

outside the range of my present enquiry. That enquiry, as far as this subject is concerned, will best end by recalling the fact that the Chaldæan legend is not without parallels in the cosmogony and mythology of other nations, and presents many striking resemblances to the revolt of Ahriman and his angels against Ormuzd, which formed part of the Zoroastrian faith, and the revolt of the Titans against Zeus as related by Hesiod (*Theogon.* 729). The Mahometan account of the rebellion of Eblis¹ as given in the Koran (*Sur.* xxxviii.), representing, as that book does, the confluence of decayed faiths, may have flowed from the traditions either of a corrupt Judaism or a corrupt Christianity.

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THE HISTORICAL CHRIST OF ST. PAUL.

I. THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS (*Continued.*)

ROMANS iii. 25 has a theological significance with which we have here no concern; it constitutes one of the Scriptural proofs of what is called the doctrine of Atonement. The doctrine of Atonement, as is well known, is differently interpreted by different schools; and we have here nothing to do with any of them: we are in search of simple matters of fact. We are trying to discover what was the historical belief of the primitive Church regarding the person of the Christian Founder; and we ignore all questions and statements which do not bear upon this subject. It frequently

¹ The Koran legend, following one of the Rabbinic traditions, gives an account of the fall of Eblis which differs, on the one hand, from the popular mediæval theory, and on the other, from the story of the loves of the Angels as related in the Book of Enoch. Allah created man, and bade the angels do homage to him. All did so but Eblis, who was puffed up with pride, and deemed himself, made out of fire, nobler than man who was made of clay. And so he was banished from heaven, and allowed to roam on earth, seducing all but the true servants of God.

happens, however, that a passage which is mainly designed to teach theology implies a historical belief which it does not express; and in such cases it becomes our duty to extract the historical element from its theological environment. The passage before us is a very striking instance of this. In so far as it is theological, it may be liable to different interpretations; but, on any interpretation which may be given, it assumes a certain historical belief regarding the person of Jesus, a belief which can admit of only one interpretation, and whose significance must be appreciated by all schools.

St. Paul here declares that the Founder of Christianity was set forth as the propitiation for the sins of humanity. The full force of the expression is, "set forth *publicly*." It indicates that the thing was not done in a corner, that it was a matter of historical notoriety. It is not, however, to the fact, nor yet to the publicity of the fact, of Christ's crucifixion, that our attention is here invited. There is, indeed, nothing yet said as to the mode of Christ's death; the phrase "propitiation in his blood" simply implies that it was violent. The point of the passage which invites our attention is the word "propitiation." We do not inquire into its theological meaning in general, or its meaning here in particular; we look rather at the association than at the import of the word. Whatever theological meaning may or may not be attached to it in the Verse before us, it is clearly intended to suggest the idea of sinlessness. It implies the offering up of something for the sins of the people. It was essential in the Jewish worship that the offerings for sin should themselves be unblemished. It is true the Jewish worship only succeeded in reaching to a *physical* unblemishedness; but it was just for this reason that it could not purify in things pertaining to the conscience; the offering of a physical purity could only make the worshipper physically pure, or, in other words, exempt from

legal penalty. It was on this account that the Jewish sacrifices had to be repeated year by year; they were not really propitiations for sin, but only for certain sins, or overt acts of evil. But Paul here declares that the death of the Christian Founder was a propitiation in the absolute sense; a propitiation which took place at a definite historical period of the past, and which had no need to be repeated. The inference is inevitable; he must have held the person of the Founder to have been absolutely sinless. The historical association of the passage is its powerful suggestion of the impression which Christ's moral character must have made upon his contemporaries.

