

The Wages of Sin An Examination of the New Testament Teaching on Death

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The Wages of Sin

When the apostle wrote ‘the wages of sin is death’ (Rom. vi. 23) he presented us with something of an enigma. For in fact a man does not die (in the ordinary sense of death) as soon as he sins, nor usually in recognizable connection with his sin. We can say, of course, that spiritual death is meant, but what are we to understand by that? Men who sin do quite often give evidence of achievement in what is rather loosely defined as the realm of the spirit of man, and again, the expression must be qualified by reference to the immortality of the soul. In view of such uncertainties it may be well to make a new survey of New Testament teaching on the subject of death.

Broadly speaking, we may say that in the New Testament there are two concepts of death lying side by side,¹ one of which regards death as the most natural of phenomena,² while paradoxically the other views it as completely unnatural, a horror, an enemy.

The first member of the paradox is clearly expressed in Hebrews ix. 27 ‘it is appointed unto men once to die’, where death is man’s inevitable end, and an end appointed by God. Not dissimilar is John xi. 14ff. where Jesus says ‘Lazarus is dead’, and Thomas exhorts his

¹ With greater precision J. Laidlaw analyses death in the Bible into *Death legal*, or condemnation, “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”, which meant from that day they were under sentence; *Death spiritual*. “Ye were dead in trespasses and sins”, “She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth”; *Death physical*, “Death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”; *Death final*, or the second death—the last outcome of sin unrepented of and unforgiven’ (*Foundation Truths of Scripture*, p. 32).

² i.e. for beings constituted as we are. I am not here concerned with the question as to whether man, as originally constituted, would or would not have died had he not sinned.

fellows ‘Let us also go, that we may die with him’, for in neither of these sayings is there any rebellion against the thought of death. There is no escaping death, and men must simply accept it as one of the conditions of this biological existence.

Death is not only inevitable, it is final, and because it marks a decisive end of life as we know it in the here and now it is used

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in emphatic expressions like the Hebraic ‘let him die the death’ (Mk. vii. 10). For the same reason it is used in a variety of expressions like ‘Be thou faithful unto death’ (Rev. ii. 10), ‘they loved not their life even unto death’ (Rev. xii. 11), which point us to the ultimate in service—there can be nothing in this life beyond faithfulness unto death, because there is nothing of this life beyond death. Similar is Paul’s ‘ye are in our hearts to die together and live together’ (2 Cor. vii. 3), or his persecution of the Christian way ‘unto the death’ (Acts xxii. 4); while, when he said ‘we ourselves have had the answer of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead’ (2 Cor. i. 9), he spoke of the utmost in testing, and his reference to God’s raising of the dead is to show the greatness of His power who cannot be defeated by even the last foe of man. Paul also makes use of the finality of death to give strong expression to the dangers to which Christian preachers were subjected, as in his ‘I die daily’ (1 Cor. xv. 31; and cf. 2 Cor. iv. 11). It is quite in line with all this that the ‘death-stroke’ of Revelation xiii. 3, 12 is the most serious of all wounds.

These usages are sufficiently close to ours as to be completely intelligible, and so is the metaphorical use we find in the parable of the Prodigal Son, who we read was ‘dead’ (Lk. xv. 24, 32), or in connection with the church in Sardis to whom it was said ‘thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead’ (Rev. iii. 1). This is the natural extension of the normal meaning, and hardly calls for comment. Death, then, is the normal end of our fleshly existence and as such is the most natural thing in the world.

But there is the other side to our paradox. We have not said everything, nor even the most important thing, when we have drawn attention to death as a universal biological necessity. “We have to die, because we are dust. That is the law of nature to which we are subject with all beings—mountains, flowers, and beasts. But, at the same time, we have to die because we are guilty. That is the moral law to which we, unlike all other beings, are subject. Both laws are equally true; both are stated in all sections of the Bible.”³ These words of Paul Tillich remind us

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that death is more than merely the terminus of earthly existence, and the thought that this ‘more’ is closely linked with man’s sin runs through and through the New Testament. Death is not only an event, it is a state. This serious view of death is found throughout the New Testament, and although the various writers have their own interests and emphases it is quite possible to speak of a New Testament view of death, having regard to this idea of an

³ P. Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations*, p. 70.

unnatural evil as well as a biological necessity.⁴ This characteristic view sees death as an enemy, sees it with a peculiar vividness, so that it is almost personified. We consider now this view of death as man's enemy.

