

O silence, whereby the monk advances in perfection; ladder reaching to heaven; way of the kingdom of heaven.

O silence, mother of compunction, mirror of sins, in which man sees his transgressions.

O silence which hinderest not tears, mother of meekness, companion of humility.

O silence, spouse of humility and enlightenment of the mind.

O silence, searcher of thoughts and promoter of discernment.

O silence, mother of all good, support of temperance, and obstacle to gluttony.

O silence, school of reading and of prayer.

O silence, calmness of the thoughts and secure haven.

O habit of silence, dispeller of anxiety.

O silence, sweet yoke, a light burden, refreshing and carrying him who carries it, joy of the soul and the heart; restraint of the ears, of the eyes, and of the tongue.

O silence, destruction of hypocrisy and enemy of impurity; mother of reverence.

O silence, guardian of the affections, aid of all virtue; promoter of poverty; soil of Christ yielding good fruit.

O silence, joined to the fear of God, rampart and defence of those who wish to strive for the kingdom of heaven.

Above all things, brother, possess that 'good part which Mary chose'. For this Mary, since she is an example of silence, sat at the Lord's feet; she clung to him alone. Therefore did he praise her, saying: 'Mary hath chosen the better part, and it shall not be taken from her'.

—*Oratio pativcutia*, vol. 3, p. 102.

THE VIRTUE OF OUR LORD'S PASSION

BY

RICHARD ROLLE OF HAMPOLE

[Rolle's most distinctive devotion is to the Holy Name. It is impossible to estimate exactly the influence of St Bernard's fifteenth sermon on the Song of Songs, wherein he dwells upon the merits of the Holy Name, but the similarity in language and feeling between that and the writings of Rolle is so great that one cannot but imagine Rolle to have been thoroughly familiar with it. Both Rolle and St Bernard play upon the meaning of the name 'Jesus' and what its saving merits. To each it is a source of spiritual joy and

sweetness. More than that: for both men the consideration of the name leads to the consideration of the Person who bears that name, and in him is rooted their salvation and their joy. Nor is the influence improbable, for this sermon was in great vogue in the Middle Ages, and St Bernard and the Victorines did much to create the vocabulary of medieval mystical writing. There is no need to conclude that Rolle was merely an imitator, for his own works are instinct with genuine emotion and have their own peculiarities of style.

The following treatise is ostensibly about the virtue of the Passion. He argues that the Passion is the source of salvation, and then he has to answer his pupil's objection that some wise men have maintained that a man can only enjoy the bliss of Heaven if he love the Holy Name. Rolle himself has urged this in other writings and now he defends his devotion and his doctrine with a syllogism. The Holy Name itself means 'salvation' and our salvation was wrought by the Passion, and so a man can be saved by believing in the Passion as well as by loving the name of Jesu, for in effect the two are the same. No man can be saved who desires not and loves not salvation, and Jesu is salvation both in name and deed.

This worrying of a meaning was a favourite medieval trick of style and thought in sacred writing. Ever since our Lord said, 'Thou art Peter and upon this rock . . .' the holy 'pun' appears to have been sanctified. It abounds in medieval literature, often with less taste and more tortuously than here. Rolle was an emotional rather than a scholarly thinker and his syntax is often confused. His style alternates between the colloquial and the conversational and passages of fired and fervent prose where feeling rushes the words along and makes them almost as that song of the angels which he heard in the chapel at Hampole, 'spiritual and above all manner of imagining and human reasoning'.]

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NOW thou well, dear friend, that even though thou hadst never committed sin with thy body, neither venial nor mortal, but only that which is called original, because it is the primary sin and lieth in losing the good estate in which thou wast created, thou wouldst never have been saved unless our Lord Jesu Christ had not delivered thee and restored thee to it again by his passion. And thou oughtest to know that, be thou never so great a wretch and hast thou done

never so great a sin, if thou forsake thyself and all thy works, both good and ill, and cry for mercy and humbly and trustfully ask for salvation by the virtue of his precious passion alone, thou shalt have it without a doubt, and be saved from this original sin and from all other. Yea, and thou shalt be as safe as is an anchorite in his cell, and not only thou but all Christian men and women who believe upon his passion and humble themselves, acknowledging their wretchedness, asking mercy and forgiveness and the fruit of his precious passion, only subjecting themselves to the sacraments of holy Church, and though maybe they have been burdened with sin and in sin all their lives and have never had a feeling of ghostly delight or sweetness or a spiritual knowing of God, in this belief and in their goodwill they shall be saved by the virtue of the precious passion of our Lord Jesu Christ and come to the joy of Heaven. See here the endless mercy of our Lord, how he inclines to thee and me and to all sinful wretches. 'Ask mercy and thou shalt have it.' Thus saith the Apostle, in the person of our Lord, 'omnis enim quicumque invocaverit nomen Domini, salvus erit.' 'Every man, whatever he be, that calls upon the name of God', that is to say, asketh for salvation by the name of Jesu and by his passion, 'he shall have salvation.' But some men take this courtesy of our Lord and are saved by it and others, trusting in his mercy and courtesy, still live their lives in sin and think to have it when they please, and then they cannot. For they are taken before they are aware, and so they damn themselves.