Now it is here incumbent on us to ask whether such an impression could have been created on the principle of the mythical theory; in other words, by clothing with apparent reality a poetic imagination of the mind. That question implies another—whether the mind of St. Paul was likely by nature to have entertained such a poetic imagination. We know that the Apostle had in him the elements of two civilizations, a Judaic and a Gentile culture; if the poetic imagination of a historically sinless being had arisen within him, it must have been generated by one or other of these. Can it be referred to either of them? Let us see. Was it likely to arise from Judaism? Is it not manifest that in the Jewish soil such a plant could never have grown? The notion of a historically sinless being¹ was directly contrary to the Judaic spirit; it ran in the face of the national religion. The Jew had an altogether appalling sense of the horror of sin. The leading principle of his creed was the fact that the world was under law, which was itself a proof that the world was under sin. There was none righteous, no not one; all the imaginations of man's heart were only evil continually. Who could abide in God's

¹ The prophetic conception of a sinless Servant of God predicts an *interrupted* order of history. See Section on 1 Cor. xi. 23.

tabernacle? who could stand on his holy hill? In his sight there was no man living that could be justified. The ideal of the Jewish mind was that of a man walking humbly with his God, conscious that he was unable to direct himself and looking ever to the commands of the Lawgiver. Such a religion could have afforded no scope to the imagination for the conception of a sinless Christ, and would have been adverse to it wheresoever it had been conceived. It would have regarded as impiety any attempt to propagate the belief that a son of Adam could rise into the position of a sinless superiority to law; it would have stigmatized as sacrilege any effort to convince the world that a human soul could ever come to act without reference to the outward commandment. If Paul derived any mythical leaning towards the belief in a sinless Christ, that leaning was certainly not derived from the portion of his life which fell under the dominion of Judaic culture; it must have come from another source.

We have seen that there was another possible source; St. Paul had in him the element of the Gentile as well as of the Jew; and we know that ultimately the Gentile element prevailed in his heart over that of the Jew. Could he, then, have received, from this source, the poetic conception of a sinless being, which the vividness of his fancy made real. There was nothing, indeed, in the Gentile religious tendency which would have made it impiety in Paul to have formed such an idea; the Gentile religious tendency was the opposite extreme from the Jewish. Yet, in this opposite extreme, the Gentile interposed to the natural conception of a sinless Christ an even greater barrier than the Jew. He would not have deemed it impiety to believe in the possibility of a sinless man. But why? Because he attached no importance to sinlessness at all. He would have deemed it great impiety to have doubted the physical strength of the immortals; physical strength was the ideal of his aspir-

ation : but he did not himself hesitate to attribute to the immortals the most ignoble vices. He had no horror of sin as a moral principle. If St. Paul had possessed nothing but a Gentile consciousness, and had he designed to create a Christ out of his own imagination, the Christ his imagination would have produced would have been not only different from, but the very converse of, the one he has depicted. He would have been a man whose life revealed the force of the Divine, not by his power of self-surrender, but by his power of self-aggrandisement ; not by pouring out his own blood, but by shedding the blood of his enemies. The fact that the Gentile Apostle has allowed his thoughts to centre on the conception of an ideal whose prominent characteristic is its sinlessness is alone a proof that there must have been something in the historical atmosphere that surrounded him which rendered it necessary for him to transcend his spontaneous imaginings. He has presented to the world a Christ who is not the natural outgrowth either of the past history of Judaism or of the past history of heathendom ; the legitimate conclusion seems to be that he has derived the conception from some apparently exceptional elements in the life of his own time.

In *Romans* iv. 25 St. Paul puts together as equally historical the fact of Christ's death and the fact of his resurrection : " Who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification." The juxtaposition of these facts in the same historical connection is worthy of attention if only because the New Testament sometimes employs both the word " death " and the word " resurrection " in a spiritual, and therefore in an unhistorical, sense. When Paul elsewhere says that the bad heart is dead in trespasses and sin, and that the good heart is dead and hid with Christ, he is using the word " death " unhistorically ; when the fourth Gospel says that the hour has already come when they that

