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Thoughts *on the* Passion  
of Jesus Christ



BY  
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THE FATHERS OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT  
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# THOUGHTS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

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## CHRIST'S AGONY IN THE GARDEN.

36. And Jesus came with them into a garden which is called Gethsemani, and said to His disciples: Sit ye here, while I go yonder and pray.

37. And taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to grow sorrowful and to be very sad.

38. Then He saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death; stay ye here and watch with Me.

39. And He went a little farther, and fell upon His face and prayed, saying: My Father if it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will but as Thou wilt.

40. And He cometh to His disciples, and finding them asleep, saith to Peter: Lo, could you not watch with Me one hour?

41. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

42. Again a second time, He went away and prayed, saying: My Father, if this cup cannot pass away except I drink it, Thy will be done.

43. And He cometh again and findeth them sleeping—for their eyes were heavy.

44. And leaving them He went away again and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

This is St. Matthew's brief history of the Agony in the Garden.



PICTURE to yourselves the villa, covered with fresh spring grass on which the dew is gathering; here and there a cedar or palm lifting upward its boughs to the calm starry sky; one group of tired men, eight in number, stretched like soldiers, after a day's march, on the ground asleep. A little way off, another group of three, between sleeping and waking; and slightly removed from them the Saviour of our souls, "beautiful in form before all the sons of men," lying flat on His face, saying, again and again, "My Father if it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me." And, still, as the three disciples yield by degrees to their drowsiness; and as the spring breezes rustle among the palm leaves, and as the roar of the distant city murmurs faintly, along from tree to tree, He lies prone on the turf and repeats: "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will but as Thou wilt."

Who can define grief, and tell its cause, and take its measure? When you have felt it, you cannot tell what it is. Tears are no measure for it; for they never come till it begins to grow lighter. Words cannot express it; for the keener the grief the simpler and more terse the words the sufferer uses. We can stand by and look at our Saviour lying on His face; we can see that face grow white with anguish; we can mark the throes of agony that shake His frame; as the storm shakes the branches of the pine tree on the mountain. We can see the red blood bursting through His pores and tracing a crimson line along His white skin, fall upon the ground. But His grief is as great as the sea; we cannot measure



it; nor would I pause to dwell on it if he were a stranger thus lying in agony, on whom we had casually stumbled; but He is no stranger. The contemplation of His sorrow is not simply distressing. He suffers thus for our sins—to save us. I desire now to think of that sorrow; for it is the cause of our joy; “By His bruises we are healed.”

Who is He that bows His head to the earth, writhing like a crushed worm, with His garments and the grass beneath Him dyed in blood? In Himself He is God and man: to the Angels, He is King of kings and Lord of lords, Creator and absolute Owner; in Heaven, the Rewarder of virtue; in Hell, the Avenger of guilt. To us He is the Redeemer from guilt and its punishment.

Redeemer is one of those words which means so much that we are dull to perceive any of its meanings. It means Him who ransoms us from Hell; who leads us to the truth; who enlightens our understanding; straightens our crookedness of will; heals our infirmities; pardons our infidelities; who meets us at the opening of life, with the grace of Baptism, and thence follows us with grace and Sacraments, to the very portals of the grave. It means our Liberator and Teacher, our Guide and Protector; our Defender; the Food and Treasure of our souls; our God and our all. Pardon me, sweet Jesus. Woe is me, for I am a man of polluted lips, to try to speak of how we ought to love Thee. Do Thou kindle Thy love within us; for only the loving can understand Thy love.

That sorrowing man, who let grief so overcome Him, for our encouragement and consolation, is our God and our all.

How then could Peter, and James, and John fall asleep, if they knew Him to be their all, when they saw the tide of that mighty agony surging in his heart? How could they not watch one hour with Him?

We must not reproach them; but put the question to ourselves. He is all to you and me that He was to them. We never had any good He did not give us. We will never get any comfort worth the name from any other. How is it then that you and I fell asleep while He was agonizing? He agonizes when men sin. Did we not fall asleep after we had sinned? There was a lethargy on our hearts when we forgot our holy resolutions; left off going to the Sacraments; began to be fond of irreligious company and idle reading, and to indulge in thoughts of pride, anger, jealousy, and voluptuousness; and our eyes were very heavy when we went groping after what the world loves, and never once were raised to see God and Heaven above us. And Jesus was agonizing over us all the time, and saying, "Return to Me; why will ye die?"

Let us see if this sleepiness has not overcome us now, as it has overcome the world. Men seem to be bustling and restless; but their very occupation of growing rich, and feeding appetite, and over-reaching and out-stripping each other, are the merest idleness. They are sleeping, with no oil in their lamps, and "Lo! The Bridegroom cometh!"

