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In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Reflections.[1]

'We all . . . beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.'—2 Co 3[18].

THREE hundred years ago, when our English Bible was made, a very fine work was finished; but the men who did it were only men, and they made some mistakes. This verse is one of their mistakes. They thought it meant that the face of Jesus Christ is like a mirror in which we see God, Whom we can't see in any other way, and so they used the words which stand in our Bible to-day. Of course it is true. We do know what God is by looking at Jesus. Our Lord Himself said, 'Whosoever hath seen me, hath seen the father.'

But although it is true, it is not what Paul was thinking about, and it isn't what he meant to say. What he meant was that Christians are like mirrors to help people to see Jesus. This is quite easy to understand and very good to remember.

We mostly think of a mirror as a means of seeing ourselves, but it is also used to let us see somebody else. In the village of Comrie there is a very sharp corner. The houses hide the road and you can't see who is coming round the corner; so to avoid accidents, a large mirror is set across the corner, so that as you approach you can see reflected in the mirror the carts or bicycles or motors that are coming to meet you.

In some city houses, you may notice a mirror set at an angle in one of the windows to reflect into the room whoever is standing at the door.

One day I was visiting a man who was ill in bed. His wife was looking after him. She was sitting by the fire; and noticing that the high end of the wooden bedstead cut them off from seeing each other, I remarked, 'But you can't see your patient, and he can't see you.' 'Oh! yes I can,' she said, and pointed to the corner of the room where a tall pier-glass stood. She had only to raise her eyes to see her husband reflected in the glass, he had only to look across to see her.

Now Paul means something like that. Nobody can see Jesus face to face, as 'once in royal David's city' the disciples saw Him. There is something between: a hymn says, 'The veil of sense hangs dark between thy blessèd face and mine.' Jesus is a living Spirit, but our eyes can't see spirits.

How are people to see Christ? Christians must be the mirror, reflecting from their lives the unseen Christ who is helping them to live. People are to see in us His glory, His grace and truth, the goodness of Jesus.

It is a great matter what we say about Jesus, but it is a far greater matter what people see of Him in us. They won't see much if the mirror is dusty. If we let dust settle on our habits of prayer and worship and kindness they will only see a vague, blurred shadow. They won't see much if there is only a broken bit of the mirror, only a bit called Sunday morning, or an hour of Sunday school. They won't see truly if the mirror is twisted and warped by evil passions and bad habits. Have you ever seen distorting mirrors? I have seen them in exhibitions, and people sitting opposite them laughing at what they saw in them. For as people walked past, quite nice, good-looking people, one mirror made them look as long and thin as a piece of string, another made them look as fat as balloons, another made them look like nothing on earth. And if a visitor from Mars who knew nothing about the people of earth had only seen them in these mirrors he would have formed a very queer and completely wrong idea of what we were like.

And some folk get very strange and unlovely ideas of Jesus because they only see Him distorted and caricatured in the lives of some Christians. So we have a big responsibility and a great task, to reflect Jesus truly in our lives to men, so that they may want to know Him. Our life is the mirror. It must be clean, so that they shall see Him clearly. It must be complete, so that they shall see Him whole. It must be straight so that they shall see Him truly. An old conundrum asks: 'What is the difference between a looking-glass and a fool?' 'The looking-glass reflects without speaking, and the fool speaks without reflecting.'

We must never speak or act without reflecting Jesus in our acts and words, and it must be a 'speaking likeness.'

Then the world will always see
Christ the Holy Child in me.

[1] By the Reverend Stuart Robertson, M.A., Glasgow.

'It.'[1]

'Here am I; send me.'—Is 6[1].

Do you know what 'it' is? Of course, you say quite haughtily, with your head in the air, it's a pronoun. Even the little kiddies in the class below me could tell that. Yes, I know. But I mean the real 'it.' What 'it'? Why 'it' at games, of course. Don't you call it that? When you're playing hide-and-seek (and that's a great game in a stackyard or among the stooks in a harvest field), some one has to do the seeking and the finding, and no one, perhaps, wants it much. There are so many ways to get into the den; you'll never catch them, so you think, and so you're quite afraid it may fall to you to be 'it.' And when they start choosing, and singing 'Eenie, Meenie, Mainie, Mo,' you are so relieved and happy when you're out; you get so excited when there are fewer and fewer left, and you're still in, till perhaps there are only two of you, you and one other, and it's 'Eenie, Meenie' for the last time now. And oh! hurrah, I'm out! Nobody as a rule wants much to be 'it.'

