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THE TEACHING OF JESUS

BY THE REV. GEORGE JACKSON, B.A.

"_Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son._"--2 JOHN IX (R.V.).

1903

* * * * *

TO MY CHILDREN DORA, KENNETH, BASIL, ARNOLD MY WISEST TEACHERS IN THE THINGS OF GOD

* * * * *

PREFACE

The following chapters are the outcome of an attempt to set before a large Sunday evening congregation--composed for the most part of working men and women--the teaching of our Lord on certain great selected themes. The reader will know, therefore, what to look for in these pages. If he be a trained Biblical scholar he need go no further, for he will find nothing here with which he is not already thoroughly familiar. On the other hand, the book will not be wholly without value even to some of my brother-ministers if it serve to convince them that a man may preach freely on the greatest themes of the gospel, and yet be sure that the common people will hear him gladly, if only he will state his message at once seriously and simply, and with the glow that comes of personal conviction. Indeed, one may well doubt if there is any other kind of preaching that they really care for.

My indebtedness to other workers in the same field is manifold. As far as possible detailed acknowledgement is made in the footnotes. Wendt's Teaching of Jesus and Beyschlag's New Testament Theology have been always at my elbow, though not nearly in such continual use as Stevens' Theology of the New Testament, a work of which it is impossible to speak too highly. Brace's Kingdom of God, Stalker's Christology of

Jesus_, Harnack's What is Christianity? Horton's Teaching of Jesus, Watson's Mind of the Master, Selby's Ministry of the Lord Jesus, and Robertson's Our Lord's Teaching (a truly marvellous sixpenny worth), have all been laid under contribution, not the less freely because I have been compelled to dissent from some of their conclusions. Like many another busy minister, I am a daily debtor to Dr. Hastings and his great Dictionary of the Bible. And, finally, I gladly avail myself of this opportunity of expressing once more my unceasing obligations to the Rev. Professor James Denney, of Glasgow. Now that Dr. Dale has gone from us, there is no one to whom we may more confidently look for a reasonable evangelical theology which can be both verified and preached.

It only remains to add that in these pages critical questions are for the most part ignored, not because the pressure of the problems which they create is unfelt, but because as yet they have no place among the certainties which are the sole business of the preacher when he passes from his study to his pulpit.

GEORGE JACKSON.

EDINBURGH, 1903.

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* * * * *

INTRODUCTORY

"O Lord and Master of us all!
Whate'er our name or sign,
We own Thy sway, we hear Thy call,
We test our lives by Thine.

We faintly hear, we dimly see,
In differing phrase we pray;
But, dim or clear, we own in Thee
The Light, the Truth, the Way."
WHITTIER.

* * * * *

I

INTRODUCTORY

"_A prophet mighty in word before God and all the people._"--LUKE xxiv. 19.

"_A teacher come from God._"--JOHN iii. 2.

In speaking of the teaching of Jesus it is scarcely possible at the present day to avoid at least a reference to two other closely-related topics, viz. the relation of Christ's teaching to the rest of the New Testament, and the trustworthiness of the Gospels in which that teaching is recorded. Adequate discussion of either of these questions here and now is not possible; it must suffice to indicate very briefly the direction in which, as it appears to the writer, the truth may be found.

First, then, as to the relation of the teaching of Jesus to the rest of

the New Testament, and especially to the Epistles of St. Paul. There can be no doubt, largely, I suppose, through the influence of the Reformers, that the words of Jesus have not always received the attention that has been given to the writings of Paul. Nor is this apparent misplacing of the accent the wholly unreasonable thing which at first sight it may seem. After all, the most important thing in the New Testament--that which saves--is not anything that Jesus said, but what He did; not His teaching, but His death. This, the Gospels themselves being witness, is the culmination and crown of Revelation; and it is this which, in the Epistles, and pre-eminently the Epistles of Paul, fills so large a place. Moreover, it ought plainly to be said that the Church has never been guilty of ignoring the words of her Lord in the wholesale fashion suggested by some popular religious writers of our day. Really, the Gospels are not a discovery of yesterday, nor even of the day before yesterday. They have been in the hands of the Church from the beginning, and, though she has not always valued them according to their true and priceless worth, she has never failed to number them with the choicest jewels in the casket of Holy Scripture. Nevertheless, it may be freely granted that the teaching of Jesus has not always received its due at the Church's hands. "Theology," one orthodox and Evangelical divine justly complains, "has done no sort of justice to the Ethics of Jesus." [1] But in our endeavour to rectify one error on the one side, let us see to it that we do not stumble into another and worse on the other side. The doctrines of Paul are not so much theological baggage, of which the Church would do well straightway to disencumber itself. After all that the young science of Biblical Theology has done to reveal the manifold variety of New Testament doctrine, the book still remains a unity; and the attempt to play off one part of it against another--the Gospels against the Epistles, or the Epistles against the Gospels--is to be sternly resented and resisted. To St. Paul himself any such rivalry would have been impossible, and, indeed, unthinkable. There was no claim which he made with more passionate vehemence than that the message which he delivered was not his, but Christ's. "As touching the gospel which was preached by me," he says, "neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." The Spirit who spoke through him and his brother apostles was not an alien spirit, but the Spirit of Christ, given according to the promise of Christ, to make known the things of Christ; so that there is a very true sense in which their words may be called "the final testimony of Jesus to Himself." "We have the mind of Christ," Paul said, and both in the Epistles and the Gospels we may seek and find the teaching of Jesus. [2]

It is, however, with the teaching of Jesus as it is recorded in the Gospels that, in these chapters, we are mainly concerned. We come, therefore to our second question: Can we trust the Four Gospels? And this question must be answered in even fewer words than were given to the last. As to the external evidence, let us hear the judgment of the great German scholar, Harnack. Harnack is a critic who is ready to give to the winds with both hands many things which are dear to us as life itself; yet this is how he writes in one of his most recent works: "Sixty years ago David Friedrich Strauss thought that he had almost entirely destroyed the historical credibility, not only of the fourth, but also of the first three Gospels as well. The historical criticism of two generations has succeeded in restoring that credibility in its main outlines." [3] When, from the external, we turn to the internal evidence, we are on incontestable ground. The words of Jesus need no credentials, they carry their own credentials; they authenticate themselves. Christian men and women reading, _e.g._, the fourteenth of St. John's Gospel say within themselves that if these are not the words of Jesus, a greater than Jesus is here; and they are right. The oft-quoted challenge of John Stuart Mill is as unanswerable to-day as ever it was. "It is of no use to say," he declares, "that Christ, as exhibited in the Gospels, is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been super-added by the traditions of His followers.... Who among His disciples, or among their proselytes, was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels?" [4]

Assuming, therefore, without further discussion, the essential trustworthiness of the Gospel records, let us pass on to consider in this introductory chapter some general characteristics of Christ's teaching as a whole.

