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

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

received the organ of joy, the sense by which pleasure can be known. He has the right to pleasure which comes from the possession of the faculty—the right which the eye has to see, which the ear has to hear, which the heart has to feel. He has got back the liberty of nature because he has himself for the first time become natural—acquired all the organs for physical enjoyment. He has entered into the pleasure of natural things because he has entered into their spontaneity. He has overcome the tendency to self-consciousness which is the death of happiness. He has ceased to say we shall be "as gods, knowing good and evil." It is the thought of being like gods that expels Paradise from the eyes, that stops the flow of the rivers, that withers the foliage of the trees. The overcoming of my own shadow restores the banished light, and the spontaneity of a sacrificial soul unbars my way to that play of energy which belongs by nature to created things.

GEORGE MATHESON.

CHRIST'S ATTITUDE TO HIS OWN DEATH.

IV.

WHAT we have hitherto attempted to understand and define has been Christ's *prophetic* attitude to His own death, and we may now add that its most remarkable characteristic is its objectivity. If He has not conceived and described it as if it were another's death rather than His own, yet He has even in His most inward moments thought of it with a certain detachment of mind; and has represented it more as an idea He had imaged than as an experience He had undergone. In other words, His attitude to it was rather intellectual than emotional, more historical than personal, more that of one who saw than of Him who suffered. This was inevitable, and expresses one of those limitations which

so define and authenticate His humanity. To *foresee* may be to *forefeel*, but in idea rather than in reality, more through sympathy than by experience; and however perfect the foresight, the reality must needs be richer and mightier than the idea, the experience more vivid and keen than the sympathy. Jesus was no mere objective intellect, as it were a conscious mirror in which the fugitive phenomena of His time were reflected for co-ordination and interpretation; but He was a beautiful and sensitive soul, which the things it touched could thrill with pleasure or sting with pain. Hence, when death came to Him as an experience, it could not but be to His consciousness quite another thing than it had seemed to be as a mere idea or expectation; and it was these new elements in the concrete reality which made death for Him so bitter, or, as He named it to His captors, "Your hour and the power of darkness."[1] And so the discussion as to His prophetic mind must be supplemented and completed by the analysis of His consciousness as He stood face to face with death.

I.

In order that we may connect the new discussion with the old, we must here note and distinguish the two principal positions in His prophetic speech,—viz. (1) How He conceived His death; (2) How He described its circumstances and mode. As to the first, He affirmed His death to be necessary yet voluntary, redemptive and therefore vicarious (*ἀντὶ πολλῶν*), a sacrifice in which He shed His blood in order to the remission of sins, the ratifying of the new covenant, and the organization of the new society. As to the second, He represents His death as the work of "the elders and chief priests," who were to "deliver Him up to the Gentiles to be crucified." Now between these two positions there is something more than an apparent contradiction.

[1] Luke xxii. 53.

If His death was voluntary, the free surrender of His life "as a ransom for many," how could it be the work, on the one hand, of "the elders and chief priests," and, on the other, of the Romans? The anomaly seems to be increased by the difference in His language and temper when He defines the idea and function of His death, and when He describes its circumstances and mode. In the former case He speaks of it as a beneficent work, spontaneously undertaken and graciously fulfilled; in the latter case He speaks of it as an evil deed, guiltily attempted and accomplished. But how can the one character belong to the death, and the other to the acts and process by which it is realized? The discussion of these questions involves important issues both for the history of the Passion and for its theological interpretation.

A. It may simplify the discussion if we begin by making a very obvious distinction—the worth or merit of the death, *i.e.*, the quality by virtue of which it could redeem, consisted in the will and dignity of the sufferer, not in the circumstances and mode of His death. Its essence or intrinsic quality was strictly personal to Him; what belonged to its form and manner was accidental and occasional. The wooden cross, with all its hideous accessories, the pierced hands and feet, the wounded side, the howling mob, the mocking priests, the vacillating Roman, the sentinel soldiers, the blistering sun under whose pitiless heat the crucified thirsts and faints and dies—these are not the unholy, but essential ritual of this unique sacrifice, the acts, instruments and modes without which its substance could not be. Jesus Himself never spoke as if they were; it was not man's action, least of all theirs whose hands crucified Him, but His own will, which made His death a sacrifice. The cross to Him was not two transverse bars of wood, but an inward experience so unspeakable as to need a cruel and horrible sign for its expression.