Well, do you know, I think that's rather small. It means that you know you're not very good at the game, are afraid that you can't run as fast as the others, and will never catch anybody, will be left 'it' time on time. But the better players rather like being 'it.' Have you never noticed that? For they know they can run like hares, and will soon get some one. If they all get home this time, well it will be the next, and so they don't mind one bit; find 'it' better fun even than hiding. And that's the kind of boy and girl that gets things done, and that helps other people. Here, you see, is a man who one day went into a church, and, as the service went on, he thought he saw God looking this way and then that way, as if He were seeking for something that He couldn't find, thought he heard God saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Me.' He was searching for somebody ready to face a very difficult job, that would be hard to do, and would mean giving up whole heaps of things. And no one wanted to do that. And God's eyes kept looking. Was there nobody at all? And, with that, before he knew what he was doing, the man stood up there in the church, and cried, 'Yes, I'll be "it"; send me, I'll do it for you.' That's the kind of person who helps things along. Did you get Kipling's book for scouts among your Christmas presents? If not, it wouldn't be a bad idea to let drop a hint before your birthday. In it he has a poem. You don't like poems! Stupid you! But you'd like this one. For it's so exciting and so thrilly, and makes you feel all kind of fizzy inside of your head. Here's a bit of it:

Once and again as the ice went north,
The grass crept up to the Firth of Forth.
Once and again as the ice went south,
The glaciers ground over Lossiemouth.
But grass or glacier, cold or hot,
The men went forth who would rather not,
To fight with the tiger, the pig, and the ape,
To hammer the earth into decent shape.
Singing Eenie, Meenie, Mainie, Mo,
What's the use of doing so?
Ask the gods, for we don't know:
But, Eenie, Meenie, Mainie, Mo,
Make—us—it.

It's the boys and girls who say that who make things go; it's to the men and women who don't shirk but who choose to be 'it' when it's all hard and horrid and uncomfy that we owe everything.

At the War my battalion went through the Hindenburg line and had days and days of fighting in the country where the Germans had been living for four years. And one day the colonel was asked to take a village lying on the top of a little slope. 'How can I,' said he, 'for I've got hardly any men left now? And you tell me there are seven hundred Germans in the village. Still, I'll do it.' And he did. And do you know how? He sent for a boy who had been in a shop before the War; and, 'Jackie,' he said, 'I'm going to give you twelve men, and to-night you've got to take that village with seven hundred Germans in it.' 'Very good, sir,' said he, clicked his heels and saluted and was going out, as if that were just nothing at all, as if he took villages every day for healthy exercise after his breakfast, and perhaps snapped up another little one before turning in at night just for something to do. All that he asked for was a certain sergeant. And then the colonel sent for twelve officers' servants who had never been over the top. 'And do you see that village over there?' he said. 'There are seven hundred Germans in it' (and, mind you, the Germans were great fighters). 'Mr. So-and-so and Sergeant What's-his-name and you

[1] By the Reverend A. J. Gossip, M.A., Aberdeen.

are going to capture it to-night.' And one of the men put out his chest, and answered, 'If you'd only sent for us months ago, the War would have been over long since!' No whimpering, no grumbling, no saying how can we, and it can't be done, and all the rest of it! *Make—us—it.* And they did take it that night by a most clever surprise, and swept up the whole garrison, with only one man slightly wounded. Make—us—'it.' These are the folk who get things done.

And what about you? Do you ever choose to be 'it' when there's something to be done that no one wants to do; or something to be given up by somebody that you all want to have? You can't all go out in the car or to that treat that Dad has planned. You can't all have the wireless when the best thing is on, unless you have a huge lot of head-phones in your house! Some one must run that message. And there's such a jolly game on, or your book is so exciting, and outside it's so wet and horrid. One of you has to be the first up in the morning and down into the bathroom, and it's cosy and warm and splendid under the blankets. Do you ever choose to be 'it'? do you ever jump up cheerily, and say, 'I'll do it,' not waiting to be picked, not trailing off with a sulky face and feet so slow and heavy you can hardly lift them, but calling out, 'I'll go,' 'Let me'? It's men like that who win the V.C. and make everybody proud of them; and it's boys and girls like that who cause God's face to light up with pleasure, and His heart to cry out as He watches them, 'Well done!' What about trying it? You won't be long before you get a chance to say,'Take me, let me run, make me "it".'

The Christian Year.

Second Sunday in Lent.

Secular and Sacred.

'In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord.'—Zec 14^{20}.

There is no doubt that in this highly figurative passage the author refers to a state of things realizable upon the earth. Earth is the scene, earth is the setting of this glorious picture which he unfolds. He gives us an ideal sketch of what life ought to be in these days.