Mark at the outset Christ's own estimate of His words: "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life;" "If a man keep My word he shall never see death;" "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away;" "Every one which heareth these words of Mine and doeth them"--with him Christ said it should be well; but "every one that heareth these words of Mine and doeth them not"--upon him ruin should come to the uttermost. Sayings like these are very remarkable, for this is not the way in which human teachers are wont to speak of their own words; or, if they do so speak, this wise world of ours knows better than to take them at their own valuation. But the astonishing fact in the case of Jesus is that the world has admitted His claim. Men who refuse utterly to share our faith concerning Him and the significance of His life and death, readily give to Him a place apart among the great teachers of mankind. I have already quoted the judgment of John Stuart Mill. "Jesus," says Matthew Arnold, "as He appears in the Gospels ... is in the jargon of modern philosophy an absolute"[5]--we cannot get beyond Him. Such, likewise, is the verdict of Goethe: "Let intellectual and spiritual culture progress, and the human mind expand, as much as it will; beyond the grandeur and the moral elevation of Christianity, as it sparkles and shines in the Gospels, the human mind will not advance." [6] It would be easy to multiply testimonies, but it is needless, since practically all whose judgment is of any account are of one mind.

But now if, with these facts in our minds, and knowing nothing else about the teaching of Jesus, we could suppose ourselves turning for the first time to the simple record of the Gospels, probably our first feeling would be one of surprise that Jesus the Teacher had won for Himself such an ascendancy over the minds and hearts of men. For consider some of the facts which the Gospels reveal to us. To begin with, this Teacher, unlike most other teachers who have influenced mankind, contented Himself from first to last with merely oral instruction: He left no book; He never wrote, save in the dust of the ground. Not only so, but the words of Jesus that have been preserved by the evangelists are, comparatively speaking, extremely few. Put them all together, they are less by one-half or two-thirds than the words which it will be necessary for me to use in order to set forth His teaching in this little book. And further, the little we have is, for the most part, so casual, so unpremeditated, so unsystematic in its character. Once and again, it is true, we get from the Evangelists something approaching what may be called a set discourse; but more often what they give us is reports of conversations--conversations with His disciples, with chance acquaintances, or with His enemies. Sometimes we find Him speaking in the synagogues; but He is quite as ready to teach reclining at the dinner-table; and, best of all, He loved to speak in the open air, by the wayside, or the lake shore. Once, as He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, the multitude was so great that it pressed upon Him. Near at hand were two little fishing-boats drawn up upon the beach, for the fishermen had gone out of them, and were washing their nets. "And He entered into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes out of the boat." It is all so different from what we should have expected; there is about it such an air of artless, homely simplicity. Finally, we cannot forget that Jesus was a Jew speaking to Jews. Son of God though He was, He was the son of a Jewish mother, trained in a Jewish home, in all things the child of His own time and race. Whatever else His message may have been, it was, first of all, a message to the men of His own day; therefore, of necessity, it was their language He used, it was to their needs He ministered, it was their sins He condemned. The mould, the tone, the colouring of His teaching were all

largely determined by the life of His country and His time.

Yet this is He concerning whom all ages cry aloud, "Never man spake like this man." This is He before whom the greatest and the wisest bow down, saying, "Lord" and "Master." How are we to explain it? Much of the explanation lies outside of the scope of our present subject; but if we will turn back to the Gospels again we may find at least a partial answer to our question.

III

(1) I said just now that Christ's teaching was addressed in the first place to the Jews of His own day. Yet the note of universality is as unmistakable as are the local tone and colouring. Christ may speak as the moment suggests, but His words are never for the moment only, but for all time. He refused almost sternly to go unto any save unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel; yet the Gospels make it abundantly plain that in His own thoughts His mission was never limited to the tiny stage within which, during His earthly years, He confined Himself. "I am the light of the world," He said; and in His last great commission to His disciples He bade them carry that light unto the uttermost parts of the earth. In the great High-Priestly prayer He intercedes not only for His disciples, but for those who through their word should believe on Him. "I will build My church," He declared, "and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

(2) So, again, too, in regard to the form of Christ's sayings; to speak of their artlessness and homely simplicity is to tell only a small part of the truth concerning them. They are, indeed and especially those spoken in Galilee, and reported for the most part in the Synoptists, the perfection of popular speech. How the short, pithy, sententious sayings cling to the memory like burs! Let almost any of them be commenced, and as Dr. Stalker says, the ordinary hearer can without difficulty finish the sentence. Christ was not afraid of a paradox. When, e.g., He said, "Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also," He was ready to risk the possibility of being misunderstood by some prosaic hearer, that He might the more effectually arouse men to a neglected duty. His language was concrete, not abstract; He taught by example and illustration; He thought, and taught others to think, in pictures. How often is the phrase, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto----" on His lips! Moreover, His illustrations were always such as common folk could best appreciate. The birds of the air, the lilies of the field, the lamp on the lamp-stand, the hen with her chickens under her wings, the servant following the plough, the shepherd tending his sheep, the fisherman drawing his net, the sower casting his seed into the furrow, the housewife baking her bread or sweeping her house,--it was through panes of common window-glass like these that Christ let in the light upon the heaped-up treasures of the kingdom of God. No wonder "the common people heard Him gladly"; no wonder they "all hung upon Him listening"; or that they "came early in the morning to Him in the temple to hear Him"! Yet, even in the eyes of the multitude the plain homespun of Christ's speech was shot with gleams of more than earthly lustre. There mingled--to use another figure--with the sweet music of those simple sayings a new deep note their ears had never heard before: "the multitudes were astonished at His teaching; for He taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." It was not the authority of powerful reasoning over the intellect, reasoning which we cannot choose but obey; it was the authority of perfect spiritual intuition. Christ never speaks as one giving the results of long and painful gropings after truth, but rather as one who is at home in the world to which God and the things of the spirit belong. He asserts that which He knows, He declares that which He has seen.

