jesus'  
scriptural  
proof*

Yet for all this we are glad to observe that Jesus' own scriptural proof was of a soberer sort. His use of those passages of Scripture which directed him in life and comforted him in death is distinguished, not by ingenuity of adaptation, but by depth of insight. We have proof and example of this in the last chapter. It is true of all his interpretations of Scripture. At the beginning of his ministry he reassured his own innate assurance of divine Sonship and Messianic vocation by appealing to that part of the prophecy of Isaiah which he read in the synagogue at Nazareth and expressly applied to himself:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to  
the poor :  
He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,  
And recovering of sight to the blind,  
To set at liberty them that are bruised,  
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

If there is any moral meaning in the ancient Scriptures, if there is any constant providence of God over the human race, if any significance in history, this proof is cogent. To the same proof Jesus appealed again at a later period, when the Baptist, doubting in the gloom of his prison the things he had believed in the glorious

<sup>1</sup> Luke iv. 18, 19 ; cf. Isa. lxi. 1, 2.

freedom of the wilderness, sent his disciples to demand, "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" Jesus did not answer in words, but in deeds. He kept the messengers with him while "he cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits; and on many that were blind he bestowed sight. And he answered and said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good tidings preached to them. And happy is he whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me."<sup>1</sup>

It was in the Scriptures Jesus sought and found light upon the mystery of the suffering fate which he foresaw in the path of rectitude and duty. He saw in every fate that might befall him his Father's will. He had taught every son of man to pray, "Father, thy will be done," as an expression for that perfect consummation which all men must desire though they know not well what it is; and he himself, when that good will seemed to run most counter to his own, was able to say, "*Nevertheless* not my will, but thine, be done."<sup>2</sup> His fate once recognized as the Father's will, prompt obedience even unto death was the expression of his filial consciousness; and the darkness

*The Scriptures explain his death*

<sup>1</sup> Luke vii. 18-23.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xxii. 42; cf. Matt. xxvi. 39; Mark xiv. 36.

of that mystery was in a measure relieved by the very name which he had chosen to designate himself.

“*Son of man*”

From the beginning of his ministry he had called himself the Son of man. This name does not, as is commonly supposed, emphasize humanity as expressly distinguished from divinity; it lays no stress upon human *origin*, and denotes nothing incompatible with the claim to be the Son of God; but it does indicate human weakness in contrast with the brute might of the bestial powers which rule the world, and which *God* destroys in order to raise his weak but elect instrument to universal dominion. This is the meaning Jesus rightly read in the seventh chapter of Daniel. Therefore the sense of his weakness produced no abatement of his confidence that God was able to perform whatsoever he purposed to do through him. As a weak instrument in God's mighty hand, he came not to wrest to himself a kingdom, but to receive it. He was the passive instrument, and it not so much signified what he might do as what might be done to him. He was thus prepared to suffer, and even to suffer death. He knew that it was not here and under earthly conditions that his kingdom was to be established; but as “with the clouds of heaven, before the Ancient of Days.” Therefore death, as a liberation from earthly conditions, was a preparation

for his reign. He came to do his Father's will, and in doing it he encountered a fate which, though the expression of that will, was yet conditioned and explained by the history of God's people and by the Scriptures which are the record of it. Therefore Jesus, no less than his disciples, was disposed to find a meaning in everything that befell him. "It cannot be," he said, "that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem."<sup>1</sup> As he approached the end, he saw in his own death and in the momentary dispersion of his disciples a fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy, "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad."<sup>2</sup> When he repudiated Peter's effort to rescue him by force, and refrained from summoning supernatural aid, he appealed to the Scripture in proof "*that thus it must be.*"<sup>3</sup> He knew that his consummate performance was, not to do, but to suffer, waiting upon God.

#### JESUS' TEACHING CONFIRMED BY THE CROSS

The Cross is the fulfilment and confirmation of Scripture, but it also may be regarded as the confirmation of Jesus' own teaching. I am not thinking here of the words in which Jesus fore-

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiii. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Mark xiv. 27 ; cf. *vv.* 21, 49, and Matt. xxvi. 54, 56.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxvi. 52-54.

told his death, but of the hard precepts which were sealed by the Cross.

*Jesus as  
teacher*

Here is One whom we account the chiefest teacher of mankind; yet he himself seemed to set so small a value upon his teaching that he never wrote but once, and that was upon the ground — no man knows what he wrote. The chief thing in his estimation was, not what he said, but what he did; rather, not what he did, but what he suffered. Yet in all this he would have men regard him as the Teacher. It was as a teacher he first gathered his disciples about him; and the sum of all that he is — from first to last, in word and deed — we justly express by the name we have given him, the Word of God. The School of Jesus preceded the Church; but the Church is still the School of the exalted Christ. What Jesus is to us as Teacher, Ten-nyson has expressed :

“ And so the Word had breath and wrought  
 With human hands the creed of creeds,  
 In loveliness of perfect deeds,  
 More strong than all poetic thought.”

*Teaching  
from the  
Cross*

Such being the character of our Teacher, we utter no baffling paradox when we say that even his wonderful words are incomplete if they stand alone, and that Jesus was never so much our Teacher as when he kept silence upon the Cross.



The words of Christ must not be separated from his life; his life cannot be separated from his death. The teaching of Christ is Christianity; but the teaching of Christ cannot be divorced from the Cross.

The newness of Jesus' teaching first became fully evident at the Cross. "Follow me," said Jesus to those whom he chose out of the world; but until he had descended unto death that he might ascend to glory, no man knew whither he led. In that path no teacher had led before.

