
A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

The Nature of Redemption.

By the Reverend A. E. Garvie, D.D., Principal of New College, London.

III.

1. I must now attempt as simply and briefly as possible to show how far this teaching of Paul can be made our own. (*a*) Can we agree with him that there is a reaction of God's perfection against sin, that not only does He act against sin in His judgment on sin in its consequences, but that He feels against sin what Paul calls *wrath*, displeasure? So long as from the latter conception we exclude resentment, and only include an indignation against the sin which gives only greater intensity to the compassion for the sinner, I can follow Paul so far, and my conscience approves his doctrine. (*b*) Can we regard the moral order of the world in the consequences—physical, moral, social, spiritual—as a manifestation of this reaction of God against sin, not adequate at present, but anticipatory of an adequate manifestation hereafter, whether in the future life for the individual or a future age of human history for the race, unless grace triumph over sin? To this view also I can give assent (*c*) Can we regard death as not a physical event, and as such a natural necessity only, but as belonging to the manifestation of God's judgment? The meaning with which it has been invested by the human conscience, accepted and approved by Christ, seems to me to warrant our so regarding it. As far as our earthly life is concerned, apart from the Christian hope, death to the thoughtful and serious cannot be only a physical event without any moral or religious meaning. (*d*) Do we believe that it was necessary that Christ should so suffer on His Cross in order that man might not misunderstand God's forgiveness as showing God's indifference to his sin, but might understand it as coming to him in such a way as to make him aware of God's judgment on sin, and so of his need of penitence for sin? Even subjective theories of the atonement admit this necessity. This moral influence, at least, the Cross must have. (*e*) Are we prepared to go the step further which to me it seems certain that Paul takes, that it is necessary for God Himself as the eternally perfect, in consistency with His own character, in the fulfilment of His purpose to make men perfect as He Himself is, to vindicate His righteousness, to manifest His judgment, to reveal the reaction of His nature against sin? Although we must recognize that we are moving in a region where reverence might enjoin silence, and human analogies cannot carry us far, yet surely we must have ourselves felt the necessity of finding an expression for the demand of conscience when that demand was being challenged in the world. When it is a question merely of personal reputation a man may be content to be silent or inactive, although in the interests of public morality it might sometimes be better that he should speak or act, as the occasion might require. But should he be placed in a position of responsibility, when his silence or inactivity might be regarded as a condonation of wrong, then he owes it to himself as well as society to show that, and how he condemns the wrong. If God's purpose in the world is not accidental to His character, but is that character in action, it is a necessity for Himself to put beyond doubt or question His judgment of the sin that challenges His purpose and contradicts His character. (*f*) Do we not in fact make a mistake in distinguishing the subjective and the objective aspects of the atonement, how it affects man and God; for is there not a moral affinity of God and man, and is not God's purpose for man a moral community? What is necessary to bring man to penitence and faith is necessary for God, as the fulfilment of His purpose depends on it; how can penitence be necessary in man towards sin, if condemnation of sin is not necessary for God. Can penitence be anything else than man's recognition of, and response to, God's condemnation? What my Christian conscience has taught me at least is that God must, even in forgiving, judge sin. (*g*) When we pass the further question, How does Christ's death realize God's condemnation of sin? Paul's answer is not complete; but he does teach quite plainly that Christ did bear the consequences of man's sin, was made sin on our behalf (2 Co 5^{21}), and became a curse for us (Gal 3^{13}). Even if the preposition ὑπὲρ, and not ἀντί, is generally used, we cannot escape the doctrine of substitution. He suffered that we might not suffer, and what is that

but that He suffered instead of us? Just what Jesus did suffer, how He could so suffer, and why He must suffer, Paul does not tell us; and we must try to answer these questions without his aid, even if we agree with Paul that it was in the death of Christ God proved Himself both just and the justifier of the ungodly.

2. I must attempt in closing to indicate what answer I should give to these questions. (i) As to the actuality of the sacrifice I hold that we do not do justice to the records of the agony of Gethsemane or the desolation of Calvary, unless we recognize that for the moral conscience and religious consciousness of Jesus death was the judgment of sin, and might involve a severance of man's fellowship with God. God did not abandon Him; but in His own sense of His relation to God He did think and feel forsaken, even if only for a moment, for, subject as He was to our human limitations, His consciousness of the reality of God might be obscured. He tasted death on learning in His own experience the worst that death could be. For the godless that may not be the worst, for the Son of God it was the worst, and the depth of His agony no human grief can fathom. While this is a holy of holies, we should try to realize what for us men and our salvation He endured, what our redemption cost as well as won.

> Yea, once Immanuel's orphaned cry
> His Universe hath shaken,
> It went up single, echoless,
> My God, I am forsaken.
> It went up from the Holy's lips
> Amid His last creation
> That of the last no son should use
> These words of desolation.