He himself lived in a time when the only sacred things were those which were associated with the religion of the land; but with a marvellous gift of vision he looks forward to the time when that distinction will be done away and when all things, all acts, all persons will be alike sacred. He sees the day coming when the whole of existence will be a consecrated thing. 'Holiness to the Lord' is to be written on 'the bells of the horses.'

But the question might be asked why out of all the symbols at his hand he should have chosen this particular one of the trappings of the horses to be the object of his lesson. And the answer is that he could scarcely have chosen a better for suggesting the many and varied employments and the many and varied interests of our outward and workaday life.

1. The horse is the sharer of man's labours. It suggests work. It is the bearer of man's burdens. It is the drawer of his ploughs and the servant of his errands. Thoughts of a hundred familiar industries and a hundred familiar interests gather round the bells of the horses. They are still to chime—those bells. And the prophet listens to their chiming as the builder brings stones to the house; as the merchant brings his goods to the mart; as the husbandman brings sheaves to the barn. In this vision of his he sees life going on much as usual—men buying and selling, sowing and reaping, toiling and moiling, journeying here and there, while the tinkle of the bells upon the harness accompanies them through all.

Christianity does not stop that life. Christianity does not silence those bells. What it does is to sanctify that life, inscribing on the very bells that symbolize it, 'Holiness to the Lord.'

And what does that mean for our everyday work and occupations? It means for one thing that the labour done shall be right. It will always be the kind of work on which conscience sets its seal of approval. And it means also that the work, right in itself, shall be rightly done. These words, 'Holiness to the Lord,' written upon our work will be a standing testimony against all careless service and all scamped work. Surely the man who has written these words upon the work and labour of his hands will see to it that everything he does is in harmony with their teaching.

On the top of a hill at Athens stands the ruins of the Parthenon—one of the most beautiful temples in the world. It was built more than four hundred years before Christ in honour of the goddess Athena Parthenos. Round the walls of this temple were wonderful carved figures. The

backs of these statues were placed against the wall and were never meant to be seen, and yet they were as carefully carved as the fronts. 'What is the use of that expenditure of time and labour?' the sculptor was asked. 'Nobody will ever see your work.' 'Yes,' he replied, 'the Gods will see it.'

2. But there is another idea connected with the figure in the text. On occasions of rejoicing, horses with bells formed part of the holiday processions. The horse is not only a partner in man's labours; it is also a partner in his pleasures. Well, these purposes are not forbidden. Human nature as it is constituted at present needs recreation and pleasures, and the conveniences that help recreation are lawful and right. Christianity does not take the bells off the horses. But it *does* do something to these pleasures. It inscribes the words 'Holiness to the Lord' upon them.

What does that mean? It means several things, and these among others: (1) These luxuries will not be indulged in by those who cannot pay for them; no one will maintain show at the expense of honesty. (2) These luxuries will be kept in their proper place; no one will use them except to fit himself for truer and more serious work. (3) These luxuries will be taken up at their proper season; no one will indulge in them at a time set apart for other and for higher things. Otherwise it is not 'Holiness to the Lord' you inscribe upon them; it is consecration to self, and consecration to the world. It is not 'Holiness to the Lord' that a man writes upon the pleasures that take him away from the services of the Church and from the religious fellowship on the one day of the week which has been set apart for the worship of God. It would be a great thing for our day and generation if men would write 'Holiness to the Lord' upon their golf clubs and motor cars and the harness of their horses.

3. There is no need for us to restrict the idea of sacredness to the bells of the horses alone. You may take this figure and apply it in a hundred different ways. Suppose, for instance, you applied these words not merely to the bells of the horses but, let us say, to the *centrepiece on the dinner-table*. There is nothing out of place in this suggestion. It is just the thought which the Apostle Paul expresses when he says, 'Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' What a suggestive thought that is—the consecration of the food upon our tables, and of the conversation that we hold as we sit round the table. It is not merely the sacredness of the food that lies there, so that there will be no intemperance and no excess, no ostentation and no extravagance, but the sacredness of the family relations, the fellowship and conversation at the table.

Lady Glenconner, in her delightful book, *The Sayings of the Children*, tells how one day at dinner she noticed her little boy who was sitting near her suddenly bend his head, and under the table she saw him put his two hands together for a second. It was so instantaneous that she was hardly sure she had understood the action, so she whispered, 'What were you doing then?'

'I just quickly asked for forgiveness.'

'Why?'

'Because I dropped bread.'

His mother could say no more then, because there were other people present, but it set her thinking, and she remembered having once told the children that we should never misuse bread or dishonour it, because it had been taken once by the Lord as a great symbol. It was a fine thing to tell the children that all bread should be sacred because of its use in the Holy Supper.