are in the grave shall hear the Divine Voice and live, it is speaking of resurrection unhistorically. In the passage before us the ideas of death and resurrection must be interpreted in a common spirit; we cannot make the one historical and the other metaphorical. The deliverance for our offences of which St. Paul speaks is beyond all question a physical or bodily death; and, to preserve the congruity of thought, it is necessary to hold that the raising for our justification is in his mind a physical or bodily resurrection. It is also worth observing that, in the mind of Paul, the death and resurrection of the Christian Founder are not only historical facts, but historical facts that have become common-places. Our reason for this statement is that Paul tries to build a theory upon them. No man begins to build theories, or arguments, upon any fact which is not, to his mind, an absolute certainty. The earliest histories are simply chronicles; it is only when the chronicles have become matters of public notoriety that men begin to theorize on the laws which have produced, and on the effects which have followed, the incidents they record. Paul says that the Founder was delivered for our offences; in other words, he affirms that his death was an expiation for the sins of men; and he declares that his resurrection was intended to shew that his expiation had been accepted: "Was raised again for our justification." With these theological statements we have here no concern. The important point is that they *are* theological statements. When a writer comes to build theories upon certain historical incidents, it proves that in the mind of that writer the incidents are beyond all doubt historical; that the facts have passed beyond the region of discussion; and that the only question remaining is: To what conclusion do they point? The theological doctrines which St. Paul is here promulgating are in themselves mysterious enough; and nothing could justify the Apostle's promulgation of them, if, in his mind, there were the

slightest doubt of the facts on which he professes to base them. These facts are Christ's death and resurrection. If to the readers of St. Paul the belief that the Founder of Christianity had died and risen again were anything less than a commonplace of Christian faith, it would have been folly on the part of the Apostle to have grounded upon these facts a doctrine infinitely more mysterious, because infinitely more removed from the possibility of historical verification. The incidental manner in which he introduces these facts, taken in connection with the mysterious theological structure he is prepared to build on them, constitutes a standing proof not only that he himself had accepted them as commonplaces, but that he knew he was speaking to a community who would receive them in the same spirit.

In *Romans* v. 6 we have a repetition of the main point contained in the previous passage, but with an important addition. In the passage last considered we find Paul averring that the Founder of Christianity was delivered up to death as an expiation for the sins of the world; in the Verse before us he adds the historical statement that in this sacrificial act the Founder of Christianity was not a passive victim but an active agent: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." The Christ is here represented not so much as a being who is offered up sacrificially as a being who offers *Himself* up sacrificially. For the first time in the document we are considering, we have the suggestion of a voluntary element in the sacrifice of the Christian Founder; and therefore, for the first time, we have a glimpse into the human heart of that Founder. We have seen Him hitherto in his regal aspect, as the son of David; or in his divine aspect, as the Son of God; or in his official aspect, as the Sacrifice for human sin: we are here called to contemplate Him in the essential aspect of a Son of Man, whose sympathies are

stirred by the perception of human weakness, and whose energies are awakened by the determinate resolve to save. Whatever of a theological character may lie in the words before us, there is at the root of them a historical conviction. They express the Apostle's assurance that the historical life of Him whom he called the Son of God was a life animated and inspired by a purpose—the purpose of death; that the sacrifice to which He was subjected was not in the view of the Founder the martyrdom of a victim, but the voluntary self-surrender of a soul to its legitimate mission; and that the legitimate mission of that soul was recognized by itself to be the accomplishment, by its own sacrifice, of the salvation of mankind.

Now when we turn to the actual portraiture which our recognized Gospels present of the Founder of Christianity, we are struck by a view of the subject which is not only similar, but precisely identical; we do not mention this with the design to establish a harmony; but, as will be seen, for a very different purpose. There can be no question at all that the uniform representation of our recognized Christ is that of a being whose life is animated by the mission of death. Never for a moment do the Gospels even hint at the suggestion that the sacrifice of the Son of Man was an accident. The shadow of the Cross is never absent from Him; He is ever running forward to meet it. He has a baptism to be baptized with, and He is straitened until its accomplishment. Even his moment of transfiguration-glory cannot shut out the vision of the decease to be accomplished at Jerusalem. The sword that is to pierce the heart of the Virgin glitters even in the cradle of the child Jesus. All this is patent on the surface of the narrative, and is not denied by negative critics; what they say is that the Gospels have tried to make Christ's death voluntary in order to make the best of unheroic circumstances. They allege that in the fourth and

