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ARTICLE VI.

"THE GOSPEL OF PAUL."

BY PROFESSOR FRANK HUGH FOSTER, D. D.

UNDER the title given above, the Rev. C. C. Everett, D. D., Professor of Theology in Harvard University, has recently published a book upon the atonement of Christ. The plan of the work is best given in his own words. "It has seemed to me that one great obstacle which will stand in the way of the acceptance of the view of Paul's teaching here presented will arise from the association of Paul's form of speech with ideas which have long prevailed in the church, especially with the notion that Christ in his death bore vicariously the penalty of the world's sin. I have, accordingly, judged it best, before presenting my own view, to attempt to remove these associations. The substitutionary view has rested partly upon a theory of ancient sacrifice which I believe to be erroneous, and which indeed is fast tending to become obsolete. For this reason I have presented in the first chapter some consideration of the nature of sacrifice. The substitutionary view has rested also, to a large degree, upon the assumed authority of the ancient church. It therefore seemed best to show in the next chapter that the history of the doctrine does not furnish a presumption of its Pauline origin, but tends to make this improbable. After this, in the third chapter, it is attempted to show, by a few illustrations, that this doctrine, in fact, cannot be reconciled with Paul's language. After this preparation, what I conceive to be the true interpretation of Paul's teaching is stated and defended. This is followed by a brief glance at the relation of this view of Paul's theory of

the atonement to the rest of his teaching. It will be found to throw much light upon this, especially upon his doctrine of election."

The point of view from which the writer comes to his task will be seen best by the closing paragraphs of the book, in which it appears that he regards the teaching of our Lord to be summarized by such passages as the parable of the Prodigal Son, in which "the prodigal was received by a waiting love which demanded no vicarious suffering." The depravity of human nature and the deity of Jesus Christ are also doctrines which Dr. Everett does not accept, and which he thinks Paul did not receive. His standpoint is therefore that of Unitarianism, which sees no necessity of atonement or of incarnation. He must therefore derive the explanation of the fact that Paul does hold some sort of an atonement from Paul's personality and situation, rather than from his possession by revelation of the eternal truth of God.

The general result of the examination of the sacrifices of the heathen nations, with which the first chapter begins, is that they all partook of the nature of gifts and never of that of substitutionary victims. The argument is of very little value. Its only force can be derived from the underlying idea that the sacrifices of the Hebrews arose in the same way as those of the heathen, that is, were purely natural, in distinction from supernatural, in their origin. But the Hebrew religion claims to be a revealed religion. Even if it were not, what great force has the conception of sacrifice held by polytheistic and pantheistic peoples in determining the conception entertained by a monotheistic people? Dr. Everett acknowledges this point, and frankly says, "If, however, we find that this [substitution] was not the general meaning of the rite, it does not follow that it may not have been its significance among the Hebrews." Coming therefore to consider specially the Hebrew sacrifices, he finds Psalm 1. teaching that the sacrifices were gifts. Other passages are considered, and other

sacrifices found to be gifts. There is nothing new here, for everybody has known that there were thank-offerings in the Hebrew system.

The "Day of Atonement" seems to stand in the way of this argument, which already begins to identify the Hebrew and heathen sacrifices in nature, and our author seeks therefore to remove the obstacle. The scapegoat is the one upon which the sins are laid, and they are carried away by him, not expiated by a substituted death. Dr. Everett seems to forget that as the other goat was a "sin offering," the hands of the priest must also be laid upon his head according to Lev. iv. 4; cf. Lev. v. 1, 5, 6. The two goats do, after all, seem to subserve the same end in different ways. The view thus sought to be sustained from the Old Testament is further sustained by quotations from the early fathers, particularly the writer to Diognetus. But, as Dr. Everett does not seem properly to consider, these writers, particularly Pseudo-Barnabas, were so hostile to the Jews as to be unable to give any true interpretation to the Old Testament, almost denying its authority and inspiration. The early references to the "blood" of Christ and to his "death," so general, though so vague, point in another direction.