The hardest of Jesus' precepts, those particularly which commend the non-resistance of evil, are explained — *and not explained away* — by the Cross. From the line of thought we have just been following above, it is clear that these precepts are the direct outcome of Jesus' inmost consciousness, the practical expression of his faith in God's justice and of his confidence in God's wisdom and might. They were first of all his own rule of conduct: but he made them over unto every son of man. For whoso has this faith and maintains this confidence will not believe that God's ark is tottering, nor intrude upon his plan with the violent purposes of anger. God's plan is worked out in part by human instrumentality, and he can make even the wrath of men to serve him; but the direct and conscious instruments of his will strive not in anger but in love. Yet strive

*Newness  
of his  
teaching*

*Jesus'  
hardest  
precepts  
are his  
own rule  
of conduct*

they do, and with a godly violence.<sup>1</sup> We misinterpret the meekness which Jesus exemplified and inculcates when we represent it as mere passivity, or as a formal compliance with a rule. To suffer and yet forego revenge is a sign of cowardice or hypocrisy, if anger is merely dissimulated, and not rather conquered by the greater violence of love.

*Love of  
enemies*

We have already seen wherein consists the novelty of Jesus' commandment to love the brethren; but newer still is the commandment to love one's enemies, and this, though enjoined before, we see exemplified for the first time at the Cross. To turn the other cheek to the smiter, to give one's coat to whoso takes one's cloak, — these are hard sayings; without the meekness of love they are impossible. But this word "meekness," if we understand it aright, is only another name for love, — love in its most specifically Christian aspect. The sincerity of these precepts appears, and the hardship vanishes, when we contemplate him who, with his cloak, gave his life also, and yet loved his slayers. Jesus forgave his enemies because he loved them; and he loved them, and *could not* hate, because he came expressly to serve and save them.

*Self-  
renunci-  
ation*

Like Peter, we are prone to ask, How many times shall I forgive a brother his petty faults,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 2 Tim. ii. 24 with Col. i. 29.

“till seven times” ? Jesus’ word of forgiveness upon the Cross forever sets at naught such calculation. “Whoso renounceth not all that he hath,” saith Jesus, “cannot be my disciple.”<sup>1</sup> And at once we begin again with our mean and minimizing calculation : How much is “all” ? We receive our answer at the Cross. And in the same moment, in view of a death which exhibited to the utmost the vital vigor of love, we recognize the truth of the saying, “A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”<sup>2</sup>

When Jesus said, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me,”<sup>3</sup> he may have had in mind some familiar proverb, or a criminal passing to his execution may have suggested and enforced the expression ; but the sober sincerity of this saying was surely never appreciated until it was remembered upon Mount Calvary.

Jesus employed a more familiar figure when he *Meekness* enjoined his disciples to bear his “yoke,” saying to all who are weary and heavy laden, “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.”<sup>4</sup> In face of the fact that Jesus calls upon us to learn meekness from *him*, it is strange that we should so commonly misinter-

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiv. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xvi. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xi. 29.

pret this word, treating it as equivalent to the monkish *humilitas*, which means lowliness in self-estimation — “with a true knowledge of one’s self to abhor one’s self,” as St. Bernard defines it. This manifestly does not hit the meaning of Jesus, and it is his meaning we must apprehend if we would have meekness untainted with hypocrisy. With him it meant, not a lowly opinion of himself—no thinking of himself at all, but the complete abstraction of self-regard, and the assumption in actual fact of a lowly *condition*. “Yoke” and “burden” are the symbols of service, and it was in the express character of a servant that Jesus appeared among men.<sup>1</sup> Lowliness of outward estate is essential to the idea, yet it is not this alone, nor this chiefly. In so far as it involves an attitude of mind, — as St. Paul intimates that it does when he enjoins, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,”<sup>7</sup> — it is an attitude which is the genuine and spontaneous expression of one who has accepted a humble *position*, the attitude of one who has renounced the ideal of mastery and embraced the ideal of service. The phrases which Jesus uses — “lowly in heart,” “poor in spirit” — indicate that as an affair of the heart it must be a service voluntarily assumed or willingly endured. The word which we translate by “meekness” is an

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xx. 28 ; Mark x. 44 ; Luke xxii. 27 ; Phil. ii. 7.

Old Testament term which may equally well denote mere poverty. It was Jesus that first raised it to an affair of the heart and inculcated it as a virtue. An affair of the heart it is, but not of a heart busy about its own interests, "looking to its own things, but looking to the things of others."<sup>1</sup> When we have rightly apprehended this conception we shall find that the apparently preposterous injunction of St. Paul, "Let each esteem others better than himself,"<sup>2</sup> is practically possible of execution. For, in reality, it proposes no critical estimate of character; but the dutiful devotion which judgeth *not*, — the attitude of the true servant towards his master.

This is the newest and most distinctive feature of Jesus' moral teaching, and again we note that it finds its ultimate test and confirmation in the Cross. No disciple could adequately conceive what the "yoke" as a symbol of service might signify, until he saw it identified with the Cross. The world's ethical ideal at its highest is self-realization, and it is an ideal which the Christian of all men is least able to ignore, since he seeks in Jesus the Saviour of his life and finds in him the promise that he shall be blessed. Yet from the same mouth he receives the commandment of self-renunciation. Jesus had a perfect perception of the paradox which lies in this ideal of service,

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. ii. 4.

and he himself has expressed it in the most absolute terms. When he says, "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled: and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted,"<sup>1</sup> he utters an adage which finds application and confirmation in many of the common situations of life. But when he says, "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall save it,"<sup>2</sup> how should we believe his saying, did not the Cross witness at once to its sincerity and to its truth?

It is significant that St. Paul, who is not wont to dwell upon the personal traits of Jesus, recalls emphatically the one trait we have here been considering, when he says, "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ."<sup>3</sup> The meekness of Jesus was manifest in the whole of his earthly life; yet it is characteristic of St. Paul that when, as in the second chapter of Philipians, he discourses at length upon "this mind which was in Christ Jesus," he finds it supremely exhibited in the descent from heaven to earth, and finally and climactically in the Cross.