That is the prophet's ideal of society and the good time coming when all things shall be done to the Lord. But how is that time to be brought about? It is certainly not to be done by abolishing everything that is worldly. The bells are not taken away from the horses and thrown into the melting-pot to be turned into the high priest's mitre or into the vessels of the sanctuary. Yet that is the principle that many people seem to go upon. 'This world,' they say, 'with all its associations and interests is so hopelessly steeped in sin that it is the Christian's part to ignore it. He must have nothing to do with it—nothing to do with its politics, its art, its literature, its pleasures.' But that is an unworthy position for those who believe that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. No! it is not by turning the bells into mitres that the change is to come, but by leaving the bells where they are on the neck of honest earthly work and honest earthly pleasures, and inscribing them with the words, 'Holiness to the Lord.'

But—if the bells are not to be turned into mitres, neither are the mitres to be taken from the holy place and diverted from their lofty vocation to please the people who like horses and

bells. There are some people in these days who talk very easily about destroying the distinction between sacred and secular. And this talk has an attractive and pleasing sound about it till you find that what they mean is to bring down sacred things to the level of the secular instead of making secular things sacred.

It is not needful that we should have great things to do. We can do little things for God and set His consecrating mark on all we lay our hands to.

'I turn the cake that is frying in the pan,' says Brother Lawrence, 'for love of Him, and when that is done, if there is nothing else to call me, I bow in worship before Him who has given me grace to work; and then I rise happier than a king. It is enough for me to pick up but a straw from the ground for the love of God.'

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

Imitators of God.

'Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children.'—Eph 5^1.

Where shall we place the emphasis on these words? Everything depends on our point of view. Let us read the passage again, and, turning out two of the lamps, mark our dark impoverishment. 'Be ye imitators of God, as devoted servants.' The light and music have disappeared from the counsel! The word 'servant' is suggestive of circumference and externality. The word 'child' is laden with the significance of home. Servant implies obedience: it moves in the region of commandment; child implies kinship, fellowship, ample privilege, and joyful freedom. Surely we must place the emphasis here. We must not begin with the word 'imitators,' or the ideal may paralyse us. We must begin with the word 'children,' and imitation will appear as the natural and inevitable fruit. 'Be ye imitators . . . as children.' That is the status of the Christian. We are the Father's very own; His house is our home.

But the Apostle now adds a richer glory. We are not only children, we are children 'beloved.' Even children may be orphaned or ignored, but a Christian is a child with the Father's love for ever resting upon his life. Now let us see the meaning of that. Love is no idle sentiment, a transient emotion of a summer's night, a fleeting sensation that comes and goes with a breath. Love is an energy, a force, a gracious power. The essential characteristic of true love is that it is ever imparting. Love is always giving its best. 'Bring forth the best robe.' That is ever the speech of the lover concerning the loved. How true is it of the love of a mother for her child! The mother is continually giving; her life consists in self-impartation. Now, with this large and rich significance, let us turn to the counsel of the text. We are not only the children of God, we are beloved by God. Our spirits are enswathed in the love of God, as our bodies are enveloped by the atmosphere. This energy is mighty and redemptive, ever seeking our salvation. It is a dynamic, the most powerful dynamic in heaven or on earth. It quickens, uplifts, and sanctifies. 'Thou hast loved my soul out of the pit.'

Now we can get our atmosphere. We are the 'children' of the Father, with the large privileges and enjoyments of 'at-homeness' with God. We are 'beloved' children, the life of the eternal God flowing out towards us in affectionate goodwill and ministry. 'Be ye therefore imitators of God.' Why, if we realized and utilized the privileges enfolded in the two words, 'children' and 'beloved,' we should not need to be counselled to imitate the Father. Imitation would become inevitable; we could not help it! Take a little child; let him be set in a home of perfect freedom; surround him with a conscious possession of parental love, and what will happen? The ministry of imitation inevitably begins. We speak of our little ones as 'perfect little mimics.' And it is this word 'mimic' that lies behind our English word imitator. In the profoundest and most deeply spiritual sense we are to be mimics of God; we are to catch His ways, His tones, His accents. We are to repeat and reproduce Him.

