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the desire and need of 'them that are without' for the highest and healthiest relaxation possible in every section and class according to its circumstances. The full Christian observance of the day is outside the scope of law, and can only be promoted by teaching, and especially by example. The strongest influence we can exercise upon the public mind in this matter will come through our own faithfulness to the principles of our profession. When we argue that a day of rest is neither complete nor secure unless it includes provision for worship, people will not believe us till they see that we ourselves order our habits accordingly. It may well be that both for our own sake and in the public

interest we need to rearrange the times of our services, our Sunday Schools, and Bible Classes. Social habits have changed and new necessities have arisen since the hours of eight, eleven, and six-thirty were fixed for summer and winter alike. The Archbishop of York has recently made some suggestions which will certainly be tried. Indeed, the time is ripe for free experiment in order to discover how in town and country we may adapt to man's varying conditions the day that was made for man. But in all such adaptation the witness from the Churches which will count for most is not denunciation of Sabbath-breakers, but our witness by example to the duty and value of public worship.

On Preaching the Cross.

BY PROFESSOR THE REVEREND A. J. GOSSIP, D.D., GLASGOW.

DR. COFFIN is a gallant spirit who holds his head up, and looks out on life with steady eyes. And yet he is uneasy. For the Churches, as they are to-day, seem to him to be little better than a shadow of what they are meant to be, with far less authority and thrill and power over men's minds and lives than they ought to possess—a thing sombre in itself, but much more disconcerting if, as he believes, one main cause of it is the sinister fact that too many of the ministry and of the people seem to have lost their grip of, and their interest in, the very core and centre of the faith; that Christ crucified is not being preached; that many so-called Christians are ill at ease on Calvary, and somewhat ostentatiously avert their eyes from that stark ugly Cross, partly because they do not understand it and can only stammer rather incoherently about it, and even more because, frankly, they do not like it, have an uncomfortable feeling that this grim horror will not fit into their cosinesses and soft ways, calls to a hardihood from which their flabby souls recoil, and out on an adventure, which, while it reads well in the lives of others, is too heroic for their taste by far; and so they leave it out, and contrive to tone down the gospel to a drab and unexciting thing, which ordinary people can live out without much drain upon their gallantry or their self-sacrifice.

And thus, even apart from the buffoons who have come to the conclusion that the way to make folk

Christian is to say as little about Christ as with any shred of decency they can, and spend their time on flashy titles and ephemeral nothings that may catch vulgar eyes and fill their pews on any terms, many honourable men, resolute not to talk beyond their own experience, determined not to be unnatural or strained, keep to the sunny days in Galilee, and preach about the Master and the Teacher and the Healer and the Friend. But the Saviour! That they let alone. Loisy tells us that his father held his tongue about religion, because it had nothing to say to him. And many adopt the same simple policy about the Cross, and for the self-same reason.

Well! even so, they may have a real and vivifying message. For everything about Christ is worth preaching, can win and can transform. Not His death only, but His life, His character, His victory, His presence with us now, have their own glorious message and appeal. There have been great days in the Church, when the centre of men's preaching was not Calvary. In the sub-apostolic times the faith was spreading like a prairie fire, and folk were risking everything for Christ with a crazy gallantry. And yet their creed was curiously nebulous and superficial, seemed to miss the bigger things and the real source of power, with an odd blindness. Apparently the Cross was not the axis round which their life span. And in its glory the Greek Church of old, gathered about

the manger rather than on Calvary, was thrilled more by the incarnation than the passion of our Lord.

