

THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

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MARSHALL, MORGAN & SCOTT, LTD.
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

1938

CHAPTER FOUR

"THEY BOUND HIM" ... "AND THEY SPAT UPON HIM"

"It is the first condition of our initiation into the secret society of the Friends of God, that we take our place with Him before the judgment seat of the world;

and are with Him
mocked,
patronized,
and misunderstood by the world's religion, the world's culture, the world's power -- all the artificial contrivances that it sets up as standards by which to condemn Reality.

In the very moment in which we declare that it cannot give us that intangible Kingdom to which we aspire,

we alienate its sympathy,
insult its common sense.

It goes up into the judgment seat, prepared to deal wisely with the rebel in us, tolerantly with the fool. Then ignorance, idleness, and cowardice condemn us at their ease, as they once condemned the First and Only Fair." --

JOHN CORDELIER in The Path of the Eternal Wisdom.

I.

JESUS carried the Cross as Isaac carried the wood up the holy mountain. JESUS was bound even as Isaac was bound before he was laid on the altar. **"And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood"** (Genesis 22:9). Not without reason has the Jewish mind in the Mishnah seized upon this incident in the sacrifice of Isaac as of the greatest significance and made it the centre of their solemn annual commemoration of the event that took place on Mount Moriah. The "Akedah" (Binding) prayer, as used by orthodox Jews, is found in the New Year's Day ritual and is as follows: --

"Remember in our favour, O Lord our GOD, the oath which Thou hast sworn to our father Abraham on Mount Moriah; consider the binding of his son Isaac upon the altar when he

suppressed his love in order to do Thy will with a whole heart! Thus may Thy love suppress Thy wrath against us, and through Thy great goodness may the heart of Thine anger be turned away from Thy people, Thy city and Thy heritage . . . Remember to-day in mercy in favour of his seed, the binding of Isaac."

Dr. Max Landberg says: "In the course of time ever greater importance was attributed to the 'Akedah.' The Haggadistic literature is full of allusions to it; the claim to forgiveness on its account was inserted in the daily morning prayer; and a piece called 'Akedah' was added to the liturgy of each of the penitential days among the German Jews."

Was this prayer already in use at the time of CHRIST? Sacrifices were often bound to the horns of the altar: **"God is the LORD, which hath showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar"** (Psalm 68:27), and special rites were observed in such binding of the victims. Whatever may have been the custom in regard to the temple sacrifices may have occurred to some of the disciples when JESUS was being bound in the garden of Gethsemane that the Lamb of GOD was being led to the great sacrifice of which Isaac's deliverance was the type.

Three of the evangelists make special and repeated reference to the binding of JESUS in the garden and before Pilate.

John tells of the earlier event. **"Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, And led him away to Annas first . . . Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest"** (John 18:12-13, 24).

There JESUS was mocked and buffeted and spat upon, and later, **"When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor"** (Matthew 27:1-2).

Mark says: **"And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate"** (Mark 15:1).

First, therefore, our Lord stretched His hands to be bound under the shadow of the olive trees in Gethsemane. The appearance of resistance made by Peter's awkward sword blow was enough for the guard. The very hands who last unfettered task was the healing of Malchus' ear, were fastened, probably behind His back, with cords. then the disciples forsook Him and fled. So ended the first scene in the terrible drama of that night.

It was not a long way that the bound CHRIST was hurried forward; by the same gate through which He had gone with His disciples after the Paschal supper, they took Him to the palace of Annas, the ex-high priest. There the soldiers left Him, unbinding His fetters, and returned to their quarters; for no further reference is made to the Roman guard.

It was then that CHRIST before Annas and Caiaphas experienced all the pent-up envy and hatred of "these bold, licentious, unscrupulous, proud and degenerate sons of Aaron" whose names

were uttered by their contemporaries with whispered curses. Here JESUS received the first blow in His face from one of the servile attendants with the palm of the hand or a rod. After the mock trial, before suborned witnesses, and the prearranged condemnation of death, as we learn from Luke's Gospel, revolting cruelties and injuries were perpetrated on the helpless prisoner by the ruffian guards and servants of Caiaphas. Yet these insults, taunts, and blows which fell upon the Lonely Sufferer, "not defenseless but undefending, not vanquished but uncontending, not helpless but majestic in His voluntary self-submission for the highest purpose of love," exhibited humanity at its lowest depth of sin and curse but also removed both by letting them fall on CHRIST the Son of GOD. All through this agony of His rejection by His own people, their cruel contempt and the spewing out of their hatred, JESUS stood bound.

No hands like these were ever tied with cords or fetters since the world began. The story of the bound hands in the Old Testament Scriptures was vivid to the mind of JESUS. Was it to His persecutors?

Were Simeon's hands willingly offered when Joseph bound him as a hostage in order to see his brother Benjamin once more?