What, then, are the essential factors if beloved children are to be imitators of God? Before a child can imitate a parent it must observe him. *Vigilance* is essential. We say of little children that they are 'all eyes and ears.' They are alert, observant, receptive, ever watching for unveilings. But they are more than observant. They are *aspiring*. They want to become like that which they see. The child notices its mother's attire, and wishes to wear it. She delights in putting on her mother's gloves, or hat, or ribbon. Ah, but the aspiration proceeds to deeper and more vital ends. They not only wish to imitate in external

attire; little eyes can see through the vesture of the body and can perceive the habits and garments of the mind and the soul. What they discover they desire to reproduce. They want to wear our clothes! But they do not rest contented with the mood of aspiration. They make ceaseless *endeavours* to repeat us. Almost unconsciously they seek to obtain our likeness. Now can we carry over these suggestions into the realm of the spirit, and find in them any help to express our relationship with God? If we are to be imitators of God we must certainly watch Him. We must be all eyes and ears! We must fix our eyes upon the revelation of God in Christ, and mark every line and feature and colour in the glorious unveiling. But we must not only fix our eyes, we must set our desires upon the Lord. And let us remember for our encouragement that a desire can be trained, taste can be acquired. To wish to be like the Master is to intensify desire. To express a wish is to confirm it. To be in the presence of God, and to even *wish to desire*, is to have the beginnings of heavenly aspiration. And like the children, in their imitativeness, our aspiration must be registered in endeavour, we must seek to repeat what we see. And let us not forget that all this time the Lord is loving us; the affectionate energy is flowing from His heart, and is working upon us for our redemption. While we are looking, love is strengthening our eyes! While we are aspiring, love is strengthening our desires! And while we are endeavouring, love is strengthening our wills! 'Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children.'

Paul now proceeds to say that there is one thing we must imitate above all things—the Saviour's walk. 'Walk in love.' We are to walk about in the home, in the street, in the market-place, with the very walk of Christ. We are to walk with Him from Bethlehem to Calvary, and Paul tells us that this is what we shall see. As the Master walked, He was for ever 'loving' and 'giving Himself' away. He was always presenting Himself as an offering; submitting His powers of body and of mind and soul to the will of the Father. And everything was consummated in a 'sacrifice' which necessitated the shedding of His own blood. I am to move like a child among all this, and I am to imitate the walk of the Master. I, too, am to go down the ways of life, distributing myself to the right and to the left in ministries of love. I, too, am to use my gifts and powers in generous offering. If need be I, too, am to shed my blood.

Let us live with Him as children, and we shall begin to imitate His life. We shall not rise into His likeness in a day. The glory will come line by line, colour by colour, until the fashion is perfected. It is a welcome suggestion that the literal rendering of the counsel might be given as follows: 'Become ye therefore imitators of God.' It is a process of gathering powers. The imitator of to-day will be a stronger imitator of to-morrow. Every line faithfully copied makes the copying of the next an easier task.[1]

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

A Fool and his Folly.

'Fools make a mock of sin.'—Pr 14^9.

When we think of all the unhappiness sin causes, and of all the misery of which it is the parent, we might deem it to be a thing incredible that any person should make light of sin.

Sin is the great power that makes for loneliness, as it is the power everywhere that makes for wreckage; and in the light of that knowledge, which is common property, to make a mock at sin might seem impossible.

Still more might it seem to be impossible when we recall the teaching of our faith, for Christ has shown us what God thinks of sin. And the one fact that the Father gave the Son that He might die for sinners on the Cross, might be thought to make such mockery incredible.

Yet the fact remains that men do mock at sin. They treat it lightly and make a jest of it. They do not view it with that holy anger which is the constant attitude of God. We see this in different ways.

1. We see it, for instance, in the *confession of our sins in prayer*. To a certain extent all unite in thanksgiving, for all men recognize that God is bountiful. To a certain extent all men are in earnest when the prayer goes up for the distant and the dear. But when it comes to the confession of sins, no part of prayer is less real.

2. Again, we gather this prevailing lightness from the *kind of way in which men talk of sin*. They speak of it with a smile or with a jest, and cover it up under some pleasant name. When a man is dead in earnest in a matter, it is then he begins to call

[1] J. H. Jowett.

a spade a spade. And the very fact that in men's common speech sin is not spoken of with such directness, is a straw that shows us how the wind is blowing. We hear men talking of the gay world. If they spoke the truth they would say the godless world. Who calls that man of business a smart man, when his practices just border on the shady? Who says that the young fellow is just a little fast, when his mother's heart is being broken by him? And men smile and say he is sowing his wild oats; and so he is, and, my God! what a harvest, never to be exhausted in his reaping, but passing its curse on to children's children.

3. Again, we may gather how lightly men think of sin from the different standards by which they judge it. Sin is a very different thing in us, from what it is in the lives of other people. Why, think of David, and of his splendid scorn when he heard the story of the one ewe lamb. Against the background of another life, he saw the criminality at once. But the same sin, with soft and sensual touch, had leaned on his own heart for many a day, and somehow he had never judged it there. What excuses we can all make for ourselves! We could not help it, or it was our destiny, or, after all, has not life been sweeter for it? And what I say is that if you talk like that, lessening the guilt of sin as it comes nearer, all judgments passed upon another's sin are shallow and unilluminating estimates. Disease is terrible in distant India: it is more terrible to us in our own home. And if sin were as real to us as war is real, if it were terrible to us as war is terrible, then the nearer it drew to our own heart, the more would we cry to God against its misery. Now the very fact that men do not do so, is a proof of the unreality of guilt to them.