(3) Another quality of Christ's words which helps us to understand their world-wide influence is their winnowedness, their freedom from the chaff which, in the words of others, mingles with the wholesome grain. The attempt is sometimes made to destroy, or, at least, to weaken, our claim

For Christ as the supremeteacher by placing a few selected sayings of His side by side with the words of some other ancient thinker or teacher. And if they who make such comparisons would put into their parallel columns all the words of Jesus and all the words of those with whom the comparison is made, we should have neither right to complain nor reason to fear. Wellhausen puts the truth very neatly when he says, "The Jewish scholars say, 'All that Jesus said is also to be found in the Talmud.' Yes, all, and a great deal besides." [7] The late Professor G.J. Romanes has pointed out the contrast in two respects between Christ and Plato. He speaks of Plato as "the greatest representative of human reason in the direction of spirituality"; yet he says "Plato is nowhere in this respect as compared with Christ." While in Plato there are errors of all kinds, "reaching even to absurdity in respect of reason, and to sayings shocking to the moral sense," there is, he declares, in literal truth no reason why any of Christ's words should ever pass away in the sense of becoming obsolete. And it is this absence from the biography of Christ of any doctrines which the subsequent growth of human knowledge--whether in natural science, ethics, political economy, or elsewhere--has had to discount which seems to him one of the strongest arguments in favour of Christianity. [8]

(4) One other quality of Christ's words, which specially caught the attention of His hearers in the synagogue at Nazareth, should not be overlooked: "All bare Him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth." The reference is, as Dr. Bruce says, [9] rather to the substance of the discourse than to the manner. That there was a peculiar charm in the Teacher's manner is undoubted, but it was what He said, rather than the way in which He said it--the message of grace, rather than the graciousness of the Messenger--which caused the eyes of all in the synagogue to be fastened on Him. He had just read the great passage from the Book of the prophet Isaiah:

"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 recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Then, when the reading was finished, and He had given back the roll to the attendant, and was sat down, He began to say unto them, "To-day hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears." This was His own programme; this was what He had come into the world to do--to bear the burden of the weary and the heavy-laden, to give rest unto all who would learn of Him.

This, then, is the Teacher whose words we are to study together in these pages. He Himself is saying to us again, "He that hath ears to hear let him hear." See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. And again He says, "Take heed how ye hear." Gracious as He is, this Teacher can be also very stern. "If any man," He says, "hear My sayings and keep them not, I judge him not. ... He that receiveth not My sayings hath one that judgeth him; the word that I speak, the same shall judge him in the last day." We read of some to whom "good tidings" were preached, whom the word did not profit. Let us pray that to writer and readers alike it may prove the word of eternal life.

* * * * *

CONCERNING GOD

"Our Father, who art in Heaven.
What meaneth these words?"

God lovingly inviteth us, in this little preface, truly to believe in Him, that He is our true Father, and that we are

truly His children; so that full of confidence we may more boldly call upon His name, even as we see children with a kind of confidence ask anything of their parents."--LUTHER'S CATECHISM.

* * * * *

II

CONCERNING GOD

_"Holy Father."--JOHN xvii. 11.

It is natural and fitting in an attempt to understand the teaching of Jesus that we should begin with His doctrine of God. For a man's idea of God is fundamental, regulative of all his religious thinking. As is his God, so will his religion be. Given the arc we can complete the circle; given a man's conception of God, from that we can construct the main outlines of his creed. What, then, was the teaching of Jesus concerning God?

I

In harmony with what has been already said in the previous chapter, concerning Christ's manner and method as a teacher, we shall find little or nothing defined, formal, systematic in Christ's teaching on this subject. In those theological handbooks which piloted some of us through the troublous waters of our early theological thinking, one chapter is always occupied with proofs, more or less elaborate, of the existence of God, and another with a discussion of what are termed the Divine "attributes." And for the purposes of a theological handbook doubtless this is the right course to take. But this was not Christ's way. Search the four Gospels through, and probably not one verse can be found which by itself would serve as a suitable definition for any religious catechism or theological textbook. Christ, we must remember, did not, in His teaching, begin *de novo*. He never forgot that He was speaking to a people whose were the law and the prophets and the fathers; throughout He assumed and built upon the accepted truths of Old Testament revelation. To have addressed elaborate arguments in proof of the existence of God to the Jews would have been a mere waste of words; for that faith was the very foundation of their national life. Nor did Christ speak about the "attributes" of God. Again that was not His way. He chose to speak in the concrete rather than in the abstract, and, therefore, instead of defining God, He shows us how He acts. In parable, in story, and in His own life He sets God before us, that so we may learn what He is, and how He feels toward us.

Christ, I say, built upon the foundation of the Old Testament. To understand, therefore, the true significance of His teaching about God, we must first of all put ourselves at the point of view of a devout Jew of His day, and see how far he had been brought by that earlier revelation which Christ took up and carried to completion. What, then, did the Jews know of God before Christ came?

They knew that God is One, Only, Sovereign: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God." It had been a hard lesson for Israel to learn. Centuries had passed before the nation had been purged of its idolatries. But the cleansing fires had done their work at last, and perhaps the world has never seen sterner monotheists than were the Pharisees of the time of Christ.[10] And He whom thus they worshipped as Sovereign they knew also to be holy: "The Holy One of Israel," "exalted in righteousness." True, Pharisaism had degraded the lofty conceptions

of the great Hebrew prophets; it had taught men to think of God as caring more for the tithing of mint, and anise, and cummin than for the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith, making morality merely an affair of ceremonies, instead of the concern of the heart and the life. But, however Jewish teachers might blind themselves and deceive their disciples, the Jewish Scriptures still remained to testify of God and righteousness, and of the claims which a righteous God makes upon His people: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well." Nor, accustomed though we are to think of the God of the Old Testament as stern rather than kind, were the tenderer elements wanting from the Jewish conception of Deity. Illustration is not now possible, but a very little thought will remind us that it is to the Hebrew psalmists and prophets that we owe some of the most gracious and tender imagery of the Divine love with which the language of devotion has ever been enriched.