latest Gospel, where the idea of Christ's divine personality attains its full development, the voluntary nature of his sufferings is most uncompromisingly asserted; demonstrating the fact that the reaction from the Jewish repugnance to death towards the glorification of death gains ground as Judaism recedes in the distance. It is undeniable, indeed, that in the Gospel of John the fact of Christ's voluntary suffering is expressed in the broadest terms. He lays down his life for the sheep; no man taketh his life from Him; He has power to lay it down, and He has power to take it again. The world can only be fed by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man; his body is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. Such, again and again reiterated in various forms and metaphors, is the utterance of the Christ in the fourth Gospel; and it certainly marks a sharp contrast to the Judaic repugnance to death. Is, then, the full development of this picture merely the mythical result of the fact that Judaism had passed away, that the armies of Titus had destroyed its walls, that the power of Paganism had superseded its temple and its worship? The answer to that question depends on another. The negative critics have assigned to our Gospels a very late origin, so late as to afford room for a mythical development. The question is, Can we find this thought of our Gospels in any document which is undoubtedly early? If we can, we shall not be able to refer the thought to the fading of Judaism from the memories of men.

Now here is a document which effectually and decidedly answers that question. In a manuscript indubitably belonging to the Apostolic age, written while Jerusalem was standing and while her worship was intact, and betraying in every page the influence of the first Christian atmosphere, we find a view of Christ's work and mission which in every respect conforms to that of the most advanced of our

historical narratives. It is here declared, not merely that his death was sacrificial, but that it was a voluntary sacrifice; that it was as much a personal and active work of the Master as any incident of his ministry; and that it was prompted by the motive of pity for the wickedness and the helplessness of mankind. All this is clearly suggested and implied in the words: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." The force of the preposition "for" is here equivalent to "for the benefit of"; it frequently means "instead of;" and, when used in this latter sense, it points to the belief in a vicarious sacrifice; but, in the passage before us, it is employed to denote a work done with the motive of bringing advantage to another. Paul on this occasion has unmistakably in his view the idea that the Founder of Christianity was driven on to the hour of death by the strength of his own love, was impelled to suffer by the force of his own sympathy with the moral need and moral weakness which He beheld in the souls of his brethren. He advances this conception of the Master, not as a new thing, but as a fact that was well known. The Vatican MS. gives a reading which virtually amounts to this. It is a mere truism to say that Christ died for the ungodly; the word we translate "yet" is here rendered "at least," that is, "even at the lowest computation." We cannot press this reading of the Vatican MS. as it is unsupported by other authorities; but we can arrive at the same conclusion even from our Authorized Version. The point in the passage before us which chiefly reveals the fact that Paul held himself to be expressing a Christian truism, is not the translation of any single word, but the general impression produced by the indefinite reference to the benefit of Christ's death. It is not a natural assertion to say that the death of a holy being has brought advantage to an unholy world; from the human side it is the reverse of natural: and, if stated for

the first time, it would demand explanation. It receives here no explanation; the statement is made in the most general terms, as if the mere fact of its being stated would suffice to recall to the mind its individual details. The conclusion is obvious and irresistible. St. Paul was not imagining a historical fact; he was appealing to something which by the Christian community was universally believed to be historical. He was speaking in general terms, simply because he was speaking of matters well known, whose truth would at once be endorsed by the consciousness of his hearers. His statement, that Christ's death was prompted by a voluntary motive, is made in such a way as to enforce the conviction that it was a re-statement of a generally received doctrine with which the Christian atmosphere of his day had been already impregnated.

Romans v. 19: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." In these words we have another glimpse into the inner life of the Christian Founder as it appeared to the eye of St. Paul. Avoiding all reference to the theological part of the statement, the historical point on which our attention fastens is the fact of Christ's obedience; or, in other words, the fact that, in the performance of his earthly work, He believed Himself to be fulfilling a law. What renders this statement remarkable is its seeming divergence from the point considered in the previous passage. We there saw that the Christ of St. Paul felt his work to be voluntary; here, in the very same Chapter, and at the interval of only a few Verses, we are told that He felt his work to be an act of submission. Of course, even from the metaphysical side, there is no contradiction in these views. A man may be conscious that his life is the fulfilment of a law, and may at the same time be conscious of a delight experienced in its fulfilment; the fact that we act