The cause of His suffering was so indescribable as to require for its representation the symbology that, while embodied in human conduct, yet spoke above all things known to man of mean and inveterate devilry, viz., the priest who ought to stand for the holiness of God, turned into the minister of sin; and the judge who is charged to be the guardian of innocence, made into the instrument of guilt. But while He recognises the form as inevitable, He never conceives it as essential; all that is of the essence is His own pure contribution. Men contribute the accidents which make the essence live to the imagination, the forms which enable it to overawe the conscience and make its appeal to the heart.

B. The relation, however, between the essence and the accidents has not been allowed to continue as He conceived it. There is a great distinction between the morbid and the pious imagination, for while the latter always seeks by assimilating the form to the matter to purify and exalt religion, the former tends by accommodating the matter to the form to coarsen and deprave it. The pious imagination is ethical, the morbid is sensuous; the one is satisfied only when religion has the apparel of light and the adornment of the graces, but the other is pleased only when spiritual ideas are grossly, if not carnally, embodied. Now the Passion is the field where the morbid imagination has most disastrously performed its metamorphic feats. The apostolic writings exhibit, whenever they touch the sufferings of the Saviour, the most marvellous reticence. They speak of His condescension, grace, love; His beautiful renunciation of self in assuming the likeness of man and humbling Himself to the death of the cross; they speak, though but rarely, of the wickedness or the ignorance of the men who "crucified the Lord of glory," but they indulge in no ghastly details. What appealed to their imagination was what He did for man, not the marks

which He bore on His body of blood-red human hands. And the sub-apostolic remained as the apostolic age, absorbed in the contemplation of His grace rather than of His physical agonies. The oldest Christian art shows how long this lucid sanity of imagination survived. In the oldest attempts to represent Him in the Roman catacombs or the Eastern basilicas, He appears in four distinct characters. First, as the Good Shepherd, bearing in His arms a lamb, or even, as Matthew Arnold so finely told us, as if in answer to Tertullian's unpitying sentence,

> "He saves the sheep, the goats He doth not save,"

carrying on His shoulders a kid. Secondly, as the young yet sage teacher, sitting amid His disciples and distributing the pure and peaceable wisdom which is from above. Thirdly, as the immortal youth radiant with the beauty which years cannot lessen or care deface. Fourthly, as the Lord of life breathing His own imperishable energy into the dead man whom He brings forth from the tomb. These are the fit symbols of a society which was conscious of having become, through the condescension of the Eternal, a sharer in the eternal life. But in the darker days that followed the sense of the immortal life faded, and the feeling of mortal weakness took its place. Asceticism invaded the Church, the body was hypostatized, made the seat of sin, the abode of the lusts which bring forth death. To please the body was to offend God; to punish the body, to do penance by means of fasting and physical pain, was to be acceptable to Him. And what God approved in the Christian He had received in an infinite degree from Christ; the death which He had accepted as an atonement for human sin was a death of superlative suffering, supreme as a sacrifice because pre-eminent in its bodily anguish. This mediæval idea, where the accidents of the Passion have become its very essence, created mediæval art. The ancient masters

were good painters, but bad theologians, and their art was most marvellous where their theology was most miserable. They made the most hideous subjects seem majestic, and forced the fastidious imagination to feel æsthetic pleasure in the contemplation of the painful, or even the horrible. They studied the agonies of the dying, the livid lineaments, the rigid limbs and emaciated frame of the dead, the horrors of the dissecting-room and the gallows, that they might the more realistically depict the Saviour bearing the cross or on the cross, being taken down from the cross or prepared for burial, entombed or rising from the tomb. And what was so enshrined in art was enfixed in thought; men could not escape from those dismal images of Christ, which met them everywhere, faced them in their worship, surrounded them in their hours of devotion, so possessed their eyes and imaginations that they could think of the Passion under no other terms than those thus prescribed and determined. The painter may be a subtler, an even more permanent and penetrative force in theology than the divine; and when he uses all the resources of his art to glorify the morbid and idealize the horrible, he becomes, in the very degree that his art is great, a mischievous and deteriorative force in religion. We should, but for the transcendent influence of the old masters, have long since outgrown the debased oriental heathenism which has made our idea of the Passion little else than the apotheosis of all, whether in dying or in death, that is most shocking to man and most divisive from God.

II.

In order that we may transcend this vulgar and carnal point of view, we must return to our analysis of the mind of Jesus.