Nevertheless, with every desire to do justice to a faith which has not always received its due, even at Christian hands, it is impossible for us, looking back from our loftier vantage-ground, to ignore its serious defects and limitations. It was an exclusive faith. It magnified the privileges of the Jews, but it shut out the Gentiles. God might be a Father to Israel, but to no other nation under heaven did He stand in any such relation. It was the refusal of Christ to recognize the barriers which the pride of race had set up which more than anything else brought Him into conflict with the authorities at Jerusalem. And when once from the mind and heart of the Early Church the irrevocable word had gone forth, "God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him," the final breach was made; no longer could the new faith live with the old. And even within the privileged circle of Judaism itself men's best thoughts of God and of His relation to them were maimed and imperfect. He was the God of the nation, not of the individual. Here and there elect souls like the psalmists climbed the heights whereon man holds fellowship with God, and spake with Him face to face, as a man with his friend. But with the people as a whole, even as with their greatest prophets, not the individual, but the nation, was the religious unit.

Such was the Old Testament idea of God. Now let us return to the teaching of Jesus. And at once we discover that Christ let go nothing of that earlier doctrine which was of real and abiding worth. The God of Jesus Christ is as holy, as sovereign--or, to use the modern term--as transcendent as the God of the psalmists and the prophets. Their favourite name for God was "King," and Christ spake much of the "kingdom of God." To them God's people were His servants, owing to Him allegiance and service to the uttermost; we also, Christ says, are the servants of God, to every one of whom He has appointed his task, and with whom one day He will make a reckoning. But if nothing is lost, how much is gained! It is not merely that in Christ's teaching we have the Old Testament of God over again with a plus, the new which is added has so transformed and transfigured the old that all is become new. To Jesus Christ, and to us through Him, God is "the Father."

It is, of course, well known that Christ was not the first to apply this name to God. There is no religion, says Max Müller, [11] which is sufficiently recorded to be understood that does not, in some sense or other, apply the term Father to its Deity. Yet this need not concern us, for though the name be the same the meaning is wholly different. There is no true comparison even between the occasional use of the word in the Old Testament and its use by Christ. For, though in the Old Testament God is spoken of as the Father of Israel, it is as the Father of the nation, not of the individual, and of that nation only. Even in a great saying like that of the Psalmist:

"Like as a father pitieth his children,
So the Lord pitieth them that fear Him,"

it is still only Israel that the writer has in view, though we rightly

give to the words a wider application. But there is no need of argument. Every reader of the Old Testament knows that its central, ruling idea of God is not Fatherhood, but Kingship: "The Lord reigneth." Even in the Psalms, in which the religious aspiration and worship of the ages before Christ find their finest and noblest expression, never once is God addressed as Father. But when we turn to the Gospels, how great is the contrast! Though not even a single psalmist dare look up and say, "Father," in St. Matthew's Gospel alone the name is used of God more than forty times. Fatherhood now is no longer one attribute among many; it is the central, determining idea in whose revealing light all other names of God--Creator, Sovereign, Judge--must be read and interpreted. And the God of Jesus Christ is the Father, not of one race only, but of mankind; not of mankind only, but of men.

II

It was indeed a great and wonderful gospel which Christ proclaimed--so great and wonderful that all our poor words tremble and sink down under the weight of the truth they vainly seek to express. By what means has Christ put us into possession of such a truth? How have we come to the full assurance of faith concerning the Divine Fatherhood? In two ways: by His teaching and by His life; by what He said and by what He did. And once more a paragraph must perforce do, as best it can, the work of an essay.

To the ear and heart of Christ all nature spoke of the love and care of God. "Behold the birds of the heaven," He said; "they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?" And again He said, "Consider the lilies of the field"--not the pale, delicate blossom we know so well, but "the scarlet martagon" which "decks herself in red and gold to meet the step of summer"--"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet I say unto you that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Or, He bade men look into their own hearts and learn. "God's possible is taught by His world's loving;" from what is best within ourselves we may learn what God Himself is like. Once Christ spoke to shepherds: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them"--how the faces in the little crowd would light up, and their ears drink in the gracious argument! You care for your sheep, but how much better is a man than a sheep? If you would do so much for them, will God do less for you? And once the word went deeper still, as He spoke to fathers: "What man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" Why, Christ asks, why do you not let your own hearts teach you? If love will not let you mock your child, think you, will God be less good than you yourselves are?

But more even than by His words did Christ by His life reveal to us the Father. "He that hath seen Me," He said to Philip, "hath seen the Father." In what He was and did, in His life and in His death, we read what God is. We follow Him from Bethlehem to Nazareth, from Nazareth to Gennesaret, from Gennesaret to Jerusalem, to the Upper Room, to Gethsemane, and to Calvary, and at every step of the way He says to us, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." We are with Him at the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee, and in the midst of the mourners by the city gate at Nain; we see Him as He takes the little children into His arms and lays His hands upon them and blesses them; we hear His word to her that was a sinner in the house of Simon the Pharisee; we stand with John and with Mary under the shadow of the Cross; and still, always and everywhere, He is saying to us, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; if ye had known Me ye should have known my Father also." Within the sweep of this great word the whole life of Jesus lies; there is

nothing that He said or did that does not fully declare Him whom no man hath seen at any time. To read "that sweet story of old" is to put our hand on the heart of God; it is to know the Father.