from love does not hide from us that we are performing a duty. The union of these elements, however, is not likely to have arisen mythically; the thought is too subtle to be the spontaneous product of a primitive imagination: and the natural inference is that it was suggested by an actual historical experience. In our authorized portrait of the Master a historical experience is presented to us which singularly combines the Pauline elements. We have seen that, throughout the four Gospels, the fact is again and again thrust upon us, that the sacrifice of the Son of Man is not accidental, nor yet in the last result calamitous; but that it is something foreseen to be advantageous to mankind, and, as such, sought after by Him who was to bear it. Yet throughout these same Gospels there is continually superadded to the voluntary element in Christ's death, that other element of necessity which seems at first view to be its antagonist. The Son of Man is constantly impressed with the belief that his life-work is a *mission*; that, however freely He accepts it, He has not Himself been its sole originator; that He is fulfilling a plan which has been mapped out for Him, and obeying the behests of a Divine Father's will. In the obedience to that will He manifests a sense of perfect freedom, nay, experiences a thrill of deepest joy; not the less, however, is his work an act of obedience, and not the less is He Himself conscious of the fact. Nay, it is somewhat remarkable that the Gospel of John, in which the voluntary element in his sufferings is most strongly asserted, is precisely that Gospel in which the subjection to a Divine Will in these sufferings is most pronouncedly indicated; for if it is there that He declares the laying down of his life to be his own act and his own desire: it is there also that He refers that act to the accomplishment of a Divine commission, which He had received from his Father: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

We cannot but remark that the attribution to the Christian Founder of the element of obedience is another point adverse to the mythical theory. We have already seen that Paul had within him both a Gentile and a Jewish consciousness; but to neither of these would it be natural that the idea of a Divine obedience should have suggested itself as a mythical imagination. The Gentile, above all things, revered power; and, therefore, the last thing which he would naturally have attributed to Divinity would have been the element of obedience. The Jew, above all things, revered law; and in the life of the creature he would have chiefly prized the obedience to law: but for that very reason he would have repudiated the notion that obedience to law belonged to a Divine life.¹ On each side of his mental culture the Apostle was excluded from the possibility of constructing out of his own imagination a Divine Life whose ideal of greatness consisted in his power to obey. Yet such an ideal St. Paul has actually given forth to the world, and held up before the eyes of men. He has exhibited as the object of his worship an ideal which must have been the natural contradiction of himself, the opposite of all that culture which he had received from birth, from education, or from social influence. The conclusion seems to be inevitable. If the Apostle did not derive his Christian ideal from within, he must have derived it from without; if there was nothing to create it in the depths of his own consciousness, it must have been imparted to his mind by the irresistible force of an external and historical atmosphere. The Christ whom Paul preached must have come into his soul because He was already in the air. He must have been adopted by the Christian consciousness through the atmosphere which He had Himself created. His reception by the spirit of man was the reception of a new

¹ The ideal "servant of God" of prophecy is not yet viewed as the Divine Life.

thought; and all new thoughts have their origin in some change of external relations. A man who, like Paul, represented the latest culture alike of the East and of the West, who had in him the distinctive elements both of the Gentile and of the Jew, was not likely to modify these elements without the constraint of some outward pressure; and the fact that he has modified them, the fact that he has even displaced them by a thought which is their contrary, must furnish a decisive evidence that he stood in the presence of a real historical change.

G. MATHESON.

CHRIST AND THE ANGELS.

HEBREWS ii. 1-9.

THIS passage commences with a practical exhortation to hold fast the word of salvation first spoken by the Lord, and communicated to the writer and his first readers by teachers who belonged to the circle of the personal disciples of Jesus. The admonition rests on the contrast between Christ and the Angels, already indicated in Chapter i.; but the precise form in which that contrast is practically used, calls for an additional argument (Verses 5-9), which is drawn from Psalm viii. The use made of this Psalm is the key to the whole passage, and must form the starting point of our exegesis.

The Author, in the usual manner of Rabbinical interpretation, fixes on an apparent paradox in the Old Testament text, and makes the solution thereof the key to the teaching of the Psalm. This paradox lies in the antithesis between the two statements: "Thou hast made him for a little time lower than the angels," and, "Thou hast put all things under his feet." The last statement it is urged (Verse 8) must be taken absolutely, including the angels, as well