But now, sayest thou, if this be true, thou amazest me greatly, because of that which I find written in some holy men's sayings. As I understood it some of them say that he who cannot love this blessed name Jesu, nor find nor feel in it ghostly joy and delight with wonderful sweetness in this life on earth shall be a stranger to sovereign joy and ghostly sweetness in the bliss of Heaven and shall never come to it. Truly these words astonish me and make me greatly afraid when I hear them or read them for I hope that many shall be saved by the mercy of God, as thou sayest, by the keeping of his commandments and the true repentance of their evil life in the past, many who never felt ghostly sweetness or inward delight in the name of Jesu or in the love of Jesu. And therefore I marvel me the more, that they say the contrary to thee, as it seemeth.

As to this, I may answer, as it seemeth to me, that their saying is true if it be well understood and is not contrary to what I have said. For this name Jesu signifieth only the English word 'saviour' or 'salvation'. Now every man who liveth in this wretched life is spiritually sick, for there is no man who liveth without sin, which is ghostly sickness, as St John sayeth himself and other holy men

thus, 'Si dixerimus quod peccatum non habemus, ipsi nos seducimus, etc'. 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.' And therefore a man may never feel nor come to the joys of Heaven until he first be made whole of this spiritual sickness. But no man that hath the use of reason may have this ghostly salvation unless he desire it and love it and have delight in it, in as much as he hopeth to obtain it. Now the name of Jesu is naught else but this ghostly salvation. Wherefore it is true to say that no man may be saved unless he love and rejoice in the name of Jesu, for no man may be spiritually whole unless he love and desire spiritual salvation. For just as if a man were ill there would be no earthly thing so dear or necessary to him or so desired by him as bodily health, for though thou wert to give him all the riches and honours of this world and if thou canst not make him whole by that thou dost not please him, just so it is with a man who is spiritually sick and feeleth the pain of ghostly illness. Nothing is so dear, so necessary or so greatly desired by him as his spiritual health, and that is Jesu, without whom all the joys of Heaven cannot please him. And this, I think, is the reason why our Lord, when he assumed manhood for our salvation, would not be called by any name indicating his endless being or his might or his wisdom or his righteousness, but only by that which was the cause of his coming, and that was the salvation of man's soul. Which salvation was most dear and necessary to us, and this name Jesu signifieth this salvation.

By this, then, it seemeth that no man may be saved unless he love Jesu, for no man may be saved unless he love salvation, which love he who liveth and dieth in the lowest degree of charity may possess. Also, I can say it another way, that he who cannot love this blessed name Jesu with ghostly joy nor have pleasure in it with heavenly melody here shall never have nor feel that fullness of sovereign joy which he that can in this life take pleasure in Jesu, by abundance of perfect charity, shall have and feel, and thus may their words be understood. Nevertheless a man shall be saved and have full reward in the sight of God, even if he be in the lowest degree of love in this life, by keeping God's commandments. For Christ says in the Gospel, 'In domo Patris mei mansiones multae sunt', 'In my Father's house there are many mansions'. Some of these mansions be for perfect souls who in this life were quite filled with the love of the Holy Ghost and sang praises to God in contemplation of him with wonderful sweetness and heavenly relish. These souls, because they had the most charity, shall have the highest reward in the joy of Heaven, for these are called God's darlings. Other souls that are imperfect

in this life and are not disposed to the contemplation of God and had not the fullness of charity, as the apostles and martyrs had in the beginning of Holy Church, they shall have the lesser reward in the kingdom of Heaven, for these are God's friends. Thus our Lord calleth chosen souls in Holy Writ, saying, 'Comedite amici, et inebriamini carissimi', 'Eat, O friends, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved', as though our Lord had spoken in this way: 'Ye that are my friends, because ye kept my commandments and set my love before any earthly thing, ye shall be fed with ghostly food of the bread of life. But ye that are my darlings and not only kept my commandments but also of your own free will kept my counsels perfectly and, above that, loved me alone entirely with all the powers of your soul, and burned in my love with all spiritual joy, as did principally the apostles and martyrs and all others who could arrive by grace at the gift of perfection, ye shall be made drunk with the finest wine in my cellar, namely the sovereign joy of love in the bliss of Heaven.' To which may he bring us, who purchased us with his precious passion, Jesu Christ, the Son of the God of Heaven. Amen.

Done into modern English by HILARY FROMBERG.

REVIEWS

JESUS, SON OF MAN: *Studies contributory to a modern portrait.*
By George S. Duncan, D.D. (Nisbet; 16s.)

This book contains, in an expanded form, the Croall lectures delivered in Edinburgh in the summer of 1937. The author is principal of St Mary's College and Regius Professor of Biblical Criticism in the University of Aberdeen. Professor Duncan's best-known earlier work was the justly praised commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Galatians in the Moffatt series. The author is one of those who will not attempt to write a 'Life of Jesus', since, he maintains, 'the materials for a biography do not exist' (p. vii). It will be remembered that Professor Maurice Goguel in his *Vie de Jésus* essayed to father a like sentiment upon Père Lagrange, and drew upon himself a courteous but devastating answer. (Cf. *Revue Biblique*, 1932, p. 598, n. 1). In place, then, of the traditional 'Life' we have a series of chapters that bear a greater resemblance in their subject matter to Père de Grandmaison's *Jésus-Christ* than to Père Lagrange's *L'Évangile de Jésus-Christ* and the well-known 'Lives' by Lebreton and Prat.

Of the three parts that make up the book, by far the best is Part I, 'The Historical Problem', though it may well seem scanty and superficial when compared with Albert Schweitzer's *Quest of the His-*