Let us watch the one hour of life with Jesus, our Redeemer, that He may find us, when He comes, with our lamps trimmed and burning in our hands.

Jesus was left alone in His grief. He looked with



sad eyes for one to console Him, and found him not. It is so with us. In the great struggle for our salvation, whenever we undertake it, we must encounter the sharpness of sorrow alone. It is so indeed, with all the world—social intercourse is on joyous topics; society wishes you to amuse it, or flatter, or divert it. It does not care about your interests, much less to be burdened with the story of your sorrow. Men live in a crowd, but die alone. But if the soul is alone when it glides onward through the darkness, it is much more so moving upward toward the light. What you do for yourself must be done by yourself. The soul is so great that, in its struggles to reach its goal, it can have no companionship but God's. Friends can stand around a death-bed; they can say farewells and receive blessings; they can press the moist, cold hand, and look into the fading eyes; the priest, kneeling by the bedside, can hear in whispered accents with what the conscience of the dying one is upbraiding him—but what can wife, or brother, or sister, or child know of the mighty contest, the tumult of swarming memories, and hopes, and terrors and prayers, and resolves with which, as life ebbs away, that soul is filled? They may weep, and tremble, and pray; the Angels and Saints may pray also—but none can comprehend, and teach, and guide, and save, but God.

When, therefore, in your endeavors to live well you find yourself assailed by a difficulty, which none of your companions seem to understand—so fearful that you dare not tell it to them, be not appalled. Let them sleep on, and do you go through your struggle alone. Even when your closest friends cannot understand you; and your

very spiritual director offers you no remedy but patience—struggle on. You are on the right road. It is in the desert that the springs of water are promised in the new dispensation, and the solitude that is to blossom as the rose.

I would not dare undertake, even after reading St. Theresa, and the devout book called the Passion of Christ, and other ascetic writers approved by the Church, to enter into the Heart of Jesus and try to describe His sufferings.

Of course He knew all things; that He had been betrayed; that in an hour or two He would be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles; be mocked, spit upon, scourged, put to death. He saw the scattering of His disciples, the denial of Peter, the tears of His mother.

There is but one point of His sorrow, on which I will dwell; endeavoring to understand, yet not pretending to fathom. The Prophet says, "God, the Father, placed upon Him, the iniquity of us all." To know how sorrowful, unto death, this made Him, we would have to understand His immeasurable hatred and horror of sin. As God, He hates nothing that He made; but He did not make sin.

Sin is an irreconcilable enmity to His essential Holiness, as darkness is opposed to light, heat to cold, truth to falsehood, good to evil. In His infinite mercy He can forgive the sinner—the sin He can never forgive. And the reason why the torments of the fallen Angels and reprobate men shall know no mitigation forever, is because they have set themselves in identity with sin, in such a manner that favor shown to them would

be approval of their malice. In the eyes of God there is more of evil, more to flee from and to loathe in one single sin, even of thought, than in all the calamities of earth, all the pains of Purgatory, and all the torments of Hell; so that if one had it in his power to restore to every living man the innocence, and peace, and immortality of Eden; to set free all the spirits that are waiting in patient sadness the end of their purification; unbar the gates of hell, and send the howling reprobate fetterless, back, into light; yet, could accomplish this only by sin, a lie, a curse, an unclean thought, he must leave them as they are. There is more evil in the malice of a single sin than in the punishment of them all.

Now, Jesus Christ, in the Garden, felt Himself clothed with the iniquities of us all. "He placed upon Him the iniquity of us all." He had accepted the mediatorship willingly, looking to the end. Now, He suspended in His human soul, the anticipation of the end, and looked upon Himself only in the present, waiving all thought of any coming change, as though the present moment held within itself the weight of Eternity. His soul was convulsed with agony at the sight of the horrible disfigurement given to it by our sins. The God-man Himself is held a blasphemer, a perjurer, a worshiper of idols, a drunkard, a glutton, one unclean. The Eternal Father looked upon Him as guilty of death. The Angels hid their faces in horror, as He appeared to them an outcast, and a reproach in the Universe. This was the thought that crushed Him to the earth, and made the hot blood start from His veins as the red juice gushes from the trodden grape. This was the cup He prayed might



pass from Him. As if He had said, "I accept the betrayal by one I trusted, and called not servant, but My friend. Welcome, judgment halls of Annas and Caiphas, of Pilate and Herod; welcome calumnies, scoffs, blows revilings, purple garment, and thorny crown! Lay on My shoulders the hard Cross; drive the jagged nails through My hands and feet; but, O Father, do not make Me a sinner. Number Me not with those who hate Thee and rebel against Thee. Gladly will I expiate the sin, but if it be possible, let Me not seem a sinner. Let this cup pass from Me, and I will drink the rest. Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done."

