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A Study of the Words of Jesus: Let a Man Deny Himself and Follow Me--The Relationship of Renunciation to Discipleship in the Synoptics

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A STUDY OF THE WORDS OF JESUS: LET A MAN DENY
HIMSELF AND FOLLOW ME--THE RELATIONSHIP OF
RENUNCIATION TO DISCIPLESHIP IN THE SYNOPTICS

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of New Testament Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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June 1955

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This research paper is the outgrowth of a personal struggle. The problem posed has in the past very sincerely disturbed the writer; this research has helped him personally in arriving at an answer. The writer's early background gave rise to the problem. His father had at an early age impressed him with the fact that scripture cannot but confront its reader. It is God's message. His mother was reared in a rather legalistic pietism, and this tended to influence him in a pietistic way. The passages which caused the most mental anguish were those concerning renunciation, passages which, upon first appearance, tended toward asceticism. The temptation was to apply these legalistically. Hence no insurance, savings and the like without a questioning conscience.

The question in the writer's mind maybe formulated thus: What is the meaning of those passages in scripture which deal with renunciation? They certainly can be found frequently enough, and therefore have to be taken seriously if one is to take the kerygma seriously. Before one may consider himself a "Christian" he must let these passages speak to him. In order to preach the whole counsel of God the minister must let these passages say something to him. Protestantism seems somewhat embarrassed by these passages.

Taking these passages seriously does not produce a comfortable Christianity.¹ Roman Catholicism, on the other hand, has legalistic rules as its answer to the problem these passages raise.²

The research paper has been conducted in the following manner: All the passages in the New Testament which seemed to throw light on the problem were listed. Word studies were done on the most important concepts. Exegetical studies with the help of commentaries were then conducted on the leading passages of the Synoptics. This method of study has led the writer to develop the thesis in the following divisions: First, the One Who calls men to renunciation. Secondly, the unique relation that exists between the One Who calls and those who accept the challenge, a relationship which explains why Jesus can demand that everything be given up for Him. Finally, passages dealing with renunciation are discussed in the light of the above relationship. Because of the historical development of the problem in his own life the writer has been more interested in gaining the dominant stress in the Lord's words, rather than giving detailed exegesis of all the passages.

¹A. Koeberle, "Der Asketische Klang der Urchristlichen Botschaft," Auf dem Grund der Apostel und Propheten, edited by Max Loeser (Stuttgart: Im Quell-Verlag der Evang. Gesellschaft, 1948), pp. 67 ff.

²Ibid., p. 72.

CHAPTER II

THE SIGN SPOKEN AGAINST

There can be no contemplation of the relationship between discipleship and renunciation in the Synoptics unless one first considers the unique bond between disciples and teacher that one finds existing between the Twelve and Christ. It is again difficult to appreciate the meaning and consequences of this teacher-disciple relation unless one first becomes "contemporaneous"¹ with Christ through the accounts of the Evangelists, thereby seeing Him without the hallowed glow that twenty centuries of tradition have placed around Him.

"Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against"(Lk. 2:34). These words heralded the "offence" which He, "a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel"(v. 32) would cause. For "the coming of Messiah necessarily involved a crisis."² Some will rejoice in His light; others will hate the light be-

¹Soren Kierkegaard states that one must understand Christ in the light of his own times before he can appreciate and understand what He has to say to us. S. Kierkegaard, Training in Christianity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), pp. 26-72.

²A. Plummer, The Gospel According to S. Luke (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1952), p. 70.

cause their deeds are evil(Jn. 3:19). Hence it was not any evil upon His part, but His life, claims, and demands which caused offence.

Jesus understood that He was an offence. His parting words to the disciples of John the Baptist as they returned to their master were, "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me"(Lk. 11:6). After all, Jesus was following on the heels of a popular preacher who had pointed out Jesus as the one with His fan in His hand, Who would thoroughly purge the threshing floor(Mt. 3:10-12), a prediction which as yet had not been fulfilled. Since the early days of His ministry Jesus had observed a gradual, yet ever widening cleavage, opening between Himself and the people. He had watched unbelief continue, despite great miracles(Mt. 8:10-12; 11:20-24). He had been condemned as a blasphemer for assuming to forgive sins(9:1-8); had been criticized for the company He kept(9:10-14); had sent His Twelve out with warnings of fierce persecution(10:16-39); now John the Baptist, His way-preparer, the one who had designated Him as the Messiah, had his doubts(10:1-6). It was this Jesus, a man arousing suspicion, causing offence and doubt, who was calling men to discipleship, and through discipleship to renunciation.

What caused the offence in Jesus? His life was not base; no one could convict Him of sin(Jn. 8:46; Lk. 23:16). His offence therefore lay outside this realm. Rather the

offence of Jesus was to be found in His being Himself. This offence evinced itself in both His life and claims.

Jesus' actions, though not sinful, caused offence. Not only did He heal on the sabbath (Mk. 3:1-4) and permit His disciples to pluck the grain (Mt. 12:1-8), but defended His actions on the basis of the contention that He was Lord of the Sabbath. Thereby Jesus put Himself not only above the "Church" of His day,³ but above the Torah as it was interpreted in His day. He cleansed the temple with no authority but His own (Mt. 21:23-27); He forsook the social amenities of His day to associate with the disreputable (Mt. 9:11); He claimed to forgive sins (9:2), an action which these monotheistic people declared, quite rightly, belonged to God alone (Mk. 2:7). His miracles created division and dispute; they did not incontrovertibly establish Him as someone totally apart (Jn. 10:19-21), nor did they save Him for persecution and death. So to the observer Jesus became an offence, for He a man acted as if He were God.

This offence was strengthened by the fact that a man who physically differed not the slightest from other men attributed to Himself names which the Jews reserved for their God alone. This monstrous claim of divinity sets

³Kierkegaard, op. cit., pp. 43-56.

