We may be sorry and we may amend; but God alone can mend the rent in the seamless robe of righteousness. He mends it at the Cross. This is the first and fullest meaning of the Cross. It is a recognition of the integrity of holiness. As Jesus crept the nearer to the Cross, this was the thought that most engrossed Him. It was not man's need of Him; it was not His action upon man. It was God's need of Him; it was God's own need of His sorrow, God's holy will for His obedience and death; it was the action of His Cross upon the holiness of God.

And when God's holiness has been satisfied, then the repentance comes. For it is atonement that makes repentance, not repentance that makes atonement. Repentance comes because the Father of love has proved Himself a 'Holy Father.' He has closed the rent that sin had made; He offers a pardon that *is* a pardon, and that is absolutely free.

Back to St. Paul.

By Professor the Rev. J. S. Banks, Headingley College, Leeds.

We know that the authority of the apostle to the Gentiles was questioned by an active party in the Church during his life. The Judaisers, who would have made Christianity a reformed Judaism and the Church another Jewish sect, put him on his defence. In the Epistle to the Galatians and elsewhere St. Paul meets these assaults, vindicating for himself and his teaching the authority of an apostle of Christ. The gospel which he preached came to him 'through revelation of Jesus Christ.' He received it, not through the hands of James, Cephas, and John, but directly from heaven. 'Am I not an apostle? The seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.'

In our day St. Paul's authority is attacked not by Jewish but by Christian assailants. The cry we hear, 'Back to Christ,' means in some quarters not merely 'Back from the Church and dogma,' but 'Back from the Epistles' to the teaching of Christ in the Gospels. Dr. Horton's book, *The Teaching of Jesus*, is constantly playing on this string. The position of the new Ritschlian school, represented by Dr. Wendt, author of *The Teaching of Jesus*, is that Christians are bound only by the express teaching of Christ Himself, and that the teaching of the apostles is to be accepted only in so far as it is supported by sayings of the Master Himself. A distinction is thus made in the New Testament, which practically reduces it to the Gospels. The Gospels are not only made a court of appeal, but the only court with authority in matters of faith. It should be noted further that the Gospels thus set apart are the three Synoptics. The Fourth Gospel is only a witness to Christ's teaching at second-hand, because it is supposed that in passing through the writer's mind the teaching has undergone considerable modification, the amount of which is not easily defined. We could almost wish that St. Paul were alive again to meet his new assailants. The question in dispute is much more than one of mere sentiment. If the contention were that special sacredness is due to the words of the Lord Jesus Himself, no one would contradict. But the question is not one of special sacredness in Christ's teaching, but of any sacredness at all in apostolic teaching.

There can be no doubt that the influence of St. Paul on Christian thought has been very great. The subtraction of Pauline theology from Christian doctrine would make an immense difference. It is sometimes assumed that the dominance of this theology began at the Reformation, but this is a mistake. Its influence was greatly increased at the Reformation by the rediscovery, so to speak, of St. Paul's teaching on the nature of justification and redemption, which has remained ever since in the front line of Protestant testimony. But, apart from these subjects, St. Paul's teaching entered into the very substance of Christian faith from the first days of the Church. It would be easy to show this by reference to Christian writers down to the time of the Reformation, but it is needless. Now it is proposed to take a new departure. St. Paul, and for that matter St. John also, are simply great Christian teachers, important as standing nearest to the great Teacher Himself. But their teaching is as open

to criticism as that of Augustine or Calvin, or any other writer. We may analyse their doctrine, separate its threads, discover its source, and then receive or reject as we think best.

The first remark suggested is the novelty of the theory. We do not say that we are obliged to believe what the entire Church has believed from the beginning, because that would be a very comprehensive admission. But when we find that Christendom has always proceeded on the assumption of the unity of the New Testament and of the equal authority of its parts, any theory that denies this has very strong presumption against it. We should require overwhelming evidence to convince us that on such a question the Church had proceeded on a false basis from the beginning. The Church always did assume the inspiration and the authority of St. Paul as of the other apostles. Otherwise his writings would never have been used and appealed to as they have been; the course of thought in the Church and the character of its theology would have been altogether different. The new theory certainly has the merit of perfect novelty, and involves a complete breach with the past.