A. And here reverting to the distinction between His idea of His death and His foresight of its circum-

stances and mode, we have to note a correspondent and characteristic difference in His mental attitude. From the idea of death He never shrinks; He contemplates it calmly, speaks of it with the serene dignity of one who knew that the most tragic moment of His life was at once the supreme choice of His will and the real end of His being. But when He thinks of the mode and agents, His feeling changes, and His speech is charged now with monition and judgment, now with pity and regret. This difference is recognised both by the Synoptists and by John. By the Synoptists He is shown as speaking of the positive fact and function of His death only when His mood is most exalted, or when He is most moved by love and pity, or when He least feels the shadow of human hate and feels most the clinging trust or blind yet kindly fellowship of His disciples. But when He thinks of the men and means by which it is to be accomplished, His language rings with another tone; the men are the wicked husbandmen, or the foolish builders; they are "blind guides," "hypocrites," who crucify the living prophet, and build the sepulchres of the prophets long dead. The city they rule so moves His compassion that at the sight of it He weeps. The traitor is a man of so woeful a fate that He had better never have been born. And so while of death in relation to Himself He thinks and speaks with benignant grace, the thought of its manner begets in Him shame and something akin to dismay.

In John the difference is even more strongly accentuated. He speaks of His death in language that would on other lips suggest rapture. It was His own act, the thing He had come by command of the Father expressly to do.[1] It was the hour in which "the Son of Man should be glorified."[2] By death He was to "be lifted up from the earth," and would "draw all men unto Himself."[3] But the sanc-

[1] x. 18. [2] xii. 23-27. [3] *Ib.* xvii. 1, 33.

tity of the death does not sanctify the instruments by which it is realized. On the contrary the traitor acts by inspiration of Satan.[1] The Jews are like their father the devil, who was "a murderer from the beginning,"[2] and this was said because He knew that they "sought to kill Him."[3]

B. We have, then, even in the prophetic period these two very different, but not at all incompatible, elements in the consciousness of Jesus. His sacred joy or spiritual exaltation in the prospect of death and His horror at the form in which, and the forces through which, it was to come to Him. But now we must advance a step further, and study His spirit as it suffers in the hands of those forces whose action He had foreseen. And here we shall have constant need to remember the distinction between experience and foresight, for the evil the intellect watches is sweet when compared with the infinite bitterness of the evil which the soul may feel. What we have then to attempt to describe is the transition of the Saviour's mind from the objective contemplation of the death He was to die to His subjective experience of the powers by which it was to be accomplished.

The incident which exhibits this transition is the scene in Gethsemane. Now, of all the events in the Saviour's life this seems to me to demand the most reverent handling; for it is, as it were, the very Holy of Holies, the inmost sanctuary of His sorrow, which ought to be entered only at those moments when thought has been purged from the pride and impurities of life. But the scholar is often more curious than reverent, yet in sacred things the irreverent is near of kin to the blind; and as it is so easy to be unfit for its interpreter, few incidents have been more utterly misunderstood than this. It is not surprising that Celsus should have explained the scene as due to Christ's

[1] xiii. 27. [2] viii. 44. [3] vii. 1.

fear of death;[1] or that Julian should have pitied Him as a miserable mortal unable to bear His fate calmly;[2] or that a modern pagan like Vanini on his way to the scaffold should have pointed to a crucifix, and said: "Illi in extremis prae timore imbellis sudor: ego imperterritus morior."[3] Nor are we surprised that the older Rationalists should regard it as the effect of a purely physical cause—fear due to bodily exhaustion and indisposition;[4] or that Baur should see in it only an event that enabled him to play the Synoptists off against John and John against the Synoptists;[5] or that Strauss, holding the narrative for more poetical than historical, should have mythically decomposed it in his first Life,[6] and followed in his second Baur's antithetical criticism to its issue in a prosaic naturalism;[7] or that Renan, true to his Parisian sentimentality, should conceive it as a moment when human nature reawoke in Jesus, and He felt enfeebled, if not affrighted, at the vision before Him of the death which was to end all, and the vision behind of the clear springs of Galilee and the fair maidens who visited them.[8] But we are surprised that Keim should see in it the human dread of death holding Christ back from His destiny,[9] that Schleiermacher should lose all sense of its sublime significance in a hypercritical analysis of the possible sources of its details,[10] or that Neander should see Him here asking, as a man, to be spared the sufferings that awaited Him.[11] But bad as these explanations are,

[1] *Contra Cels.*, lib. ii., c. xxiv.

[2] *Apud* Theod. Mops., *in Ev. Lucæ Com. Frag.; Pat. Gr.*, T. lxvi. p. 724.

[3] Grammondus, *Hist. Gall. ab. ex. Hen. IV.*, lib. iii. pp. 211. seqq.; cf. Brucker, *Historia Philos.*, T. iv., pars 11, pp. 677–8.

[4] Paulus, *Das Leben Jesu*, ii. pp. 202–210.

[5] *Untersuch. über die Kanon. Evang.*, pp. 198 ff., 207, 265 f.

