

*THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT IN THE
NEW TESTAMENT.*

VI. OTHER TEACHING OF ST. PAUL.

IN two earlier papers I have endeavoured to expound the teaching of St. Paul about the Death of Christ as set forth in the Epistle to the Romans. And we found it to be a logical development of one central idea, viz. that God gave up His Son to die in order to harmonize with His own justice the justification of sinners. This result we shall now compare with the teaching of the other Epistles of the great Apostle.

Already I have referred to Galatians i. 4, "who gave Himself for our sins"; to chapter ii. 19-21, "through law I died to law, that I may live for God. With Christ I am crucified. . . . If through law cometh righteousness, then Christ died in vain"; and to chapter iii. 13, 14, "Christ bought us off from the curse of the Law, having on our behalf become a curse, (because it is written, 'Cursed is everyone that hangeth upon wood,') in order that to the Gentiles may come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus in order that we may obtain the promise of the Spirit through faith."

This last passage asserts plainly that Christ died in our stead. For we are told that He rescued us from the curse of the Law by placing Himself under a curse pronounced in the Book of the Law; and that He did this in order that in Christ by faith we may obtain the blessing promised of old to Abraham and to his seed. In other words St. Paul teaches that had not Christ died we should have remained under the curse pronounced by the Law against all who break its commands.

In Galatians vi. 12 we read of some who sought to make

proselytes to Judaism only in order that they might not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. This casual expression reveals the large place of the death of Christ upon the cross in the teaching of the Apostolic Churches. Still more remarkable is the joyous outburst in verse 14, "far be it from me to exult except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which to me the world is crucified, and I to the world." We here see a man who is unmoved by all the objects which arouse in others confidence and joy. Yet the heart of the patriot who is almost willing himself to tremble under the curse of God in order to save his nation is kindled into a glow of emotion by a symbol of his nation's degradation, (for the cross was a Roman punishment,) by the cross on which his beloved Master died a painful and shameful death.

The explanation of this strange exultation is even more wonderful than the exultation itself. St. Paul glories in the cross of Christ because on that cross the world has been crucified to him and himself to the world. These strange words assert most emphatically that through the violent death of Christ St. Paul had been rescued from degrading bondage to the men and things around.

Somewhat similar is Romans vi. 3-6: "so many of us as were baptized for Christ Jesus were baptized for His death? we were buried with Him by the baptism for death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so also we may walk in newness of life. For, if we have become united in growth with the likeness of His death, we shall be also in that of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him in order that . . . we should no longer serve sin." Also Colossians ii. 20: "if ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world." This remarkable phraseology, which is peculiar to St. Paul, proves how completely the death of Christ upon the cross

had moulded his entire thought about the way of salvation.

In 1 Corinthians i. 17, 18 we read that Christ sent Paul "to preach the Gospel, not in wisdom of word, lest the cross of Christ become an empty thing." He then speaks of the Gospel as "the word of the cross." So verse 23, "we preach Christ crucified"; and chapter ii. 2, "I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." These passages prove that the death of Christ was an essential and conspicuous element of the salvation announced by Him.

In 1 Corinthians v. 7 we read that "Christ our passover has been sacrificed"; in close harmony with John i. 29. In 1 Corinthians vi. 20, vii. 23 we have a cognate, but simpler, form of the word used in Galatians iii. 13: "ye were bought with a price." Very similar to Romans xiv. 15 is 1 Corinthians viii. 11: "the brother because of whom Christ died."

Specially significant is 1 Corinthians x. 16: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a partnership of the blood of Christ?" Such partnership in His blood might justly be laid at the doors of those who joined together to slay Him. The words before us describe evidently a partnership in the benefits resulting from His death. They thus point to the death of Christ as a means of great blessing. The same is true of chapter xi. 25, "this cup is the New Covenant in My blood," words already expounded on page 8 of my first paper. In chapter xv. 3 St. Paul begins a summary of his personal teaching at Corinth by the assertion that "Christ died for our sins." The preposition *ὑπέρ* suggests the benefit derived from deliverance from sin.

The references in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians to the death of Christ as the means of our salvation are not so numerous as in the Epistles already referred to; but two

of them are very important. In 2 Corinthians v. 15 we read: "The love of Christ constraineth us, having judged this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and on behalf of all He died in order that they who live may live no longer for themselves, but for Him who on their behalf died and rose." Here we have Christ represented as dying, not by accident or merely as a martyr, but with a deliberate purpose, viz. to rescue men from their own selfishness and to inspire them with a new life of loyalty to Himself. This implies that the death of Christ had a definite moral aim and was an essential part of the purpose of salvation.

The same is implied in 2 Corinthians v. 21: "Him who knew no sin, on our behalf He made to be sin, in order that we may become righteousness of God in Him." By giving Him up to suffer death, which is the threatened penalty of sin, God made Christ to be in some sense an impersonation and manifestation of sin. And, if so, He died in our stead. The Sinless became a personal manifestation of the deadly nature of sin, in order that sinners may become righteous. That these words are added as a sort of comment on St. Paul's embassy of reconciliation, suggests or implies; in complete harmony with Romans v. 10, Ephesians ii. 16, Colossians i. 20, that the death of Christ was the basis of this reconciliation.

In the earliest group of St. Paul's Epistles we have no express mention of the death of Christ as the means of salvation. Nor have we definite teaching on the same subject in the beautiful Epistle to the Philippians. But in the picture of the humiliation of Christ given in Philippians ii. 8 we read that He was "obedient even to death, to death upon a cross." The significance of the death of Christ is also attested in chapter iii. 10: "to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."