Samson, the strong, was bound again and again but he mocked those that bound him, with new ropes and with withs, and broke them **"tow is broken when it toucheth the fire"** (Judges 16:9); only when he forsook GOD did GOD forsake him.

Jeremiah, tied with cords, was cast into the dungeon of mire, but the Lord delivered him.

He also delivered the three friends of Daniel cast bound into the fiery furnace. All these had their hands bound, but their hands were only human hands. JESUS was like the fourth One in the furnace, a son of the gods, nay, the Son of GOD. Look at the hands of JESUS!

Charles Bell, in his celebrated "Essay on the Human Hand," as proof of design in nature, tells of its wonderful anatomy and its marvellous adaptability to all the creative skill of man as distinguished from the paw of the highest brutes. But who can describe the hands of JESUS -- on which as on every human hand could be read not only perfect individuality but a perfect character. These bound hands, as an infant's, once toiled as carpenter making the yoke easy for sturdy oxen or fashioning the village plough for the husbandmen of Nazareth. These were the hands stretched out to heal the lepers, the lame, the blind. Hands of tenderness and compassion -- hands laid on little children whom He gathered in His arms -- fingers that fondled their cheeks and dark tresses. These were the hands that in the temple court made clay and put it on the eyes of one born blind, awakening the envy and hatred of those who continued spiritually blind in spite of all CHRIST's words and wonders. These were the hands that twisted the cords and lifted them in holy indignation against those who had made His Father's house a house of merchandise and a den of thieves. These were the hands that gave the sop -- the tid-bit of oriental hospitality -- to the traitor Judas at the last supper. With these hands JESUS, **"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God"** (John 13:3), took a towel and girded Himself and washed the disciples' feet. Also the feet of Judas.

These hands were folded in prayer on lonely mountain tops and last of all clasped in the agony of

intercession in the garden. Now they were bound -- soon they would be nailed to the Cross.

These were the hands that broke the bread and lifted the cup of thanksgiving when He said: **"Take eat; this is my body ... Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"** (Matthew 26:26-28).

Now was to be the fulfilment of this last great prophecy. His body soon to be broken and His blood of the new covenant poured out for sinners.

"And they bound Jesus."

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

The military tribune knew, when the mob shouted against Paul, that it was not lawful to scourge a man who was a Roman uncondemned and he **"Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him"** (Acts 22:29). But these men were not afraid.

The writer to the Hebrews had heard this story of the binding of JESUS from eye-witnesses and wrote of the men and women of his day who were led captive for their faith: **"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body"** (Hebrews 13:3). But there was no one that remembered JESUS.

Even Peter was ashamed of His bonds and said, **"And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not"** (Luke 22:57).

Who was it bound the hands of our Saviour, first in the garden and then in the court?

Was it the Roman guard? But they were doing their duty as soldiers under orders. Did Judas add this touch of fear to his dark treachery? Or did Annas suggest its necessity? We read that afterwards **"Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest."** (John 18:24). Was Pilate guiltless in leaving this Prisoner bound and scourging One who had not been tried legally, nor condemned, and in Whom he found no fault?

Ecce Homo! Here is a new Prometheus bound -- One who has brought fire and life and light from Heaven without deceit or cunning -- One who re-creates man and confers on him the riches and most valuable gifts of Heaven.

"What was their tale of some one on a summit
Looking, I think, upon the endless sea, --
One with a fate, and sworn to overcome it,
One who was fettered and who should be free?
Round him a robe, for shaming and for searing:
Ate with empoisonment and stung with fire,
He through it all was to his Lord uprearing,
Desperate patience of a brave desire."

Prometheus, however, was delivered by Hercules from his bonds and torture, after thirty years. CHRIST was bound by Annas and Caiaphas and Judas and you and me -- and is suffering bonds and imprisonments -- being crucified afresh these nineteen centuries.

CHRIST with the bound hands is with us to-day.

"With bound hands," says Robert Keable, "does JESUS of Nazareth walk still the streets of half the world. No little crippled child is born of sin into a world of woe in Hoxton, but JESUS drinks again of a cup that may not pass away -- though in the end the will of the Father, that not one of these little ones should perish, shall be done, and that just because He drinks the cup. No maimed and half-blind soul is made to stumble somewhere off Piccadilly, but a Judas has betrayed his Lord again for a few pieces of silver. No boastful but frightened disciple sits by a fire in Mayfair when JESUS is called in question, and denies Him at the test, but once again that MASTER is wounded more deeply than by Roman or by Jew, in the house of His friends. And even more, nowhere is deliberate sin planned and plotted and performed, but some one has ridden by the Cross on Calvary and stabbed JESUS mockingly to the heart."

II.

"And they spit upon Him" (Matthew 27:30).

They spat not on Him but at Him. The Greek word gives that dreaded added emphasis. A different word is used in all the Gospel passages where JESUS used spittle for healing the sick or the blind: **"And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue . . . And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought"** (Mark 7:3; 8. 23) and **"When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay"** John 9:6).