Him apart from all other founders of the world's "great religions."⁴ It has happened that men have tried to deny that this was really part of His claim.⁵ If the claim to deity were removed, the "offence" would be gone. The rest would be easy to believe. Jesus would be then mere man, His teaching mere moralism, discipleship merely arbitrary. To do this is to surrender Jesus' absoluteness and to put Christianity on the same plane as other religions.⁶

It is true that Jesus never says, "I am God," or at least no such phrase is recorded. His own favorite designation for Himself was "Son of man." It is peculiar to Jesus Himself; never does anyone else so address Him. The term was considered a Messianic title, though it was not a common one.⁷ The chief Old Testament source for the term in the peculiar way in which Jesus uses it is found in Daniel 7. There the Son of man is pictured as coming before the Ancient of Day, and from His hand receiving dominion, glory, and a kingdom. All peoples serve him, and his king-

⁴A. Koeberle, The Quest for Holiness (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1938), p. 53. This idea is developed from various backgrounds, pp. 51-56.

⁵A. Schweitzer, Out of My Life and Thought (New York: The New American Library, 1953), pp. 46-50.

⁶A. Koeberle, op. cit., p. 50.

⁷Plummer, op. cit., pp. 156-157.

dom and dominion are everlasting. Son of man is therefore not primarily a title of humility. Rather, when viewed in the entire context of Daniel 7, it is the vehicle of some of the highest claims which Jesus lays claim to. This same designation turns up in intertestamental writings understood as a Messianic title.⁸ It is as the Son of man that Jesus forgives sins (Mt. 9:6), that He comes to give His life a ransom for many (20:28). Jesus uses this name for Himself also when He makes His great eschatological claims.⁹ "And ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Mk. 14:61).

In the scriptural account never does Jesus initiate the use of the term, Son of God, though in many instances He claims what these words imply. As the one sent of the Father He assents to His right to claim the title without being considered blasphemous (Jn. 10:36). Never when others refer to Him by this title does He deny the validity of this claim. When Peter so addresses Him, Jesus replies, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my father which is in heaven" (Mt. 16:16,17), thereby confirming that Peter had given the correct answer, but only by an act of God. Jesus' constant referring to God as His Father in a very

⁸M. Franzmann, A Workbook in New Testament Theology--Basilea Tou Theou (St. Louis: Concordia Print Shop, 1954), p. 65.

⁹Ibid., p. 66.

singular and unique sense (cf. Jn. 8:54), especially throughout the entire Gospel of John, is correctly understood by the Jews to whom He spoke as an attempt to equate Himself with God (Jn. 5:18; 10:33), and therefore they wish to stone Him for blasphemy.

Other titles are both used by Jesus of Himself or used by others of Him which carry either Messianic or divine connotations. Andrew calls his brother to come and see the Messiah (Jn. 1:41); Nathaniel addresses Jesus as the King of Israel (1:49);¹⁰ Jesus accepts the title of Son of David (Mt. 9:27,28; 15:22,24); His self-designation as "Heir" (Mt. 21:33-43), "Bridegroom" (9:15), "Judge" (7:22; 13:41)--all these point to claims beyond the reach of ordinary man.¹¹

Jesus' disciples are offended in Him for another reason. They see the man whom they believe to be the Messiah, yea, the very Son of God, apparently helpless and subject to men. For them the Son of God suffering the shameful death of the cross cries, "Offence."¹²

¹⁰For a complete picture of the connotations associated with the "kingdom" see ibid., pp. 9-25.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 58-86. Professor Franzmann in this section demonstrates by many textual references that one cannot separate Jesus from His claims to divinity. He brings into this context the actions of Jesus, which also betray a singular relation to God.

¹²Kierkegaard, op cit., p. 106.

The unique union of the God-man, His communion with the Father enabled Him to stand absolute. When He sent forth the disciples on the mission of the kingdom He places a notable emphasis on the sender: Behold I send you forth.¹³ Christ, the God-man, sets Christianity in a peculiar light:

On the one side are the unhistorical religions of salvation, whose founders are only significant as mystagogues and which, on that account, are tolerant and animated by a moral pragmatism and optimism. On the other side is the Gospel, whose founder not only obligates us to His teachings but also to the historical facts of His Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection: Who dashes us to the ground by the way in which He unmasks the supposed holiness of man, but who also bestows perfect communion with God, through His pardon-bringing presence, to those who accept Him in faith.¹⁴

Why the claims of Jesus were so offensive to those who actually heard them is perhaps most clearly portrayed by Soren Kierkegaard in his book, Training in Christianity. In the section titled "The Offence" Kierkegaard takes great pains to demonstrate the contradiction in the minds of people of a figure that appeared like any other man, and whose parents the Jews knew, claiming titles that belonged to God alone. Kierkegaard states that Jesus could not directly communicate to the Jews that He was God, for His human flesh was a block to the understanding of this.

^{13A}. Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew (London: Elliot Stock, 1909), p. 151.

¹⁴Koerberle, op. cit., p. 54.

Because of this block what Jesus said was offensive:

When one says directly, "I am God; the Father and I are one", that is direct communication. But when one who says it is an individual man, quite like other men, then this communication is not just perfectly clear and direct; for it is not just perfectly clear and direct that an individual man should be God-- although what he says is perfectly direct.¹⁵

Again:

But the contradiction, the greatest possible, the qualitative contradiction, is that between being God and being an individual man. He is an individual man, just like other men, a lowly, insignificant man; the contradiction is that He is God.¹⁶

Jesus never tries to remove the offence caused by His person. He does not attempt to prove to the readers of Old Testament prophecy that He really was born in Bethlehem (Jn. 7:41,42). He commands His disciples not to tell others when He consents to their designating Him as Messiah and Son of God (Mk. 8:27-30). When many of His followers are offended by His insistence that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood before they can have life (Jn. 6:53), He does not seek to explain Himself nor tone down the offence, but rather calls for faith (v. 61). He allows them to be offended and sets His face toward the cross. His whole plea is that they should believe on Him in spite of the contradiction. The choice, as Kierkegaard points out, is not between doubting or believing, but rather between being

¹⁵Kierkegaard, op. cit., p. 134.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 125.

offended and believing.¹⁷ Even miracles are not incontrovertible proof if one does not believe in the person performing the miracles.¹⁸ The offence of Christ can be avoided in only one way: "faith!"

