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## The Example of Jesus.

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It is very discouraging to be told that we ought to reenact the life of Jesus. Yet this is substantially what certain popular books and sermons do tell us. The idea grows out of a wrong conception of the character of Jesus. We need another Athanasius to teach us that Jesus was more divine than we, or perhaps an Augustine to convince us that we are not so divine as we imagine ourselves to be. It seems late in the history of Christianity for the errors of Arins, Pelagius, and Socinus to be revived. The strongest scriptural support for this doctrine is 1 Peter 2:21: "For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow in his steps." R. V. This is an exhortation to slaves to be patient in submission to their masters. It applies to the exercise of patience by any one. By inference we may teach that we ought to take any other of the moral qualities of Jesus as an example. In the same manner we may teach that the attributes of God the Father are to be copied in our lives. His long-suffering, His mercifulness, His love are the correct ideals for our conduct. Along these lines we should strive to grow more like Jesus, more like our Heavenly Father, that the evidences of sonship may be manifested in us. All this is very different from such an imitation of the life of Jesus as is often enjoined upon us. By the way, that word, *hupogrammos*, example, is not used in any other passage in the New Testament, and no other word translated "example" refers to Jesus or has the same meaning as this.

Aside from mere verbal exegesis it is apparent that we cannot imitate Jesus, from the fact that He was born with a different nature. He was without sin. If we realize what that must mean we see at once that we can never hope, even though sanctified, to think or feel or act exactly as He did. He was more human than we. He was the Archetypal man. God was in Him as he has never yet been in any other. We are sub-human. We are born with a nature atrophied by the sins of our ancestors. We possess perverted impulses, blunted sensibilities, and weakened wills. Regeneration does not immediately restore to us the full complement and force of the normal human nature. While we are growing to be like Christ in all the fullness of His moral stature, we are necessarily incapable of acting as He did.

There is another difference. We cannot have the same object in life which He had. The supreme object of a Christian life modifies all its details. The prime object of the incarnation was Redemption. Not education for the race, but a vicarious atonement. He suffered once for all. That work is done. When He comes to earth again He will have a different object. He will not act or speak as He did then. His spirit of love for God and for humanity will be the same, but His work and consequently His methods will be different. Our work is not the same as His messianic mission. He was founding the kingdom. Our work is to help to strengthen it. Our methods are the substance of his teaching. The apostles illustrated in their lives what men may do and ought to aim to do, and to do better.

There is a great truth for us to recognize in this connection. It is the identity of Jesus with the human race, but that is not the same thing as saying that we are to imagine the identity between ourselves and Him. He had superhuman qualifications for doing a superhuman work. Jesus affords us the most complete manifestation of the divine nature the world has ever received.

God is manifested in all things; in the human race especially; in Jesus preëminently, supremely. In this was the acme of divine manifestation, or, in other words, the Lord of all created things. He was essentially before all, in all, and over all.

This implies His oneness with us, and our own imperfectness. The grape may have the same nature as the vine, but it has not the same qualifications, nor is it capable of the same performances. Jesus is our divine Saviour and our Commander. No soldier expects to imitate the General. The Commander uses a different set of faculties and agencies to do a different service from that of the private in the ranks, though the spirit and ultimate object is the same. So with us. We are workers together with Him. Obedience to His will is our ideal. Yet we are not the less His brethren. We have the endowment of the spirit to qualify us in temper for our work, and exercise will avail in great measure to develop in us better qualifications of intellect and other resources.

There are two real dangers in the doctrine that we ought to imitate Jesus. Discouragement is almost certain, and skepticism is likely to follow, as balky horses are produced by overloading. The other danger is the tendency, in certain temperaments, toward eccentricities and fanaticism. When one cuts adrift from solid truth there is no telling where a landing will be found. People who are taught to imagine that they may do all that Jesus did are apt to claim exemption from many of the requirements of common life. They become subject to the most unreasonable vagaries. Spiritualism and Theosophy find a congenial soil in such minds. The gospel plan of a Christian life is for us to receive the Spirit of God into our hearts. In this we are one with Jesus. The manifestations of the Spirit in us will agree with the ministry and teachings of Jesus; but our duties may be such as Jesus never had occasion to do, and our service will inevitably fall far below the completeness and power of His

## Temptation.

A sentinel posted on the walls, when he sees a party of the enemy advancing, does not attempt to make head against them himself, but at once informs his commanding officer of the enemy's approach, and awaits his word as to how the foe is to be met. So the Christian does not attempt to resist temptation in his own strength, but in prayer calls upon his Captain for aid, and in His might and His Word goes forth to meet it.