III

"Yes," says some one, "it is a beautiful creed--if only one could believe it." Christ took the birds and the flowers for His text, and preached of the love of God for man, but is that the only sermon the birds and flowers preach to us? Does not "nature, red in tooth and claw with ravine," shriek against our creed? And when we turn to human life the tragedy deepens. Why, if Love be law, is the world so full of pain? Why do the innocent suffer? Why are our hearts made to sicken every day when we take up our morning paper? Why does not God end the haunting horror of our social ills? They are old-world questions which no man can answer. Yet will I not give up my faith, and I will tell you why. "I cannot see," Huxley once wrote to Charles Kingsley, "one shadow or tittle of evidence that the great unknown underlying the phenomena of the universe, stands to us in the relation of a Father--loves us, and cares for us as Christianity asserts." And, perhaps, if I looked for evidence only where Huxley looked, I should say the same; but I have seen Jesus, and that has made all the difference. It is He, and He alone, who has made me sure of God. He felt, as I have never felt, the horrid jangle and discord of this world's life; sin and suffering tore His soul as no soul of man was ever torn; He both saw suffering innocence and Himself suffered being innocent, and yet to the end He knew that love was through all and over all, and died with the name "Father" upon His lips. And, therefore, though the griefs and graves of men must often make me dumb, I will still dare to believe with Jesus that God is good and "Love creation's final law."

But while thus, on the one hand, we use Christ's doctrine of God to our comfort, let us take care lest, on the other hand, we abuse it to our hurt and undoing. There has scarcely ever been a time when the Church has not suffered through "disproportioned thoughts" of God. To-day our peril is lest, in emphasizing the Divine Fatherhood, we ignore the Divine Sovereignty, and make of God a weak, indulgent Eli, without either purpose or power to chastise His wilful and disobedient children. "God is good; God is love; why then should we fear? Will He not deal tenderly with us and with all men, forgiving us even unto seventy times seven?" The argument is true--and it is false. As an assurance to the penitent and to the broken in heart, it is true, blessedly true; in any other sense it is false as hell. He whom Christ called, and taught us to call "Father," He also called "Holy Father" and "Righteous Father." Have we forgotten Peter's warning--we do not need to ask at whose lips he learned it--"If ye call on Him as Father... pass the time of your sojourning in fear." This is no contradiction of the doctrine of Fatherhood; strictly speaking, it is not even a modification of it; rather is it an essential part of any true and complete statement of it. Peter does not mean God is a Father, and He is also to be feared; that is to miss the whole point of his words; what he means is, God is a Father, and, therefore, He is to be feared; the fear follows necessarily on the true idea of Fatherhood. Ah, brethren, if we understood Peter and Peter's Lord aright, we should be not the less, but the more anxious about our sins, because we have learnt to call God "Father." "Evil," it has been well said, "is a more terrible thing to the family than to the state." [12] Acts which the law takes no cognizance of a father dare not, and cannot, pass by; what the magistrate may dismiss with light censure he must search out to its depths. The judgment of a father--there is no judgment like that. And if it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for him who all his life through has set himself against the Divine law and love, it is a still more fearful thing because those hands are the hands of a Father.

But this is not the note on which to close a sermon on the Fatherhood of God. Let us go back to a chapter from which, though I have only once quoted its words, we have never been far away--the fifteenth of St.

Luke, with its three-fold revelation of the seeking-love of God. The parables of the chapter are companion pictures, and should be studied together in the light of the circumstances which were their common origin. "The Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." These parables are Christ's answer. Mark how He justifies Himself. He might have pleaded the need of those whom the Pharisees and scribes had left alone in their wretchedness and sin, but of this He says nothing; His thoughts are all of the need of God. The central thought in each parable is not what man loses by his sin, but what God loses. As the shepherd misses his lost sheep, and the woman her lost coin, and the father his lost son, so, Christ says, we are all missed by God until, with our heart's love, we satisfy the hunger of His. The genius of a prose poet shall tell us the rest. We have all read of Lachlan Campbell and his daughter Flora, how she went into the far country, and what brought her home again. "It iss weary to be in London"--this was Flora's story as she told it to Marget Howe when she was back again in the glen--"it iss weary to be in London and no one to speak a kind word to you, and I will be looking at the crowd that is always passing, and I will not see one kent face, and when I looked in at the lighted windows the people were all sitting round the table, but there was no place for me. Millions and millions of people, and not one to say 'Flora,' and not one sore heart if I died that night." Then one night she crept into a church as the people were singing. "The sermon wass on the Prodigal Son, but there is only one word I remember. 'You are not forgotten or cast off,' the preacher said: 'you are missed.' Sometimes he will say, 'If you had a plant, and you had taken great care of it, and it was stolen, would you not miss it?' And I will be thinking of my geraniums, and saying 'Yes' in my heart. And then he will go on, 'If a shepherd wass counting his sheep, and there wass one short, does he not go out to the hill to seek for it?' and I will see my father coming back with that lamb that lost its mother. My heart wass melting within me, but he will still be pleading, 'If a father had a child, and she left her home and lost herself in the wicked city, she will still be remembered in the old house, and her chair will be there,' and I will be seeing my father all alone with the Bible before him, and the dogs will lay their heads on his knee, but there iss no Flora. So I slipped out into the darkness and cried, 'Father,' but I could not go back, and I knew not what to do. But this wass ever in my ear, 'missed,'"--and this was the word that brought her back to home and God.[13]

* * * * *

CONCERNING HIMSELF

"Christ either deceived mankind by conscious fraud, or He was Himself deluded and self-deceived, or He was Divine. There is no getting out of this trilemma. It is inexorable."

JOHN DUNCAN, Colloquia

Peripatetica.

* * * * *

IIII

CONCERNING HIMSELF

"_Who say ye that I am_?"--MATT. xvi. 15.