Herein, reader, appears to our shame, how God's thoughts are not our thoughts. To us the horror of Christ's Passion is in the sensible sufferings He endured, added to His loss of reputation and favor of men. To Him it was to be held guilty of sin. We look with the same crooked vision on what happens to ourselves; and if we do hate sin, we hate it, not in itself, but for the calamities it entails upon its author. "Do not sin" we say, when we mean our best, "lest evil come upon you;" lest you forfeit Heaven—incur Hell. Blinder still than we are, the respectable and decent world says: "Do not sin, lest you forfeit health—lose your credit and standing in society." Yet neither the world nor we see, as God sees, that where one sins the calamity has befallen him already. The sin is the calamity. It is an evil and a bitter thing to go away from the Lord God. You sinned—but soon repented and confessed; and so no harm came of it. "Ah! foolish and slow of heart;" the harm did come of it, none the less, because its consequences

fell, not upon you, but upon the innocent head of Jesus Christ. There is greater measure of evil, says St. Thomas, in the cause of evil than in the sum of all the consequences. There was a greater measure of evil, by fair comparison, in the sin of Adam, than in all its consequences. So, in the least of your or my sins, confessed and forgotten, there was more to be abhorred, and avoided, and regretted, than in the death we tremble at, and in the devouring flame in which no one dare to think he can dwell for ever. This is what Jesus Christ understood, and we do not understand. How can there be so much, we say, in a transient thought, a fleeting word, or even in an act that is begun and ended in a moment? Inconsistency of human pride! that exaggerates our greatness, urging us to rebel against God, and puts forward our littleness to extenuate our guilt! God says, "Thou shalt not eat;" and we say, "Who is God, that He should dictate to us?" Then God says, "Thou shalt die" and we say, changing front, "Who are we that God should be so offended at what we do?"

This inconsistency marks the pride of our age. On one hand, man is too great to bow his intellect to the teachings of Christ, or submit his will to the laws of the Church; and, on the other, he is too little to be noticed and held responsible by God for what he does. Unworthiness is made the excuse for insolence—a man pretends that he must be allowed to annoy and wrong you, because he is worthless and contemptible. Though not great enough to escape the control of the Supreme God, we are still great enough to declare war against Him; and this declaration is greater evil than all others put



together, as would be plain enough to our minds did we know what we mean when we say that God is the Supreme Good and the measure of all Good.

Our sins, more than His own calamities, straightened, in that hour of darkness, the Redeemer's heart. More than all others, the sins that we still cling to, and love, and excuse, and repeat. Our excesses in eating and drinking; our yielding to brutal appetites; our false oaths, blasphemies, infidelities, sacrilèges; our envyings, anger, violences; our frauds, thefts, oppressions; our contempt of the laws of the Church and the graces of the Holy Spirit were in the chalice which He begged might pass from His lips. Is it not time for us to repent of them, confess them, and forsake them once for all?

Do you pity Him? Were He a dumb brute so writhing on the ground, you would. But He is your Saviour, and your heart aches as you see Him suffering. Why, then, relieve Him by abandoning sin and the thoughts and aims that lead to sin. Get you on the road to Heaven; cleanse your conscience from guilt; begin a life on the end of which you are not afraid to think; and as far as you can do, you have taken the bitterness from His chalice.

## THE BETRAYAL AND ARREST OF JESUS.

Jesus Christ could have expiated every sin by a single drop of His sacred Blood. But to satisfy His exceeding love for us, and to manifest His utter abomination of sin, He chose rather to expiate it in detail, paying, as it were, the price of each kind of crime, by a suffering corresponding to it. This will appear to us, more and more, as we go on meditating the History of the Passion.

Considered as an abuse of the gifts of God, all sin is treachery. Of His free gift, God endows us with being, understanding, and free will, and He tells us, as of old He said to Adam: "Of all that is good and beautiful in the universe you may partake. You may know every truth; love every good; but if you abuse the understanding I give you, to seek error; if you pervert the will with which I have made you like Myself, to love any good out of its proportion; then you are My enemy, and shall die." After following up in kindness these gifts of understanding and free will, when He makes us Christians, He discloses to our understanding what truth is, and sets free our will from the bondage of original guilt and concupiscence by the Sacrament of Baptism.

Then, when through natural frailty or inconstancy of mind, we have forgotten that our happiness lies outside the dominions of sense and passion, and have forfeited our innocence through desire of the visible, He restores us to heirship by the sacramental absolution.