Well, then, if that be the fact, can we discover the causes of that fact?

1. In the first place, men treat sin lightly just because they are so accustomed to it. It is so common that their hearts are hardened; so universal that they are never startled. There are a thousand mercies of which we are regardless, just because we are so accustomed to them. They have been over us like the heavens, under us like the earth, round us like the air since we were born. And there are a thousand sins so interwoven with the very tissue of our being, that they never arrest us for a moment. If life were a paradise and sin a rarity, then sin would startle us when it appeared. But the whole world lieth in wickedness, says Scripture, like a great city in its pall of smoke.

2. Again, we are tempted to make light of sin because of its intertwining with the good. In deeper senses than the Psalmist thought of, we are fearfully and wonderfully made. If all that was bad in individual character stood by itself in visible isolation, then as we looked at a man and praised the good in him, we might feel the loathsomeness of what was bad. But human character is not constructed so, with separate stations for its good and evil: it is an intricate and inextricable tangle of what is brightest with what is very dark. Then I beheld, says Bunyan in his dream, and there was a way to hell from nigh the gate of heaven. I think that that is so with every man: his heaven and hell are never far apart. Now all this intermixture in the life has two notable effects on judgment. It makes it hard to extricate the good, and to give it the value which it has for God. And it makes it hard to estimate the evil in its inherent guilt and naked ugliness, as it stood out before the sight of Christ, whose eyes were as a flame of fire.

3. Once more, men are tempted to make light of sin because it veils its consequences with such consummate skill. Sin is the jauntiest of all adventurers, and sets its best foot forward gallantly. If one thing is certain in our human story it is that the wages of sin is death. And I tell you I could almost honour sin for the skill with which it covers up that grave, and spreads the greenness of the grass upon it, and decks it with the beauty of the rose. Whatever may have happened to other people, somehow we are going to escape. The wonder of all righteousness is this, that its to-morrow is brighter than its yesterday. The certainty of sin is always this, that its to-morrow is a little worse. And so with consummate skill it hides to-morrow, and says in the very words of Christ *to-day*, and to-day is so exquisitely sweet and passionate that certainties of judgment are forgotten. If here and now were to arise before us all the long consequences of the smallest sin, there is not one of us but would abhor it, and pray to God for mercy and release.

4. Again, many make light of sin because no one knows sin's power till he resists it. It is a natural law in the spiritual world that power can be measured by resistance. How silently the river glides along when there is nothing to impede it

in its flow. But let a rock be hurled into its bed, and how the resisted current chafes and foams!

It is the same with sin—you never know its power till you bid it defiance and resist it. So long as its evil sway is undisturbed, so long its terrible strength is undiscovered. Only when the life of grace begins, and a man awakes to all that life may be, does he learn the powerful swirl of that black river that flows in the dark places of his heart. Let a man take up arms against one evil habit, and he will never jest at that habit any more.

Let us look at sin with the eyes of God the Father. Look at it with the eyes of Christ the Son. And then remember that for your vilest sin there is abundant pardon in His blood.[1]

Fifth Sunday in Lent.

The Cross-Bearer.

'He that doth not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me.—Mt 10^{38} (R.V.).

1. '*Take his cross.*'—When people speak about their crosses, they usually mean what would be more appropriately expressed by the figure of a fly in the ointment. In the lot of every man there is an element which is apt to make him fidget. But Jesus Christ never intended to provide those whose tempers were more cruciform than their trials with convenient phrases under which to cloak their failure to sustain the ordinary discipline to which all flesh is heir. This warning about cross-bearing was one of the hard sayings which even His most attached disciples found it difficult to hear. It set before His followers a standard which looked like a Quixotic squandering of great opportunities when He applied it to His own case. He told His disciples that He was about to make good the principle in His own Person, and that immediately. 'Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man is delivered to be crucified.' Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him. He loved his Master too well not to talk to Him for His own good, to deal faithfully with Him, as we should say. So accustomed are we to connect the thought of salvation with the Cross, that we fail to realize the situation. That the Son of Man must be crucified seemed to His best friends a proposition wholly inconsistent with that rôle of the world's Redeemer which they had just acknowledged as His proper part. Their zeal in Jesus' behalf was proportioned to the fullness of their belief in His Messiahship. It was because they had committed themselves to the great confession that He was the Son of the living God, that the little band of devoted disciples, who followed Him from Galilee, were eager to save Him from the strange madness that seemed suddenly to have taken possession of Him. Had something snapped in His brain? Crucifixion for the Son of Man was inconceivable, impossible, absurd. They wanted to save Him from a course which meant nothing short of a stultification of His whole career, a surrender of His whole claim, a complete and utter denial of Himself. At all costs the catastrophe must be averted. Where all seemed to be at stake, remonstrance even with such a Master as Jesus was peremptorily demanded. 'This be far from thee, Lord.'