[6] *Life of Jesus* (4th ed.), §§ 125, 126.

[7] *New Life*, § 87.

[8] *Vie de Jésus*, p. 378 (7th ed.).

[9] *Jesus of Nazara*, vi. p. 12.

[10] *Das Leben Jesu*, pp. 422–4. Cf. Essay on the Gospel of St. Luke, pp. 300–1.

[11] *Life of Christ*, § 280.

some of those we owe to more orthodox theologians are worse. Steinmeyer thinks that Jesus here may have taken upon His shoulders the sin of the world in order that He might, vicariously, make atonement for it on the Cross.[1] Long before him Calvin had here seen Jesus as our substitute, burdened with our sins, bearing the wrath of God with the judgment-seat before His eyes.[2] More reasonable was Ambrose, who saw Jesus sorrowful not for His own, but for man's state: "Tristis erat, non pro sua passione, sed pro nostra dispersione."[3] But possibly even more reasonable was the elder Dumas when he represented the agony as a second temptation, in which the devil tried to drive Christ back from His work by three successive visions, the last and most terrible being the persecution by the Church of the heretics, their heresy being often their higher saintliness. These selections from a multitude of elaborately argued opinions are enough to show how hard it has been to seize the real significance of this awful moment in the history of our Saviour's Passion.

III.

How then is the agony to be interpreted?

A. We assume its reality and the authenticity of the Synoptic narrative.[4] John does not give it, but the attitude and state of mind it expresses were not unknown to him.[5] Luke differs in certain details from Matthew and Mark—the angel which strengthens Him, the sweat "as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground," and the omission of the thrice-repeated prayer; but the differences are mainly noticeable for this—Luke, by the angel and the sweat of blood, and Matthew and Mark, by the three-

[1] *Leidensgesch. des Herrn*, pp. 62 ff.
[2] *Harm. Evang., Matt.* xxvi. 37.
[3] *Expos. Ev. sec. Lucam*, lib. x. § 61.
[4] Matt. xxvi. 36–46; Mark xiv. 32–42; Luke xxii. 39, 40.
[5] John xii. 27.

fold resort to prayer, express the same thing—the intensity of the strain, the deadly nature of the struggle. Now, it is evident that the Evangelists did not regard the narrative as representing anything so commonplace and even vulgar as the fear of death. They had told, with many a touch of unconscious truth, how the disciples had refused to see the approach of its inexorable foot while He had looked upon it with serene and open face; and, simple as they were, they could not have mistaken the meaning of so sudden a reversal of mental attitude. Not that horror at death in Jesus would have been either an unseemly or an inexplicable thing. Contempt of life is the obverse, indifference to death is the reverse of the same mind. The more excellent the good of life seems, the more terrible will appear its negation; and it might well have been that the soul which of all souls most possessed the good should have most loved life, and most have feared its darksome ending. But the feeling, though explicable in itself, will not fit into the history. The death so often anticipated, so solemnly sanctioned, so formally blessed, could not be thus met. The higher we place its significance for Jesus, the less can we construe it as the cause of His agony; for this agony must stand in organic connexion with His expressed mind, not in violent contradiction to it. If so, then it is evident that the antecedent of the agony was not the idea of death, but the feeling as to its means and agents. His death was to be for sin, but at the hands of sinners, yet of sinners disguised as "elders and chief priests," as disciples and judges. In foresight the mode of death was subordinate to the idea, but in experience the idea tended to be lost in the emotions which the mode awakened. How this was the history tells. In Galilee the men who were to effect His death were mere names to Him; in Jerusalem the names became men. They were the priests, who stood for all that the worship of God signified; the elders, who were in symbol the

people of God; the magistrates, who guarded freedom, enforced law, and typified right; the disciple, who had heard and followed Him, and

"Lived in His mild and magnificent eye."

Behind the actual persons He thus saw ideal figures stand; and if the ideal signified what ought to have been, it was the actual which, by its inevitable working, determined His all too bitter experience. To see it stand in the holy place was bad enough, it was worse to feel that it stood there to oppose all that was of God in Himself. And worst of all was the discovery that evil had found a foothold and embodiment in the society He Himself had selected and trained. We must not overlook the influence which the conduct of Judas would exercise on the mind of the Master. Jesus as He entered the garden carried a double memory: the gracious dream of the supper, and the lurid image of the traitor. From the very nature of the case, the more bitter would for the moment be the more potent feeling; for where the soul is so susceptible and tense, the painful strikes more deeply than the agreeable. And Gethsemane represents the struggle of Jesus with the new problem which thus came before His imagination personified in Judas and the priests, and which He had to solve in the very face, if not in the very article, of death.