Knowing how weak we are, and how easily wrought upon by our terror of the anger or ridicule of our fellows,

He strengthens us in this regard by the Sacrament of Confirmation.

To fill us with all grace and sweetness, He trusts us with his own Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity.

Now, our sin consists in treacherously abusing these gifts, as far as in us lies, to the injury of the Giver. We use our wit to thwart His designs; our will to oppose His law; and drag down our character of Christian, and the priceless graces of the Sacraments, into the service of God's enemies. This is why Jesus Christ suffered Himself to be betrayed. Of course He knew, beforehand, what Judas was thinking about, as he sat with averted eyes and scowling brow in the supper-room; and could easily have prevented his making the journey to the house of the high priest; but He did not wish to do it. He had complained, by the mouth of His prophets, of the hard treatment He received at the hands of men. "I have raised up children," He said, "and they have despised Me" (Isaias i. 2). "If My enemy had done this, and if he who stood up as My foe had spoken so much against Me, I could have borne it." But thou, O man of one heart with Me! Thou who didst eat bread at one table with Me! "What else could I have done for My vineyard that I did not?" "My people, what have I done to thee, or wherein have I made thee sad?"

But now, in order that we might see with our eyes the treachery of which He complained, behold to what He submits. It was not enough to endure the rancor of the jealous Scribes and Pharisees, the wild fury of the brutal mob. He must be betrayed and sold for a paltry sum of money, by one of his chosen Twelve. "How

much will you give me to betray Him to you?" asked the traitor, as if anxious to get some worthless commodity off his hands. Reader, have you ever heard a question like this? Did you ever hear of a Catholic ready to betray his faith, and asking, "What will you give me" among the politicians and men in power? Of one wavering before the commission of some fraud or theft, and calculating what he would get by betraying his conscience? Did you never stand, hesitating between God on one side and the satisfaction of an unlawful desire on the other, asking yourself, "What will I get by yielding to wrong?" If the thought would but go one step further, and the question take this shape, "What can you give me in exchange for my soul?"—sin would never gain dominion over us. "The traitor gave them a sign, saying, 'Whom I shall kiss, the same is He. Hold Him fast.' And, approaching, he said, 'Hail, Rabbi,' and he kissed Him."

It is hard to be betrayed. The heart that trusts, clings in so many ways to the trusted one that, when cast off suddenly and rudely, it bleeds in many places at once. But to be betrayed by the sign of love is the cruelest of all. Hypocrites betrayed Jesus Christ with a kiss. False teachers, wolves in sheep's clothing, who preach heresy and calumniate His Church; who seduce souls with a promise of impunity for guilt, betray Jesus Christ with a kiss. Those who affect piety for evil and corrupt motives, betray Jesus with a kiss. But, pre-eminently false and detestable are those who make communion with the guilt of mortal sin on their souls; who have either concealed something in confession, or have



not resolved to fly sin and its occasions, and yet dare to kneel with the children of God, and to receive into their guilt-blackened souls the Author of Purity.

“Then they laid hands upon Him and held Him fast.” They conducted His arrest with all manner of insulting rudeness. They seized on Him as if He had been a wild beast, and dragged Him along through the streets. Some from rancor, but more from frolic, labored to give Him pain. It was rare sport for the rowdy boys and uncouth rustics, with whom the city was filled for the Pasch, to caper, and dance, and grimace about Him; to leer on Him and shout ribaldry and pluck His beard; and push, and strike, and trip Him. And it was rare enjoyment for the parasites of the high priest to encourage them to do it. We who have seen men of their profession fomenting the mob spirit against churches and convents, ought to be able to form some idea of the scene. Here it was, that He was “led as a lamb to the slaughter,” that He was a “worm and no man;” no longer master of His own movements; no longer in possession of that personal dignity which afterward appeared so majestically in his mock trial before the high priest and Pilate.

The strongest and subtlest source of sin in the human heart, is precisely that sense of personal dignity, or self-complacency, or self-reliance which the Redeemer permitted to be crushed thus rudely in Himself. It is an element of every sin, for it separates the heart from subjection to God. The true greatness of the human soul is the high estimate God puts on it; the value He puts on it. But pride places its greatness in some kind



of importance, not only by comparison with other created beings, but also in the face of God Himself.

Before their fall, Adam and Eve walked fearlessly before God, and spoke freely to Him; because they never dreamed of trying to appear to Him but just as He had made them. But after their sin, after their understanding was darkened, they began to make comparisons, and to consider how they should meet Him, and greet Him, and entertain Him. That is, they no longer annihilated themselves before Him, and adored Him as their absolute and Supreme Master and Owner; but held their own lives inferior it may be, but still divided from His. So it has been ever since with their descendants.