Is there such overwhelming evidence? No evidence from the past, from the teaching of Christ and the apostles, is adduced. The chief argument is an abstract one, founded on the complexity of the New Testament as a whole and its consequent unsuitableness to form a standard of doctrine, and on the simplicity of a standard consisting only of the teaching of Christ. There is also a specious appearance of doing honour to Christ. Simplicity, however, may be bought too dear, and it is doing Christ doubtful honour to slight Him in the person of His elect servants. 'He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me.' Speaking of those who regard the apostolic writings 'as only Petrine, Pauline, or Alexandrian versions of the Christian doctrine, interesting records of the views of individuals or schools of opinion concerning the salvation which Jesus began to speak,' Canon Bernard in his *Bampton Lectures* on 'The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament,' says: 'No, the words of our Lord are not honoured (as these men seem to think) by being thus isolated; for it is an isolation which separates them from other words which are also His own words given by Him in that day when He no longer spake in proverbs, but showed His servants plainly of the Father' (p. 87).

Does Christ anywhere intimate that He meant His own teaching to be treated in this exceptional way? Does He intimate that it would be complete in itself? All the indications are to the contrary. In His last discourses He says expressly, 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.' In the same discourse He states how His teaching will be completed. The Spirit is to teach them all things, bring His words to their remembrance, and guide them into all the truth. If after this there had been no supplement of equal authority, what becomes of these promises?

Is it strange that Christ's teaching should be left unfinished for the reason assigned? Think, how wonderful, how lofty that teaching was, how after centuries of study we seem to be only at the beginning of knowledge, how we are constantly receiving new interpretations of the teaching of Jesus and the words of Jesus; and it will scarcely appear strange that Christ found it necessary, considering who and what the disciples were, to defer the complete exposition of the truth. With only the Gospels in our hands, how many questions arise respecting their meaning, respecting the issues and bearing of their contents, which no human teacher could answer!

Besides, Christ did not appear in the world as an abrupt phenomenon, unforeseen and unannounced. He appears as a part—the crown and consummation indeed, but still a part—of a great system of revelation. Speaking of Scripture as a whole, He is the Head; prophetic and apostolic teachers are the members of the one body of truth. If these are separated, how can either be understood? Scripture can only be understood as a unity, and the New Testament can only be understood as a unity. The idea of a progressive revelation, so plainly expressed in Hebrews i. 1, implies subordination and relative imperfection or incompleteness in the parts. But it equally implies identity in the divine source and in the authority speaking in the parts.

Christ Himself wrote nothing. The account of His ministry comes to us from other hands than His own. In this respect the Gospels are on the same footing as the Epistles. The authorship of St. Paul's Epistles, at least of the four chief ones, is far better attested than that of the Synoptics. What questions may be raised on the latter point! If anyone thinks that in relying on the Gospels only, he escapes all disputes about authenticity and

genuineness, he is greatly mistaken, as the works of the critics themselves show.

This leads to the remark, that the text of the Gospels is subjected by the same school to the most capricious criticism. If the Gospels were left intact, we might be partially compensated for our loss, we might cling to the belief that faith in a divine Christ is still possible. But it is not so. We have said that St. John and the Fourth Gospel are treated like St. Paul. They are treated even worse, because while the Pauline authorship of the Epistles is admitted, how much of the Fourth Gospel comes from St. John is left quite uncertain. Further, the contents of the Synoptics are cut up in the same way. Whatever in Christ's reputed words cannot be made to agree with what it is supposed He must have said, is rejected. In the same sentence one clause is taken and the other left. Christ cannot have said this or that, because it is too advanced, or it bears the marks of a later date, or its origin cannot be traced. Then the miracles are cut out. When they are cut out of St. Mark's Gospel, what is left? We do not refer to this treatment of the Gospels in order to prejudice the argument about St. Paul, but simply that we may understand the extent of the case we have to meet. We can only explain such arbitrary criticism on the supposition that the critics bring to the Gospels a preconceived theory of what Christ's teaching contained, and adapt the Gospels to it. Where they obtained the materials for the theory, we do not know. This criticism of the Gospels makes comparison with St. Paul's Epistles difficult, but we must try.

If the gospel report of Christ's teaching is substantially true, the case against St. Paul breaks down, because St. Paul's teaching does not go beyond Christ's, except in the sense of fuller exposition and development. There is nothing absolutely new in St. Paul. Augustine said that the New Testament is latent in the Old, and the Old patent in the New. It is just as true to say that St. Paul's teaching or theology is latent in Christ's, and Christ's is patent in St. Paul. In one we have the seed, in the other the blade and full ear. We think of two cardinal points in Paulinism, the divine person and the atoning work of Christ. We need not say how Christ is the central sun round which all Pauline doctrine revolves. In every one of his Epistles Christ fills a unique place. St. Paul is Christ's servant as he is God's. Christ is St. Paul's Saviour as God is. What of the Christ of the Gospels, even taking the Synoptics only? If these are substantially genuine, the claims which Christ makes for Himself, the way in which He speaks, His entire bearing before God and man are such as require a Christology like St. Paul's to explain them, and on the other hand they justify all that St. Paul says. We must get rid by arbitrary criticism of the text of a large portion of the Gospels before it can be shown that there is any discrepancy between the Christ of the Gospels and the Christ of St. Paul's Epistles. St. Paul sums up his doctrine of Christ thus: 'He was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and marked as the Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead.' Canon Gore (*Bampton Lectures*, p. 65) shows in detail how this corresponds to the picture of Christ presented in St. Mark's Gospel. St. Paul's words are 'a sufficiently accurate analysis of that Gospel.'