B. Let us try now to conceive clearly what this new problem was. Jesus was holy, and felt as only the sinless can the stain of sin burn like a living fire upon His soul. He had conceived Himself as a Redeemer by the sacrifice of Himself, as a Saviour by death. But now, when He comes face to face with this death, what does He find? That sin has taken occasion from His very grace to become more exceedingly sinful, to mix itself up with His sacrifice, penetrating and effacing it, transmuting it from a free and gracious act into a violent and necessitated

death. His act of redemption becomes as it were the opportunity for sin to increase. The thing He most hates seems to become a partner with Him in the work He most loves, contributing to its climax and consummation. Or if not so conceived, it must be conceived under a still more dreadful form, as forcing itself into His way, taking possession of His work, turning it into "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence," a means of creating sinners while it had been intended to save from sin. And there was an even more intolerable element in the situation: the men who were combining to effect this death were persons He was dying to save, and by their action they were making the saving a matter more infinitely hard, more vastly improbable, and changing the cause efficient of salvation into a sufficient reason for judgment.

Is it possible to exaggerate the suffering which such a problem at such a moment must have caused? He could not turn back without being defeated by His horror of this transcendent evil, and He could not go forward without feeling that He was almost compelling it to be. And so first seclusion, then solitude, become to Him a necessity. The society that had made the Supper sacred becomes intolerable; *then* He had something to give which made Him happy, while it consoled and satisfied the disciples; *now* He wanted to receive and could not, for they did not understand what to give and why He suffered. So He leaves them that He may pray alone, yet pauses, and turns to take Peter, James, and John, the three who seemed to know Him best and love Him most. But they are as irresponsive as the dumb soul which speaks no word the human ear can hear, because it has no ear which human speech can reach. So He turns to God in what we may almost describe as His despair. Thrice He prays in an agony of spirit which becomes an agony of body; but even in the midst of the anguish that will not be controlled, He remains master of His will, com-

pels it, even while all His nature seems to resist, to be not submissive but obedient, to accept not its own impulse, but God's wisdom as its law. The thing He would not do, is what His own nature abhors, but the thing He will do because He must, is what God requires. He feels the position as it lives in the place and the moment, but God sees the universal and the eternal issues within it; and so in spite of the noble and justified resistance of the flesh, the spirit obeys the wisdom that cannot err. The conflict is over, and He goes to a death which is at one and the same moment the world's redemption and the world's crime.

C. I feel the temerity and presumption in so thinking, and still more in thus writing, about so solemn a moment in the most august of all lives. But it is humbly offered as a contribution to the understanding of His mind in relation to His own death. There has been no effort made at any doctrinal construction of the agony, nay, I feel as if the intellect, in analytically handling the Passion, would become little else than profane. I may say, however, that the very last thing I could bring myself to do is to apply legal fictions or judicial processes to the mind and state of the Saviour in Gethsemane. Everything here seems to me superlatively real, in the last and highest degree actual. And the reality in this stage of the Passion concerns His relation not to the Father, but to destiny and death. From death as such He does not shrink, but from its mode and agencies, from death under the form and conditions which involve its authors in what appears inexpiable guilt, His whole nature recoils. And this recoil compels us to see that we must divide asunder His part and man's; in what He contributes there is saving efficacy, in what man contributes there is a guilt which causes shame, and becomes a reproach to all mankind. And here one may find some small part of the reason why His prayer for release could not be granted. The cross has in a perfectly real sense done more than

any other agency to convince the world of sin; one may say it has created in man, both as person and as race, the conscience for sin. It stands not simply as the symbol of the grace that saves, but of the wickedness that dared attempt to extinguish the grace. And another thing may be added. While He had to drink the cup, it would not be quite correct to say that His prayer was not answered. For He did not pray in vain. The author of *Hebrews* says, "He was heard for His godly fear."[1] Jesus died on the cross, but not of the cross. He suffered crucifixion, but He was not crucified. The will which triumphed in the conflict broke the heart which could not bear to endure death at the hands of sinners. And this brings us to the conclusion that the death which redeems was all the work of the Redeemer; and not at all of the men who might sin against His grace but could not sin away His mercy, or deprive Him of the splendid privilege of giving Himself "a ransom for many."

A. M. FAIRBAIRN.

MOSES AT THE BATTLE OF REPHIDIM.

"Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword."—EXODUS xvii. 8–13.

STUDENTS have always been at considerable pains to explain the meaning and efficacy of the lifting up of the hands of Moses during the battle which Israel fought against

[1] v. 9.