

CHRIST'S ATTITUDE TO HIS OWN DEATH.

II.

IN the previous paper¹ it was argued: (i.) That the special significance attributed to His death owes its rise to Jesus Himself, and is not a mythical or apologetical invention of the retrospective imagination. (ii.) That the moment when He became explicit concerning it was coincident with the moment when His disciples became conscious of His Messiahship,² which warrants the inference that there was a direct connexion between His new teaching and their new consciousness; in other words, not until they had conceived Him as Messiah were they capable of understanding what He had to say as to His death. (iii.) That as it was of Himself as the now confessed Christ that He spoke, His death had to Himself a distinct Messianic import, which was the more emphasized by the "elders, chief priests, and scribes" being represented as the active agents in it. (iv.) That the very terminology employed indicated a sort of symbolism: the Christ, on the one hand, subsumed all the ideas which the supreme hope of Israel stood for, while the ministers of death may be described as the personalized orders and usages, laws and hopes, of actual Judaism. This studious and defining emphasis on the actors can only mean that the death in which He and they are to play so opposite parts takes a special significance from their respective offices and functions.

1. In this earliest reference, then, Jesus expresses what we may term His idea as to His own death in its most rudimentary and general form; but in order to bring out the place it filled in His consciousness we must consider

¹ EXPOSITOR for October.

² Mark viii. 29-31; Matt. xvi, 15-21,

how it affected and was affected by His relations to His disciples.

A. Vague and general as were the terms in which His anticipation of death was stated, it was yet at once unwelcome and unintelligible to His disciples. For from this point onwards a change which profoundly affects their mutual relations may be seen in process. Their agreement with Him as to the central matter—His Messiahship—only accentuates the radical difference between them as to what the Messiah is to be and what He ought to do. The "Christ" Jesus conceives Himself to be is one devoted to suffering and death, but the disciples conceive the Messiah not in terms they had learned of Jesus, but rather under the categories of local tradition and personal interest. The more explicit His Messianic consciousness grows the more He emphasizes His death; but the more strongly they believe in His Messiahship the less will they permit themselves to think of His liability to a death which they can only construe as defeat. And so there emerges the most tragic moment in the ministry, the bewilderment of the disciples and their alienation from the Master. The conflict which had hitherto raged between Jesus and the Pharisees is now transferred to the innermost circle of His friends; but with this characteristic difference: while the old conflict was open, frank, and audible, the new was secret, sullen, inarticulate. The signs of the estrangement are many. Their ambitions grew sordid, and they began to feel as if following Him were sheer loss. When He said, "How hard is it for them who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God"—no strange truth in His mouth—they were "astonished above measure," and said to Him, "Who then can be saved?"¹ Feeling as if this doctrine threatened them with the lot of the uncompensated, Peter, as ready a spokesman of suspicion as of faith, said, "Behold we have forsaken all and followed

¹ Mark x. 26; Matt. xix. 25.

Thee; what, therefore, shall we have?"¹ The natural result was that jealousy, envy, and mutual distrust wasted their brotherhood, and they disputed by the way as to "who should be the greatest,"² Hence Jesus had to set the little child in their midst that he might teach the grown men how to live in trust and love. Even thus their greed of place and pre-eminence was not silenced, for the ten were moved to indignation by James and John—two of the most privileged disciples—seeking to beguile the Master into a promise to give them seats, the one at His right hand, the other at His left, in His kingdom.³ So far did they fall that they attempted to do His works without His faith,⁴ tried to hinder men doing good in His name,⁵ and even when His face was towards Jerusalem so little had James and John knowledge of His spirit or His mission that they asked authority to command fire from heaven to consume a Samaritan village.⁶ The picture of the alienation is most graphic in Mark: "They were in the way going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went before; and they were amazed, and as they followed they were afraid."⁷ He walks alone, unheeded; the words He speaks they do not care to hear, for they are confounded, and walk as in a vain show, feeling as if the voice which had created their hopes had turned into a contradiction of the hopes it had created. This was their mood, and it is doubtful whether they ever escaped from it while He lived. It helps to explain their behaviour during the passion, which was but the natural expression of their imperfect sympathy with the Sufferer.