*Imitation  
of the  
suffering  
Christ*

It is an exceedingly striking fact that the commandments which Jesus enjoins upon his disciples as the mere condition of discipleship—not as

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiv. 11; Matt. xxiii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xvi. 25; Mark viii. 35; Luke ix. 24.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. x. 1.

counsels of unattainable perfection, as we are fain to regard them — are precisely those hard commandments which find their full exemplification only at the Cross. This agrees with the fact which we observe in the Apostolic Scriptures, that wherever we are exhorted to the imitation of Jesus, it is not in view of the human excellencies of his character which are most nearly level with our attainment, but in view precisely of those traits in which he transcended human limits in giving himself over unto death. Everywhere it is the death of Jesus — the Cross — which is proposed for our imitation.<sup>1</sup> It is a wholesome example, not because it is death, but because it exhibits the utmost plenitude of life, — life flowing onward towards the Cross, converging upon it, — and persisting unchecked, we must believe. This is our surest argument for life beyond death. If Jesus ever lived, he lived supremely upon the Cross; for, with him, to live was to love. Life which exhibits in one moment such sheer abundance that it spills its overplus, cannot be about to cease, but to escape.

To the rule that it is everywhere the sufferings of Jesus which are proposed in the Scriptures for our imitation, there is only one notable exception. That is where St. John makes use of a term so general that it covers the whole life, exhorting us

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. iv. 10.

“to walk as he walked.”<sup>1</sup> To this St. Augustine pertinently remarks that when Christ was nailed to the Cross he still *walked*, for the path in which he trod was love — “*fixus in cruce erat et in ipsa via ambulabat: ipsa est via caritatis.*”

JESUS REIGNS FROM THE TREE — AND THE  
SECRET OF HIS SCEPTRE'S SWAY OVER  
THE HEARTS OF MEN IS HIS SUFFERING.

<sup>1</sup> 1 John ii. 6.



## THE SIXTH WORD

### ACCOMPLISHMENT AND DUTY

*When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said:*  
IT IS FINISHED. — John xix. 30.

#### ACCOMPLISHMENT

IT would not be strange or startling if Dante *Jesus' joy*  
had found in this word, "It is finished," the *in accom-*  
proof of Jesus' joy in suffering, the gladness *plishment*  
of labor accomplished, of homesickness relieved.  
It is certain that St. John perceived this meaning  
in the saying which he alone has recorded. And  
we who read it are irresistibly reminded of Isaiah's  
prophecy, "He shall see of the travail of his soul:  
he shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my  
righteous servant make many righteous: and he  
shall bear their iniquities."<sup>1</sup>

The Jews and their rulers congratulated themselves that by their subtilty and force they had cut short and ended this man's career: "Finished," replied Jesus. His work is accomplished — it is also over. For a man to say, My work is over yet incomplete, is to pronounce a curse upon his

<sup>1</sup> Isa. liii. 11.

life. But Jesus knew that because his work was God's work, it could not be ended without being finished; and the joy of accomplishment was superadded to the joy of labor done.

*The joy  
of every  
servant of  
God in  
work done*

Jesus knew by faith that his task was accomplished, though it did not so appear to men. And may we not thence draw this comfort, that for every servant of God the end is also accomplishment? Though his strength be cut off in the prime, and his plans perish before they be effected, must we not believe that his service in the kingdom of God — and what else counts beneath the Cross? — is not merely ended but finished? Even of the believing thief it might be said, though he might not say it of himself, that his work was finished. We are weak; “howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.”

*The joy of  
St. Paul*

This confidence of Jesus is an example to his disciples. St. Paul, too, though he saw himself about to be cut off by a violent death, dared to affirm, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.” If these words match Jesus' consciousness of duty done, the next words of glad anticipation reflect his joy in the confidence of reward, having also the same basis in the consciousness of moral integrity conjoined with faith in God's righteousness: “Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown

of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day, — and not only to me, but also to all them that love his appearing.”<sup>1</sup> St. Paul is very bold in drawing the parallel between his experience and that of Christ. He even suggests that there is a sense in which we may say that Christ’s sacrifice was not the last and only offering for sin. For he says, “Now I rejoice in my sufferings, *for your sake*, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ, in my flesh, for his body’s sake, which is the Church.”<sup>2</sup> And in the context of the passage we have just quoted, he says, “I am already being offered — poured out as a drink-offering.”<sup>3</sup> St. Paul dares to speak thus because he accepted in earnest the Cross as the symbol of discipleship, — and by the same token he could count upon the Crown.

St. Paul is not the only disciple that has dared, and rightly dared, to use such words. We may not all dare to count so confidently upon the Crown, nor with such assurance to reckon our work accomplished, — too much bowed down by the conviction of failure, by the thought of service so late commenced, so faintly prosecuted. We repeat the words of the Psalmist as our own heartfelt cry,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 24.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 6.

“ O Lord, establish thou the work of our hands  
upon us ;  
O prosper, thou, our handy-work.”

Nevertheless, when we see our work tested as by fire and consumed, we may still comfort ourselves with the thought that man's failure may be God's accomplishment.

#### DUTY

*Accom-  
plishment  
implies  
duty*

We cannot use the word “ finished ” or “ accom-  
plished ” except in relation to a definite task. A  
task which is imposed by authority is a duty, and  
the joy of accomplishment is the joy of duty done.  
This word, therefore, of Jesus implies that he  
regarded his whole life, and particularly his suf-  
fering and death, under the aspect of duty. The  
sternness of duty, Jesus felt as few men have ;  
and because he never had to suffer remorse for  
a duty shunned, he experienced in full measure  
the joy of duty done. The joy of Jesus may be  
expressed, like that of any other man, in the  
words of Wordsworth in his Ode to Duty :

“ Stern Lawgiver ! yet thou dost wear  
The Godhead's most benignant grace ;  
Nor know we anything so fair  
As is the smile upon thy face.”

*Jesus'  
sense of  
duty*

It is exceedingly necessary for us to note what  
place duty held in Jesus' consciousness. Our

modern age, by ignoring the most palpable facts of the Gospel record, has succeeded in eliminating this stern feature from the popular picture of Jesus. Our popular art, popular religion, and even the popular theology depict exclusively the soft traits of tender-hearted sympathy and weak concession. Other ages have preferred their own partial and unbalanced picture of Christ — as the impassible monarch, as the vindictive judge, as the excruciated victim ; — but perhaps no other has done graver damage to the majesty of his character.