Take the doctrine of Atonement. It is well known how profoundly St. Paul's teaching has influenced the belief of the Church on this subject. Dr. Wendt has no difficulty in admitting that St. Paul teaches a forensic form of atonement, because if St. Paul is no authority to us it does not matter what he teaches. But leaving out of sight the forensic form of the doctrine, take simply the idea of vicarious expiation, the essence of which is that the death of Christ is in some way the ground of forgiveness. Is this idea part of Christ's teaching or not? Dr. Wendt dare not admit that it is, and yet finds great difficulty in denying it. He has to admit that Christ attributes a sacrificial character to His death, but does his utmost to get rid of the connexion between Christ's death and forgiveness implied in the words at the Last Supper, and the saying about His life being given as a ransom (Matt. xxvi. 28, xx. 28). The ransom is not expiatory, but refers only to deliverance from bondage. Without the slightest textual authority Dr. Wendt is obliged to assume that the words 'unto remission of sins' were put into Christ's mouth by the evangelist, and express not Christ's thoughts, but the disciples' thoughts about His death. Yet after all this fencing, Wendt cannot help admitting that Christ in some way attributed saving efficacy to His death, and then proceeds to explain what this efficacy was. But here Wendt becomes very difficult to understand. His meaning seems to be that Christ's death as a sacrifice was a

seal of the new covenant of God's kingdom, not that the sacrifice was necessary to salvation, but that such an act of fidelity on His part would merit special reward, and would become an additional motive to God to perform His promise of forgiveness. This is the only substitute we have for old explanations of the atonement, and it amounts to saying that Christ did something which somehow benefits man. We think that the old is better.[1]

Dr. Horton in his *Teaching of Jesus* reproduces much of the matter of Dr. Wendt's book, but on this subject happily he departs from his guide and comes much nearer to the ordinary view. He acknowledges that, while Christ's teaching in the Synoptics gives no explanation of the mystery, it sets forth His death as the 'supreme means' of man's salvation, as 'not only an incident of His life-work, but an integral part of His mode of saving men.' He says that Christ in instituting the Last Supper took the most impressive way to inculcate this truth. 'When we would state the means by which salvation is effected, according to the teaching of Jesus, we must dwell not only on the mediation of His unique person, but also on His death, the sacrifice offered upon the cross for the sins of the world.' Alluding to Dr. Wendt's exclusion of the words 'unto remission of sins,' he says that 'the addition is implicit in the whole situation' (p. 122). At a later point (p. 245) he remarks that the absence of these words from St. John does not justify Beyschlag in regarding them as a spurious insertion in St. Matthew. In considering Christ's teaching about His death in the Fourth Gospel, Dr. Horton comes to similar conclusions. He finds in that Gospel two leading thoughts: first, the necessity of Christ's death; second, its infliction by the power of Satan, who is, however, vanquished thereby. The necessity is in order to the salvation of the world (p. 242). And this result was secured in some mysterious way by the victory won on the cross over the power of Satan. If in this Gospel, we are told, Christ does not specifically connect His death with the forgiveness of sins, it was not because He repudiated the idea, but because He included it in the wider idea of victory. In dealing merely with Christ's teaching, Dr. Horton feels himself precluded from using the explanations of the apostles, especially as he protests against reading later theological ideas into the Epistles and the Epistles into the Gospels. Yet, so instinctive is the desire for explanation that he attempts an explanation himself, which I find difficult to understand (pp. 246–9). However this may be, Dr. Horton finds in Christ's teaching in the Gospels the connexion beween Christ's death and forgiveness, which is the kernel of St. Paul's teaching. If Christ's death was the ground of forgiveness, or the means of Christ's triumph over Satan and of man's deliverance from Satan's power, there must have been something in the nature of the death fitting it to accomplish the result. What was that something? St. Paul, like St. John, calls it propitiation or expiation or sacrifice. Is there any other explanation?