B. Christ's method of dealing with this mood enables us to read more clearly His idea as to His sufferings and death.

¹ Matt. xix. 27.

² Mark ix. 34; Matt. xviii. 1-2; Luke ix. 46-48.

³ Mark x. 35-41; Matt. xx. 20-24.

⁴ Mark ix. 17-19; Matt. xvii. 19, 20.

⁵ Mark ix. 38-40; Luke ix. 49, 50.

⁶ Luke ix, 51-56.

⁷ x. 32.

He met the protest of Peter by a public reproof, for Mark here has a trait which Matthew overlooked: "When He had turned about and looked on the disciples, He rebuked Peter"¹—an act which the apostle had evidently never forgotten. But much more significant than the reproof is the manner and the circumstances under which He repeats and enforces the teaching as to His death. All the Synoptists agree in placing after this incident the words in which Jesus affirms that those who follow Him must not shrink from the fellowship of the cross.² They must deny themselves, willingly lose life for His sake and the Gospel's, live as those who love the soul and fear no worldly loss. But not satisfied with indirect instruction, He, under conditions which speak of exaltation, returns to the idea which they so hated. He speaks of it as they were descending from the Mount of Transfiguration.³ While men were wondering at the things He did, seeing in them "the mighty power of God," He bade His disciples let His sayings sink down into their ears, "for the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men."⁴ But one Evangelist is careful to add, "they understood not this saying."⁵ His answer to James and John, when they wanted the Samaritan village consumed, was, "The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them";⁶ which means, read in its connexion, to save even by suffering at their hands. Then at the very hour when the alienation was most complete, He would not hide the offence of the cross from their eyes, but once more predicted His death and the part "the chief priests and the scribes" were to take in it,⁷ though even yet, as Luke says, "this saying was hid from them, neither

¹ viii. 33.² Mark viii. 34-38; Matt. xvi. 24-28; Luke ix. 23-27.³ Mark ix. 9, 12; Matt. xvii. 9, 12. Luke makes "His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" the subject on which Moses and Elias are said to have discoursed (ix. 31).⁴ Luke ix. 43, 44; Mark ix. 30, 31; Matt. xvii. 22, 23.⁵ Luke ix. 45.⁶ Luke ix. 56.⁷ Mark x. 33; Matt. xx. 17-19.

understood they the things which were spoken."¹ So far, however, Jesus has only repeated His thought in its original form, His purpose seeming to be to make it as clear and distinct to the consciousness of the Twelve as it was to His own. He could not attempt to expand or explain it to men who would allow it no entrance into their minds. But their mutual rivalries, which were the fruits of their alienation from Him, created at once the opportunity and the need for further exposition; and He added to His prediction of the fact and manner a word as to the function and end of the Messianic death: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."²

2. This saying marks a very clear advance in the expression of His consciousness, or the definition of His own idea as to His death. It deserves, therefore, the most careful consideration, especially as to what Jesus meant by "giving His life" and what by being "a ransom for many."

A. Baur argued that this saying is so contrary to the thought and habit of Jesus that we must suppose He either never said it or said it in quite another form.³ The exhortation to the disciples is complete without it, and so, said the critic, these words were made for Him, not used by Him. But it is hardly possible to conceive a more gratuitous supposition. The words will stand any test, critical or diacritical, that can be applied to them. The heart of the narrative implies its conclusion, for what do the "cup" He has to drink, the "baptism" He is to be baptized with, signify? Not surely the mere idea of service, but the idea of suffering endured to its tragic end. Here, if anywhere, we have a *λόγιον ἀληθινόν*, spoken to jealous, unsympathetic, disputatious disciples, while He and they were going up to Jerusalem, and before He had fallen

¹ Luke xviii. 31-34.

² Mark x. 45; Matt. xx. 28.