The revival in modern times of the Good Shepherd as a popular theme in art exemplifies our sentimental notion of Christ. For what we exclusively dwell upon is the pitifulness of the Shepherd, who leaves the whole flock to seek the one sheep that has gone astray. We ignore the wealthier range of pastoral symbolism which appears in the Scripture and in early Christian art. The question may well be raised whether such a shepherd as we depict would dare attack the wolf; whether he is mighty enough to rescue the soul “in the valley of the shadow of death.” This is merely one example among many, — only a straw, but it shows the direction of the wind.<sup>1</sup>

If men are able to disregard the stern quality *Sin* of duty in our Lord’s own consciousness, it is

<sup>1</sup> See my *Monuments of the Early Church*, pp. 214 sqq.

*The sentimental picture of Jesus*

not strange that they listen only to his gracious promises, and hear no longer the sterner note of his commandments, — the most exacting any teacher ever uttered. Knowing themselves no rule of duty, they know no sin; and having interpreted the Father by their estimate of the Son, they have no fear of God before their eyes. This is the tendency of our whole modern age. It is the tendency which Heine satirized from his “mattress-grave,” when he replied to those who asked him if he hoped in God’s forgiveness, “Oh, he’ll forgive me: that’s what he’s for — *c’est son métier.*”

*Temptation*

One who swims with the current cannot know its force: one who knows not the good will of God opposing his human will has no experience of the imperative of conscience. Conversely, that man, if such there be, who knows the will of God, yet feels within himself no prompting to oppose it, can have no sense of the compulsion of duty. This is true also of Jesus. Those who, with excess of zeal to guard the sinlessness of Jesus, scruple even to admit the reality of his temptation, succeed only in depriving him of an essential human experience, — essential most of all to the Saviour of men. The sinlessness of Jesus is a dogma of our faith, and it is attested by Jesus’ own words in the Gospel.<sup>1</sup> But the same Gospels

<sup>1</sup> John viii. 46.

also attest the reality of his temptation, and that in a story which they must have derived from Jesus himself.<sup>1</sup> The Temptation of Jesus, which is related immediately after the story of his baptism, depicts in symbolical language a triple experience of the prompting of individual desire which was the direct outcome of the recognition of his Messianic vocation. The essential fact is that Jesus *overcame* temptation; and it is significant that he overcame by appealing to the rule of duty which he found in the Scripture, replying to every prompting of the Tempter, "It is written." This was doubtless not the only temptation he encountered as a man, nor was it the last or bitterest of the Christ. Recognizing the reality of Jesus' temptation, we know that "we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all points in the very same way *without sin*."<sup>2</sup> Jesus knew sin by conflict with it; and by conflict and victory he knew it better than any man can know it by conflict and defeat.

Jesus feared God. We can say this in the full *Jesus' fear of God* sense of the scriptural term. For, at its highest, fear is not the opposite and exclusive contrary of love. We may rather say that "the fear of

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iv. 1-11; Luke iv. 1-13.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. iv. 15.

God" is the closest Old Testament parallel to the New Testament conception of "the love of God" and "faith in God."<sup>1</sup> Jesus feared God too much to blench from the perfect line of rectitude. The fearfulness of duty was at once his guide and his defence. The fear of God is the inevitable experience of conscience: it is a slavish fear when we hate the authority we are obliged to recognize; it is a filial fear when we love it and even in our disobedience commend it. To put away from us fear is not to gain in courage, but to cast away our armor through temerity.

Jesus feared God, and he expressly inculcated this fear in his disciples. He means, evidently, not mere awe, but genuine fear, when he says, "Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him who after he hath killed the body hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him."<sup>2</sup> This is a wholesome fear, and it excludes every worldly fear which perturbs our peace and frustrates our endeavors. Hence there is no real contradiction in the commandment which Jesus subjoins: "Fear not."<sup>3</sup> This last is an injunction which admits of

<sup>1</sup> Deut. x. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xii. 4, 5; cf. Matt. x. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xii. 7.



but one exception. The fear of God makes us bold. When we recognize our wayward helplessness and cast ourselves trustfully upon the intimate, personal care of our heavenly Father, the changes and chances of this mortal life frighten us no more. When we are freed from the innumerable fears which it is the whole province of worldly prudence to guard against, we find the true guiding principle of life in the fear of God.

The sense of duty, of obligation to do the *right* Conscience *the only* guide of *life* life whatever befall, is the only possible guide of life. God may be guided by wisdom and prudence, for he sees the whole: but for us who see but in part, the only wisdom and prudence is to ignore the specious guidance of profit and expediency, and follow in the straight path of rectitude. We believe in God's providence in the universe, and as a part of this faith we believe that to do the right is to fulfil God's will and to conform to his plan. But from the point of view from which man must regard the universe it exhibits no plan which he can surely trace: it appears rather as a boundless intricacy. It is astonishing that in this maze we should so commonly take for our guide the wisdom of the understanding, when by wisdom we cannot compute the remote consequences of any act, and by the most far-sighted prudence cannot be assured of attaining even our own temporal profit. In our faith in God we

have the assurance that the right is also the good, — for us and for all. This is the conclusion of the wisdom of the Preacher: “Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.”<sup>1</sup> And Job likewise, after the most impressive discourse upon God’s wisdom in the ordering of the universe, makes a sudden transition to the one way of practical wisdom which is obvious to man:

“And unto man he said,  
Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;  
And to depart from evil is understanding.”<sup>2</sup>

*Jesus our  
example  
in the path  
of duty*

Jesus walked as the example of men; and therefore he walked in man’s path and under human limitations: the wisdom which guided him was not the all-seeing wisdom of God, infallible in its calculation of expediency; but the practical reason with its sure judgment of *right*. This light which sheds its narrow beams only upon our immediate pathway is yet the only light man has for his practical guidance; and it is of this Jesus exclaims, “If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!”<sup>3</sup>