And yet it is not for nothing that the Church's symbol is the Cross. Quite certainly the Lord Himself was sure that it would give Him a queer irresistibility that nothing else could bring. Why did Christ choose to die? For He did choose. Why did He, while still young, elect to end those days of constant usefulness, to throw away the many years He might have filled with healing and teaching and uplifting, to turn into the path that led to Calvary, though sometimes His soul shrank from it, and on occasion He was less than certain where His duty lay, had to pause and think things out again, and feel for the hand of God to steady Him? Yet each time with deliberation He still set His face steadfastly towards Jerusalem and the inevitable ending there. Why? He Himself has given the answer. 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to me.' I know men; know that they may listen to Me and be unimpressed, be healed and look for nothing further than their physical gain, meet Me and turn away. But if they see Me dying for them, then I win. And since He Himself deliberately chose that line of appeal, risked everything on that, surely it is treachery for those who speak for Him to huddle the Cross out of sight or at best into a very minor place, and less than a full Christianity such men declare.

And so Dr. Coffin, looking out over a Church quite desperately energetic, though often, as it seems, resultlessly enough, asks, Must not our work be largely futile till we get back to the proved seat and source of power? Cannot we manage to translate the Cross into our present-day thinking, so that with perfect honesty and with no sense of unreality or strain, men can preach it again with the old confidence and passion and abandon and, please God, with the old triumphs?

That surely is a practical and very central question; and he answers it in an arresting little book, *The Meaning of the Cross* (Hodder & Stoughton; 3s. 6d. net), marked by his usual delicate aptness in quotation, subtle power of phrasing, and, above all, winsome sincerity.

One reason why the Cross is not being preached to-day as much as it used to be is that our sense of sin is dulled and deadened. The old theologies and the old preaching were built up on the assumption that sin is a terrific and a terrifying thing. And many folk were terrified by it. It shocked them to be smirched by it. Their alienation from God would not be forgotten. No doubt all, even of the saints, did not experience that with the same

acuteness. Thomas Chalmers, for example, more than once confesses to himself that he for one just did not feel the devastating horror that he found recorded in much religious autobiography. Yet, more or less, that was a prevalent mood. And now very largely it is gone. Men have convinced themselves that after all sin, or at least their sin, is no such mighty matter; very unfortunate, and not to be repeated, certainly; but there is no need to be flustered or to fuss. And they are not fussing. To folk desperate to be saved it was easy to preach Calvary. But can we preach it now? Must there not be a period of law work, as they used to say, before the meaning and the need of it come home to men's souls? No, says Dr. Coffin. Just because our sense of sin is dimmed, bring men to the Cross. For one effective way to use it is to set it there before us, and let it bring home to us its unique revelation of the awesome possibilities and facts that lie hidden away in entirely respectable lives.

For who was it that killed Jesus Christ? Not monsters whose presence among our kindly humanity we cannot explain, but very ordinary people like ourselves with very ordinary failings—some of the most zealous Church people of their day, but whose minds happened to be stiffly orthodox, and thirled to the familiar, and inhospitable to new truth, and irritably impatient of change and progress. And these very minor-looking sins of theirs ended in that, and in us also they are working havoc to the cause of righteousness to-day! And others, whose vested interests Christ had attacked, and who resented this assault upon their proprietary rights. And how many social sores have their root in a like selfish blindness? And one who had lost faith in spiritual methods, who had come to think that matters could come to a head more quickly and successfully along other and more material lines. And is not even the Church to-day full of those who seem more eager about men's social betterment than the salvation of their souls, who pin their faith to what Raleigh called 'the idiotic simplicity of the revolutionary idea,' to some quick-change external transformation, we ourselves remaining what we are? And, not least, the people who had not interest enough to be there when the decisive vote was given, who assumed Jesus would be all right, who had other things filling their mind, and could not be bothered worrying about this matter, one way or the other. And so the vote went for Barabbas, and Jesus was left unsupported and alone. And is it not just that crass mass of stolid

indifference and inertia that arrests and hinders the coming of the kingdom to this day and hour? So almost endlessly. Preach the Cross with some vividness, and some small understanding of the circumstances out of which it came, and it must bring a staggering revelation of the guilt that lies upon our souls.