Christ, the God-man, is an offence. That the centuries have tried to destroy that offence by making Him mere man proves the vital relation which this fact today has to discipleship. In His claims to a unique relation to God, and to an authority which is God's alone, to God's prerogative of forgiving sin, and in His miracles of giving life to the dead the man Jesus of Nazareth stands a contradiction. The modern mind can no better comprehend it than could the people in the days when He walked the hills and valleys of Palestine. He who would be a disciple must say "yea" when confronted to His claims to deity, fall on his knees before Him, and cry, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Lk. 5:8).

¹⁷Ibid., p. 83. The note by Lowrie is helpful here.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 99.

CHAPTER III

THE DISCIPLE

Because of His claims to divinity, His message which centered in Himself, and His miraculous power Jesus stands alone in the pages of all religious and secular histories. Therefore it is not strange that to be His disciple is qualitatively different from any other allegiance. In that He is more than mere man, the resulting relationship is characterized as being more than a relation of one man to another, but rather, as it is, one of man to God.

During the earlier portion of Jesus' ministry much of the time great crowds followed Him. On one occasion He turned to them, told them that if they would follow they must bear their cross after him (Lk. 14:25-27). Then Jesus proceeds to tell two parables, the point of both being that people should count the cost before entering into any large project; so it is to be with discipleship (vv. 28-33). If one does not count the cost, he will not realize the true meaning of discipleship. Geldenhuys comments:

He must relinquish all his possessions--not merely money and material things, but also his dear ones any everything that his heart clings to, yea, even his own life, his own desires, plans, ideals and interests. This does not mean that he must sell all his possessions or give away all his money or desert his dear ones and become a hermit or beggar or wanderer, but it does mean to give Christ control over his whole life with everything that he is and all he possesses.

Discipleship therefore is not a mere social nicety; it should not be entered lightly. Christ demands undivided earnestness.²

An instructive portion of the Synoptics concerning the absolute quality of discipleship is found Luke 9:57-62. Plummer remarks, "The section is well summarized in the chapter-heading in the AV. 'Divers would follow Him, but upon conditions.'"³ The first (a scribe, we gather from Matthew's account) is informed that Jesus does not even have a place where He may lay His head. The second, upon being summoned by Jesus, asks permission to first go and bury his father. Jesus counters with, "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of heaven" (v. 60).⁴ The third volunteers, but upon the condition

¹N. Geldenhuys, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), pp. 398, 399.

²A. Koeberle, "Der Asketische Klang in her Urchristlichen Botschaft," Auf dem Grunde der Apostel und Propheten, edited by Max Loeser (Stuttgart: Im Quell-Verlag der Evang. Gesellschaft, 1948), p. 67.

³A. Plummer, The Gospel According to S. Luke (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1952), p. 264.

⁴Geldenhuys, op. cit., p. 296. He holds the view that the man's father was not necessarily dead as yet, but rather that he was old and would no doubt soon die. Plummer disagrees. Plummer, op. cit., p. 267. He comments, "The apparent harshness and obscurity of the saying is the guarantee for its authenticity. 'Leave the spiritually dead to bury their own dead.' There will always be plenty of people who have never received or have refused the call to a higher life; and these can perform the ordinary duties

that he be allowed to say farewell to his family. Jesus shows the true implications of discipleship as He answers, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (v.62). Swete, speaking of such renunciation, comments:

The idea is very inadequately represented by the current notions of "self-denial", which regard it as the abnegation of a man's property, rather than himself. St. Paul had the correct idea (Gal. 2:19, 20: For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live.).⁵

Nor is this serious air just for the more intimate circle of disciples; renunciation is demanded not merely of the Twelve; Jesus said to all (πρὸς πάντας), "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Lk. 9:23). The necessity of self-denial and self-sacrifice is made known to all.⁶ Plummer in his commentary on Matthew makes the statement that disciples who come upon their own terms are easily won and easily lost.⁷ Jesus makes no bones about it. It

of family and society. To take nekrous as literal in both places gives harsh meaning, 'Leave the dead to take care of themselves.'

⁵H. Swete, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: McMillan Company, 1898), p. 182.

⁶Plummer, op. cit., p. 248.

⁷A. Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew (London: Elliot Stock, 1909), p. 268.

is not that He would not have all follow him. He just wishes them first to count the cost, and the cost is high.

Just what is the price of discipleship that Jesus demands? As God He holds an absolute claim upon the individual. It is an all-or-nothing-at-all matter. The kingdom of heaven is compared to a man who finds treasure buried in a field, sells all that he has that he might buy that field and thus obtain the treasure (Mt. 13:44). Again, the kingdom of heaven is compared to a pearl of great price which when a seeking man finds, he sells all to gain the one pearl (Mt. 13:45, 46). The disciple therefore is one who recognizes the one great value, and seizes the opportunity and sacrifices all to achieve it. The kingdom of heaven is worth all; it demands all. Therefore it is better to lose a limb than because of its downward pull to keep it and lose all in eternity (Mt. 5:29, 30).⁸ It is noteworthy that the right hand and the right eye are mentioned in Jesus' illustrations. These signify the most precious members that can be yielded without death.⁹ The reason this is so true is that it is not merely a choice between what is good and what is slightly better. It is the choice of serving one of two diametrically opposed masters: God

⁸Koeberle, op. cit., p. 68.