The temptations which are related of Jesus are such as could influence only a noble mind. To

<sup>1</sup> Eccles. xii. 13; cf. Prov. ix. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Job xxviii. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. vi. 23; cf. Luke xi. 35.

turn stones into bread, to grasp earthly dominion, to claim supernatural protection, — these do not represent the temptations of selfish lust (the lust of appetite, the lust of conquest, the lust of power): they were the temptations of the Messiah, temptations to attain the end of God's evident purpose by diverging from the sober road of right into a plausible short-cut of expediency which promised a swifter issue. No one was ever more tempted to fulfil a lofty aim by means — not illegal, but aside from the plain path of duty: no one ever more resolutely refused to leave that sober path. Therefore Jesus, for all his zeal and enthusiasm in a high cause, cannot justly be reckoned among zealots and enthusiasts. He is the more perfectly our example because he displays the simplicity and power of a life led according to the rule of duty. He is supremely our example in his death because that was the culmination of a dutiful life.

It was because of Jesus' own solemn regard for duty that he could impose upon his disciples the most uncompromising and exacting commandments. He imposed upon them even his Cross; and the Cross is the very symbol of duty. The Cross excludes every precept of expediency, — even the obvious expediency of saving one's life. The paradox which Jesus expresses in word and deed is an absolute one: it is denied, not explained, by

*The severity of his precepts explained by his own regard for duty*

those who resolve it into a far-sighted rule of prudence, which counsels us to exchange gladly the temporal life for life eternal. To seek one's own life, the salvation of one's soul, even in the highest sense, Jesus forbids;—and yet life is what he promises. This riddle cannot be solved by any effort of the understanding. How, we may ask, can the individual come to mighty self-realization by the suppression of all claims of self? How can he attain the goal of his own life by self-abnegation, by the renunciation of an independent life aim directed to the perfection of his *ego*, by ignoring all that contributes to his personal satisfaction, and by making himself merely a serviceable instrument for the development of others? But in our *experience* this inconceivable becomes the actual. It is realized in the man whom the personal life of Jesus takes captive. Jesus woos us to a willing service, since we see in him the one who is alone worthy to rule and who yet takes upon himself service as his distinctive mark. When his might over us creates the willingness to serve and the power to serve, we have then attained what by no decision of self-interested prudence, and by no concern about ourselves and all that we find within ourselves, is ever attainable.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See W. Herrmann, article *Demut*, in Herzog's *Realencyklopädie*, 3d ed., vol. iv. pp. 571 sqq.

Jesus' repudiation of formalism did not mean *Jesus' notion of righteousness* emancipation from the law of duty — either for himself or for his disciples. In receiving the baptism of John he declared, "It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness,"<sup>1</sup> — meaning thereby the formal prescriptions of piety, even where they were not defined by the Scriptures. We have to note that Jesus expresses his thought, not in the terms of conscience and duty, which are familiar to us, but in the equivalent Hebrew terms of law and righteousness. He says, "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil."<sup>2</sup> He claimed to give a purer conception of the law of righteousness, but not one which was less genuinely derived from the Scriptures. He repudiated the righteousness which was done in selfish expectation of reward, teaching us rather to say, when we have done all that is commanded of us, "We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do."<sup>3</sup> But he regards the filial duty of a son of God as, not less, but more exacting than the servile performance of the hireling: "Except your righteousness shall exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. v. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xvii. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. v. 20.

*Right-  
eousness  
is the per-  
formance  
of God's  
will*

To express his broader and profounder conception of the law, Jesus preferred to use the phrase "God's will." The will of God, however it might be ascertained, was his absolute rule of duty. How conformable his will was to the will of God, we learn from such a saying as, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work."<sup>1</sup> And yet, even in this same Gospel of St. John, we see Jesus' will contrasted with the Father's will: "For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."<sup>2</sup> When Jesus says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!"<sup>3</sup> we see how stern a conflict he had with his own will in view of the supreme duty of death. His willingness to die is expressed as a conquest of his own will, when he prays, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."<sup>4</sup>

*The Cross  
as the  
symbol  
of duty*

The Cross, which is the witness of Jesus' sublime sense of duty, is the highest symbol of obedience and duty *for us*. The Epistle to the Hebrews says, "Though he was a son, yet learned he obedience through the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salva-

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 34.

<sup>2</sup> John vi. 38; cf. v. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xii. 50.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xxii. 42; cf. Heb. v. 7-9.

tion.”<sup>1</sup> The will of God, which Jesus accepted as his rule, he enjoins upon his disciples as the only criterion of conduct, and as the condition of entrance into the kingdom.<sup>2</sup> This thought is so essential that he incorporates it in the formula which his disciples were constantly to repeat, the words which he taught them for a pattern of prayer and for the regulation of desire. When we pray, “Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth,” it is normally the expression of our ardent desire; for to our faith the will of God represents the utmost conceivable blessedness for us and for all. This marks the height of our attainment. But progress in this direction is conditioned by the fact that in our human experience the will of God is constantly making itself felt as *duty*, by opposing our will and spurring us onward. Though the Cross has been sealed upon our forehead in baptism, though we have voluntarily embraced it in our mature confession of Christ, it is ever asserting itself anew as a *cross* — that is, as an instrument of torture and death — when we are most sure that it is our sign of triumph. It is so very hard to be a Christian, because at each step in the path of duty we meet a new test,

“And where we looked for crowns to fall,  
We find the tug’s to come, — that’s all.”

<sup>1</sup> Heb. v. 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. vii. 21.

We can often say, "Thy will be done," as a genuine expression of our desire ; but in the experience of a life of duty there must come black moments when our utmost is to say, "*Nevertheless* not my will, but thine, be done." That, however, is victory. The path of perfection is paved by the conquest of desire.

JESUS REIGNS FROM THE TREE — AND HE  
JUSTIFIES HIS RULE BY HIS OWN ROYAL  
REGARD FOR DUTY.



