Luke - Commentaries by William John Hocking, Editor

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WHAT enhances the blessedness of Christ's moral glory to the saint is, that it is not something to be seen alone in solitary grandeur, as we behold a distant star, but He is mine in the nearness of His love; not only what He is for me, but to me, and in me. For what He is I am in Him. Am I not as a Christian one spirit with the Lord? Then again, if I see Him to be glorious, God sees Him to be infinitely more so; and what God sees Him to be, is the measure, if it can be measured, of what I am to God in Him. The most distant star is comparatively a small light in the heavens to the clearest eyes amongst us; but if we could get close to it, conquering the millions of miles of space that lie between, what a different object would be seen! Would not we ultimately gaze upon a great and glorious sun, shining in warmth and splendor? This helps but feebly to illustrate the difference between what Christ is to us and what He is to God; and what He is to God whether, in view of His blessed person or in His stupendous work. It remains that as we approach Christ, His glory and beauty and blessedness rise on our view, and will increase, until all distance is lost in the full sunlight of His and our resurrection glory. It is well that we should see that God has undertaken to express to us the moral glory of His Son, and where He is liberal in expressing the Blessed One's worth, we are safe and blessed in plenteously enjoying all He is.

The very contrast of what self is ought to give the more prominence to His glory. We have blemishes, nay, in our nature we are ruined. "I am carnal, sold under sin," bankrupt by nature as to all good. But how different Christ! He is the exact contrary of my nothingness, evil, and failure; and He is God's provision not only for my every need, but for His blessing me in full. How painful then when Christian teachers or teachings stop short as to this—when a saint's words and thoughts fail on the very point where they ought to be firm—when men fancy flaws in Christ where they ought to know perfection! We may be sure that "an enemy hath done this." Alas! that which constitutes His unique glory among men is the very place where they discover a blemish. But the blindness is always in themselves. In Him is no sin, the Christ of God.

To the believer the aim of the Spirit of God throughout scripture is manifest. On the one hand, He would lay bare before man his own ruin, his corrupt and sinful state; on the other, He would present to him, and keep before him, the Lord Jesus, holy and undefiled, and separate from sinners. The aim of Satan is equally distinct; he would blind man as to his own corruption and folly, puffing him up with lofty views of himself, and hiding from him that which is distinctive of the Lord Jesus. Alas! it is of man's fallen nature to side with the enemy against Christ as the Son and Holy One of God.

No one was ever so full of tender sympathy for poor sinners as Christ, yet no one was ever less like them in their intrinsic condition than He. We may doubtless learn many lessons from the transfiguration of Christ, but nothing is taught more prominently in that wondrous fore view of coming glory than His pure and unblemished nature. Even the mount of transfiguration is called "the holy" mount. "His raiment was white as the light." What do we see there but a temporary manifestation of His abiding purity and glory? He is there presented to us openly and outwardly for the moment as He eternally is in Himself. For the glory of Christ manifested in His transfiguration was not something that rested on Him from without, but a passing visible expression of His eternal invisible worth, of Whom the Father said, "This is my beloved Son."

Who but Christ could say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Who but He could say, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me?" Satan could see something of himself in every human being but Christ; but in Christ was no taint nor trace, no stain nor breath of the enemy. Of course this question goes deeper than the acts of Christ's life. There are saints around us who are godly and gracious, humble, good, and faithful. There have been many such, blessed be God! But in the hidden or discovered depths of their being there was a natural fountain of evil. There was a nature which loved its own will; and what is this but rebellion against God? In the saint sin does not get the dominion, because he died with Christ to sin, and he is not under law but under grace. But could any passage of scripture write my natural sinfulness (though now by grace a saint) more plainly than this? Such language could not be addressed to any except on the ground of their assumed sinfulness. But how different Christ! He was "made under the law," though divinely above it, and full of grace as He was, He could never be under grace, as He had no sin or ruin that needed the mercy of God. Yet, being truly man, "Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor [or, grace] with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