The earliest perversion of the soul's consciousness of greatness is to exempt itself from subjection to God. Sometimes this manifests itself in shocking ways; as in those who worship idols of their own device, and images their own hands have made. At other times it is subtler, as when it corrupts the good works and poisons the humility of the children of God. But wherever it is, it works division between the heart and its Supreme God.

The beginning of all sin is pride. No man lives without his own good opinion. Deprived of one source of self-complacency, he is sure to find another. If he is not talented, he is rich; if he is poor, he is highly born; if he is a criminal, he outwits the world; if he is stupid, and low-born and wicked and miserable, he was not always so, or he is not so much so as others whom he knows. So in virtue; he does not study his defects; but the excellences he has or imagines he has. If he is hard hearted, he is not one of your spendthrifts and drunk-

ards; if he is a blasphemer, he does not steal or rob; if he is impure, he is no hypocrite. Let his conscience convict him of what guilt soever, he finds consolation in some virtue he imagines he has, as an offset against it.

It is this feeling of self-complacency that prevents the heart from turning easily to God when it is conscious of needing Him. It keeps people standing outside of the Catholic Church years after they are intellectually convinced of her claims to the obedience of their minds and souls. It keeps Christians from going to confession immediately after they have fallen into sin, and deceives them into waiting under the pretext of being better prepared. It prevents sorrow for sin from being genuine and pleasing to God—making it, not regret for offending the good and merciful Father of our souls, but bitterness and mortification at being humbled. It is in reference to this feeling that the disposition to be reconciled to God is called Contrition—a word signifying crushing, or grinding to powder, as grain is ground into flour between millstones, or earth to dust on traveled roads. The heart, that is, all the natural inclinations, affections, complacency, must be ground to powder, until nothing is left of their old form, shape, direction and consistency, and they are perfectly soft and pliable, and ready to take the new shape grace is pleased to give them.

“If any man shall come after Me let him deny himself and take up his cross.” If any man would be a friend to God he must adore. He must not come claiming any right, or seeking any treaty, or stipulating this much he is willing to concede to, but not that. He must yield all his intellect to God’s teaching; his will to God’s

guiding; his affections to God's control. His whole heart must be contrite. He must have no views, no opinions, no aims, no affections, no thought of any kind, but such as God allows him; and God claims neither the rooting out of his natural affections nor the suspension of his mental operations, but only the control and mastery of them.

Contrition is the root of that "change of mind" (as it is expressed in the Greek Testament) or repentance, without which all shall perish, with those on whom the tower fell in Siloam.

Naturally, man lives in his senses. He satisfies his appetites; takes up with the ideas in vogue about him; gets his notions of fortune and misfortune from what happens the body, and sets himself to live as though life ended in the grave. All these thoughts and aims must be ground out of him by contrition. He must dwell as a stranger and pilgrim on earth, for his home is in Eternity. He must learn not to regard what the body fears or loves for its own sake, but to go right on, without shrinking from sickness, or poverty; or censure, or death; or being elated at health, or abundance, or applause, or promise of long life. He must change as completely as he changes, who from going downward begins to move upward. And this change implies the complete grinding into powder of the sensual heart, its self-complacency and carnal affections; or, as St. Paul calls it, "crucifying the man that once we were, in order to rise again a new man in Jesus Christ."

Mary Magdalen is the example left us by inspiration to instruct us on this point. Before the Redeemer looked



on her with pity, her chief delight had been in sensual enjoyment and vain display of her person and its ornaments. After, she forgot her appetite at the feast, and sat with streaming eyes and disheveled hair in the midst of an assembly she would once have loved to fascinate. But now her mind is so changed on those matters, that the humiliation costs her no effort, and her tears flow because it can be no compensation to Jesus for the licentiousness of her past undisciplined life. Her ambition that had been unbridled, and the warmth of her affection that had been wantonness, had been ground to powder by the grace of Jesus; and not annihilated, but transformed into the fine flour of unfeigned contrition and God-like love.

Jesus Christ, in being dragged through the streets of Jerusalem, suffered the apparent annihilation of His personal dignity, to atone for the obstinacy of our pride. "The Lord," says the prophet, "willed to crush Him in infirmity;" to crush Him, to grind Him to powder in all His outward seeming. Already He had annihilated the semblance of His Divinity in becoming man; the dignity of chief of a sect, or school, when He was betrayed and His disciples fled; the respect due to a well-meaning man, when he was seized as a felon, and now, as He is dragged and hooted at, He seems to lose the very semblance of manhood, and to become, in the estimation of the people, a wild beast, "The Lord willed to crush Him in infirmity."