⁹Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew, p. 881.

and mammon (Mt. 6:24). Serving one's own desires ends up only in laying up treasures which perish, and the fool who so makes his choice perishes with them (Lk. 12: 16-21). It is a choice between death and "life." And "what shall a man give in exchange for his life? . . . Whosoever would save his life shall lose it, but whosoever loses his life for my sake shall find it"(Lk. 9: 24, 25).¹⁰

Rengstorff's word study on μαθητής in Kittel's Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testamenten¹¹ provides ample coloring for the term as Jesus used it. The relation of Jesus to his disciples is shown as something unique. It is not to be supposed that the ultimate choice for discipleship rest upon the disciple. This, it is true, was the case in both the Greek and the Rabbinnical schools. There a person who wanted to learn would look for a teacher under whom he felt he wished to study. He would then have to exert himself in order to join the teacher's company. Such is not the case with Jesus. "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you"(Jn. 15:16). It is Jesus who takes the initiative in calling: "Follow me!"(Mt. 4:19, 21; 9:9). And even where in exceptional cases people volunteer to

¹⁰Plummer, The Gospel According to S. Luke, pp. 248 ff.

¹¹Rengstorff, "μαθητής," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testamenten, Vol. IV, edited by G. Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1942), 416-465. Closely related in thought is G. Kittel's word study of ἀκολουθεῖω, which is found in the first volume of the same work.

follow, Jesus, by controlling the conditions for discipleship becomes ultimately the directing factor behind each call.¹²

The disciple-teacher relation as established by Jesus is unique in content too. The teacher of the Torah derived his importance from the fact that he taught the Torah. He is nothing of himself. The disciple, in turn, is bound to the rabbi only because he is the teacher of the Law; and so the Greek disciple is bound to Socrates, Plato, etc. only by the idea that his personality represents. Over against both of these Jesus binds His disciples to Himself alone. He is the center of His proclamation. His teaching is empty without Him as its center (cf. chapter one). This is brought out by the events following the death and resurrection. We have no hint that Jesus' teaching provided any source of power or inspiration to the men huddled in fear in the upper room. The conversation with the men on the way to Emmaus centered in the despair of men who still possessed what He had taught them; they lacked Him, or so they thought (Lk. 24:13-24). Nor is there any record that the disciples felt that they were to administer the precious heritage which they possessed in the Word of Jesus.¹³ John writes:

We are writing to you about something which has al-

¹²Ibid., pp. 447, 448.

¹³Ibid., pp. 449-451.

ways existed yet which we ourselves actually saw and heard; something which we had opportunity to observe closely and even hold in our hands, and yet, as we know now, was something of the very Word of Life Himself (I Jn. 1:1-3)¹⁴

When a disciple was chosen to fill out the Twelve, the qualifications required of him were that he be an eye-witness of Jesus (Acts 1:22). This only has meaning of Jesus, not His message, is of prime importance (not that the two can be completely separated).

There are several other areas in which discipleship to Christ differs from the normal disciple-teacher relation. In the school of the rabbis, for example, the disciples hoped some day to graduate and themselves become rabbis. This is not the case with the disciples of Christ. Once a disciple, always a disciple.¹⁵ Neither do the disciples of Jesus engage with Him in a discussion of what He teaches.¹⁶ They might ask for a point of clarification, but what He says remains absolute. Jesus is on a separate plane. He has the twelve perform menial tasks without question that would not have been expected of any other disciples. They obey Him because they see in Him the long promised Messiah.¹⁷ It is significant that Jesus can also

¹⁴J. Phillips, The Gospels Translated into Modern English (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1953), p. 215.

¹⁵Rengstorff, "Μαθηταίς," p. 452.

¹⁶Loc. cit.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 451, 452.

without any material grounding of His authority expect of His disciples that they will renounce all to follow Him.¹⁸ To follow Jesus means to suffer, for the disciple "is not above his master." And the Gospels are unanimous in declaring that Jesus did not leave His disciples in the dark concerning the fact that they were destined to suffer. Rengstorf notes that Luke discontinues the use of the term μαθητής after the disciples fled in the Garden. They were not disciples again till Jesus healed the breach. And after Easter and Pentecost they gladly suffered for their Lord.¹⁹

"To follow" Jesus is to answer the question concerning eternal life.²⁰ "And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, 'Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' . . . and Jesus . . . said to him, 'You lack one thing; go, sell all that you have, and give it to the poor . . . and come, follow me'" (Mk. 10:17, 21 RSV.). Again Jesus spoke to them saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but have the light of life!" (Jn. 8:12 RSV).

¹⁸Ibid., p. 451.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 453.

²⁰G. Kittel, "Ἀκολουθεῖν," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testamenten, Vol. I, edited by G. Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1932), 210-215.

The disciple as a disciple is in this relationship also a δούλος . Slavery is an idea totally foreign to the Greek concept of disciple, for freedom was a prized possession of the Greek. There is no trace of anything similar in the Old Testament or in rabbinical writings. Again, this is possible only because Jesus' disciples are not aligning themselves with just another man, a teacher, but with the Messiah, the Savior, the Son of God.²¹

The whole picture of the disciple-teacher relation would be distorted, however, if it were not made to shine in the light of God's agape. It is not a blind, selfish motive that causes Jesus to call unto Himself men to serve, suffer and die. His call is grounded in love, that selfless love that is characteristic only of God, that love which does not love for the value of the object, but rather in love creates value within the object.²² "Interested affection is of little account: Christian love is of necessity disinterested; unlike human love, it embraces what is repulsive and repellent."²³ "I came not to call the right-

²¹Rengstorf, "Δούλος," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testamenten, Vol. II, edited by G. Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1935), 265-283.

²²A. Nygren, Agape and Eros, translated by Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), pp. 75 ff.

²³Plummer, The Gospel According to S. Luke, p. 186.

eous, but sinners"(Mt. 9:13). The disciple is loved by God. He calls him into discipleship that He might serve him, give the kingdom to him (Lk. 12:32).²⁴ "Christian fellowship [and hence discipleship] with God is distinguished from all other by the fact it depends on God's agape."²⁵

This is the relation of the disciple to Christ. It enables him to renounce all, take up his cross and follow. For Christ is God, supreme, though seen in the form of flesh. He needs not man, but man needs Him. He, and not merely His "teaching", demands man's obedience complete and full. But this God-man from whom men shrink because their deeds are evil calls men unto Himself in love. He Himself is the sacrifice, their champion over against their captor. He has given all for them. He is the "vine" from which they receive their life; He Himself is their resurrection. He who found them sinners has washed them white. As such it is a privilege to be his doulos, a joy to be his disciple.