# THE SEVENTH WORD

## FILIAL TRUST

*And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT: and having said this, he gave up the ghost.*

Luke xxiii. 46, quoted from Ps. xxxi. 5.

### TRUST IN GOD

**W**E are struck at once by the contrast between the filial confidence of this word and the despairing note of the cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" There needs no subtilty of exegesis to detect here the joy of trustful repose upon the goodness of God, the Son's confidence in the Father's care.

It is remarkable, in both these cases, that the unpremeditated cry which is wrung from our Lord's lips is expressed in the language of the Psalter. This shows not only Jesus' familiarity with the Scriptures, which he accounted as his daily bread;<sup>1</sup> it proves, further, the enduring worth of the Old Testament, and especially the Psalter, as an expression of the religious nature

*Jesus' familiarity with the Scriptures*

<sup>1</sup> See Matt. iv. 4; cf. Deut. viii. 3.

of man, — his Godward consciousness at its highest. Yet it justifies, too, our instinctive tendency to put into the old words a new and distinctively Christian meaning.

*New  
meaning  
in old  
words*

We cannot in every place apply the parable of the old bottles which are unserviceable for the new wine. For here Jesus fills the old expression with a totally new significance, undreamt of by the Psalmist. It was a triumph of faith in the Psalmist to commend his spirit to God in the trust that he would save him *from* death; but Jesus, in the very moment of death, triumphed in the assurance that God could save him *through* death. Yet the old words sufficed to express this new hope.

*The first  
Christian  
death*

I have said in another connection, in view of Jesus' feeling of desertion, that his death was hardly an example of Christian dying. We may say now, in view of his last word from the Cross, that his was the first Christian death. This cry of Jesus has been echoed again and again by generations of disciples who have lived and died in him. The new meaning which Jesus attached to these words was expressed more plainly by the martyr Stephen, — the first to suffer in his name, — who cried out to *him* who had gone before to show the way and to prepare a place, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."<sup>1</sup> The belief that God will

<sup>1</sup> Acts vii. 59.

receive the spirit at death, that to be away from the home of the body is to be at home with the Lord,<sup>1</sup> has become so much a commonplace of Christian thought that we hardly detect the newness of this hope in Jesus' utterance, and scarcely can credit the fact that the Old Testament saints lacked this assurance of faith.

It is exceedingly difficult to state accurately *The Old Testament and the hope of immortality* the attitude of a pious Israelite towards the question of life after death. It is even difficult for us to realize that such a hope constituted no part of his faith in God. It is certain that the Old Testament formulated no desirable picture of life beyond the grave, and that the Old Testament saints cherished no lucid hope of personal immortality. Their personality was merged in the family and the nation; in his posterity the individual survived. And yet — the hope of eternal life was logically justified by their faith in God, as a righteous God; and this logical corollary of their faith was finally apprehended.

Belief in the righteousness of God is the backbone of the Bible: it is the constant factor which unifies the development from the Old Testament *Faith in God's righteousness* to the New, and unites both as an organic whole. If God is righteous and omnipotent, righteous men must be adequately rewarded, and the wicked condignly punished. The Old Testament believer

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 6-9.

affirmed that this righteous equivalence is a *fact*, taking merely the earthly life into account as the sphere of God's judgment. Manifestly, it is the rule in the moral government of the world; but, manifestly, there are many exceptions, — and the absolute righteousness of God can endure no exception. The pious Israelite of the calamitous days of the later kingdom and the exile was constantly preoccupied by this problem of reward. This is the theme of the Book of Job; and nowhere is the inadequacy of the dogmatic solution more mercilessly revealed. It might do for Job's friends to deny the difficulty by affirming that if Job is unfortunate, he must be wicked; but for the afflicted man who is conscious of his own integrity there is no such escape. Again and again there rose to the lips of persecuted saints a cry which was *almost* a profession of faith in a future life in which God's righteousness would be fully vindicated. So Job cried:

“But I know that my vindicator liveth,  
 And that he shall stand up at the last upon the  
 earth;  
 And after my skin hath been thus destroyed,  
 Yet from my flesh shall I see God:  
 Whom I shall see for myself,  
 And mine eyes shall behold, and not another.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Job xix. 25-27.

Though this may not mean precisely what we have been accustomed to suppose, it has a right to its place in our Burial Office; for it is the seed of the later hope of a life beyond the grave.

Such a hope as this emerges frequently, as an expression of personal experience, in the Psalter; and in the days of public calamity, when the nation itself was regarded as the persecuted and afflicted servant of Jehovah, this problem of reward pressed upon the prophets with still greater severity. What, it was asked finally, — what if righteousness demand the sacrifice of life itself? Where then can be the reward — this side the grave? Isaiah answers: “Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the proud; because he poured out his soul unto death.”<sup>1</sup> The word “*therefore*” (and “*because*”) has all the force of man’s faith in God’s righteousness. Whatever may be the meaning of these words as Isaiah uttered them, they have justly been applied to Christ; and there can be no doubt that in the logic of this illative particle he found strong comfort as he poured out his soul unto death. Jesus’ faith in the righteousness of God implied reward for duty done, either here — or hereafter.

*Belief in  
the reward  
of right-  
eousness*

<sup>1</sup> Isa. liii. 12.

## THE FATHER

*Trust in  
God as  
Father*

But it was not upon God's righteousness alone that Jesus relied: his confidence was founded far more upon his intimate, personal relation to God as Father.

This word, "Father," is not found in the Psalm from which Jesus borrowed the words of his last cry from the Cross. It is a significant addition, for it transforms the expression into one of *filial* confidence.