³ *Neutest. Theologie* 101.

into the hands of "the elders, chief priests, and scribes." It is something to have this fragment of authentic speech, which has, as it were, seized and preserved His articulate voice in the very act of defining Himself and His mission. It is easy to import into the clause too much of our technical theology, but it is still easier to simplify it into insignificance by attempting to keep all theology out of it. The key to its meaning has been commonly found in *λύτρον*, and in a measure correctly. In each of His explicit references in the Synoptists to the death there is a special *terminus technicus* which may well claim to be a key-word. In the first it is *Χριστός*, in the last *διαθήκη*, here *λύτρον*. Now *λύτρον* is a term easy of interpretation by itself, but here the context in which it stands makes it peculiarly difficult; for while it specifies the persons ransomed—"many"—it neither defines the state out of which, or the state into which, they are redeemed, nor the need for the ransom, nor the person to whom it was paid, nor the precise respect in which it is the issue of His surrendered life. Ritschl,¹ in an elaborate dissertation, argues that *λύτρον* here, as in the LXX., where it translates *כֶּפֶר*, signifies means or instrument of protection (*Schutzmittel*), which may in certain cases become means or price of release (*Lösepreis*). He examines various typical texts in the Old Testament, and comes to the conclusion that those which present the most exact parallel to the words of Jesus are Psalm xlix. 7 and Job xxxiii. 24, and he thence deduces three positions: (i.) that this ransom is conceived as an offering to God and not to the devil; (ii.) that Jesus did instead of the many, what no one either for himself or for any other could do; and (iii.) that Jesus in thus defining His work specifically distinguishes Himself from man, who must die, as one who dies freely, or who by His own voluntary act surrenders His life to God. So he finally defines

¹ *Christ. Lehre von der Rechtfertigung u. Versöhnung*, ii. 69-89.

λύτρον as "an offering which, because of its specific worth to God, is a protection or covering against death." The positions are interesting, and we see how they are reached, but what we do not see is any connexion between the method of reaching them and the words of Jesus. Wendt¹ is less elaborate and exhaustive. He argues that the term is used to express one idea—deliverance of many, *i.e.*, "all those who will learn of Him," by Christ's voluntary sufferings "from their bondage to suffering and death"; but he has nothing to say as to the person or power to whom the ransom was paid. Beyschlag² considers the ransom not a payment to God, but a purchase for God, and a being freed from the dominion of a power hostile to Him, the bondage neither of death nor even of mere guilt, but of sin.

B. Let us reverse the order these scholars have followed, and instead of coming to the context through the term, come to the term through the context. The sons of Zebedee and their mother had made their request for the two pre-eminent seats in the new kingdom. Jesus in charity attributes their request to their ignorance, and then asks, Were they able to drink His cup and bear His baptism? And they said they were able. The question and the answer are alike significant. The question shows that His spirit was already foretasting the passion. We see that while they wrangled and schemed as to who should be pre-eminent, He was feeling the awful solitude of His sorrow, the suffering that was His alone to know and to bear. The answer illustrates, more than any other utterance recorded in the Gospels, the ignorance which was the root of the alienation in which the disciples then lived. It expressed a tragic temerity, the courage of the childish or the drunken, who use words but do not know what they mean. If John ever recalled this

¹ *Teaching of Jesus*, vol. ii, pp. 227-234.

² *Neutest. Theologie*, i. 153.

moment, and looked at it through the memories of the passion, he must have experienced shame and humiliation of a kind which it is good even for saints to feel. But though it suggests to us the audacity of the child which now overwhelms and now amuses the man, what it must have signified to Jesus was the distance between His mind and theirs, the absence in their consciousness of what were then the most patent facts and potent factors in His own. So He gently calls to Him the disappointed two and the angry ten, though in the ten the very thoughts were active that had moved the two, and proceeded once more to explain His kingdom in its antithesis to man's. They had construed His kingdom through man's instead of through Himself, and so had been seeking parallels where they ought to have found contrasts. And these He indicates rather than develops. (i.) The first and fundamental contrast was in the persons who exercised kinghood, and therefore in the kinghood they exercised. In man's kingdom lordship is founded upon conquest, authority is based upon might, and so the great are the strong who compel the obedience of the weak; but in Christ's the note of eminence is service, "the chiefest of all is the servant of all." This, however, requires the rarest qualities: for service of all without moral elevation degrades both him who gives and him who takes. Humility without magnanimity is meanness; the humbleness that glories in being down invites the contempt of all honourable men, for it can neither climb up itself, nor lift up the fallen, nor help up the struggling. The service must therefore here be interpreted through the ideal Servant, "the Son of man." "Lordship" of the heroic order is not a difficult thing to attain, for men of marked moral inferiority have attained it: Alexander, who was a youth of ungoverned passions; Cæsar, who was a statesman more astute than scrupulous; Napoleon, who was but colossal obstinacy, loveless and athirst for blood. But the pre-