My friends, unless we profit by His atonement, and partake of His contrition, we shall perish in the Judgment. The dwellers in Sodom and Gomorrah, and the army of Pharaoh, which the waves buried, were at one

time no nearer destruction than we. The fact that history records sins which we never committed is not going to save us. If the general bent of our inclinations and aims is toward earth; if our minds are set on money, and place, and pleasure now, there must be a change, or we are lost. The old carnal heart must be crushed and ground to powder, and a new one must take its place.

Yet, do not imagine that this contrition is to be effected, necessarily, with any tumult of sensible emotions, with noisy groans, and many sighs and tears. It may be done in the higher region of the soul, without any feeling whatever. Tears and smiles come and go, like sunshine and shadows over the surface of the ocean. Convictions are deeper and more abiding, like the waters that lie far down on the pearl beds below. One may be convinced that he has gone wrong, and wasted his life hitherto in trying to quench the thirst of his soul from broken cisterns that hold no water, without any vehement emotion or a single tear. Nay, he can see the truth so clearly, and resolve on a change of life so strongly, as to rejoice rather than weep, thinking rather of what he has found than of what he has lost. But, in everyone, there must be this change of mind or there is no salvation. Jesus, dragged through the streets by the mob, is our model of contrition. We must be, before God, what He was before men.

Another source of sin to us, is false friendship; and, for this Jesus Christ denies Himself the solace of friendship that is true. "Then all the Disciples leaving Him, fled away." There is no greater temporal blessing than a true friend; one who is sincerely virtuous; one who



loves you too well to flatter you, or encourage you in wrong doing. But such a one is so rare that the poet may well talk of grappling him with hooks of steel. Most friendships in the world are false, and hollow, and corrupting. Young people become friends, because each flatters the other's vanity—too often encourages his vices. In the butchery of souls that is going on in the world about us, all the time, the false friend plays a bloody part. He is the devil's right-hand man in sins of rioting, gambling, drunkenness, and often bloodshed; in sins of disobedience to parents, frauds, thefts that are to feed riots, in the nameless and loathsome abominations of impurity, from the obscene word and wanton look, to the last extremity of brutish corruption. How many lives are wrecked and souls lost, not to seem rude, not to hurt a friend's feelings or forfeit his regard. This was why Jesus Christ allowed Himself to be deserted by His friends. "And leaving Him they all fled away," some to the right hand, some to the left. They stood by Him in the days of His popularity, and were ostentatiously of His retinue the day when the people strewed palm branches in His path, and shouted, "Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord." But, now when the clouds have gathered on Him, "leaving Him, they fled away." There is no trusting any one for a friend who is false to God. The sooner we break with those who have encouraged us to sin, the better for us in every respect. They will soon leave us, if we do not leave them; and our Divine Redeemer, deserted by His disciples, calls upon us, in the most touching accents, to come away from His persecutors and share His desertion with Him.

## THE CHARGES AGAINST CHRIST.

*“Then the Chief Priests and the whole council sought false Testimony against Jesus, that they might put Him to Death” (Matt. xxvi. 59.)*

They accused Him of being a blasphemer and therefore without conscience; an impostor and seducer of the people; an enemy to the established government and of the public peace; and though they proved none of these accusations, yet they established them in the minds of the people. They succeeded in robbing Him of His good name so completely that, had He not risen from the dead, what is called historical truth would have set Him down, for all time, as Tacitus writes, “The attempted founder of a detestable sect, who suffered for His crimes, under Pontius Pilate the Procurator of Judea.”

He whom the Father sanctified by communication of His essentially holy nature, and sent into this world that He might make compensation to God for the outrages sin had put upon Him, even to the shedding of the last drop of His blood, is held a blasphemer! The True Light, enlightening every one that cometh into this world, is called a deceiver by the courts and by the mob. The Author of all law, and the Upholder of all government, is called seditious and rebellious; and the very Prince of Peace, who brought together Heaven and earth, and gave tranquillity to all the children of men, is punished as a disturber of the public quiet. He submitted to this ignominy to atone for our sins of human respect, or those sins which we commit for the sake of the good opinion of men.