Spitting is one of the oldest and most universal forms of insult. There are animals that may have taught primitive man the horrible lesson -- the toad, the cat, the viper, the deadly cobra.

One of my colleagues in Arabia laboured for many years as a medical missionary and won the respect and friendship of the Arabs.

One day he was sitting in his clinic when a fanatic Wahhabi from the desert came in, not for treatment, but to spit in his face. With righteous indignation and the approval of all the patients who saw it, he gave the man a well-deserved lesson in muscular Christianity.

There is no deeper insult to an Oriental than this. Instances are found in the Old Testament: **"And the LORD said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again"** (Numbers 12:14). **"Then shall his brothers wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brothers house"** (Deuteronomy 25:9). **"They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in**

my face" (Job 30:10).

To this we must add the prophesy of Isaiah regarding the MESSIAH who, full of grace and truth, bears the reproach and scorn of His people: **"The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting"** (Isaiah 50:4-6).

Did not JESUS Himself refers to this prophecy when He foretold the dreadful tragedy? **"Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again"** (Mark 10:33-34).

Here we see the most degrading insult offered to the majestic person of our Saviour.

"There are terrible things in man," says Stalker; "there are some depths in human nature into which it is scarcely safe to look. It was by the very perfection of CHRIST that the uttermost evil of His enemies was brought out. As He now came into close grips with the enemy He had come to destroy, it exhibited all its ugliness and discharged all its venom. The claw of the dragon was in His flesh and its foul breath in His mouth. We cannot conceive what such insult and dishonour must have been to His sensitive and regal mind.

Who was guilty of this repeated horror? The record seems to show that it was first the Jewish priests and their servants and afterwards the soldiers of the guard: **"Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands . . . And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head"** (Matthew 26:67; 27:30).

Aryans no less than Semites spat out their fury and contempt in the holy face of JESUS, Europe as well as Asia, **"that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God"** (Romans 3:19). Yet it was done first by His own, by those who knew Him best and knew the significance of the insult from their own Scriptures.

What a revelation it was of how sin and unbelief degrade human judgment and debase character. To spit is to show spite. The poison of their hate came from their own darkened hearts. The scene that is indescribable is drawn in few words; like in some of Rembrandt's pictures the background is dark as night -- the blackness of the human heart, its desperate wickedness, its cowardly hatred of the good and the pure.

They could not spit on His face until they had bound Him and blindfolded Him.

So has it ever been.

History affords many examples of those who spat in the face of JESUS or in the face of His disciples. Not cruelty only, but insult and contempt are found on every page of the red book of

the martyrs.

Paul felt it when he wrote, "**Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day**" (I Corinthians 4:13). While Bernard of Clairvaux was singing:

"JESUS, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast,"

Others were making men blaspheme the name of CHRIST by the cruelties of the Inquisition and the Crusades.

How many apostates, atheists and infidels have spewed out hatred and scorn against the Nazarene. there is no enmity like that of an apostate, from the days of Judas.

Nero was cruel in shedding the blood of Christians, but he showed nothing like the intensity of rage displayed against the followers of JESUS by the apostate Julian, who once professed CHRIST and then renounced Him.

Gibbon, who had in turn been a member of the Protestant and the Roman Catholic Church and then in turn forsaken them, is another illustration.

Nietzsche fell so low that he speaks of CHRIST in terms that can only be described as spitting: "The Christian concept of GOD, as deity of the sick, GOD as spider -- GOD as SPIRIT is one of the most corrupt concepts of GOD that has ever been attained on earth. Maybe it represents the low-water mark in the evolutionary ebb of the godlike type. GOD degenerated into a contradiction of life instead of being its transfiguration and eternal yea. I call Christianity the one great curse, the one enormous and innermost perversion, the one great instinct of revenge, for which no means are too venomous, too underhand, too underground and too petty -- I call it the one immortal blemish of mankind." Could human hate go farther?

"Shame tears my soul, my body many a wound;
Sharp nails pierce this, but sharper, that confound,
Reproaches which are free, while I am bound.
Was ever grief like mine?"

But we notice also in the scene of the insulted CHRIST the utter impotence of such Satanic malice and the triumphant self-consciousness of the Divine Saviour, His certainty of victory. "**Blessed are ye,**" said He (did He not feel it too?), "**if men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.**"

Ecce Homo! He suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should walk in His footsteps. Ye have not resisted unto blood striving against sin. Think of Him who when He was reviled, reviled not again.

"Quis patitur?

Christus Verbum
Sapientia Patris
Quid patitur?
Spinas, verberas
Sputa, crucem.
Sic patiente Deo
Tu quoque disce pater," *

* "Who is it suffers? CHRIST the Word, the Wisdom of the Father. What does He suffer? -- the thorns, the scourge, the spittle and the Cross. Since GOD so suffers learn thou too to suffer."

~ end of chapter 4 ~