*Old and  
new in the  
notion of  
the divine  
father-  
hood*

Here again we find in Jesus' teaching a feature which was old and yet new. God is sometimes spoken of in the Old Testament as the Father of the nation collectively; and later Jewish usage, particularly in the time of our Lord, employed this title not infrequently with a more individual reference. The growth of this usage in favor of the title "heavenly Father" is accounted for, first of all, by the disposition to avoid the utterance of the express names of God. This in turn was a consequence of an increasing emphasis in later Judaism upon the awful transcendence of the Deity. In dread reverence for God, his name was replaced in common use by a periphrasis: he was described as "the Highest,"<sup>1</sup> "the Blessed," "the Power,"<sup>2</sup> or as "the Father in heaven." Jesus himself observed this scruple — perhaps

<sup>1</sup> Mark v. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Mark xiv. 61, 62.

more consistently than our Greek Gospels seem to indicate. But the fact that before all other names of God he preferred this last designation, and employed it with a frequency unparalleled in Jewish literature, is significant of the new conception of God which he possessed and endeavored to impart to his disciples. An exclusive emphasis upon the transcendence of God was matched and balanced by a name which drew him as Father close to his children. Jesus appropriated this name, and filled it with a richer content. Old as this name was, Jesus made it the symbol of all that was most original in his contribution to the religious consciousness of mankind: it is the summary of all that he had to teach about God.

Jesus' doctrine of the divine fatherhood was not based upon God's activity in creation or upon any aboriginal relation between God and man. This was substantially the pagan notion, to which St. Paul did not hesitate to appeal in preaching to the Athenians: "For we are also his offspring, as certain even of your own poets have said."<sup>1</sup> It is true that Jesus interpreted the fatherhood of God in the most universal sense, affirming that his loving care was shown towards all his creatures, his fatherly love towards all men, bad men as well as good: "for your Father in heaven maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and

*Jesus' doctrine the reflection of his experience*

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 28.

sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.”<sup>1</sup> But at this universal conception of God’s fatherly goodness Jesus had arrived through the most intimate and personal experience of God as *his* Father.

“*My  
Father*”  
and “*your  
Father*”

It appears that the Gospel of St. Matthew most correctly reflects the usage of Jesus, representing that, except in direct address to God, he never used the term “Father” without the adjunct “in heaven,” and that in prayer he addressed God as “*my* Father.”<sup>2</sup> It is clear from all the Gospels that he never so associated himself with his disciples as to speak of God as *our* Father. This phrase occurs in the prayer which he taught his disciples to make, but which he did *not* make in common with them. Substantially, St. John interprets aright the significance of Jesus’ use of the possessive pronoun, when he represents that throughout his ministry Jesus spoke of God as “*my* Father,” and that only at the end, when he had magnified to the utmost the reality and intimacy of this relationship, did he make it over to his disciples as their own possession, saying, “I ascend unto *my* Father and *your* Father, and *my* God and *your* God.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 45.

<sup>2</sup> For the proof of this, which is too intricate to give here, see Dalman, *Die Worte Jesu*, pp. 155 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> John xx. 17.



That cry of Jesus from the Cross, “*My God, “Abba” my God,*” was not more intimate in its personal appropriation of God than the address “My Father,” or simply “Father.” There was something so impressive in Jesus’ use of this name that the word has been preserved, even by the Greek-speaking Church, in the language in which Jesus uttered it,—as in the case of the cry, “Eli, Eli” and the “Amen” (unfortunately in our English version translated by “verily”) which Jesus used, in a fashion peculiar to himself, as an *introduction* to his solemn assertions. In the form “*abba*” the definite article is joined to the Aramaic word for “father”: it means strictly “*the father,*” but was commonly used also in a possessive sense, as equivalent to “my (or our) father.” This word may owe its survival in Christian use to the fact that it was the first word of the prayer which our Lord taught his disciples — “Our Father”;<sup>1</sup> and St. Paul may have had this prayer in mind in the two passages where he cites this name as a symbol of the spirit of adoption: “Because ye are sons, God sent forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”<sup>2</sup> But it is also recorded as the first word of our Lord’s own prayer in the garden, when he bowed his will

<sup>1</sup> It could be rendered either by “Father,” as we have it in Luke xi. 2, or “Our Father,” as in Matt. vi. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. iv. 6; cf. Rom. viii. 15.

to the will of his Father;<sup>1</sup> and there can be no doubt that what made this word so memorable was Jesus' own utterance of it. This word which he uttered finally upon the Cross is the surest token of his filial confidence in the moment of death.

*Parables  
of father-  
hood*

Jesus employed several parables to illustrate the fatherhood of God. Fundamental to them all is the notion, not that God is to be conceived after the image of man, but that human perfections are a faint reflection of the divine.<sup>2</sup> Or, as St. Paul says, substantially: The divine fatherhood is the aboriginal fatherhood after which every fatherhood on earth is patterned.<sup>3</sup>

*We know  
God as the  
Father of  
the Son*

Parables might faintly illustrate what God is as Father; but Jesus' own relation to God was the conclusive testimony and proof of the divine fatherhood. Jesus was conscious of a unique and incomparable relation to God. How he attained that consciousness, the Gospels give us no hint. Rather we must say that they represent him as one who, like a child, growing up with a serene consciousness of a father's presence and loving care, cannot point to a time when he first knew his parent. All that was unique in his consciousness of essential sonship Jesus jealously guarded as his own; but his consciousness of the universal fatherhood of God he communicated to his dis-

<sup>1</sup> Mark xiv. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. vii. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iii. 15.

iples. He said, "My Father"; he said also, "Your Father": but he never put himself upon the same plane with his disciples by the use of such a phrase as "*our* Father." The Church has always recognized that the knowledge of God as Father, and access to this Father-God, has been attained through Jesus Christ. Hence the distinctive Christian name for God is not "our Father," simply; but "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup>

### SONSHIP

Jesus appeared among men as the Son of God in a unique sense. It is true that he never expressly applied to himself this name, — as he never expressly called himself the Christ. His self-chosen appellation was "the Son of man." But for all that, his claim is none the less clear and certain. His consciousness of exclusive and privileged sonship is expressed, as we have already had occasion to note, by the way in which he speaks of God as "my father." Other traits in the Gospels which cannot be so briefly adduced concur in proving that this was the fundamental factor in his Messianic consciousness. *Jesus' consciousness of sonship*

Jesus claimed to be the Son of God in an exclusive sense. He did not seek to impart to his disciples all that he was conscious of being and *Jesus the example of sonship*

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xv. 6; 2 Cor. i. 3; 1 Pet. i. 3; cf. Rev. i. 6.

possessing as the Son of God. Yet he taught them to look to God as *their* Father, and to behave themselves in a way befitting God's sons. Hence his own relation to God, unique as it is, illustrates the religious and moral relation of every son to his heavenly Father. What it is to be a son, in the perfection of likeness and love, Jesus would have his disciples learn in his person; and the disciples, having come to know sonship in its highest instance, were not disposed to dwell upon the lowest relations to which this conception might be applied.