It will be observed that Dr. Wendt admits that the meaning of Christ's death which he rejects was held by the very earliest disciples of Christ, and embodied by them in the gospel accounts of His teaching. What an admission! The disciples who were eye and ear witnesses of Christ, His companions in private and public, so to speak His confidential friends, took a view of His death which is essentially one with that held in the Church ever since, which is the gist of all theories on the subject, and yet it was an utterly mistaken and perverse view! They have misled the whole Church on the question! This modern school can go behind the first disciples, behind Peter, James, and John, and know Christ's mind better than His nearest friends. Is this credible? If the disciples could be mistaken on so vital a point, can they be trusted in anything? Do not those parts of Christ's teaching which the critics receive, rest on just the same testimony as those which they reject? Is not, then, the reception just as arbitrary as the rejection? We know that Churches and parties have grossly departed from the faith of their leaders and founders; but it has always been a considerable time after the death of the leaders. Here the perversion is the work of the first witnesses, of those through whom alone we know the Master's teaching.

The same line of argument applies to St. Paul. If St. Paul was not an immediate disciple, he was familiar with the apostles, living and working in harmony with them. They explicitly approved his teaching and aims. He must have known whether his presentation of his central theme agreed with the mind of the other apostles and the Lord. Quite apart from inspiration, we have the best

[1] See Bernard, *Progress of Doctrine*, Lectures vi. and vii.

security for believing that the teaching of the apostles on this subject represents the mind of Christ. It is impossible to suppose that as honest men they could have published to the world an interpretation of His death which they knew differed from His own. This is the ground taken by Dr. Dale in his work on the Atonement, and it is strong ground.

The theory we have been considering proposes nothing less than a new basis of Christian faith. St. Paul and the other apostles are discarded as authorities, while, of course, we may accept everything in their writings that commends itself to our judgment. The New Testament is reduced to the personal teaching of Jesus Christ as we may be able to gather it from the Gospels, and especially from the first three. The miraculous side of Christ's life is swept away. This is a tolerably complete revolution. The discarding of the whole past theology of the Church is insignificant beside it. The drift of the theory becomes still clearer when we see Dr. Wendt in his *Teaching of Jesus* explaining away everything in the Gospels which points to a higher nature in Jesus, making His Sonship a simply ethical one like ours, and finding the essence of His teaching in the doctrines of God's Fatherhood and God's kingdom. It is easier to get rid of the ordinary doctrines of the Trinity, of Sin, Atonement, Justification, Regeneration, Union with God, Future Judgment, when St. Paul is out of the way. There is so much less material to be dissolved in the crucible of minimising criticism. In short, the Sermon on the Mount, worked out and amplified in other discourses and parables of Christ, is the whole Christian gospel, the sole authoritative revelation brought by Christ and binding on us. This is a fair summary of the new Ritschlian version of Christianity. Far be it from us to question the large amount of truth which it contains. The practical ethics of Christ can never be placed too high. But the questions which then arise are such as these. Is this sufficient alone? Does it meet the needs of human nature as we know it? Whence do we get the motive power to secure the acceptance of such lofty moral and religious truth, and to make it effectual? Hitherto the working power of Christian ethics has been drawn from faith in the wondrous grace of God in redemption. Separate the two, and can the first live alone? In the Christianity of the new school we are in a new world. It is as if the familiar face of heaven and earth were changed, as if we were in a world from which sun and moon, mountain and river have suddenly vanished. So in Christian life the old words disappear, or remain with new meanings; prayer and thanksgiving, repentance and faith, pardon and holiness change their character. We have a new Bible, new gospel, new Christ, new conceptions of God and of Christian life.

One ground of prejudice against St. Paul is that he is supposed to deal in theology. In early days he was not regarded in this light. It was St. John who was called the 'divine,' although early conceptions of a divine must have been different from ours. In the Gospels we are supposed to be in contact with religious life and experience, whereas in the Epistles we have to do with dogma and speculation. There is much that is unreal in this kind of talk. No doubt theology may be overdone; it is often out of place. But to do without it is impossible. Many a man is a theologian without knowing it, like the man who had talked prose all his life without knowing it. There is a theology in the teaching of Jesus Himself, and in the Gospels, even the Synoptics. Just as the practical work of the historian, lawyer, doctor, mechanic, teacher, implies a science or philosophy of his subject, so the experience and practice of a Christian imply a science of divine things. It is strange that in our day, when the demand everywhere is for thorough, systematic knowledge, knowledge of causes, reasons, laws, there should be a cry for religion without theology. It is like the cry for a return from civilisation to nature. We may as well abolish schools of science and art, and cease to write and read books of philosophy, as abolish schools of theology. And while theology keeps its place, the Epistles as well as the Gospels will be indispensable.