This was our Lord's question to His first disciples; and this, by the mouth of Simon Peter, was their answer: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And in all ages this has been the answer of the Holy Catholic Church throughout all the world. In the days of New Testament Christianity no other answer was known or heard. The Church of the apostles had its controversies, as we know, controversies in which the very life of the Church was at stake. Division crept in even among the apostles themselves. But concerning Christ they spoke with one voice, they proclaimed one faith. The early centuries of the Christian era were centuries of keen discussion concerning the Person of our Lord; but the discussions sprang for the most part from the difficulty of rightly defining the true relations of the Divine and the human in the one Person, rather than from the denial of His Divinity; and, as Mr. Gladstone once pointed out, since the fourth century the Christian conception of Christ has remained practically unchanged. Amid the fierce and almost ceaseless controversies which have divided and sometimes desolated Christendom, and which, alas! still continue to divide it, the Church's testimony concerning Christ has never wavered. The Greek Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the various Protestant Churches, Lutherans, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists, Christian men and women out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,--all unite to confess the glory of Christ in the words of the ancient Creed: "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God."

This, beyond all doubt, has been and is the Christian way of thinking about Christ. But now the question arises, Was this Christ's way of thinking about Himself? Did He Himself claim to be one with God? or, is it only we, His adoring disciples, who have crowned Him with glory and honour, and given Him a name that is above every name? To those of us who have been familiar with the New Testament ever since we could read, the question may appear so simple as to be almost superfluous. Half-a-dozen texts leap to our lips in a moment by way of answer. Did He not claim to be the Messiah in whom Old Testament history and prophecy found their fulfilment and consummation? Did He not call Himself the Son of God, saying, "The Father hath given all judgment unto the Son; that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father"? Did He not declare, "I and My Father are one"? and again, "All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father: and no 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"? And when one of the Twelve bowed down before Him, saying, "My Lord and my God," did He not accept the homage as though it were His by right? What further need, then, have we of witnesses? Is it not manifest that the explanation of all that has been claimed for Christ, from the days of the apostles until now, is to be found in what Christ claimed for Himself?

This is true; nevertheless it may be well to remind ourselves that Christ Himself did not thrust the evidence on His disciples in quite this wholesale, summary fashion. It is an easy thing for us to scour the New Testament for "proof-texts," and then, when they are heaped together at our feet like a load of bricks, to begin to build our theological systems. But Peter and Thomas and the other disciples could not do this. The revelation which we possess in its completeness was given to them little by little as they were able to receive it. And the moment we begin to study the life of Jesus, not in isolated texts, but as day by day it passed before the eyes of the Twelve, we cannot fail to observe the remarkable reserve which, during the greater part of His ministry, He exercised concerning Himself. When first His disciples heard His call and followed Him, He was to them but a humble peasant teacher, who had flung about their lives a wondrous spell which they could no more explain than they could resist. Indeed, there is good reason to believe, as Dr. Dale has pointed out, [14] that the full discovery of Christ's Divinity only came to the apostles after His Resurrection from the dead. At first, and for long, Christ was content to leave them with their poor, imperfect thoughts. He never sought to carry their reason by

storm; rather He set Himself to win them--mind, heart, and will--by slow siege. He lived before them and with them, saying little directly about Himself, and yet always revealing Himself, day by day training them, often perhaps unconsciously to themselves, "to trust Him with the sort of trust which can be legitimately given to God only." [15] And when at last the truth was clear, and they knew that it was the incarnate Son of God who had companied with them, their faith was the result not of this or that high claim which He had made for Himself, but rather of "the sum-total of all His words and works, the united and accumulated impression of all He was and did" upon their sincere and receptive souls. [16]

Are there not many of us to-day who would do well to seek the same goal by the same path? We have listened, perhaps, to other men's arguments concerning the Divinity of our Lord, conscious the while how little they were doing for us. Let us listen to Christ Himself. Let us put ourselves to school with Him, as these first disciples did, and suffer Him to make His own impression upon us. And if ours be sincere and receptive souls as were theirs, from us also He shall win the adoring cry, "My Lord and my God." Let us note, then, some of the many ways in which Christ bears witness concerning Himself. In a very true sense all His sayings are "self-portraits." Be the subject of His teaching what it may, He cannot speak of it without, in some measure at least, revealing His thoughts concerning Himself; and it is this indirect testimony whose significance I wish now carefully to consider.

II

Observe, in the first place, how Christ speaks of God and of His own relation to Him. He called Himself, as we have already noted, "the Son of God." Now, there is a sense in which all men are the sons of God, for it is to God that all men owe their life. And there is, further, as the New Testament has taught us, another and deeper sense in which men who are not may "become" the sons of God, through faith in Christ. But Christ's consciousness of Sonship is distinct from both of these, and cannot be explained in terms of either. He is not "a son of God"--one among many--He is "the son of God," standing to God in a relationship which is His alone. Hence we find--and we shall do well to mark the marvellous accuracy and self-consistency of the Gospels in this matter--that while Jesus sometimes speaks of "the Father," and sometimes of "My Father," and sometimes, again, in addressing His disciples, of "your Father," never does He link Himself with them so as to call God "our Father." Nowhere does the distinction, always present to the mind of Christ, find more striking expression than in that touching scene in the garden in which the Risen Lord bids Mary go unto His brethren and say unto them, "I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God."

This sense of separateness is emphasized when we turn to the prayers of Christ. And in this connection it is worthy of note that though Christ has much to say concerning the duty and blessedness of prayer, and Himself spent much time in prayer, yet never, so far as we know, did He ask for the prayers of others. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not." So did Jesus pray for His disciples; but we never read that they prayed for Him, or that He asked for Himself a place in their prayers. How significant the silence is we learn when we turn to the Epistles of St. Paul and to the experience of the saints. "Brethren, pray for us"--this is the token in almost every Epistle. In the long, lone fight of life even the apostle's heart would have failed him had not the prayers of unknown friends upheld him as with unseen hands. There is no stronger instinct of the Christian heart than the plea for remembrance at the throne of God. "Pray for me, will you?" we cry, when man's best aid seems as a rope too short to help, yet long enough to mock imprisoned miners in their living tomb. But the cry which is so often ours was never Christ's.

