

Græco-Roman civilisation had established itself, the old religion survived as strongly as ever, but the deities were spoken of by Greek, or sometimes by Roman, names, and were identified with the gods of the more civilised races. This is precisely what we find at Lystra : Zeus and Hermes are the names of the deities as translated into Greek, but the old Lycaonian gods are meant and the Lycaonian language was used, apparently because, in a moment of excitement, it rose more naturally to the lips of the people than the cultured Greek language. It is noteworthy that those to whose lips Lycaonian rose so readily were not converts, but the common city mob.

The commentators aptly compare the pretty tale, localised in these plains, of the visit paid by the same two gods to the old couple, Philemon and Baucis. For the right understanding of the story, we must remember that in this Asian religion Zeus and Hermes are the embodiment of two different aspects of the ultimate divinity, "the god," who was represented sometimes as Zeus, sometimes as Hermes, sometimes as Apollo, according to the special aspect which was for the moment prominent.

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

#### VIII. CERTAIN MODERN THEORIES.

IN earlier papers I have endeavoured to expound the teaching of the various writers of the New Testament about the death of Christ in its relation to the salvation announced by Him. We found that these various writers agree to assert the absolute necessity of the death of Christ for man's salvation and trace this necessity to man's sin ; and that St. Paul goes beyond the other Sacred Writers by tracing it to the Law and the Justice of God.

These results at once evoked serious and pressing questions. We asked, Why could not God pardon sin, apart from the death of Christ, by royal prerogative? and, How does the death of the Innocent harmonize with the justice of God the justification of sinners? To these questions, the New Testament gave us no clear and full answer. For an answer to them we now seek.

These questions cannot be set aside as unreasonable. Nor, if asked reverently, can they be condemned as intruding into that which God has not revealed. For many truths are hidden beneath the surface of Holy Scripture and beneath the phenomena around us, in order that they may be the rewards of patient search. Our questions are only an attempt to trace, along lines laid down in the New Testament, the connection between the teaching of Christ and His Apostles and whatever else we know about God's moral government of the world, in order thus to understand this one doctrine as a part of a larger whole. They are prompted by a conviction that, just as the universe is one, consisting of many parts, all related, so every matter of human knowledge stands related to whatever else is known. This deep conviction of the unity of whatever is known, and of whatever exists has grown with the growth of human knowledge; and in all ages it has been a fruitful source of intellectual progress. We may therefore hope to gain, by comparing the teaching of Christ and His Apostles about His death with whatever we know about God's government of men, a fuller knowledge of the relation between the death of Christ and the salvation announced by Him. For all knowledge of broad principles sheds light upon specific cases within their domain.

Notice carefully that the incompleteness of the best answers to these questions does nothing to weaken the foundation of the results already attained. For these results rest on abundant and decisive documentary evidence. Similarly,

we frequently have evidence which compels us to believe that an event has taken place, although we are utterly at a loss to know by what means it has been brought about. So now our loyal acceptance of the teaching of Christ and His Apostles prompts further and reverent research.

We must seek answers in harmony with all the facts of the case; or, in other words, we must seek an hypothesis which, if true, will account for and explain all that the writers of the New Testament say about the death of Christ. If we can find an hypothesis which does this, and which is also the only conceivable explanation of all the facts of the case, we may accept it, so far as it goes, as probably true. To this method of hypotheses tested and verified by facts is due almost all progress of human knowledge. We thus advance from matters of direct observation to broad and deep principles.

Before attempting to construct an hypothesis, I shall in this paper discuss certain modern and popular theories of the Atonement which seem to me to be incorrect or insufficient, yet containing important elements of truth; and in another paper I shall suggest a theory which I think to be in closer harmony with the facts of the case.

The first theory of the Atonement which I shall mention is taken from a well-known published sermon by a great preacher. F. W. Robertson, commenting in Sermon ix., First Series, on the famous words of Caiaphas recorded in John xi. 51, 52, says of the death of Christ, "It was the foresight of all the result of His opposition to the world's sin, and His steady uncompromising battle against it notwithstanding, in every one of its forms, knowing that He must be its victim at the last, which prevented His death from being merely the death of a lamb slain unconsciously on Jewish altars, and elevated it to the dignity of a true and proper sacrifice. We go beyond this, however. It was not merely a sacrifice, it was a sacrifice for sin. 'His soul was

made an offering for sin.' Neither was it only a sacrifice for sin—it was a sacrifice for the world's sin." . . .