In my last paper we noticed the conspicuous place of the death of Christ upon the cross as the means of our reconciliation in Colossians i. 20, 22: "having made peace through the blood of His cross . . . you hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death." Somewhat startling are St. Paul's words in verse 24: "I rejoice in these sufferings on your behalf, and I fill up the deficiencies of these afflictions of Christ in my flesh on behalf of His body, which is the Church." He probably means that, when Christ breathed His last upon the cross, all the sufferings needful for the establishment of the kingdom of God had not yet been endured. For the full accomplishment of God's purposes, it was needful, not only that Christ should die for the sins of the world, but that the Gospel should be preached to all nations. This involved, owing to the wickedness of men, hardship and sometimes death to the preachers. This hardship St. Paul willingly endured to save others. Consequently, just as the life on earth of the servants of Christ is in some sense an extension of His incarnation, (for in them He lives, Gal. ii. 20,) so the sufferings of St. Paul were in a similar sense a continuation and completion of the sufferings of Christ. But this by no means implies that St. Paul's sufferings were in any sense propitiatory or that Christ's sufferings were not so. For the one point in common here mentioned and made conspicuous by repetition is suffering on behalf of another. Propitiation for sin is here entirely out of view.

The death of Christ as the means of salvation is prominent in Ephesians ii. 13: "but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who formerly were far off have become near in the blood of Christ." This prominence is increased by the words following in verse 16: "that He might reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, having slain the enmity in it." Reference has already been made to Ephe-

sians v. 25, 26: "Christ loved the Church and gave up Himself on her behalf, that He may sanctify her."

In close agreement with Matthew xx. 28, "to give His life a ransom instead of many," we read in 1 Timothy ii. 5, "who gave Himself a ransom on behalf of all," and in Titus ii. 14, "who gave Himself on our behalf that He may ransom us from all lawlessness." In these passages we are again taught that Christ died, not by sad misfortune, but with a deliberate purpose and with a definite aim.

Such in scanty outline is the teaching of St. Paul about the death of Christ. It is in harmony with, and includes whatever else the New Testament teaches on the same subject. At the same time it contains forms of expression and definite and important elements of teaching unknown, except in the Epistle to the Hebrews which we have not yet considered and which emanates from the school of St. Paul, to the other writers of the New Testament. And these new elements of teaching mark a definite advance in the doctrine of the Atonement.

St. Paul, and he only, teaches that the need for the death of Christ as the means of man's salvation from sin lay in the Justice and the Law of God. This he asserts in the great passage in which, as a part of his exposition of the Gospel of Christ, he describes the purpose of the death of Christ: "that He may be Himself just and a justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." It is asserted or assumed in several other passages which describe men as delivered by means of His death from the claims of the Law. And it underlies the teaching, peculiar to St. Paul, that through the death of Christ men are reconciled to God.

This legal aspect of the doctrine of the Atonement is in close agreement with St. Paul's mode of presenting other doctrines of the Gospel. He alone (except a casual word in Luke xviii. 14) uses the legal term *justify* to describe the pardon of sin, and the legal term *adoption* to describe a

sinner's entrance into the family of God. Manifestly we owe to the mental disposition of the great Apostle, and to his training at the feet of one who is described as an "honoured teacher of the Law,"¹ the important element of doctrine now before us.

Already we have seen that this element of doctrine explains all else that St. Paul says about the death of Christ; and all else that we find in the New Testament. For if to pardon sin be inconsistent, apart from the death of Christ, with the justice of God, then was the death of Christ absolutely needful for salvation. And if so, it may be described as the redemption-price of man's salvation, as a propitiation for his sin, and a means of reconciliation to God. We understand also, in some measure, the necessity which lay upon Christ to go up to Jerusalem and put Himself in the hands of His enemies, and the many passages which assert that He died by His own deliberate purpose. Thus in the Epistles of St. Paul and in the specific element now before us we reach the fullest teaching of the New Testament about the relation of the death of Christ to the salvation of men.

It must however be admitted that even this fullest teaching of St. Paul does not answer all our questions and remove all our difficulties. We ask, Why could not the mercy of God forego the claims of justice? And with still greater perplexity we ask, How did the death of an innocent victim harmonize with the claims of justice the pardon of the guilty? Such substitution seems to contradict the very essence of law, which is to protect the innocent and to punish only the guilty. It would not be tolerated in human administration. In other words, we ask, How can the teaching of St. Paul, involving as it does the teaching of the entire New Testament, be harmonized with those conceptions of justice which are interwoven in the moral sense

¹ Acts v. 34.

of men? This difficult question will, in a later paper, demand further attention.

In my next paper we shall consider the abundant and important teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

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CARDINAL NEWMAN.

II.

ALL this reveals the weak place in Newman's mind. He eagerly acted on what he took to be the moral signalling of God,—the beckoning of His finger—and counted on finding the facts conform to his anticipation. But when facts are accessible to patient study, we shall not be allowed to succeed in this method of settling them beforehand.

And yet, all through we must own in Newman a real intellectual continuity and consistency. He had undertaken to carry through a principle about the source of Christian knowledge, and about the administration of salvation. It seemed to him to be the only valid and the only safe principle, and he thought and hoped it was the principle legitimately dominant in the Church of England. He set out to make that good. But the truth was, that on these subjects two heterogeneous principles—not one only—are represented throughout the literature and in the precedents of the English Church; and many of her sons have thought it wisest to disclaim absolutely neither way of it, but to contend on both grounds against Rome on the one hand, against Puritanism and dissent on the other. The Bible accepted in the Protestant way, and tradition operating in what we may call the non-Protestant way, were worked alternately. Usually, care was taken not to drive conclusions from either side, so as to bring about fatal collisions. On either ground a great deal could be said in favour of forms of doctrine agreeing well enough with the