

*THE RELATION OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION
TO OUR JUSTIFICATION.*

It has recently been asserted by Prof. Everett, of Harvard, in his *Gospel of Paul* (pp. 199 ff.), as an objection against the doctrine of Christ's vicarious satisfaction, that it does not enable us to recognise an objective effect of Christ's resurrection towards our justification, such as Paul teaches. For, he argues, if it is by Christ bearing the penalty of our sin on the cross that we are forgiven, His rising again may have value as confirming our faith, but cannot be, as Paul declares, for our justification (Rom. iv. 25), or indispensable to our forgiveness (1 Cor. xv. 17). He therefore holds, as if opposed to the generally accepted doctrine, the view, which is also propounded as a new one by M. Ménégos, that the resurrection was of essential importance, because by it Christ was justified, having paid the penalty due to sin; and Dr. Bruce¹ states this view as a new and strange one, a novel and ingenious explanation of the apostle's doctrine, which, though deserving respect, is, he thinks, at fault in several respects.

But the strange thing in all this is, that this view of Christ being justified, and we in Him, by His resurrection, whether it be right or wrong, is, in the first place, not a new theory at all, but one that has been held and fully expounded, both in doctrinal and practical treatises, by some of the best known divines. For instance, Amesius says: "Sententia haec (justificationis) fuit i^o in mente Dei quasi concepta, per decretum justificandi (Gal. iii. 8); ii^o fuit in Christo capite nostro a mortuis jam resurgente pronunciata (2 Cor. v. 19); iii^o virtualiter pronunciatur ex prima illa relatione, quae ex fide ingenerata exsurgit (Rom. viii. 1); iv^o expresse pronunciatur per Spiritum Dei testantem spiritibus

¹ See EXPOSITOR, August, 1893, pp. 92-5.

nostris reconciliationem nostram cum Deo (Rom. v. 5).” *Theologia Medulla*, Lib. I. cap. xxvii. § 9.¹ Still more distinctly writes Bishop Pearson: “By His death we know that He suffered for sin, by His resurrection we are assured that the sins for which He suffered were not His own; had no man been a sinner, He had not died; had He been a sinner, He had not risen again; but dying for those sins which we committed, He rose from the dead to show that He had made full satisfaction for them, that we believing on Him might obtain remission of our sins, and justification of our persons; ‘God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, for sin, condemned sin in the flesh,’ and raising up our Surety from the prison of the grave, did actually absolve, and apparently acquit, Him from the whole obligation to which He had bound Himself, and in discharging Him acknowledged full satisfaction made for us (Rom. viii. 33, 4).” *Exposition of the Creed*, Art. v. The same view is also taken by Thomas Goodwin in *Christ Set Forth*, (Works, vol. iv.), sermons on Rom. viii. 33, 4; by Bishop Horsley, in his sermon on Rom. iv. 25; and by Principal Candlish, in his *Life in a Risen Saviour*, on 1 Corinthians xv.

Surely a view held by so many theologians of different times and schools is no novelty, but might rather be regarded as a commonplace of divinity. But a second strange thing is, that it should be supposed, as it is by Prof. Everett, that it is at all at variance with the substitutionary view of Christ’s death to ascribe such an effect to His resurrection. For all the writers above cited held that doctrine; and both Bishop Horsley and Dr. Candlish expressly argue in support of it, from the efficacy which Paul ascribes to Christ’s resurrection. This is an instance of the way in which objections to the doctrine generally held

¹ This passage is the more memorable, as it is on it that the statement of the Westminster Confession (ch. xi. § 4) as to the time of justification is modelled.

in the Church proceed from a too narrow and inadequate conception of what it really is. The aspects of the truth as presented in Scripture are manifold, and the great theologians have really endeavoured to do justice to them all; but it is not possible to include every one in a single representation; and if critics fasten upon partial statements without trying to enter into the system of thought as a whole, they are liable to grave errors.

But the more important question remains, whether this view of the effect of Christ's resurrection is really Paul's, and not a notion gratuitously forced upon his words by the ingenuity of expositors. In favour of the former alternative must be reckoned the frequency with which he uses expressions that cannot naturally be otherwise understood. The statement in 1 Corinthians xv. 17, "If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins," is an express assertion, that His resurrection was indispensable to our forgiveness. For it should be observed, that the word translated "vain" here is not the same as in verse 14 at an earlier stage of the argument. There he used the word *κενή*, empty, *i.e.* hollow, untrue; but here he says *ματαία*, useless, to no purpose. Though we believe in Christ, yet if He has not been raised from the dead, it will not profit us; we should be still in our sins. Why this is so, Paul does not deem it necessary to explain; but as this forms part of a chain of reasoning, he must have thought it obvious to his readers; and since he had said before that Christ died for our sins, the inference is natural, that His resurrection was needful to show that He had fully atoned for and made an end of them. Again, the words in Romans iv. 25, "who was delivered up for our trespasses, and raised for our justification," express such a close connection, and are so parallel to that of our trespasses with His death, that Meyer's explanation, that the resurrection is the ground of the faith by which we are justified, seems a