"Christ came into collision with the world's evil, and He bore the penalty of that daring. He approached the whirling wheel, and was torn in pieces. He laid His hand upon the cockatrice's den, and its fangs pierced Him. It is the law which governs the conflict with evil. It can be crushed only by suffering from it. . . . The Son of Man who puts His naked foot on the serpent's head, crushes it: but the fang goes into His heel."

Robertson further connects the death of Christ with the immutable "moral Laws of this universe." He attributes it to "the eternal impossibility of violating that law of the universe whereby penalty is annexed to transgression, and must fall, either laden with curse, or rich in blessing."

This is, on the whole, reasonable so far as it goes. The writer does good service by asserting that the death of Christ was no arbitrary act of God, but was itself in harmony with the principles of His moral government of the world. He rightly, though perhaps needlessly, protests, "Let no man say that God was angry with His Son." But it seems to me that in this sermon Robertson has not grappled with the real difficulties of the case; nor has he grasped the central conception of St. Paul touching the death of Christ. He does little or nothing to explain the absolute necessity which compelled Christ to go up to Jerusalem and put Himself in the hands of enemies who, as He knew, would kill Him. Nor does He show how the death of the Innocent harmonizes, as St. Paul teaches, the justification of sinners with the justice of God.

The sermon is valuable chiefly as a not uncalled-for protest against certain coarse misrepresentations of the doctrine of the Atonement. But it does little to elucidate the doctrine.

In a thoughtful and devout work on *The Nature of the Atonement* by M'Leod Campbell, we are taught that Christ

made expiation for our sins by His recognition and confession of them, this recognition by Man of man's guilt being a necessary condition of remission of sins, and being also, in consequence of Christ's voluntary union with us, intensely painful to Him. In chapter vi. page 119 we read: "Without the assumption of an imputation of our guilt, and in perfect harmony with the unbroken consciousness of personal separation from our sins, the Son of God, bearing us and our sins on His heart before the Father, must needs respond to the Father's judgment on our sins, with that confession of their evil and of the righteousness of the wrath of God against them, and holy sorrow because of them, which were due, due in the truth of things, due on our behalf though we could not render it, due from Him as in our nature and our true brother;—what He must needs feel in Himself because of the holiness and love which were in Him—what He must needs utter to the Father in expiation of our sins when He would make intercession for us." Similarly on p. 117: "This confession, as to its own nature, must have been a *perfect Amen in humanity to the judgment of God on the sin of man.*"

It is impossible to reproduce, by one or two short quotations, the teaching of a book. But, as I understand him, this is Campbell's explanation of the relation of the death of Christ to the forgiveness of sins. Sin must be fully acknowledged before it can be forgiven. And, inasmuch as it cannot be fully recognised by guilty man, the Son of God became Man in order that in Him humanity might know the depth of its own fall; and suffered all the moral anguish involved in this recognition.

We have here an important aspect of the Incarnation of the Son of God, viz. the moral pain involved in the contact of a pure human spirit with evil. And doubtless this pain was an essential part of the burden laid by the Father upon the Son for the salvation of men. But the suggestion

before us does nothing to explain the necessity, so conspicuous in the Synoptist Gospels, which gave Christ no choice but to put himself into the hands of His enemies, to go up to Jerusalem and to die. Nor does it explain the prominence, as a means of salvation, given throughout the New Testament to the *death* of Christ upon the *cross*.

Another somewhat similar view demands a moment's attention. Dr. Horace Bushnell, in a volume on *The Vicarious Sacrifice*, ch. i. page 7, says: "Christ, in what is called His vicarious sacrifice, simply engages, at the expense of great suffering and even of death itself, to bring us out of our sins themselves and so out of their penalties; being Himself profoundly identified with us in our fallen state, and burdened in feeling with our evils. . . . Love is a principle essentially vicarious in its own nature, identifying the subject with others, so as to suffer their adversities and pains, and taking on itself the burden of their evils. It does not come in officiously and abruptly, and propose to be substituted in some formal and literal way that overturns all the moral relations of law and desert, but it clings to the evil and lost man as in feeling, afflicted for him, burdened by his ill deserts, incapacities, and pains, encountering gladly any loss or suffering for his sake."

All this is true and good. But, as before, it fails to explain the teaching of the New Testament about the death of Christ. Indisputably, the death of Christ is frequently appealed to as an amazing manifestation of the infinite love of God to fallen man. But love never prompts a needless sacrifice. Our question comes back to us, as yet unanswered, Whence came the necessity which required, for man's salvation, that Christ should voluntarily surrender Himself to die? The above suggestions unveil interesting and important elements in the work of Christ, but they are only *sidé* lights. They do not touch the real difficulties of the case.