eminence that comes of being "the servant of all" only Jesus has attained, and it is a pre-eminence which has outlasted all dynasties, because based on qualities that have ministered to all that was best, highest, and most universal in man. (ii.) Correspondent to this contrast in the authorities of the two kingdoms, is the contrast in their ends. The "lord" governs as a ruler, persons to him are nothing, order and law are all in all. The violated law must be vindicated, the man who breaks it must be broken. But the "minister" serves as a saviour; persons to him are everything; law and order are agencies for the creation of happy persons and the common weal. The law which lordship enjoins is in its ultimate analysis force, and is, when violated, vindicated by the greater strength of the forces it commands than of those opposed to it; but the end or law which the ministry obeys is benevolence, or in its ultimate analysis love, and it is vindicated only when it can, by the creation of a happy harmony between the person and his conditions, overcome misery and its causes. The creative energy in this case is moral, not, as in the other, physical; and the created state is beatitude, or personal happiness within a happy state. (iii.) The contrast of authorities and ends implies therefore a correlative contrast of means. The "lord" prevails by his power to inflict suffering, the "minister" by his power to save from it; but the saving is a process of infinite painfulness, while the infliction is easy to him who has the adequate strength. The "lord" has only so to marshal his forces as to work his will, but the "minister" has to seek the person he would save, bear him in his own soul, quicken the dead energies of good within him by the streams of his own life, burn out the evil of the old manhood by the fire of consuming love. The final act, therefore, of the King whose kingdom is a ministry, is the sacrifice of Himself, giving "His life as a ransom for many."

3. From this analysis of the words of Jesus, several positions seem to follow, and these we may illustrate, not only from the Synoptists, but from John. The discourses of the Fourth Gospel are here full of elucidatory material.

A. This Synoptic passage indicates a distinct change in the point of view from which the death is regarded. Before it was represented as inflicted, the Son of man was to be slain or killed, to suffer death at the hands of the "elders and chief priests"; here He lays down His life, spontaneously submits to death. The entrance of this voluntary element modifies the whole conception, changes the death from a martyrdom to a sacrifice. The martyr is not a willing sufferer, he is the victim of superior force. He dies because others so will. He might be able to purchase a pardon by recantation, and his conscience may not allow him to recant; but conscience is not the cause of his death, only a condition for the action of those who inflict it. He does not choose death; death, as it were, chooses him. But sacrifice is possible only where there is perfect freedom—where a man surrenders what he has the right to withhold as well as the power to withhold it. Now Jesus here speaks of His act as a free act; He came, not simply to suffer at the hands of violent men, but to do a certain thing—"give His life." The terms that describe the ministry and the death are co-ordinate, freedom enters in the same measure into both; as He came to minister He came to give His life, the spontaneity in both cases being equal and identical.

The two points of view—the earlier and the later—are not inconsistent, but rather complementary. In John the spontaneity is more emphasized than in the Synoptists. His life no man takes from Him, He lays it down of Himself.¹ But the same Gospel emphasizes more than any of the others the malignant activity of the Jews in compassing

¹ x. 18.

His death.¹ Their action was necessary to its form, but His Spirit determined its essence. The significance it had for history came from the framework into which it was woven, but its value to God and man proceeded from the spontaneity with which it was undertaken and endured. In the freedom, therefore, which He now emphasized, Jesus lifted His death from an event in the history of Israel to an event in the history of Spirit, and at the same time changed it from a martyrdom into a sacrifice, *i.e.* from a fate which He suffered to a work which He achieved.