The result of the second chapter is similar. Modern doctrines of the atonement begin at a late date, with the person of Anselm, and have never sought to ascertain the true meaning of Paul, but have been based upon merely theoretical considerations. And in our own day, this doctrine which has flourished less than half of the life of the church, is losing its power and passing away. We miss here any true conception of the doctrinal progress of the church through the ages, or of the problem sought to be solved by doctrinal thinking. All the Christian doctrines have been developed by slow processes, and in a series which has left some of them unelaborated even at this distant date. The doctrine of justification by faith was not formulated till Luther, centuries after Anselm worked

upon the doctrine of the atonement; and Unitarians, and Liberals generally, pay little regard to it to-day. But the evangelical church holds it as the very truth of God. It was a legitimate process for Anselm to take the general idea of Paul, that Christ was the propitiation for our sins, an idea not fully explained by Paul, and seek, as he did, its eternal foundation in the nature of God and of things. That is the perennial problem of theology. If he succeeded only partially, he met with the same fate here as many others have met; for it is only by the successive study of generations that great vital truths have been fully given to the world. Even religious liberty is a principle which met only with gradual development. Nor is Dr. Everett always successful in interpreting his authors. He does not state the once prevailing theory of ransom from the devil correctly. The devil found that he could not keep Christ in his power because of the divine nature of Christ, which he had not understood. He eviscerates even Anselm's thought, for he does not mention the main fact, that sin created, according to Anselm, an infinite debt of honor which must be repaid. Neither does he understand Grotius, who did not teach that God might accept anything he chose in place of the full penalty, but that he accepted something, in itself sufficient, and hence a satisfaction, which he might have refused, since it was not exactly the payment demanded. The antithesis which he ascribes to Grotius: "a part of the debt paid, the rest forgiven," is also completely false. The death of Christ, according to Grotius, effected the same ends, in the nature of things, that the punishment of the sinner would have effected, so far as the government of God was concerned. He manifests complete ignorance also of the thought of the New England writers, to whom the attraction of the Grotian theory was not that it maintained "the dignity and authority of the law instead of guarding the honor of a personal ruler," but that it met a certain definite theological issue in New England, viz., that

upon the basis of the old theory, the undoubtedly scriptural doctrine of a universal atonement led directly to Universalism. It is very doubtful to the writer if Dr. Everett even understands the Socinians. Socinus, at least, has not a scintilla of the theory which he ascribes to them, that "the death of Christ was designed to manifest the love of God, and thus to move the hearts of men to an answering love"; but puts the work of Christ in his "announcing to us the way of eternal salvation," "confirming" the same, "exhibiting" it unto us by his life which we are to imitate, "exhibiting" it also by his resurrection, and finally bestowing upon us the promised salvation. Thus his "*De Jesu Christo Salvatore.*" The Racovian Catechism, as I now remember it, does not go farther. And, finally, he makes the curious mistake of ascribing to Dr. Stevens as "peculiar" to him, an idea which is the root of the whole New England theory, that by the sufferings of Christ "an adequate revelation" is made of God's righteousness against sin. Surely it requires more sympathy, and the studious labor of a more loving spirit than Dr. Everett possesses to gain even a simple intellectual understanding of the great orthodox writers of the church. And so he comes out with the result that the history of the church lends no support to the satisfaction theory of the atonement, for a different view has been held most of the time, Anselm was a "queer" thinker, and his "conceit" was speculative and not exegetical in its origin, and so a clear field is left for new efforts.

The third chapter is intended to demolish the scriptural character of the traditional theory. The majority of modern exegetical scholars have found this view supported in the Scriptures. But "all that can be said is that these students have accepted the results which had been reached by an uncritical age. No other explanation of the Pauline phraseology suggested itself; they therefore undertook to interpret the New Testament as nearly as possible in accordance with the received doctrine of the church. This they have done in good

faith and with much ingenuity. So far as their results are concerned, they rest upon nothing which does not admit of a test. Their basis is clearly set forth, and we can determine for ourselves what confidence we may place in it. In point of fact, the result is heterogeneous. There is some forcing of the doctrine, and some forcing of the language of the New Testament. The outcome is inharmonious and self-contradictory." Paul's theology is, in fact, a "difficult region" abounding in "jungles" and "chasms" and "opposing cliffs." "All that I claim is that in my wanderings I have happened upon a trail by which advance is so pleasant and easy that I cannot help believing it to be the original one that was blazed by Paul himself." This trail starts in at the text Gal. iii. 13, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree." Taking the clue furnished by the ceremonial law with its distinctions between things clean and unclean, things ceremonially defiled, etc., he calls attention to the fact that crucified persons "were in the eyes of the law impure, and if they remained in this position over night, the land would suffer from the presence of these impure objects. They were 'cursed before God.'" Applying this, now, to Christ's death, Dr. Everett maintains that "it was because he was crucified that he was accursed. We here reach the centre of Paul's thought and the essential thing in his argument. . . . He [Christ] was not crucified because he was accursed." The next original blaze of the Apostle is found in the text Gal. ii. 19, 20, "For I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God. I have been crucified with Christ." In this text Dr. Everett sees the statement that the annulling of the law was brought about by the law itself, but as to how this was effected, the orthodox writers have, according to him, no hint to give us. Of Meyer's explanation, "The curse of the law is likewise fulfilled, so that, in virtue of his ethical fellowship in the death of Jesus, he knows himself to be $\delta\lambda\alpha$