There is an indirect idolatry in this sin; that is, a worship of the creature instead of the Creator; for God alone, as we are fond of boasting, is our Master. In His judgment alone, we stand or fail. It makes no difference in our happiness, whether this man or that one, or in fact all who know us, think well or ill of us—we will settle in Heaven or Hell, according to God's sentence, all the same for that. The majority of society held the Martyrs and Saints of their time in derision; and, now behold, they are numbered with the children of God; and there is awful truth in the old monkish saying sung among college boys as a refrain, "Plato and Cicero, and the great master, Aristotle, have sunk into the depths of Hell." Only God's judgments are just, and therefore, only they are entitled to respect from the rational soul. Hence, to seek the applause of men—to wait on their opinions, is to put man in the place of God, and so put mortal affront on Him Who has said, "Thou shalt have no strange gods before Me."

The prophet of old shattered the statue Dagon, and then had it borne, prostrate and mutilated, through the city, crying out, as it passed in sight of the people, "Behold whom you worshipped!" In the Day of Judgment that idol of public opinion will be shattered by the power of truth; and, as the nations stand, in cowering groups, awaiting each his sentence, their terror-stricken aspect will say, plainer than words, "Behold what it was you worshipped!" These were they before whom you were ashamed to confess Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of your faith. For fear that these poor wretches would call you simple, or superstitious, or credulous, you out-



raged God and did violence to your own sense of duty. You bartered your birthright; sold your liberty; dishonored your character of Christian, to propitiate these who, instead of being judges themselves, now await the Judgment.

Let us call to mind for one moment, the sins for which Jesus Christ paid, by the loss of His good name. Denial of Faith was the one He specially warned us against. "Him that denies Me before man, will I deny before the Angels of God." Experience sadly shows, as each generation goes by, how needful was the warning. The itching after novelty, which has made heresiarchs, from Montanus to Luther and Renan, or apostates, from Julian to Voltaire, is one form of human respect. What is called the learned world in this country, although by this time convinced that the truth is not to be found in its integrity among the non-Catholic sects, still gropes vainly outside the Church, because it dare not face public opinion, and say after all, the Reformation is a failure and a delusion, a movement away from Christianity, from truth, and from virtue; and the old way is the right way, although it was trodden by popes and bishops, and monks and nuns. Here and there indeed, one man, like Newman or Burnet, gathers courage to see this and to say it; but the learned world, though it fears it, dare not see it and dare not say it.

"For this was I sent into the world," said Jesus Christ to Pilate, "that I might bear witness to the truth;" and Pilate, true type of the great world, asks neglectfully, "What is truth?" and passes out of the room without waiting for an answer.



Sure enough. What is truth to the busy, scheming world? Men of research and study tell us, sometimes with sly irony, sometimes with refreshing simplicity, that the love of truth is what urges them on in their investigations. Yet they love only those truths in which the public take concern, and which promote the views or interest of their clique or party; and because they are not mere debauchers or misers like the mass of men, they delude themselves with the persuasion that their pride of life is devotion to truth. It is a long way from the topmost point of the earth's atmosphere to the blue sky above, where the stars are set; so there is a wide space between the coarse, vulgar, brutal crimes of the herd of pleasure-seekers and money-gathers, and the virtues that have God for motive and end. And this space is filled with works better than beastly—worse than Christian—the works of misdirected mind—of mind that was clear enough to see the beauty of truth, but not humble enough to worship it.

The Church does not teach us to denounce philosophy, science, poetry, art, as did Martin Luther, and others—his companions; but she teaches that they are useless when they do not lead to God—fragments of truth, disjointed from the main body; as the world keeps them—jewels, sparkling among the mold and darkness of the charnel-house. The philosopher, the poet, the artist, all aglow with eagerness to build themselves that old heathen vanity—a monument more enduring than brass—each thinks his aspiration sublime because he is looking down on those below him, instead of up at those above him. One may be above a multitude, and not very high after

all. Look up, through ten thousand times ten thousand circles of creatures nobler than we, to the inaccessible Light near which stand the veiled Seraphim, and into which, in wave after wave of melody, the never-ending Sanctus eternally rolls, and see there, O aspiring soul! the immortality for which you thirst; see there, where the enduring monument is to be built, and judge thence, and not by looking down upon the poor worms writhing and wriggling among their filthy pleasures and sordid enterprises, whether or not your aims are as lofty as they should be. Are not those who have understanding enough to seek better things than food and raiment for the body, all the more inexcusable if they seek not that for which they were created? Are not the outrages God endures from us, all the more keenly felt when wit frames them? And is not His wrath more kindly kindled, when we not only do it but teach it? Oh, the terrific judgment that awaits the seducer of souls! The false priest that gave out the oracles of Satan, from the Sanctuary of God; the venal writer who said, "Go to, I must not let myself be cried down by critics," when he pandered to unjust prejudices, and sent forth what he knew was false; the recreant poet who sang what was popular, even when it was vicious and obscene; all those who having received, not one but five talents from the Lord, consumed them in ministering to their pride of life. Woe unto blind guides! for them Jesus Christ is reduced to shame and dishonor in the sight of men. Look at Him, in the purple garment, with the reed scepter in His hand and the crown of thorns upon His brow—see Him, when the servant strikes Him in the face, saying, "Answerest

thou the High Priest so?" when they all buffet Him, and say, "Prophecy unto us, O Christ, who it was that struck Thee!" when they "pass before Him, wagging their heads, and exclaiming, 'If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross!' or when the multitude shout out, "Set free the robber! crucify the Christ!"