It has further been remarked that, intimate as was Christ's intercourse with His disciples, He never joined in prayer with them.[17] He prayed in their presence, He prayed for them, but never with them. "It came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, that when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples. And He said unto them, When ye pray, say----." Then follows what we call "The Lord's Prayer." But, properly speaking, this was not the Lord's prayer; it was the disciples' prayer: "When ye pray, say-----." And when we read the prayer again, we see why it could not be His. How could He who knew no sin pray, saying, "Forgive us our sins"? The true "Lord's Prayer" is to be found in the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel. And throughout that prayer the holy Suppliant has nothing to confess, nothing to regret. He knows that the end is nigh, but there are no shadows in His retrospect; of all that is done there is nothing He could wish undone or done otherwise. "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do." It is so when He comes to die. Among the Seven Words from the Cross we are struck by one significant omission: the dying Sufferer utters a cry of physical weakness--"I thirst"--but He makes no acknowledgement of sin; He prays for the forgiveness of others--"Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do"--He asks none for Himself. The great Augustine died with the penitential Psalms hung round his bed. Fifty or sixty times, it is said, did sweet St. Catharine of Siena cry upon her deathbed, *Peccavi, Domine miserere mei*, "Lord, I have sinned: have mercy on me." But in all the prayers of Jesus, whether in life or in death, He has no pardon to ask, no sins to confess.

We are thus brought to the fact upon which of recent years so much emphasis has been justly laid, namely, that nowhere throughout the Gospels does Christ betray any consciousness of sin. "Which of you," He said, "convicteth Me of sin?" And no man was able, nor is any man now able, to answer Him a word. But the all-important fact is not so much that they could not convict Him of sin; He could not convict Himself. Yet it could not be that He was self-deceived. "He knew what was in man;" He read the hearts of others till, like the Samaritan woman, they felt as though He knew all things that ever they had done. Was it possible, then, that He did not know Himself? Not only so, but the law by which He judged Himself was not theirs, but His. And what that was, how high, how searching, how different from the low, conventional standards which satisfied them, we who have read His words and His judgments know full well. Nevertheless, He knew nothing against Himself; as no man could condemn Him neither could He condemn Himself. Looking up to heaven, He could say, "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." [18] This is not the language of sinful men; it is not the language of even the best and holiest of men. Christ is as separate from "saints" as He is from "sinners." The greatest of Hebrew prophets cries, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." The greatest of Christian apostles laments, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" Even the holy John confesses, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." It is one of the commonplaces of Christian experience that the holier men become the more intense and poignant becomes the sense of personal shortcoming. "We have done those things which we ought not to have done; we have left undone those things which we ought to have done:" among all the sons of men there is none, who truly knows himself, who dare be silent when the great confession is made--none save the Son of Man; for He, it has well been said, was not the one thing which we all are; He was not a sinner.

This consciousness of separateness runs through all that the evangelists have told us concerning Christ. When e.g. He is preaching He never associates Himself, as other preachers do, with His hearers; He never assumes, as other preachers must, that His words are applicable to Himself equally with them. We exhort; He commands. We say, like the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Let us go on unto perfection"; He says, "Ye shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." We speak as sinful men to sinful men, standing by their side; He speaks as

From a height, as one who has already attained and is already made perfect. Or, the contrast may be pointed in another way. We all know what it is to be haunted by misgivings as to the wisdom of some course which, under certain trying circumstances, we have taken. We had some difficult task to perform--to withstand (let us say) a fellow-Christian to his face, as Paul withstood Peter at Antioch; and we did the unpleasant duty as best we knew how, honestly striving not only to speak the truth but to speak it in love. And yet when all was over we could not get rid of the fear that we had not been as firm or as kindly as we should have been, that, if only something had been which was not, our brother might have been won. There is a verse in Paul's second letter to the Church at Corinth which illustrates exactly this familiar kind of internal conflict. Referring to the former letter which he had sent to the Corinthians, and in which he had sharply rebuked them for their wrong-doing, he says, "Though I made you sorry with my epistle, I do not regret it, though I did regret"--a simple, human touch we can all understand. Yes; but when did Jesus hesitate and, as it were, go back upon Himself after this fashion? He passed judgment upon men and their ways with the utmost freedom and confidence; some, such as the Pharisees, He condemned with a severity which almost startles us; towards others, such as she "that was a sinner," He was all love and tenderness. Yet never does He speak as one who fears lest either in His tenderness or His severity He has gone too far. His path is always clear; He enters upon it without doubt; He looks back upon it without misgiving.

This contrast between Christ and all other men, as it presented itself to His own consciousness, may be illustrated almost indefinitely. His forerunners the prophets were the servants of God; He is His Son. All other men are weary and in need of rest; He has rest and can give it. All others are lost; He is not lost, He is the shepherd sent to seek the lost. All others are sick; He is not sick, He is the physician sent to heal the sick. All others will one day stand at the bar of God; but He will be on the throne to be their Judge. All others are sinners--this is the great, final distinction into which all others run up--He is the Saviour. When at the Last Supper He said, "This is My blood of the covenant which is shed for many unto remission of sins"; and again, when He said, "The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many," He set Himself over against all others, the one sinless sacrifice for a sinful world.

There is in Edinburgh a Unitarian church which bears carved on its front these words of St. Paul. "There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." I say nothing as to the fitness of any of Paul's words for such a place--perhaps we can imagine what he would have said; I pass over any questions of interpretation that might very justly be raised; I have only one question to ask: Why was the quotation not finished? Paul only put a comma wherethey have put a full stop; the next words are: _"Who gave Himself a ransom for all."_ But how could He do that if He was only "the _man_ Christ Jesus"?

"No man can save his brother's soul,
Nor pay his brother's debt,"

and how could He, how dare He, think of His life as the ransom for our forfeited lives, if He were only one like unto ourselves? There is but one explanation which does really explain all that Christ thought and taught concerning Himself; it is that given by the first disciples and re-echoed by every succeeding generation of Christians--

"THOU ART THE KING OF GLORY, O CHRIST.
THOU ART THE EVERLASTING SON OF THE FATHER."

* * * * *

"While there is life in thee, in this death alone place thy trust, confide in nothing else besides; to this death commit thyself altogether; with this shelter thy whole self; with this death array thyself from head to foot. And if the Lord thy God will judge thee, say, Lord, between Thy judgment and me I cast the death of our Lord Jesus Christ; no otherwise can I contend with Thee. And if He say to thee, Thou art a sinner, say, Lord, I stretch forth the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between my sins and Thee. If He say, Thou art worthy of condemnation, say, Lord, I set the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between my evil deserts and Thee, and His merits I offer for those merits which I ought to have, but have not of my own. If He say that He is wroth with thee, say, Lord, I lift up the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between Thy wrath and me."--ANSELM.