νόμου, and consequently at the same time dead to the law," he says, "What is meant in this passage by the words 'ethical fellowship,' . . . is, I confess, to me wholly incomprehensible." We supposed that it was one of the commonplaces of Christian thought that a Christian, because he surrenders himself utterly to Jesus as Lord, is like him, has the same purposes, will do the same things, and so is in "ethical fellowship." Now, when Jesus suffers for our sins, that suffering is ours, because it takes the place of what we would have suffered, had we not united ourselves with Jesus, and hence, in a figurative sense, we partake in his death, and in it suffer through the law. And now, because we are in fellowship with him, and so have our sins forgiven, and are not subject to the condemnation of the law, we are in no relations to it as law, and so are dead to it. What is there incomprehensible about that? "Another thing that is incomprehensible," continues Professor Everett, "is the relation between the divine anger, on the one side, and the law which is silenced when its penalty is inflicted, on the other. The former is something real and spiritual; the latter is something technical and formal." The law of God something "technical and formal"! But we shall see the origin of this curious idea when we come to understand what our author means by the law in this book. Still another text (Heb. ix. 13, 14) affords "a fine opportunity for the writer to the Hebrews to introduce the idea which the church has in these later centuries upheld, if it had only been in his mind"; but he is in fact silent upon the whole thing!

Up to this point Dr. Everett has not propounded his own solution to the problem. With fine rhetoric art, he has been only whetting our curiosity. But in the next, the fourth chapter, he gives his own theory in full. In condensed form it is as follows. Every one crucified became, according to the ceremonial law of the Jewish people, accursed. Christ was seized by the violence of the rulers and put to this death. He

thereby became accursed, was utterly separated from the people of Israel, and every one who by believing in him became associated with him, participated also in his defilement, became like him "legally impure, and was thus an outcast from the Jewish church." "With the law, therefore, the Christian had simply nothing further to do; neither had the law anything further to do with him. . . . He was like one who has been excommunicated from the Catholic Church, who therefore stands outside of it. Neither its fasts nor its feasts, neither its mass nor its confessional, have any further relation to him." Thus the law was dead to him, utterly abrogated; and thus still further—a result quite unexpected but real—"old scores were wiped out, and old offences lost their condemnation. The penalties of the law were no longer dreaded, for the law that had imposed them had ceased to be," or the sins *committed under the old law* were forgiven. Thus Christ did not by his atonement secure the forgiveness of *mankind*. "*It was not sin in general that was redeemed, but transgressions of the law of Moses!*"

We may pause at this point to remark that the whole theory rests upon so glaring a misunderstanding of Paul's characteristic word "law," that one is at a loss to explain how the simplest reader of the New Testament, to say nothing of a University professor, could possibly fall into it. The "law" of the Epistle to the Romans is, it is true, the Mosaic law, but it is not this law upon its ceremonial side, but upon its moral side, its universal side, the "work" of which is written in the hearts of such as have not its letter. The sins which Christ forgives are not ceremonial transgressions, but ruptures of the fundamental and universal obligation affirmed in the conscience of every man and only formulated by the "law," not created by it. It is the doctrine of this Epistle, as of all the rest of the New Testament, that man is ruined, lost in sin, under the wrath of God, and that in this respect there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. All need the forgiv-

ing mercy of God, for all Christ died, and every man who is saved at all, will be saved in the one way, by faith in Christ, who will do for all precisely the same work, and one which none can do for himself, namely the propitiation of God, so that forgiveness is possible. This is the first, the simplest, the most profound, and the last, impression which the student of the New Testament receives from the study of every and any considerable portion of it. These are the great realities of the Scriptures and the great realities of Christian experience. In their light the theory of Professor Everett becomes as impossible as it is trivial.