No doubt our stark individualism may even then blind our eyes to it in part, our foolish notion that we are solitary units, our failure to realize that we are all involved in the sins of our community and nation. Hutton tells us of Maurice that he felt 'a self-reproachful complicity in every sinful tendency of his age.' And there was that feeling in Jesus Christ. Hence, argues Dr. Coffin, the baptism, in which vicariously He entered into the sins of the community. 'The Lord's Prayer is recorded as taught by Jesus to His disciples: it sounds as though He had prayed it with them. He who underwent the baptism of repentance may well have joined in praying "forgive us our debts." He was implicated in the sins of society.' Clean Himself, He was one of a community who were not clean, and He felt, in part, responsible for it and soiled by it. So, get men upon Calvary, make them look at the Cross; and with horror they will see that there is blood upon their hands, that they have crucified the Lord afresh, that in their hearts there is what wrought out that.

Further, it is only through the preaching of the Cross that there comes to us a due revelation of what God is like and is. Jesus was rejected as a blasphemer because a thing like Him claimed oneness with God. And yet nowadays to those who have once stood on Calvary, with seeing eyes and any understanding in their souls, this at least is clear, that if there be a God at all He must be Christlike; that to be God is not merely to be high and lifted up above the sorrow and the travail of this desperate earth—out of it all—sitting smiling on a sunny mountain, as Maeterlinck pictured Him, regarding our worst failings with something of the amused complacency with which we watch mischievous puppies playing on a hearthrug, but cut to the heart by it, unable to keep out of it, willing and eager to make any sacrifice, and to go any length, if thereby He can help and heal and save, and till that be accomplished, spending Himself unrestingly like a shepherd until the strayed sheep be found, and hurt, like a father who cannot forget his wayward boy, nor be at peace till he is safely home. Philosophers may mock at that, and prate about the unruffled serenity of One who knowing the end from the

beginning dwells in the calm and coolness of eternity; and theologians may talk with heavy learning about His impassibility. But that won't preach. 'A God that could understand, that could suffer, that could sympathize, that had felt the extremity of human anguish, the agony of bereavement—this is the extraordinary conception of God-head to which we have at this stage risen.' So Sir Oliver Lodge. Was it not God Himself nailed to a Cross that stretched across the whole breadth of the heavens that St. Francis saw in his tremendous vision? And that has come to many a humbler soul on Calvary. Beneath the Cross, all other conceptions of the Divine have grown old-world, and pagan, and barbaric. Elsewhere men may catch a murmur coming from behind the veil, and dream and hope and wonder what God may be like; but there that veil is rent; and, looking in, they see God face to face, a God that suffers until He has saved. It must be so. For human nature has risen as high as Calvary, and it cannot out-top God. He, too, has gone the length of that. His whole life is like that, is that, till we be saved. Well do I remember seeing Denney's face light up as he declared with a strange passion moving his very soul, 'I do not envy the Romanists anything excepting this, that I would like to be able to hold up the crucifix in the pulpit, and cry, "God loves you—like that."' And nothing but the preaching of the Cross brings that home to the mass of men.

And many other vital truths grow really clear to us on Calvary for the first time, or else gain a new power. The infinite value of a man, for instance, of any man, of even the shabbiest and most impossible of us—a man for whom our Lord did that. Montefiore, arguing that very much in Christianity is to be found in Judaism, honestly concedes that this seeking and saving of the lost Christ introduced is something new and very glorious—yes, and His valuation of these lives of ours which bids us act on the assumption, as He acted, that the biggest thing that we can do with them is to throw them away for those who look unworthy of the sacrifice, and that that is not a foolish squandering of what might have been put to some high use, but itself the highest of all uses, and infinitely worth our while. It is the Cross that teaches that, and when the lesson has been thoroughly learned, the Kingdom will have come. And so on endlessly.