Look on Him, you who sought to be esteemed, learned and wise! You took your prejudice for information; rejected doctrines you never examined; put forth assertions on topics you had never studied; played Sir Oracle to a little clique of dupes; for this, the Infinite Wisdom is reputed foolish; mocked as idiotic. It is you that should have borne those scoffs. It is you and I that should have worn that purple; for when we thought we were wise, were we not fools? When we clung to the earth, grasping after the applause of men, and letting go the good opinion of God and His Angels, were we not quite devoid of reason; and did we not deserve the mockery that fell upon our Redeemer, Jesus Christ? Look upon Him, you that would lead parties, and intrigue, and lie, and cringe, and flatter, and fawn, to win distinction and outstrip rivalry. His friends fled, His enemies triumphed, and He looked in vain for one to console Him or partake of His grief. Thus He prays for the success you won at the price of manhood, and conscience and justice, and truth; for the crimes by which thrones are reached and nominations procured. Because you would mount up, He is brought low; because you would domineer, He is made obedient unto death.

Look upon Him—cut off from the land of the living, with none to tell His generation—you that extol your-



selves, and deny the rights of others, through senseless pride of birth. You know that you were conceived in iniquity, born in sin; that the blood of Adam is in your veins and the stain of original guilt was on your soul at birth; yet you take honor to yourself, because since Adam's time there have been men of your ancestry who did not live by honest toil, but seized upon, and reveled in the fruits of the toil of other men; nay, as if for lack of all other excellences, you puff yourself up with pride, because you were not born black, and, through this pride, sin in arrogating to yourself what is not yours, and denying to others what is theirs. And, for this vain boasting and guilty arrogance, Jesus Christ, in His Divine nature, co-equal Son of the Eternal God, begotten before all ages—in His human nature, miraculously sprung from a pure Virgin of David's royal line—is treated as a "Worm and no man!" crucified with savage ferocity, before His Mother's eyes. After this, O follower of Christ! never speak of your birth, but of your baptism; recount and emulate the deeds of those who are your kindred, not by blood, but by grace.

For our pride of virtue He was called impostor and blasphemer. The custom of doing good deeds before men, to be seen of them, did not die out with the Pharisees. There are other ways of making a show of piety than broadening phylacteries and praying at street corners. Who is there, with eye so simple, as to see only God in the virtue he practices, and the virtue he does not practice? Who is there that does not give a little more to the poor and the orphan, when the subscription list is to be published, than he does when the poor and



the orphan come privately to beg? Who is there that does not fold his hands more meekly, cast down his eyes more modestly in the presence of God and the congregation, than in presence of God alone? Who is there who does not modulate his tone, and shape his language, when he speaks of the things of God, somewhat at least according to what he thinks the piety of those whom he addresses? Who is the Israelite, without guile, who seeks no one's favor or esteem but God's? I do not say that he does not exist; because I believe he does. It may be the child kneeling before the altar, that you thought looked so stupid; or the poor old woman you saw blessing herself at the holy water font as you came into church; but wherever he is, like the man that never went after gold nor hoped in money and treasure, he has done wonders in his life. He has learned the lesson of His Saviour's ignominy. He has found out why Jesus Christ suffered Himself to be esteemed a felon. He has learned not to flout the world, and rail upon it, and gnash his teeth at it, in wrath that it does not worship Him; but simply and candidly to hold it as naught, and walk in simplicity of heart before God. Who is that person? Whether we find him a priest at the altar, a ruler in his court, a nun in her cloister, a servant in his master's hall—we will praise him.

It is not you, reader, if you are satisfied with being as pious as your neighbor; and study his conduct as solicitously as you do your own. It is not you either, who are so touchy about what this one thinks and that one says and so anxious to explain matters, and defend yourself, and so fearful that what you did may be miscon-

strued. Nor you, madam, who for appearance sake, do not dance round dances nor go to the theatre in Lent, and are sorry that appearance exacts it. You have yet to learn why the Author of all holiness was called the vilest name the universe contains—a sinner. Learn it today, and put Him to shame no more.

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