The theory has, up to the point to which we have advanced in our exposition, provided only for Jews. How does it provide for the salvation of the Gentiles? To this there is no clear answer given, undoubtedly because our author sees no difficulty in the case. There had been no hope for the Gentile before; but now that the law is abrogated, "the promise which had been wrapped up in it" is displayed, the universal intent of God is seen, and the Gentile hopes. Yes, but how is he forgiven? To this question there is no answer (though Dr. Everett quotes at length the passage, Eph. ii. 11-20, in which occur the words which should have opened his eyes, "reconcile them *both* [Jews and Gentiles] in *one body* unto God through the *cross*"), for he does not see any difficulty in the matter. The forgiveness of sins is a matter of perfect ease, and needs no explanation. Not so says the universal testimony of Bible and church alike!

The objections to this theory are so many and so strong that one is at a loss which to select in the brief treatment which the matter can here receive. How utterly inadequate it is to fill out the meaning of the long and elevated discussion of the priesthood of Christ presented in the Epistle to the Hebrews! Dr. Everett feels this difficulty. He remarks that on Calvary "there was no priest and no altar." The sacrificial language has a figurative sense when applied to the

death of Christ and is used "very loosely." Perhaps the astonishing limitations put upon the work and person of Christ, the utter failure to give him that central place in man's salvation which he occupies in the consciousness of the universal church, more impresses the reader than any other peculiarity of the theory. There was a portion of the early church, Dr. Everett thinks, who had no doctrine of the atonement, and hence it does not appear in the Epistle of James ("whatever Jewish Christian was the author of this epistle"), "simply because *for James and his followers there was no such atoning death,*" since, remaining loyal to the law, they were not set free from it, which was the substance of the atonement to Paul! "The idea of remission of sins by the blood of Christ was not held before, or outside of, the Pauline teaching." Hence it does not really belong among the words of institution of the Lord's Supper (Matt. xxvi. 27, 28). But is it not implied in Mark x. 45, and does not this passage furnish the example of a previous use of the same idea by Jesus, which Dr. Everett desiderates, and hence is it not evidently no new thing when it appears in the solemn words at the passover table? But not only does Dr. Everett think that the doctrine of the atonement belongs exclusively to Paul among biblical writers, but, he says, even in his general scheme it fills but "a small place."

The entire book is dependent upon the thoroughly naturalistic view which the author has of the Scripture. Paul was a man whose ideas were determined by his environment, and must not be assumed to be in accord with our moral sense; whose philosophy of history is of no more importance than that of any one else; whose enthusiasm for Christ leads him to exaggerate the absolute helplessness of man (a tardy recognition of the fact that the Everett theory does not give Christ the same place that Paul did); who was sometimes not quite sure that he was not, after all, deluded; and who was a man of moods and spake out of "varying moods." The Gospels' conception of the resurrection of Christ was "crude." Thus

the marvelous doctrine which he passes in review is, for our author, but a specimen of mere human thinking, and he studied it as any other specimen of the ingenuity of men might be studied. He cannot, therefore, complain if his own production excite irresistibly in the mind of the critical reader certain reflections upon himself as a phenomenon in the Christian world. His difficulties and perplexities, considered in this light, are full of interest. He seems, from the beginning of his book, completely in the dark as to certain very fundamental and simple Christian ideas. "In the New Testament the death of Christ is *at times* spoken of as if it *could* be regarded *in some sense* a sacrifice by which the believer is relieved from the condemnation of his sin." Strange, is it not! "The hold which the view [of sacrificial substitution] has taken of the Christian world" is another mystery. "Ethical fellowship with Christ" is, as we have seen above, an "incomprehensible" thing with him. And the passage (Rom. viii. 9-11) which speaks of life by the Spirit of the indwelling Christ, provokes the expression of puzzlement: "If we could fully understand this passage we should thoroughly comprehend the positive doctrine of Paul," which for himself he cannot. But the origin of these difficulties, when considered in the light of the whole book, is perfectly plain. Professor Everett does not approach the study of Christian doctrine from the Christian standpoint. He is hopelessly astray as to the entire significance of Christianity. His book has no connection with the Christianity of the church or the Bible. He is a Unitarian and a Humanitarian. He serves to illustrate mournfully how remote from all real Christian fellowship the school of thinkers to which he belongs is and must remain. The book is a pitiable milestone upon the road by which Unitarianism has departed from the precious fellowship of believers. Scientific value, it has none.