*Sonship a  
peculiar  
privilege*

It seems perfectly logical to say that because God is to be regarded as the Father of all men, therefore all men indiscriminately are his sons;—but it would be a perfectly perverse use of logic. For it is a fact that in the New Testament the notion of sonship expresses the exalted privilege of membership in the kingdom of God. Love is substantially what is expressed by the name “father”; and because God's love is universal, he may be called the Father of all men. On the other hand, the name “son” is meant to express something more than the mere fact that one has a father. In the notion of sonship there is implied (far more stringently to the Hebrew than to us) likeness and obedience, as well as privilege. Moral likeness to God and obedience to him are proofs of sonship and conditions of its privilege.

It is manifest that all do not fulfil these conditions and attain this status.

It is true that the parable of the prodigal son, if its allegorical interpretation is to be pressed in detail, implies that a sinner remains a son even in his estrangement from God. We must remember, however, that we are here dealing with figurative language, and must endeavor to avoid the logomachy into which men commonly fall in debating this subject. There can be no doubt that the express point of this parable is the proof of God's fatherly love towards even the sinner in his estrangement. But if there is any significance at all in the usage of words, it is important here to observe that Jesus does not use the term "son of God" to describe the common status of men, but to indicate the acme of religious attainment and privilege. It is certain that he did not regard the sum of all the benefits he brought to men as a mere restitution of an original status which had been lost through sin. He brought men into a new relation to God, and for this relation sonship is a summary expression. When St. John regards divine sonship as conditioned by a new birth, he rightly interprets the newness of the relationship and its peculiar privilege, as St. Paul does also by the notion of "adoption." The fact is that the name "son of God" expresses a degree of perfection which is unattainable even to Christ's disciples

under earthly conditions, and can be realized, like the perfected kingdom, only in the coming age. A heavenly perfection is expected of God's sons which they can in part realize in this world ;<sup>1</sup> but only in the resurrection does their state completely match their name. Divine sonship appears as the supreme and final attainment of man, in the striking passage where Jesus says of those that "are accounted worthy to attain to that world and the resurrection from the dead," that "they are equal unto the angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection."<sup>2</sup>

*Parables  
of sonship*

The relation between father and son which is exhibited in the human family afforded Jesus a many-sided parable, which he applied in various ways. He used it to illustrate the universal love of God in the reception of repentant sinners,<sup>3</sup> or his particular care for those who call upon him in filial confidence ;<sup>4</sup> or, again, to define the behavior of genuine sons.<sup>5</sup> But he employed it also to explain the peculiar relation which subsists between the heavenly Father and himself as the only Son. It is as a parable we must understand Jesus' words in Matt. xi. 27, where he says, "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 45-48

<sup>2</sup> Luke xx. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xv. 11-32.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. vii. 9-11 ; Luke xi. 11-13.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xxi. 28-31.

one knoweth the son, save the father ; neither doth any know the father, save the son, and he to whomsoever the son willeth to reveal him." The exclusive intimacy which exists between a father and a son, and between a son and a father, explains the unique position of Jesus as the only possible mediator of a true knowledge of God.<sup>1</sup> Both in form and content this passage is closely akin to many of the characteristic utterances recorded in the Fourth Gospel. But there "the Father" is no longer a parabolic expression ; it has become a fixed title for God, as he is known, first of all, in his relation to "the only begotten Son," and then through him, the Revealer, is apprehended as Father by all who are born from above.

How Jesus understood the peculiar privilege of sonship which he claimed for himself, one may learn more clearly from the parable of the wicked husbandmen.<sup>2</sup> The notion of sonship here emerges in a new and distinctive form, when the lord of the vineyard sends his "son," who is sharply distinguished from the "servants," and recognized as "the heir," to whom reverence and rule are due by natural right. While the narrative in St. Matthew's Gospel has simply the expression "my son," St. Luke says, "my beloved son," and St.

<sup>1</sup> Dalman, *Die Worte Jesu*, pp. 231 sq.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxi. 33-45 ; Mark xii. 1-12 ; Luke xx. 9-19.

Mark has the more pointed and probable phrase, "he had one left, a beloved son." This phrase precisely matches in meaning "the only begotten Son," which was a favorite term with St. John.<sup>1</sup> Both expressions denote the rightful authority of the only Son to rule in God's kingdom. This reflects the prophecy of Psalm ii. 6-9, — the text which first gave currency to the name "Son of God" as a Messianic title. But in Jesus' use of it the name "Son" has become more than a mere figure of speech; it denotes a substantial and natural relationship. As the Son of God, Jesus felt himself called to a universal dominion; not such dominion, however, as a fortunate Jewish general might acquire, but such as God himself exercises.

*Jesus' consciousness of sonship upon the Cross*

Such is the lofty consciousness which is implied in Jesus' last word from the Cross. He never was so clear in his claim of royal authority as when he approached his death. He faced death's last moment calling upon God as Father, and committing confidently to his keeping, not only his personal existence, but his royal rights as Son.

JESUS REIGNS FROM THE TREE — AND THOUGH HIS RULE BE IGNORED OR REJECTED, HE REIGNS NEVERTHELESS BY RIGHT DIVINE AS SON.

<sup>1</sup> Dalman, *Die Worte Jesu*, p. 230.



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