Scripture speaks of our bodies as "mortal bodies." Speaking of resurrection for the saint the apostle says, "This mortal shall put on immortality, this corruptible shall put on incorruption." But scripture shows that the mortality and corruptibility of man are because of sin. But seeing He had no sin, such words as "mortality" or "corruptibility" can never be used of Christ. He was neither mortal (save in the distinct sense of capable of dying), nor corruptible. For our sins He died, but God raised Him from the dead. He was God's Holy One, and saw no corruption. We must never read into the reality of His manhood the necessity of His sinfulness, as though He could not be a real man without having a sinful nature. Alas! Christ excepted, sinner ship is as wide as the race, "for all have sinned;" but it is a strange conclusion from the fall of man that man cannot be man without being fallen. Even the first man, Adam, was made innocent; and we know that the Second is man in perfection, — the Man of God's delight.

According to his own state man judges of the necessity of sin and failure in his race. But God's thought is the absence of that for which man seems to see a necessity; and this He presents to us in the Lord Jesus, Who was "as a lamb without blemish and without spot." No trial or temptation through which He passed could discover sin in Him, because there was none to discover, while man has only to be tempted when sin follows and ruin. The gold of Christ's holy nature left the fire of temptation the same in weight and value as it entered, thus proving that in His case there was no dross to consume; but His nature ever was as the most fine gold. On the other hand the quiet and sure assumption of man's sinfulness is evident in the words of Christ. Many scriptures are forthcoming to show that Christ assumed the fact of man being evil, — teaching on the ground of it rather than stopping to prove that it was so. But nowhere is the blindly wicked condition of man more manifest than in the treatment meted out by him to the blessed Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is "fairer than the sons of men;" He is "the chiefest among ten thousand" and "altogether lovely," and yet to men in the flesh there is no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. What should we say

to the judgment of men who would pronounce the sun to be a dark blot in the heavens that must be removed at all cost? Yet when the glorious Lord, Who was and is surpassing fair, came into the world, the world's men said, "Away with him, crucify him!"

Could anyone ever conceive greater moral evil than the hardhearted rejection of infinite love, whether as manifested in the person of Christ when down here, or in the gospel of His grace announced consequent upon His resurrection, and preached today? For man is not naturally a whit more kindly disposed to God's Son now than he was two thousand years ago. Philosophers reason about man possessing naturally the idea of the beautiful. This may be true esthetically, but alas I for man's conception of moral loveliness when there is no beauty in Christ that he should desire Him! There are those who sing:

But such singers are not of the world; they are in Christ, and a new creation.

Hun Hwa, Chinkiang. T.H.

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THEY only who have learned of Jesus Christ, who, sit at His feet and rest in His presence can serve Him acceptably. What a revelation of the secret of effectual service is Luke 10:42! The soul of Martha was completely occupied with her service, but Mary found her heart's satisfaction in sitting at the feet of the Lord and receiving from Him those words of life and grace which He communicated.

Christ Himself and not service must be our heart's object. In this path we are kept lowly and have neither time nor inclination to complain of the shortcomings of others. The enjoyment of His presence and communion with Himself destroys all self-importance.

Martha was oppressed with her service, but Mary had rest of soul in the Lord's presence. Divine intelligence followed, so that at the right moment she came forward and served acceptably (John 12:1-8).

Some of us find it difficult to take this place and keep it. Busied with our own plans, and filled with a sense of our own importance, we miss the blessedness of that rest and peace in which He trod this weary world (Matt. 11:25-30). It was so perfectly enjoyed by Him even in times of the deepest discouragement, when such scriptures as Isaiah 49:3 found fulfillment in His experience upon earth as God's servant, bringing the deepest sorrow to His heart (for He felt the contempt of His people profoundly).

He thus turned to the Father in true submission to His will, and found His own deep joy in all the way that led to the accomplishment of the Father's counsels. This was natural to Him as a perfect dependent man. It often happens that we reach it by a path of discipline because of the perversity of our nature. G. S. B.

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