²⁴Nygren, op. cit., p. 68.

²⁵Ibid., p. 91.

CHAPTER IV

AREAS OF RENUNCIATION

Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. This is why the Twelve left all to follow Him (Mt. 4:18-22; Jn. 1:41, 45, 50). For them it literally meant leaving family and whatever wealth they might have had in order to become His disciples (Mt. 19:27; Mk. 10:28). Was this a prerequisite to discipleship? Is every case the same? What was Jesus driving at when He said, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Lk. 14:33)? Are we to take the words of our Lord literally for ourselves today? Or do the words of Jesus recorded by the Synoptic writers merely furnish guidelines? Are they a chart, or a compass? Jesus speaks to His disciples of four areas of renunciation, which investigated give the answer to the above question.

Renunciation of Wealth

Wealth and the wealthy receive their share of negative attention from Jesus. "Woe to the rich" (Lk. 6:24, 25), and "Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 19:23). It is significant that most of Jesus' opposition comes from those who are rich.¹ It might at first glance appear that riches them-

selves are incompatible with discipleship. Geldenhuys in his comments on Luke 6:24-26 denies that this is the case:

Jesus next addresses those persons who do not follow Him, but who in self-righteousness and pride revel only in earthly possessions. Again He means not all the outwardly rich, but the type of persons who seek their life and happiness only or primarily in material things, who do not realize their souls' need and do not acknowledge their dependence on God.²

This is brought out by the story of the scribe who came to Jesus with the desire to become His disciple. Jesus in this case does not tell him that he must go and sell all, nor does He deny him the chance for discipleship. He merely asks the scribe to consider earnestly what he is about to do (Mt. 8:18-20). Nor does the Lord command the repentant Zacchaeus to sell all. Instead Zacchaeus remains in possession of his property, and was voluntarily to make good his former ways (Lk. 19:1-10). Zacchaeus no doubt had accumulated much wealth; the scribe, no doubt, had been used to a comfortable existence.³ The command, "Go and sell that what thou hast, and give to the poor . . ." (Mt. 19:21), given to the rich young ruler is not a general rule to be

¹A. Plummer, The Gospel According to S. Luke (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1951), p. 182.

²W. Geldenhuys, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 210.

³A. Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew (London: Elliot Stock, 1909), p. 129.

followed, but was a necessary test of faith and obedience in this case, since riches for this young man had assumed the place of "idol" in his existence.⁴ Jesus tried to remove his stumbling block:

How hard and humanly impossible it is for a rich man to be saved--because one who is rich is so easily dominated by his wealth and held by a blind attachment to worldly possessions.

As for Christ's statement, "Sell your possessions" (Lk. 12:33), which was made to all listening to Him, Plummer comments:

The first half of this verse (παλαιούμενα) has no parallel in Mt. As in vi.29,30, we have a rule given, not that it may be kept literally, but that it may illustrate a principle. So far as attachment with our possessions is concerned we must be ready to part with them (I Cor. vii.30). Our fondness for them is not a justification for keeping them.⁶

Therefore riches in themselves are not the impediment to discipleship, but rather the attachment to them which draws a person away from God Who alone is to be worshipped.

The passages in the Sermon on the Mount which concern themselves with lending and giving also add strength to the argument that Christ is not laying down a legalistic rule, but is rather attempting to arrive at an agape-centered at-

⁴A. Swete, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: MacMillan Company, 1909), p. 226.

⁵Geldenhuys, op. cit., p. 459.

⁶Plummer, The Gospel According to S. Luke, p. 329.

itude within the individual involved. His whole attack on the Jewish keeping of the law was that it was centered in a legalistic attention to statutes, and therefore in reality was an abrogation of the true law of God (Mt. 5:17-48). It would therefore seem strange for the Lord to turn around and impose upon His followers a new set of legalisms. If someone appropriates the disciple's good for his own he is not to ask them back again as had previously been the rule. This is not because the having of these things is evil, but that the disciple is not to be concerned with these things.⁷ Plummer denies that the translation of Luke 6:35⁸ by the AV., "lend, hoping for nothing again," is an accurate rendering of the Greek. He would rather substitute the reading, "Lend, giving up nothing in despair," with the idea added, "never doubting that God will requite you."⁹ Plummer points

⁷Ibid., p. 186. "For αἰρεῖν in the sense "to take as one's own, appropriate" compare xi.52. It does not imply that violence is used But the μὴ ἀπαίτει implies that hitherto asking them back has been usual."

⁸Luke 6:27-36 is considered a parallel of Matthew 5:43-48.

⁹Plummer, The Gospel According to S. Luke, pp. 187, 188. "The meaning of this famous saying depends . . . upon the interpretation of ἀπελπίζοντες. All English Versions previous to RV. adopt the common view that ἀπελπ. means "hoping for in return," a meaning which is without example, but which is supposed to be justified by the context, or rather by the corrupted context. Thus Field argues: "No doubt this use of the word is nowhere else to be met with; but the context is here too strong for philological quibbles (!). 'If ye lend to them πᾶρ ὧν ΕΑΠΙΖΕΤΕ Ἀπολαβεῖν, what thank have ye?' Then

out:

Our Lord gives five examples: assault, lawsuit, impressment, begging, borrowing. They are all figurative. They do not give rules for action, but indicate temper.¹⁰

He continues to show that taking these words literally and legalistically would make of Christianity the laughing stock of humanity. He quotes Augustine. "As Augustine points out, we are not told to give everything that is asked for, but to everyone who asks. We may give him a wholesome word" ¹¹ These words of Jesus then are to be taken no more literally than "If thy eye offend thee, pluck it out" (Mt. 5:29). Geldenhuys sums it up briefly:

It is not the possession of material things that make one worldly-minded, but the attitude adopted towards them; nor does the lack of earthly things make one heavenly-minded, but the inward freedom from selfishness and covetousness, and consecration to the Lord.¹²

follows the precept: 'Lend μηδέν ἈΠΕΛΠΙΖΟΝΤΕΣ,' which can by no possibility bear any other meaning than μηδέν ἐλπίζοντες ἀπολαβεῖν." . . . The argument would be too precarious, even if the facts were as stated; but the true reading is πορ' ὧν ἐλπίζετε λαβεῖν (αβλ = Justin), and therefore the whole falls to the ground. The usual meaning of ἀπελπίζω, "I give up in despair," makes excellent sense; either "despairing of nothing," or "despairing of no one" (μηδένα). "Despairing of nothing" or "never despairing" may mean either "never doubting that God will requite you," or "never despairing about your money."

