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Entre Nous.

Sincerity.

When Lord Charnwood wrote his study of the origin and character of the Gospel according to St. John, he was drawn to add a postscript discussing not the origin of the creed but its truth, telling frankly what he himself really thought about religion. This epilogue attracted perhaps more attention than the work itself, and it is not to be wondered at that Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton have thought well to publish it in the form of a little book. The title is *A Personal Conviction* (2s. 6d.).

'I start, more or less at random, from an observation which happens to have forced itself upon me long ago, regardless of such principles as I should probably have then professed. Towards any great man, alive or dead, except our Lord, the attitude of discipleship is unreasonable and unmanly; towards our Lord, as from a simple reading of the Gospel we all more or less conceive of Him, some sort of unaffected discipleship appears, as we go on in life, the only reasonable or manly attitude. . . . Some people, though they would shrink from putting the fact into words, would have to confess that they never get through their ordinary course of duty efficiently, except in a temper which is kept alive in them by the constantly renewed resolve of very humble discipleship to Him.'

The first certain fact, then, to Lord Charnwood is that men have had so far but one Master. The second is that He revealed the one Gospel that they could ever have. After a section on Sin and the Atonement—though the sense of Sin has been obscured to many people with repetition, he does not believe that it has been lost—he passes to the mystery of pain and to the mental processes that lead men to Christianity.

'The religious apprehension comes, first, not as an assertion but as a command. Christ does not come to you and me saying, "I am the Christ." Without explanation He says, "Do likewise." "Get up and walk." His promise of a fuller light that we shall walk in lies behind.'

To the question, 'What is the *First Duty*,' Lord Charnwood answers: 'It is to be sincere towards yourself and the world. Only, since after all you are probably going to let yourself off something on the ground of sincerity, be quite thorough with the sincerity. It is not at all easy. Perhaps this simple reminder is better than any analysis of the very obvious ways in which humbug and cowardice

may take one to church or keep one away, or in which fidgety minds may skip or torpid minds drift to one conclusion or its opposite.'

'But I believe it is in every way helpful to recall that Christ demands sincerity. It is helpful, amongst other ways, in preventing that agony of religious questioning (attempting to force one's belief and never succeeding) to which more people than we suspect may be prone, but which surely is not God's desire. This demand of sincerity is a fact about Christ's religion which modern study reads quite clear in the Bible. And it is one of the dark stains on the history of all Churches for many centuries now that not only ecclesiastics, but congregations and crowds of Christians, have so often been the enemies of any fearless quest of truth or any straightforward telling of it. Even now many preachers and their congregations speak just as if conformity instead of truth could lawfully be made the primary aim. It would not be fair to say this without adding that the exact parallel holds good in politics, and in other walks of life—conceivably even in some scientific pursuits. The fact is, that it is harder and more unusual than we sometimes recognize for men to value truth as such very highly. That hard and unusual thing Christ demands. It would be slightly inaccurate to say that it was His primary demand, because life must not be artificially simplified by picking out some one element in the right life and putting it alone. But, along with some other things, honest facing of fact was an essential part of the childlike simplicity and singleness of heart which was His primary demand.'

A Sense of Sin.

'Nobody can be healthily alive without having often tingled with impotent rage against himself for some thing that he has done. Of course this self-anger is often most unforgettable when it relates to some quite trivial awkwardness, and a man will almost blush half a century later about some boyish absurdity which he knows had its creditable side. Yet it is not true to say that we forgive ourselves our graver lapses, our actually foul acts, or perhaps fouler omissions. These are things of which, the truth is, we hardly dare think, and doubtless, though it is good for us sometimes to face them steadily, it would not be good for us to think often of them. So far as we do think of them, they are worse in our eyes than they would

be in the eyes of our friends or of our enemies either; it is no comfort to know that other people do equally despicable things; and the excuse of circumstances, temperament, etc., which we would willingly make for other people's faults, would be the worst mortification of our self-esteem if we made it for ourselves. This is, I am sure, the normal way of thinking for healthy minds, and it is not made much less so by the appalling ease with which we may lose this way of thinking in regard to the particular kind of fault which has become habitual to us.¹

Women and Holy Orders.

Canon Raven has just published a book which he is well aware will arouse fierce criticism. But there is a constraint upon him which brooks no refusal—to make his plea to the Church of England to admit women to Holy Orders on an equality with men. The volume is entitled *Women and Holy Orders* (Hodder & Stoughton; 2s. 6d. net). It is a persuasive book, full of careful reasoning, which merits widespread consideration. The most important chapter is the fourth, in which Canon Raven examines the argument from Scripture. For the admission of women is to him a matter of theological principle even more than of justice and expediency. Our Lord, he says, did not discriminate in His treatment of men and women. 'He horrifies His apostles by speaking to the woman of Samaria, and His host by permitting the woman who was a sinner to anoint His feet. He has women in the company of His disciples and accepts their ministry.' 'In him,' as Saint Paul declares, 'there is neither male nor female: we are all one.'

But what of Christ's silence—of the fact, first, that He nowhere establishes the ordination of women; and second, that He did not choose a woman as an apostle. The former fact, Canon Raven says, 'is scarcely relevant, for He never mentions either deacons or priests, or, indeed, any of the details of Church organisation. Here, as always He came, not to lay down a code, but to sow seeds that would live and grow and bear fruit.' Again, to use the argument that He did not choose a woman as an apostle is 'fatally misconceive the whole purpose of the Apostolate. Apostles were missionaries, chosen and sent to a particular service. And to select a woman for such a task would have been at once unjust to her and practically futile. . . . It does not follow that because such work was im-

practicable for a woman in the first century, she is to be debarred from any authorised ministry for all time.'

Turning from the Gospels to the Epistles of Saint Paul, Canon Raven argues that in the passages in which the Apostle reaches his full stature, he, like his Master, sees all distinctions of sex and race, of class and culture done away with in the new age. When he is dealing, however, with more practical questions, he is less free from Judaism. 'Corinth, whose sacred prostitutes in the temple of Aphrodite gave their city's name to all women of loose life, was the place above all others at which scandal was most to be expected. There was bad trouble in the Church already: the town was full of women accustomed to identify religion with sensuality: the Christian community set great store by emotional excitement.' It was natural, then, that Saint Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians should declare that 'women must not speak' in the meetings.

After examining the directions in the Epistle of Timothy in some detail, Canon Raven says, even if it is possible 'to collect a few texts which imply that in the Apostolic age the exigencies of the time made it impossible to secure the full and immediate realisation of the Kingdom of God upon earth, the whole tenor of the New Testament is plainly against any final adherence to the subjection of half the human race.'

In the first century, immorality was open and general, and it was in such a depraved world that Jesus proclaimed the Sermon on the Mount, and committed the task to His disciples of so permeating human life by His spirit that gradually the conventions and resistances of men should be overcome, and all things be made new. The little Church of Jerusalem soon learned that if it was to survive, it must be prepared to grow slowly, and so we find them giving sanction to temporary arrangements, but if we mistake these for 'the eternal principles of the Gospel of Jesus, we shall wholly misconceive the character of Christianity and shall make of it a mechanism, not a way of life.'

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¹ Lord Charnwood, *A Personal Conviction*, 26.