But take these matters we have touched upon. Yes, says the present-day mind, you tell us that on Calvary we see what God is like, but is the Cross only a picture and a metaphor, or did some-

thing happen there that made, and makes, a difference: and, if so, what? You talk about forgiveness, and we believe in that, perhaps too lightly and with too little wonder, for there is sad truth in Rainy's cry, 'that we are no longer astonished at it in our own minds.' Still we do accept Divine forgiveness as one of the fixed and eternal facts of life, can follow the daring prophet in his bold declaration of the forgetfulness of the omniscient. 'Your sins I will remember no more,' he heard Him saying. As if we began our confession, and God pulled us up, and said, 'Sins! But were there sins? I have forgotten about them!'—an amazing metaphor of the whole-heartedness of what God means by pardoning. We understand the father of the prodigal, and know that, times without number, God in very deed has dealt with us just so. That we believe, that we accept, that we can preach, and do. But this elaborate machinery of pardon set up upon Calvary seems out of touch with that, confuses and bewilders, does not help. It may be that in other days that may have been needed to convince men of God's true nature, and His attitude toward us. But that having been learned, the ladder by which other generations climbed to it is of no further use to us. Given the God of Jesus' teaching, why the Cross? What is the need of it? What did it do? What is its rationale?

For my part I agree with Dale: 'I remember, says one, going to him in great distress; I wanted to preach on "Christ died for our sins," and I thought if only I could show how through the death of Christ it was made possible for God to forgive sin, many might be led to believe. He replied, "Give up troubling, my friend, about *how* it was possible for God to forgive sin, go straight and tell them He *does* forgive sin, and tell them straight that Christ died for their sins. It is the fact the people want most to know, and not your theory, or mine, as to how it was, and is, possible.'" That, I think, is sound.

Still, the mind cannot breathe in a vacuum, and it does keep asking, How? And thus the literature on the Atonement is a large and varied one, some of it helpful, some of it quite blasphemous, most of it not much handled nowadays. And yet, if one fails to appreciate a great literary classic, a wise man knows that the reason must be some fault in himself. And if the metaphors for what happened on Calvary that helped other generations are impatiently dismissed by us, the probability is that our minds are lop-sided, that we are overlooking some side and aspect of the truth that stared at them. At all events, Dr. Coffin is quite sure that

the old terms and phrases—substitution, vicarious, sin-bearing, sacrifice—are not just obsolete jargon, queer and old-fashioned garments impossible for modern wear, but that they represent real facts that meet real needs, and must and can be easily translated into the mental accent of our time; and in an interesting chapter sets himself to do it. Was Christ our substitute? How did He bear our sin? In what sense was His death a sacrifice? and the like. How can we preach these things to-day with meaning and sincerity?

But what fires his heart the most is the Cross as the standard for our living and our character. And certainly in preaching it we must make this quite plain, that it becomes effective for us only if we adopt its spirit and catch its infection, and live our lives in our small way according to that plan. 'As I, so you,' says Christ over and over, laying it down that what He was and did and suffered was not meant to stand out as a solitary and unique thing, except in degree; that we too who are His must live in that same gallant, daring, recklessly unselfish way. 'The Cross is our boundary line,' our author quotes from an old Christian writer, and we must not stop short of that, but march right up to it. And yet we are not even trying so to do, have taken just enough of Christianity to make us immune from a real attack of it, have dwarfed it into a dull and tame affair, without the danger, the sacrifice, the gallantry, the adventure, the Cross, that there should be in it. 'No one knows,' says Dr. Jacks, 'exactly what ideal of life the Church stands for, unless it is that of a kindly and good-natured toleration of things as they are, with a mild desire that they may grow better in time, so far as that is compatible with the maintenance of existing vested interests.' A hard saying, and yet is it not too true? So the Church dwindles. And we shall never recapture men's hearts and passions and enthusiasms as we had them once, until our call to them is Christ's call to take up the Cross; until we shame this caricature of Christianity into the big thing it is meant to be by preaching Jesus crucified, confronting men and women with the Saviour dying for them, and asking from His Cross that they too throw in all they have and are, helping Him in His saving of the world. Nothing else will ever do it. 'Again and again,' says Tyrrell, 'I have been tempted to give up the struggle, but always the figure of that Strange Man hanging on the Cross sends me back to my task again.' And nothing else will send a listless Church and tepid souls back to the work which it and they are here to do.