¹⁰Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew, p. 86.

¹¹Loc. cit.,

¹²Geldenhuys, op. cit., p. 358.

The disciple is not then to renounce wealth as such. He says with Paul, "All things are good, but not all things are expedient . . . all does not edify"(I Cor. 10:23). But "avarice is the mosr exacting of all vices; it is never off guard, never relaxes its hold."¹³ Only God can break the spell which wealth holds over the would-be disciple.¹⁴ The danger is not in wealth, but in placing one's heart in and with wealth. It is because such a condition is slavery to material as opposed to God that the disciple must be careful of its grasp and snare. The disciple is not to be anxious about such things since he has a Father who cares for him and will supply him with all his needs (Mt. 6:19-34).

Family Ties, and One's Own Body

What is the disciple's relation to others, especially to his family? Or what about the sexual powers if he is to deny himself? Once again, what Jesus says concerning these subjects must be understood in the light of His complete teaching. When Jesus says, "Except a man hate father and mother for my sake he cannot be my disciple"(Lk. 14:26), it certainly cannot be taken literally as a blanket rule for

¹³Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew, p. 107.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 270.

discipleship. Such an interpretation would deny Christ's own teaching concerning both duty toward parent (Mt. 15:4), and concerning love (Mt. 5:44). Rather He would point out that if this loyalty to one's own immediate family stands in the way of his relation to Jesus, the disciple must then treat his loved ones as those whom he hates.¹⁵ Jesus does not mince words over the fact that He Himself will, by being the sign-spoken-against, split families apart. For He brings not peace, but a sword, the sign of war (Mt. 10:34-38). The reign of peace that the Messiah was to usher in should not be understood in the sense of peace as a mundane tranquillity. Therefore if anyone considered mother or father more important than Christ, then he does not deserve to be His. His whole discipleship is at stake in the making of this decision. But as in all other cases of renouncing something for Christ, the Savior promises a reward. Those who renounce family ties will receive brothers and sisters one hundredfold, as they are brought into fellowship with one another in Him (Mk. 10:29; Mt. 12:49,50).

The same general rule of interpretation applies in dealing with the question of renouncing the exercise of one's sexual powers for Christ's sake. The only passage in the Gospels which touches the matter is found in Matthew 19:12:

¹⁵Geldenhuy's, *op. cit.*, p. 358. He adds, "Here Jesus, as He often did, utters the principle in a startling categorical manner." Jesus wished to make them think.

For there are some eunuchs which ere so born . . . and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

One can hardly concur with Origen's action, for he found in these words an injunction to castrate himself.¹⁶ Soren Kierkegaard, though he quotes these words in a literal context, no doubt feels that these words imply a renunciation of the exercise of the sexual powers.¹⁷ Plummer interprets as follows:

The passages must be compared with our Lord's declaration that His disciples must be ready, if the call should come, to part with everything they possess, even with life itself for His sake.¹⁸

Actually one should not be too much shocked by Origen's action or Kierkegaard's suggestion. The idea that the body is in itself evil and that the sexual powers are to be put into entire subjection is exceedingly widespread. This idea, which originated in the Near East, found its way into Neo-

¹⁶F. Farrar, Lives of the Fathers, (Vol. I (Edinburg: Adam & Charles Black, 1889), pp. 397, 398. Farrar makes the comment that tradition states that Origen did this to himself so as to remove all suspicion from the great amount of female counseling which he performed.

¹⁷S. Kierkegaard, Training in Christianity, translated by Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 113. Kierkegaard was himself engaged to an exceedingly charming girl. He broke the engagement shortly before they were to be married. It would be interesting to know what connection, if any, there is between his interpretation of the passage involved and his breaking of the engagement.

¹⁸Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew, p. 261.

platonie thought.¹⁹ Its premise in different forms has come down through the centuries:

The fundamental idea that unites them all, irrespective of time or place, is their teaching of the soul which denies the cosmos, and according to which God, Who is Himself pure soul substance, has created other spiritual souls out of such essence. In any case, the spiritual, as corporeal, and the immaterial are considered holy and good, the natural, on the other hand, because it is earthly is regarded as essentially low, evil and devilish This antagonism is particularly directed against the sexual character of humanity which is regarded as a low, sinful disfigurement of the flesh that has resulted from a loss of man's original state of purity. The contempt for marriage shown in the harsh descriptions that portray it as an immoral and defiling element, has its counterpart in the glorification of virginity (the new heavy burden of oriental-syncretistic origin that burdens the Roman Church) which was advocated with unbounded enthusiasm, particular by the western fathers, by Tertullian, Ambrose and Jerome and by medieval and modern Romanism.²⁰

Over against this pagan conception the New Testament knows nothing of the body itself being evil. It is holy, the work of creation. It is the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:15, 19). It is therefore not to be despised, but brought under the control of Christ.²¹ The body is included in the promise of the resurrection.

¹⁹A. Koeberle, Der Asketische Klang in der Urchristlichen Botschaft, Auf dem Grunde der Apostel und Propheten, edited by Max Loeser (Stuttgart: Im Quell-Verlag der Evang. Gesellschaft, 1948), p. 72.