(ii) As to the possibility of such an experience we are able to offer some suggestions, anticipated by Paul in his doctrine of the solidarity of the human race in sin and grace alike, and his experience of the identification of his life with Christ's and Christ's with his. Man as personably is social; he can take the life of others into his own, and live his own life in others. Love by its very nature is vicarious. Christ loved both God and man, and so perfectly that He could identify Himself with God and man. He not only endured the Cross in obedience to God and compassion for man, but in His experience on the Cross He identified Himself with God's judgment on sin, and with man's endurance of that judgment. As one with man in love He endured, and as one with God in love He approved the judgment of sin. Sinless as He was, His endurance of the doom of sin was an acceptance which perfectly corresponded to that approval. We may hesitate to use the words repentance or confession of the sinless; but we may say that His sacrifice was the human Amen to the divine sentence of death on sin. On His Cross man and God were in perfect accord in regard to sin. It is evident why the death under such conditions was necessary. Only thus could even He apprehend all that God's judgment on sin involves, when God required of Him so to die; only thus could He apprehend all that death may mean for man, as all the conditions of His death exposed to Him the enormity of man's sin, and made Him acutely sensitive to its shame and sorrow. (iii) So, approaching our last question—the necessity that God's judgment on sin should be realized in Christ's Cross—we may have caught some glimpses of the truth that may scatter our difficulties. A logical demonstration of that necessity it would be impiety either to ask or to offer. If for Jesus, even in Gethsemane, it was possible to believe that the cup might pass, and if only in agony of prayer even He was taught that the cup could not pass (Mt $26^{39.42}$), how irreverent is it for human cleverness to attempt to prove that necessity. I myself believe that we must learn that necessity, as Jesus did, upon our knees, in moral intuition and spiritual discernment. Christ's perfect approval as Son of God and perfect acceptance as Son of Man of the judgment of God on sin in death in an undivided consciousness (the aspects and relations of which we must distinguish) established once for all that moral community of God and man which is the fulfilment of God's purpose for man, and established that community in respect of what was necessary if God's forgiveness was not to be misunderstood as indifference to sin, but to be understood as in the very form in which it came, judging finally and adequately the sin forgiven.

3. But how does the Cross offer forgiveness? We must remember that the Crucified in the days of the flesh revealed God's fatherhood, and in God's name offered forgiveness to sinners, that He apprehended His death as a ransom for many, and as the sacrifice of the new covenant between God and man, that on His Cross He prayed for

the forgiveness of those who crucified Him, that in His dying He proved not only His fidelity to God, but His sympathy with, and compassion for, man. The whole New Testament records the experience of men who had found forgiveness in Christ and Christ crucified. The interpretation given above offers us a reason for this assurance. In Christ's consciousness the moral affinity of God and man was realized in a moral community of judgment of sin, and what is forgiveness but the restoration of man's moral community with God, disturbed by sin? Christ by His Spirit reproduces that consciousness in believers, for in Him they die unto sin, and live unto God, and so the broken fellowship is renewed. When in penitence they accept and approve God's judgment, then and only then can they in faith receive the grace wherein they stand as sons redeemed by the Son of God.

4. Any statement must be incomplete, and yet the Christian thinker must do his utmost to get as near completeness as he can. While we must recognize the necessity of the death of Christ as penal substitution and satisfaction, not in the sense that He felt Himself guilty, or was punishment by God, but in the sense that in submitting unto death He not only shared with man the consequences of sin, but accepted and approved the moral order of God which appointed these consequences, yet the value of the death of Christ transcends that necessity. It is not Christ's suffering with which God is well pleased; it is those sufferings as the necessary sacrifice of a love such as His for a race such as ours in a world of sin, pain, and death. It is the perfect love, compassionate to man and obedient to God, that has in itself a value so absolute, revealing and realizing eternal perfection, that it once for all in human history gives the promise and the pledge that God's purpose, challenged by sin, will be fulfilled. God is justified in His permission and tolerance of sin in the world, in His judgments that have ever fallen short of the extinction of sinners, by introducing into human history the Cross that judges in forgiving sin, because He has therein brought into the human race a standard, a motive, and a power of holy love, which are a morally and spiritually recreative activity of God for the effective transformation of sinners into sons and saints. The sinful, sorrowing, dying world without the Cross would make belief in God as holy love well-nigh impossible; the Cross in such a world makes faith in the eternal perfection of God not only possible, but certain and confident. As moral achievement, no less than moral endurance, it justifies God's forgiveness of the race which Christ represents, and justifies man's faith in the God whom Christ reveals. Its absolute value more than compensates for the detraction from the world's moral value due to sin. There is active, no less than passive, obedience; there is merit no less than satisfaction. In the Cross not only is every barrier to the holy love of God to mankind removed; it is the channel for the full flow of that holy love.

Recent Foreign Theology.

A Hebrew Deluge Story in Cuneiform.[1]

Professor Clay is one of the best and most accurate copyists of cuneiform texts, and he has a *flair* for discovering the most interesting among them. His new work is based on certain tablets in the Pierpont Morgan collection, one of which is an ancient version of the story of the Deluge. This, he points out, is an early form of the story as given in two broken tablets in the British Museum, which is known to Assyriologists as the 'Ea and Atrakhasis' version, and he gives revised translations of both of them. He has added to them the fragments of some other versions—a little fragment of thirteen lines written probably in the Kassite period, the Deluge story preserved in the fragments of Berossus, the fragment of a Sumerian version in the Philadelphia Museum, and another fragment dated in the eleventh year of Ammizadok (B.C. 1966) which is now in the Pierpont Morgan collection. As I stated in my *Higher Criticism* thirty years ago, there were many different versions of the story current in Babylonia, and

[1] *A Hebrew Deluge Story in Cuneiform*, by Albert T. Clay. Oxford University Press, 1922.