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IV

CONCERNING HIS OWN DEATH

_"The Son of Man came ... to give His life a ransom for many."--MARK X. 45.

The death of Jesus Christ has always held the foremost place in the thought and teaching of the Church. When St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," he is the spokesman of every Christian preacher and teacher, of the missionary of the twentieth century no less than of the first. It is with some surprise, therefore, we discover when we turn to the teaching of Jesus Himself, that He had so little to say concerning a subject of which His disciples have said so much. It is true that the Gospels, without exception, relate the story of Christ's death with a fullness and detail which, in any other biography, would be judged absurdly out of proportion. But this, it is said, reveals the mind of the evangelists rather than the mind of Christ. And those who love that false comparison between the Gospels and the Epistles of which so much is heard to-day, have not been slow to seize upon this apparent discrepancy as another example of the way in which the Church has misunderstood and misinterpreted the simple message of the Galilean Prophet.

But, in the first place, as I will show in a moment, the contrast between the Gospels and Epistles in this matter is by no means so sharply defined as is often supposed. And further, granting that there is a contrast--that what in the Gospels is only a hint or suggestion, becomes in the Epistles a definite and formal statement--it is one which admits of a simple and immediate explanation. Christ--this was Dr. Dale's way of putting it--did not come to preach the gospel; He came that there might be a gospel to preach. This must not be pressed so far as to imply that it is only the death and not also the life of Christ that has any significance for us to-day; but if that death had any significance in it at all, if it was anything more to Him than death is to us, if it stood in any sort of relation to us men and our salvation, manifestly the teaching which should make this plain would more fittingly follow than precede the death. And they at least who accept Christ's words, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all truth"--they, I say, who accept these words can find no difficulty in believing that part of the revelation which it was the good pleasure of the Father to give to us in His Son, came through the

lips of men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Moreover, when we turn to the Gospels we see at once that the interpretation of Christ's death was just one of those things which the disciples as yet were unable to bear. The point is so important that it is worth while dwelling upon it for a moment. So far were the Twelve from being able to understand their Lord's death, that they would not even believe that He was going to die. "Be it far from Thee, Lord," cried Peter, when Christ first distinctly foretold His approaching end; "this shall never be unto Thee." When, at another time, He said unto His disciples, "Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man shall be delivered up into the hands of men," St. Luke adds, "But they understood not this saying." And again, after another and similar prophecy, the evangelist writes with significant reiteration, "They understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, and they perceived not the things that were said." So was it all through those last months of our Lord's life. His thoughts were not their thoughts, neither were His ways their ways. They followed Him as He pressed along the highway, His face steadfastly set to go up to Jerusalem, but they could not understand Him. Why, if as He had said, death waited Him there, did He go to seek it? Think what utter powerlessness to enter even a little way into His thoughts is revealed in a scene like this: Two of His disciples, James and John, came to Him to ask Him that they might sit, one on His right hand, and one on His left hand, in His glory. Jesus said unto them, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink? or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" And they said unto Him, "We are able." What could Jesus do with ignorance like this--ignorance that knew not its own ignorance? He could be "sorry for their childishness"; but how could He show them the mystery of His Passion? What could He do but wait until the Cross, and the empty grave, and the gift of Pentecost had done their revealing and enlightening work?

At the same time, as I have already pointed out, it is altogether a mistake to suppose that Christ has left us on this subject wholly to the guidance of others. From the very beginning of His ministry the end was before Him, and as it drew nearer He spoke of it continually. At first He was content to refer to it in language purposely vague and mysterious. Just as a mother who knows herself smitten with a sickness which is unto death, will sometimes try by shadowed hints to prepare her children for what is coming, while yet she veils its naked horror from their eyes, so did Jesus with His disciples. "Can the sons of the bride-chamber fast," He asked once, "while the bridegroom is with them? ... But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast in that day." But from the time of Peter's great confession at Cæsarea Philippi all reserve was laid aside, and Christ told His disciples plainly of the things which were to come to pass: "From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up." And if we will turn to any one of the first three Gospels, we shall find, as Dr. Denney says, that that which "characterized the last months of our Lord's life was a deliberate and thrice-repeated attempt to teach His disciples something about His death." [19] Let me try, very briefly, to set forth some of the things which He said.

I

First of all, then, _Christ died as a faithful witness to the truth._ Like the prophets and the Baptist before Him, whose work and whose end were so often in His thoughts, He preached righteousness to an unrighteous world, and paid with His life the penalty of His daring. That is the very lowest view which can be taken of His death. No Unitarian, no unbeliever, will deny that Jesus died as a good man, choosing rather the shame of the Cross than the deeper shame of treason to the truth. And thus far Christ is an example to all who follow Him. In one sense His cross-bearing was all His own, a mystery of suffering and death into which no man can enter. But in another sense, as St.

Peter tells us, He has left us by His sufferings an example that we should follow His steps. It is surely a significant fact that the words which immediately follow Christ's first distinct declaration of His death are these, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." His death was the supreme illustration of a law which binds us, the servants, even as it bound Him, the Master. In the path of every true man there stands the cross which he must bear, or be true no more. Let no one grow impatient and say this is no more than the fringe of Christ's thoughts about His death; even the fringe is part of the robe, and if, as the words I have quoted seem clearly to indicate, Christ thought of His death as in any sense at all a pattern for us, let us not miss this, the first and simplest lesson of the Cross.

There are few more impressive scenes in the history of the Christian pulpit than that in which Robertson of Brighton, preaching the Assize Sermon at Lewes, turned as he closed to the judges, and counsel, and jury, and bade them remember, by "the trial hour of Christ," by "the Cross of the Son of God," the sacred claims of truth: "The first lesson of the Christian life is this, Be true; and the second this, Be true; and the third this, Be true."

II

But though this be our starting-point, it is no