²⁰A. Koeberle, The Quest for Holiness (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1938), p. 29.

²¹Koeberle, "Der Asketische Klang in der Urchristlichen Botschaft," p. 69.

²²Ibid., p. 72

Therefore the Christian is to bear no evil against his body, torture it by fastings or beatings, but is to cherish it as something which has been sanctified by Christ. The sexual renunciation some are called on to make, and any disciple must be willing to make this renunciation should the Lord ask him to do so. Otherwise he may use his body with its full physical potentialities, always keeping it in subjection that it may help him sever his Lord, rather than lead him to destruction (I Cor. 9:27). The disciple stands before God "as God's own creation that in its marvelous physical as well as spiritual existence reverently praises the Creator."²³

Renunciation of Pietistic Legalism as "Religion"

Sinful man looks for something in which he may find a certain security, something which at the same time declares man righteous and good. Keeping of a legalistic piety offers such to man. It cannot offer peace within, but enables to a limited extent to defend himself against his prodding conscience.²⁴ Such a pietism is especially strong in its grip on the individual when it has become the mores of the culture in which it exists.

²³Koeberle, The Quest for Holiness, p. 31.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 1-18.

The religion of the Pharisee had largely become just this, a legalistic observance of certain laws and rules. It is against the security of this legalistic interpretation of the law that Jesus concentrates the major portion of His attack against these religious leaders, who attack Him when He transgresses the Jew's sabbath by healing a sick man (Mk. 3:2-5); when His disciples pluck the grain from a field on the sabbath (Mt. 12:1-7); when they fail to observe the Pharisee's custom of ceremonial washing (Mk. 7:1-8). For the Pharisee the performance of his fasting, giving of alms, and prayer had become to a great extent the source for his feeling of security over against God, and hence the source of pride and a matter of ritual. Jesus therefore uses them as examples of how not to worship God (Mt. 6:1-18). They had replaced God's law with traditions which actually denied God's commands (Mt. 15:1-9). Though they observed the law's exacting details, they missed the heart and center of what it was trying to say (Mt. 23:23). It is because of this legalism, which fostered false security that Jesus was forced to oppose their religiosity of His day. He made it clear to those who would be His disciples that following Him was not the obeying of a staid and rigid listing of requirements. Jesus' own witness to His disciples never even bordered on pietism or legalism. He never suggests to them, in any of the Gospel accounts, that they

should fast,²⁵ and in fact defends them before the disciples of John the Baptist for not fasting as they and the Pharisees did. He states that they will fast when He is taken from them, but this is more in the form of a prophecy than a command (Mt. 9:14, 15). Nor was Jesus a teetotaler. He admitted His reputation as being that of a glutton and a drunkard in comparison with John the Baptist's being one of strict austerity.²⁶ The wedding of Cana He honored His mother's request by producing no small amount of wine, approximately 120 gallons.²⁷ His only act of personal "ascetic" piety recorded is His fasting during His stay in the wilderness. Both Plummer and Geldenhuys, in trying to understand the thinking of Jesus in performing this fast, feel that Jesus was going through a great spiritual conflict and did not even therefore notice hunger pangs till near the

²⁵As to Jesus' answer to His disciples as to what kind of faith was necessary before they would be able to cast out demons, the AV. translates, "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting" (Mk. 9:29). $\kappa\alpha\iota \nu\eta\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\alpha$ is absent in the Greek text, Novum Testamentum Graece, edited by E. Nestle (Stuttgart: Privel. Württ. Bibelanstalt, 1953), p. 111. The critical apparatus indicates that no major manuscript contains this reading. Matthew 17:21 is completely relegated to the apparatus (Ibid., p. 46.).

²⁶This is J. Phillips translation of Mt. 11:18, 19. J. Phillips, The Gospels Translated into Modern English (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1953), p. 22.

²⁷Ibid., p. 192. The translation points out that there were six water pots, each containing twenty gallons; hence total production was 120 gallons of wine.

end of the forty day period.²⁸ Otherwise, though His whole life was dedicated to doing the Father's will and serving His fellowman, Jesus does not demonstrate His "religion" in pietistic ascetic acts.

Therefore, as the disciple finds himself answerable solely to Jesus for his actions, his life becomes a response to that immediate confrontation with his God, rather than a legalistic following of rules which have been laid down by that God. St. Paul in his letters to the Romans and the Galatians can only strengthen what the Gospels spell out in terms of Christ's living, that the Christian is not a slave to the law, but lives by the Spirit.

The disciple has become a son of God by faith (I Jn. 3: 1-3) and as such, receiving power even from God, must show that this relation with God exists in his relation toward his fellow man. As he partakes of God's agape, so he is able to translate this into agape toward his brother, even his enemy.²⁹ It is precisely because of God's agape in the disciple that he turns the other cheek. The lex talionis is part of the old aeon, the natural man.³⁰ While it would fit

²⁸Geldenhuys, op. cit., p. 158. Plummer, The Gospel According to S. Luke, p. 108.

²⁹A. Nygren, Agape and Eros, translated by Philip Watson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), pp. 96, 97.

³⁰Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew, p. 85.

under the old, legalistic understanding of the law of vengeance, the old has passed away. The Christian lives in the new aeon, controlled by agape.³¹ This does not mean that the disciple is to be "weak-kneed," or spineless. Jesus does not wish the guilty to go unpunished. He does not condemn punishment, but rather the spirit of vengeance.³² He Himself rebukingly asked the soldier who struck Him, "If I have spoken evil bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?"(Jn. 18:23). Geldenhuys sums it up as follows:

All this should be viewed in the light of the general principle that there should be a constant endeavor, in a spirit of sincere love, to bring the guilty to repentance and to conquer evil by Good. And even where sever measures have to be taken, this should be done only from motives of genuine love. But the Christian throughout must be prepared to deny himself to the utmost and to place his own interest completely in the background.³³

And so the disciple approaches the law and pietism: All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not (I Cor. 10:23); through my knowledge shall the weak brother for whom Christ died perish?(8:11). God forbid! I would rather give up something, and so serve my brother

³¹Nygren, op. cit., p. 66.