very far-fetched one, and that of Horsley preferable, "delivered on account of our trespasses, *i.e.* because we had trespassed, and raised up on account of our justification, *i.e.* because we in Him had been justified, by His atonement for our sins." Thus we can see why, in Romans viii. 34, the resurrection is mentioned, in addition to the death of Christ, as a distinct ground of our freedom from condemnation; and in Romans x. 9 the fact that God has raised Christ from the dead is the object of that faith which is unto righteousness. Further, in 2 Corinthians v. 15 the words, "who for their sakes died and rose again," import that the resurrection was as truly *ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν*, on their behalf, as the death of Christ; He was a public person acting for us in both alike. This text has sometimes been alleged to prove that the statement, "He died for them," does not imply substitution: but it implies that representation, which is the ground of what we call substitution, though it is rather vicarious action of the Head for the members. Once more in 1 Timothy iii. 16, Jesus is said to have been "justified in the Spirit"; and if the antithesis is to be understood like that in Romans i. 3, 4, the reference will be to the resurrection. So in Romans viii. 34, the exclamation in the mouth of believers, "It is God that justifieth; who is he that shall condemn?" is taken from the words of the servant of Jehovah in Isaiah l. 8, 9; and in Romans vi. 7, "He that died hath been justified from sin," apply both to Christ and to us. Thus it seems clear, that Paul does really speak of Christ being justified, and our being justified in Him, as well as for His sake (Gal. ii. 17); and the act by which God acquitted Christ and declared Him righteous was His raising Him from the dead on the third day.

Indeed it seems to have been just the resurrection that convinced Paul that Jesus had died for our sins, and that we have forgiveness and acceptance for His sake. For, as

Prof. Everett well says, the cross had been his offence ; he had held Jesus to be accursed, only not merely because of his being hanged on a tree, but because put to death thus by the condemnation of those who were the guardians of God's law and justice. If Jesus was not the Christ, the Son of God, He was justly condemned, and His crucifixion was really the curse of God, and so Paul held it. But when he saw Him risen again, he perceived that God had reversed the judgment of the Sanhedrin against Him, and declared Him innocent. Since then God had delivered Him up to death ; it cannot have been for any sin of His, but, as had been said of the Servant of Jehovah who was to justify many, "He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities." These were the grounds of His death ; and His resurrection proved that these had been done away, and that when we believe in Him our faith is not vain, for we trust in one whom our sins killed, but exhausted their power in doing so, and could not prevent His rising and our salvation in Him.

But it is objected this gives a different sense to justification in the case of Christ and in ours. I cannot see that it does. Justification in every case is acquittal and absolution from guilt ; that is the simple and uniform meaning of the word ; and the difference in the two cases is simply that in the one the guilt is personal, in the other only imputed ; and in the one the acquittal is for the sake of another ; in the other for His own innocence. Even this difference disappears in view of Paul's conception of the believers' oneness with Christ ; He made our guilt His own and died for it, and by His being raised to life He and we in Him are absolved from that guilt for His righteousness' sake. The double meaning of death, too, is only apparent, and due to the difference between the holy Son of God and the sinful children of men. Paul describes the death that is the wages of sin as involving "tribulation and anguish" ; the

endurance of that by impenitent sinners can never cancel guilt, because they are going on in sin ; but the endurance of it by the Holy One of God does cancel the guilt of all who believe in Him ; He died for our sins, as truly bearing their penalty as the finally impenitent shall do ; but He did what no sinner can do, "He died to sin" (Rom. vi. 10), and therefore, having thus died, He was justified from our sin and on our behalf. According to M. Ménégos' view, indeed, that Paul held the death that is due to sin to be simply destruction, there does lurk in the apostle's teaching a double meaning of death ; but that view is far from being self-evident, and it is certainly not necessary to the belief, that he attributed to the resurrection of Christ an objective bearing on our justification. The general Biblical idea of the death that is the wages of sin would seem to be, separation from God ; and though it cannot perhaps be certainly shown that Paul held this view, it is quite consistent with his statements, and would remove any ambiguity in his use of it in this connection.

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