The reply was startling as it was strong. It was a staggering blow to that latent satisfaction which underlies all interference, however distasteful, which men deem to be demanded by the greatness of the issues. 'Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art a stumbling-block unto me.' Then the Lord reiterates the great principle of cross-bearing, of which His own approaching sacrifice is to be the supreme example. 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself.'

2. '*Deny himself.*'—Here is another instance in which the coinage has been debased. We often take credit to ourselves for what we call self-denial because we curtail our amusements by an occasional hour in order that we may pay some of the debt of service which we owe to others. We may mount much higher on the ladder of self-denial and still remain much nearer self-indulgence than what the Saviour calls the denial of self. When Garibaldi offered the Italian patriots hunger and hardship, wounds and death, as the price of their country's freedom, he appealed to a well-understood instinct of our glorious human nature. When he thus summoned his followers he knew well that he was making a demand to which hundreds and thousands of brave men, yes, and of women also, have in every age been ready to respond. When Latimer called on Ridley to play the man, his soul glowed with an intense passion of self-realization, for, though his body was consumed in the flame, he knew that such a candle would be lighted in England as should never be put out. You and I may not be martyrs, but we are convinced that no great

[1] G. H. Morrison, *The Return of the Angels*, 214.

cause will ever appeal for them in vain. But it was something different even from heroic self-surrender that Jesus meant when He said, 'Whosoever doth not take his cross is not worthy of me.' Look again at Christ as He meets the remonstrances of Simon Peter. It is not alone the risks which attend the assertion of an unpopular claim that He is willing to undertake. It is not alone the reluctance of the flesh, the love of life, the applause of the world, that He is willing to trample underfoot. It is not the resistance of the lower nature that He flings to the ground. Give the words their full meaning. *He denies Himself.* It is clear from the form of the disciple's urgent representations that Jesus is embarking upon a course that seems to crush and annihilate the very claim that He is making. He is the Saviour, and to the eye of those who love Him best He is flinging away His very power to save. The world needs Him and He forsakes the world. God's Messiah has become a fool. He denies Himself.

It is difficult not to use language which would seem to imply that when Jesus went up to Jerusalem to die He became, what the Son of God could never be, untrue to Himself! Yet we must hazard misunderstanding if we are to attempt to convey what self-denial really means as it is interpreted by the sacrifice of Christ. It is the entire abandonment of everything that is rightly called life. 'He emptied Himself.' So St. Paul, looking back upon the self-abnegation of the Eternal Son, expressed the sacrifice which redeemed the world. And it was only when, as it were, He was already cut off out of the land of the living, that the Saviour took up the Cross.

3. *The impossibility.*—No one can bear the cross in any sense which approaches that in which Jesus bore it, until he has passed upon himself that sentence of outlawry which Jesus means by self-denial. He must have placed himself in regard to all the world in just that position in which Peter placed his Master with regard to himself at the moment when the cock crew. It is difficult for us to understand the consternation with which the Twelve listened to this startling figure, because for us, with centuries of Christian experience behind us, the Cross is the sign of triumph at which Satan's hosts do flee.

Who among us would have stood beneath the Cross of Jesus? The disciples forsook Him and fled. Peter denied Him in the judgment hall. They were braver than most men. But three short years before they had forsaken all to follow Him. They had stood by their Master in more than one dangerous encounter. Some of them at least had dared to declare themselves ready to drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism. And one of them had even drawn the sword on His behalf. But they understood only too well what bearing the cross meant. It meant neither honourable wounds nor glorious risks. What they had to look upon was Jesus going forth beyond the camp bearing His reproach. No one carried the cross who was not beyond the pale of human society, a slave who was already no better than living carrion, who had no character to lose, and who only awaited the shameful process of extinction. Suppose that one had told those followers of Jesus that in the ages to come these words would trip from the tongue as a synonym for petty troubles and trivial trials. They would have been less able to understand his meaning than we should be if one were to predict to us that a pretty metaphor was to be culled from the gallows. When those disciples continued to follow Jesus they must have hoped against hope that His words were after all some wild paradox, the limitations of which time would at length disclose.

To what conclusion does this lead, then? To the conclusion that no one can reach that height of discipleship at which it becomes possible to take up the Cross and bear it after Jesus.