## Christ's Sympathy.

We are told that in some lands, when one friend passes through the pathless forests, he breaks a twig here and there as he goes, that those who come after may see the traces and know that they are in the right road. So, when we are journeying through the dark paths of temptation or sorrow, it is cheering to know that Christ, our best friend, has gone before and trodden the rough way—that He has been in all points tempted like as we are, and yet sinned not. That thought can bear us up, and turn our darkness into light.

## Sin Confessed.

A German prince, traveling through France, visited the galleys at Toulon. The commandant, as a compliment to his rank, offered to set at liberty any slave whom he selected. The prince went round the prison and conversed with the prisoners. He asked each the cause of his being there, and met only with tales of injustice and false accusation. At last he came to one man who admitted his imprisonment to be just. "My lord," said he, "I have been a wicked wretch, and deserve all my sufferings, and more." The prince at once selected him, and he was set free. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

## The Lamb of God.

In 1857, wrote Mr. Spurgeon, before preaching at the Crystal Palace, I went there to decide where the platform should be fixed, and, in order to see how the sound of my voice would be heard, I cried in a loud voice, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" In one of the galleries a man, who knew not what was being done, heard the words, which came like a message from heaven to his soul. He was smitten with conviction on account of his sin, put down his tools, went home, and there, after a time of prayer on his knees, found peace by beholding the Lamb of God. Years afterwards he told this story to one visiting him on his death-bed.

## Tears Not Enough.

One of the papers tells of a woman at an old man's coffin. She kissed him and wept over him. She told the people how good he was. But he took it all very coolly. He was dead. He was old and poor and she was young and rich. He had ten rooms but no room for her father. Yet he made room for her when he had only two. He was not educated. She was at his expense. He had fed and clothed her and sent her to seminary and college, until she grew refined and married a rich man. Now she kissed him and cried by his coffin and buried him handsomely. But everybody said this did not make up for her want of kindness in the years of his old age.

## Relief for the Old Preacher.

JAMES SCOTT.

The *Commonwealth* of December 21st, discusses the disposition of the "Old Preacher" after the age of forty or fifty, the age of his "best years of service"—speaks of having him shot, etc.

How would the last command of our Lord, and the Mosaic law dispose of these men? Suppose a very large proportion of the theologians should prepare to carry the Gospel to the perishing 800,000,000 of heathen; and leave these experienced preachers for some years longer, in charge of home pulpits. Then the principle of supporting religious instructors, as taught in the Mosaic law, and applied by Christ himself to the sustaining of the messenger of the Gospel. What more reliable authority can we find for the disposition of our religious instructors?

The *Commonwealth* of December 14th reports a larger decrease in number of Baptist missionaries in India than of any other denomination. This is almost a crime, while home pulpits are crowded. Men discarded from their all-absorbing profession of preaching the Gospel, cannot in many cases learn a new means of support, and have lost the arts of their boyhood. No more sacred obligation can be taught the churches than that of the care of these men.

Cold Spring, N. Y.

Many a good article has missed publication because of bad handwriting. Phillips Brooks thought there was a moral side to illegible chirography. As a recent biographer points out, he was scrupulous about his correspondence, and every letter that came to him received his personal attention and an answer. Even the illegibly written were deciphered; though nothing, it is said, tried the good bishop's righteous soul like an illegible letter; and he used to say: "What right has that man to save his time in writing badly, and steal mine?"

An innocent man needs no eloquence; his innocence is instead of it.—*Ben Jonson.*