Very different from the above is another type of popular

teaching of which I shall select Dr. Chas. Hodge of Princeton as a modern representative. In his *Systematic Theology* vol. ii. page 482 he writes: "The first point is that Christ's work was of the nature of a satisfaction, because it met and answered all the demands of God's law and justice against the sinner. The law no longer condemns the sinner who believes in Christ. Those, however, whom the infinitely holy and strict law of God does not condemn are entitled to the divine fellowship and favour. To them there can be no condemnation. The work of Christ was not, therefore, a mere substitute for the execution of the law, which God in His sovereign mercy saw fit to accept in lieu of what the sinner was bound to render. It had an inherent worth which rendered it a perfect satisfaction, so that justice has no further demands. It is here as in the case of state criminals. If such an offender suffers the penalty which the law prescribes as the punishment of his offence he is no longer liable to condemnation. No further punishment can justly be demanded for that offence. This is what is called the perfection of Christ's satisfaction. It perfectly, from its own intrinsic worth, satisfies the demands of justice. This is the point meant to be illustrated when the work of Christ is compared in Scripture and in the writings of theologians to the payment of a debt. The creditor has no further claims when the debt due to him is fully paid.

This perfection of the satisfaction of Christ, as already remarked, is not due to His having suffered either in kind or degree what the sinner would have been required to endure; but principally to the infinite dignity of His person."

In this quotation, and elsewhere, Dr. Hodge correctly traces the necessity of the death of Christ as a means of man's salvation to the justice of God. He thus holds fast the distinctive feature of St. Paul's teaching on the subject. But I think that he somewhat misrepresents it.

For the Bible never says that Christ has paid the debt of those for whom he died in such manner that the Law has no further claims upon them. And the suggestion that they for whom Christ died are in the position of an offender who has suffered the penalty which the law prescribes and is therefore no longer liable to condemnation is, in my view, repugnant to all principles of justice. It seems to me that Dr. Hodge does nothing to meet our real difficulty, viz. to explain how the death of Him who knew no sin made consistent with the justice of God the pardon of sinners.

Dr. Hodge complicates the question by speaking (*Systematic Theology* vol. ii. page 359) of a "covenant between the Father and the Son in reference to the salvation of men." Of such Covenant we never read in the Bible. Both Old and New Covenants are between God and man. So Jeremiah xxxi. 33, quoted in Hebrews viii. 10: "This is the Covenant which I will make with the house of Israel." It is true that Christ speaks in John vi. 39 of those whom the Father had given to him. But we have no hint of negotiation between the Persons of the Godhead touching the salvation of men. And such negotiation is inconsistent with the unity of the Godhead.

A still more serious error, found here and there in popular religious literature, is that which represents the Father as implacable, and the Son as pleading for those whom the Father was minded to slay. In the New Testament, the coming of Christ is even traced to the infinite love of God who gave up His Son to die in order to save fallen man.

The results of this paper are chiefly negative. It seemed to me well, before attempting to grapple with the real difficulties of the case, difficulties which I can only partly remove, to consider certain unsatisfactory solutions which have been offered, in hope that the failure of others may suggest a better path.

In my next paper I shall endeavour to answer the two



questions before us, viz. (1) Why could not God pardon sin by mere prerogative, as a father forgives a penitent child? and, if this be impossible, (2) How does the death of an Innocent Victim harmonize with the justice of God the pardon of the guilty? I shall then conclude this series by a paper discussing the question, For whom did Christ die?

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*HEROD THE TETRARCH: A STUDY OF  
CONSCIENCE.*

ONE of the fairest ways of testing the authenticity of the Gospels, just as they lie before us, is to take some one narrative recorded by more than one Evangelist, embracing a number of incidents, some of them small, and extending over a considerable period; and, having put all the details together, to see whether they make a consistent story, and, especially if we happen to know something of the case from other sources, whether the two agree together. That there should be even one case in which all these conditions meet, is hardly what we should expect. But it so happens that the narrative we have fixed on—that of Herod the Tetrarch—is recorded or referred to by all the four Evangelists; that it embraces a number of incidents; that it extends over a period of at least two years, and that Josephus expressly refers to it as a known historical fact. Let us, then, take the facts, just as we read them in the Gospels, and see if they do not speak for themselves, assuring us of the authenticity of the story and of the Gospels which tell it even in its details, many of which are of the most startling and unexpected nature.

Herod Antipas was left by his father, Herod the Great, the two provinces of Galilee and Peræa, with the title of Tetrarch. He married the daughter of Aretas, the king of