4. *The transformed meaning.*—None knew better than the Master Himself that He must go forward alone to tread the wine-press of the wrath of God. Ah! we must be humble enough to let the Saviour bear the Cross for us. We have not yet begun to be disciples until we have learnt the humiliating lesson of our entire dependence upon the grace of Christ. The Cross becomes our glory when it spells for us, not punishment, but pardon. When St. Paul declares out of the fullness of a rich experience that he has been crucified with Christ, he means that he belongs wholly to Jesus, whose sorrows are the joy, whose death is the life, of every one that believeth. He is the freedman of Him who became a slave, the child of His redeeming love, and the offspring of His pains. He suffers, but it is a light affliction. The burden which he bears is an exceeding weight of glory. Nothing can be clearer, to any one who will have the patience to follow his impassioned argument in the Epistle to the

Galatians, than the true cause of the triumphant song into which he breaks in the sixth chapter: 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross.'

Look at the context and you will see at once that it is not his sufferings for Christ, but Christ's sufferings for him, that the Apostle here salutes in the wondrous Cross.

To take up the Cross daily, while it does not exclude suffering and persecution, yea and death itself, has for the Christian a transformed meaning. 'How might any pain be more than to see Him that is all my life and all my bliss suffer?' So said Julian of Norwich. To take up the Cross means that, but it means infinitely more. It means to glory in the Cross, as St. Paul gloried.

It is a changed cross which is offered to the Christian, a yoke which is easy, a burden which is light. Hast Thou said, O my Saviour, that if I take not up the cross, I am not worthy of Thee? What, shall I carry Thy Cross, who am not worthy even to bear Thy shoes? Nay, Master mine, but I come to Thee. Stoop down from the Cross which carries Thee. Embrace me with the arms of Thy mercy. Whisper the word of pardon. Breathe on me with the spirit of power. I am not worthy, but worthy art Thou. The feast is prepared; Thou hast sanctified the guests and called them to the sacrifice. We have an altar, on which they have no right to eat who deem that here in this camping-ground of weary mortals, with its daily tasks and customary routine, they have found an abiding city. We who seek the eternal city must needs be pilgrims. Without the gate Christ suffered. Thither we go forth to Him, bearing the reproach of believing in His Name. Beneath the Cross is opened the fountain for sin. Beneath the Cross the Table of the Lord is spread. Through Him let us draw near, in full assurance of faith. Through Him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.[1]

[1] J. G. Simpson, *Great Ideas of Religion*, 259 ff.

Contributions and Comments.

Note on Job xxi. 27.

הֵן יָדַעְתִּי מַחְשְׁבוֹתֵיכֶם וּמְזִמּוֹת עָלַי תַּחְמֹסוּ.

THE R.V. translates: 'Behold, I know your thoughts, and the devices which ye wrongfully imagine against me.' The rendering 'wrongfully imagine' is the best that can be given for the text, but is, it must be admitted, forced. מְזִמּוֹת itself already suggests the idea of 'evil' and makes the repetition of the same idea in the verb, unnecessary and superfluous. A man does not 'wrong,' *i.e.* 'distort' evil designs which are in themselves evil *ex hypothesi*. What we require is some word meaning simply 'to think' or 'imagine.' Emendations have been proposed. Some suggest תַּחֲרֹשׁוּ from חָרַשׁ, 'to work,' 'practise in'; cf. Pr 12^{20}, חֹרְשֵׁי רָע, 'devisers of evil.' Duhm suggests תַּחְפְּשׂוּ, 'think out,' lit. 'search out,' and cites Ps 64^{7}. Such emendations, however, do not come sufficiently near the Massoretic Text to inspire confidence. I would suggest that the original word was תַּהֲמֹסוּ. ܬܗܡܣ is a good Syriac word meaning 'to cogitate,' 'meditate.' In Arabic, also, همس is found, meaning to 'mutter,' 'mumble,' 'utter inaudible words.'

The ח of תַּחְמֹסוּ is simply a scribal error for a ה. Compare the similar case of תַּהְבִּרוּ (Job 19^{3}), which is explained from the Arabic حكر, 'to wrong,' 'detract from,' where the ה is a copyist's mistake for an original ח. The writing of the common תַּחְמֹסוּ for the unknown תַּהֲמֹסוּ by a careless copyist is easily intelligible. It is unnecessary, I think, to waste any words in justifying the assumption of an Aramaism or Arabism for a Book of the Bible, in which the large number of such words is a marked feature.

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The Hours of the Day in the Fourth Gospel.

WRITING to me from Jerusalem, Mr. Hugh James Orr-Ewing, M.D., M.C., Medical Superintendent of