B. But beside this change from the conception of His person as a passive to that of an active factor in His death stands another: the expression of the principle that governs His action. The sacrifice is not unmotivated; it is in order to service, an act born of benevolence. John here supplies an interpretative verse: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."² And there is a still higher synthesis. What is done in obedience to love is done in obedience to God. And so the same act which appears as love to man appears as duty to His Father, doing His will or obeying His commandments.³ The voluntary act thus turns into the very end of His existence, the cause why He came into the world.⁴ And He is therefore the way, the truth, and the life,⁵ the person whose function it is as the way to lead to the Father, as the truth to show the Father, as the life to generate, enlarge, and perpetuate on earth the Spirit which is the life of God. The death thus ceases to be an incident in the mean and sordid history of a small people. It assumes a universal significance, is taken into the purpose of God, and becomes the means for the realization of the divine ends.

C. The ends to which the death is a means may be variously represented. In the synoptic passage the end is

¹ v. 18; vii. 19, 30; viii. 37-40; x. 31-32; xi. 50.

² xv. 13. ³ x. 18; xiv. 31. ⁴ xviii. 37; xix. 11. ⁵ xiv. 6.

the antithesis to what exists in the ethnic kingdoms, *i.e.* it is a state of ordered freedom, where the highest in honour and in office are the most efficient in service. This is in harmony with the Johannine word, "the truth shall make you free."¹ But the opposite of freedom is bondage, and the one is in nature correspondent to the other. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty"; but "whosoever committeth sin is the bondservant of sin."² The sin which man serves may be incorporated in many forms: the world,³ which is sin generalized; the devil,⁴ which is sin personalized; the wolves that harass and devour the flock,⁵ which is sin symbolized. These are but aspects of one thing: sin is each, and sin is all; the death is the means which effects deliverance from each and all. By it the world is overcome,⁶ the devil is judged,⁷ and the sheep are saved.⁸ Now there is no term that could better express the means that effects these ends than *λύτρον*, *i.e.*, where the end is redemption, emancipation, deliverance from the dark powers which hold man in bondage, the means are most correctly denoted a "ransom." It is evident that Jesus is thinking of the fitness and efficacy of His death as a method of accomplishing a given purpose, and this determines the word He chooses. He does not think of buying off man either from the world or the devil, of paying a debt to God, or making satisfaction to law; He simply thinks of man as enslaved, and by His death rescued from slavery. To require that every element in a figurative word be found again in the reality it denotes, is not exegesis but pedantry—the same sort of pedantry that would find in the parable of the Prodigal Son a complete and exhaustive picture of the relations of God and man.

D. The death is "for many." The "many" is to be taken as = multitude, mass. We cannot think that "the

¹ viii. 32. ² 2 Cor. iii. 17; John viii. 34. ³ xv. 18, 19. ⁴ viii. 44.

⁵ x. 12.

⁶ xvi. 33.

⁷ xvi. 11; xiv. 30.

⁸ x. 14, 15.

Son of man" and the "in many" stand accidental juxtaposition. The one term denotes a person who stands in common and collective relations; the other term denotes those to whom He is related as the "multitude," the "many," not as opposed to the few, but as distinguished from "the One." This One has the distinction of the unique: He stands alone, and does what He alone can do. Of the "many" no one "can by any means redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for him";¹ but "the One" can do what is impossible to any of the "many." His pre-eminence, therefore, is the secret of His worth; He does what is possible to no other, for He transcends all others, and His personality equals as it were the personality of collective man. Hence He is able to "give Himself a ransom for many."

E. "For many." *ἀντὶ πολλῶν* = "in room of many." His death is not a common death, and Jesus does not here conceive it simply as suffered "for conscience' sake," but as "for many." In it He endures the tragedy of His pre-eminence. Though once He has suffered, His grace concedes to those who follow Him fellowship in His sufferings, yet in the article and moment of Sacrifice He is without a fellow. It is "a cup" which He alone can drink; "a baptism" which none can share. And it is so because He stands where no one can stand beside Him, in a death which is "a ransom for many."

A. M. FAIRBAIRN.

THE MIDRASHIC ELEMENT IN CHRONICLES.

MIDRASH means "Enquiry, Seeking." The Darshan ("Enquirer") fixes on turns of expression and on details in the work which lies before him, in order to draw out from them (usually for purposes of edification) some side fact or

¹ Ps. xlix. 7.