³²Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew, p. 85.

³³Geldenhuys, op. cit., p. 212.

and glorify my God (8:13).

The Disciple and His Life

"The disciple is not above his master" (Mt. 10: 24). They crucified Him. Therefore the disciple of Christ cannot even claim his life his own, but "whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Lk. 9:24). Not only is there no choice involved for one who would be a disciple. Anyone who has experienced the meaning of the things which count and have eternal worth realizes that it is faith's sheer common sense that this is the only way to have life. Throughout Jesus' entire ministry He leads His disciples to understand that in His service their very lives are at stake. Who would follow must follow to the end, even death.

The commentators checked were unanimous in the meaning of the "cross" which the disciple must bear if he would follow:

The "cross" is not the ordinary, human troubles and sorrows such as disappointments, disease, death, poverty and the like, but the things which have to be suffered, endured, and lost in the service of Christ--vituperation, persecution, self-sacrifice, suffering, even unto death, as a result of true faith and obedience to Him.³⁴

³⁴Ibid., p. 276. Also Swete, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

As to the words, "take up his cross and follow me"(Mt. 10: 38), Plummer makes the comment that Jesus wanted no half-hearted followers.³⁵ In his commentary on Luke he adds further insight into the impressions these words must have made upon their hearers:

Its [the cross'] associations were such that this declaration must have been startling. The Jews, especially in Galilee, knew well what the cross meant. Hundreds of the followers of Judas and Simon had been crucified. It represents, therefore, not so much a burden as an instrument of death, and it was mentioned because of its familiar associations.³⁶

Geldenhuys comments:

He who desires to become His disciple and servant will everyday have to be willing to put his own interest and will into the background and to accept voluntarily and wholeheartedly (and not fatalistically) the sacrifice and suffering that will have to be endured in His service.³⁷ Indeed, he who is not willing to die the most hideous death, by crucifixion, for the sake of his love and loyalty to Christ cannot be His disciple.³⁸

The disciples were no doubt also aware of the disgrace that was involved in death by crucifixion. To the Jews such a death was a curse, as Paul points out in writing the Galatians (3:13). The disciple must bear the cross, endure the shame, as he walks in the way of his Lord and Master.

³⁵Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew, p. 235.

³⁶Plummer, The Gospel According to S. Luke, p. 248.

³⁷Geldenhuys, op. cit., p. 276.

³⁸Ibid., p. 398.

The demand Jesus lays upon His disciples is one that He has laid upon Himself; He asks nothing of others that He Himself hasn't done first:

Jesus' way was a way that led to the cross, and therefore those who desire to follow Him will have to pay the highest price. So it is particularly fitting that Luke here, after describing our Lord's determination to follow the way to the Cross (ix.51), relates the story of three prospective followers of Jesus whom Jesus asks to consider the cost..³⁹

This does not mean that the Christian seeks out persecution unto death; nor does it necessarily mean that if persecution threatens, the Christian must wait to meet it, or remain if it has come. Jesus' words to His disciples were, "If they persecute you in this city, flee to another" (Mt. 10:23). But it does mean that if witness be required, though the punishment of death follow, the disciple follows his Lord.⁴⁰

Christ's words are clear; His demand absolute. He demands all, for He demands the life of the individual disciple, not only in service, but also in sacrifice when called upon. And the disciple thanks God that he is counted worthy to suffer for the Lord Who loved him and died for him (Acts 5:41).

³⁹Ibid., p. 295.

⁴⁰Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to E. Matthew, p. 152.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The disciple is related to the King of heaven and earth. He has become His son, not by anything which he himself has done, but rather by what his God in mercy has performed for him. And even as God is Lord over all, so the disciple stands in a relation of absolute obedience to this Lord of all. But at the same time another force is pulling at his very being, trying to enslave him to itself. This counter-force would win its victory by attaching its victim to seemingly harmless objects of affection, and so turn the attention of the man from the Creator to the creation. It is because this temptation is so subtle and alluring that the disciple is called upon to renounce anything that will build a barrier which will keep him, or a fellow disciple waging the fight, from enjoying complete fellowship with the God Who has so loved him. Renunciation is a call, therefore, made in love to the disciple, so that being on his guard he might not give sin even a foothold.⁴⁰ Renouncing for Christ's sake never becomes the means of entrance into the kingdom of God; never does it earn for us

¹A. Koeberle, "Der Asketische Klang in der Urchristlichen Botschaft," Auf dem Grunde der Apostel und Propheten, edited by Max Loeser (Stuttgart: Im Quell-Verlag der Evang. Gesellschaft, 1948). p. 70.

our salvation.² It rather keeps us free from the world that would enmesh us, lest in times of tribulation we become choked by the cares and riches of this world (Mt. 13: 22)³

What is Christian asceticism? Adolf Koeberle writes:

Asceticism means: to allow the will of God's kingdom to happen. This renunciation can envelop the material, spiritual and rational existence of the Christian. It does not entertain feats out of the ordinary, which usually only serve to contradict Nature's ways and in times of "low calories" only leads to poor health. It rather concerns itself with the humbler things. Can a theologian during the season of the Passion give up smoking and so witness that in his existence he has not become a slave to it? Can the pastor refrain from divulging to his wife what he has learned in the confessional? Is a man his own master to the extent that he can before the beginning of his labors have set aside sufficient time for meditation and prayer? Or are we in these and a hundred other similar things possessed with an inability to resist?

He who can deny himself nothing, who in such test succumbs to one defeat upon another should not be surprised when these same weaknesses manifest themselves in his life of faith. Even so the opposite can produce from the victorious superiority in such apparently insignificant things great and unconscious refreshment in the life with God.⁴

²Ibid., p. 81.

³Loc. cit.,

⁴Ibid., p. 80. The translation is free and belongs to this writer.

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