I. The Enemy

As might perhaps be expected, it is in the Revelation with its vivid imagery that we find the most explicit personification of death. There it is regarded as an individual sitting on a pale horse (Rev. vi. 8), and to this personage there is given, in conjunction with Hades, authority over a quarter of the earth. In this expression two things are indicated at the same time; the one that man is absolutely helpless in the face of this antagonist, the other, that the sovereignty of God is maintained, for the authority is expressly said to be 'given'. Death has no absolute rights over man. Death's subordinate place is again indicated in chapter xx where it is forced to give up its thralls and is then cast into the lake of fire.

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This personification is to be seen also in the concept of death as a reigning monarch. 'Death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression... by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one' (Rom. v. 14, 17). As A. Nygren puts it, 'for Paul, death is not only an event which comes upon us and puts an end to life. Death is a power, a ruler.'⁵ Death and sin have a close liaison and thus it can be said that 'sin reigned in death' (Rom. v. 21), while there are a number of passages in which the reign of sin is treated, as for example in Paul's view that men are slaves of sin unto death (Rom. vi. 16) or Romans vi. 17, 20 'you were slaves of sin' or the words of our Lord Himself 'Everyone that commits sin is the slave of sin' (Jn. viii. 34). The point of it all is that man is no longer a free agent. Because he is enslaved to sin he cannot avoid death,⁶ and so may fitly be said to be under the rule or the sovereignty of death. He is not a free agent who can determine whether he will die or not. Physically he is condemned to death⁷ and spiritually he is already dead. He is ruled by death, by that death which can be spoken of as 'the last enemy' (1 Cor. xv. 26).

II. The Enemy Territory

a. *Death and the Devil*

But death can be viewed in other ways. For example. we read that Christ came 'that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil: and might

⁴ Failure to recognize this important distinction sometimes leads to erroneous conclusions, as for example when T. H. Hughes complains that Denney 'does not mention that the death which was originally predicted on sin in Genesis, did not come to pass, that as St. Paul says, "God passed it over and winked at it". Further, Jesus did not regard it in such a way for He speaks of death as "falling on sleep" and as "going home" ' (*The Atonement*, p. 88) This is to assume that physical death is the death meant in Gn. ii. 17, which ought rather to be proven; and there is rather poor exegesis. St. Paul's comments on God's 'passing over of the sins done aforetime' (Rom. iii. 25) and His winking at 'the times of ignorance' (Acts xvii. 30) do not refer to the Genesis passage at all, while Jesus' words have reference to physical death, but not to the spiritual state which is 'the wages of sin'.

⁵ *Romans*, p. 216.

⁶ Cf. Nygen 'these two, sin and death, belong together inseparably, they stand and fall together' (*op. cit.*, p. 316).

⁷ Cf. the cynical doctor quoted by Reinhold Niebuhr, 'Modern man has forgotten that nature intends to kill man and will succeed in the end' (*The Nature and Destiny of Man*. i. 203).

deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage' (Heb. ii. 14, 15), where death is regarded as the sphere of the devil, the sphere in which he has his power. This cannot be understood in an absolute sense, nor as signifying that the devil has within his power the determination of the physical death of any man. When our Lord enjoined His

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followers 'Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him' (Lk. xii. 5), it is God, not the devil who is meant,⁸ and throughout the New Testament we may discern the conviction that it is God in whose hand are the issues of life and death.⁹ Death, then, in the Hebrews passage, is being used of a state rather than an event, of a sphere in which the devil rules, rather than the act of passing out of this physical existence.¹⁰ 'Dying' may be thought of as simply a biological phenomenon, but 'being dead' is something more.¹¹ It means being in that sphere where the devil rules.

It is this which gives meaning to, 'all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage'. There seems no particular reason why men should fear death, considered as no more than a physical event; but in fact men characteristically do fear death,¹² which indicates that it is more than the end to this existence, or at least that men think so.¹³ We can understand the fear of pain or suffering, but there seems no reason at all to fear the end of existence. It is the fact that death includes the idea of 'being dead' which makes it something to be feared, and this

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overplus is conceived of in the New Testament as being in the sphere of evil and the Evil One.

b. *Death and sin.*

Along the same lines is the reasoning which asserts that 'the sting of death is sin' (1 Cor. xv. 56),¹⁴ or which speaks of 'dying in sin' as something to be feared (Jn. viii. 21). Death as such has no terrors for man, but it cannot be dissociated from the fact of man's sin, and therefore

⁸ Cf. the book of Job, where Satan had no power over the patriarch and in particular was forbidden to bring about his death, this being a matter for determination by God and no one else.

⁹ So in Rom. xiv. 9 it is Christ who is spoken of as 'Lord of both the dead and the living', and in Rev. i. 18 He has 'the keys of death and of Hades'.

¹⁰ 'Death, as we know it, is spoken of in Scripture as the Kingdom of the Devil. It is the result of sin and no part of the divine order' (H. Maynard Smith, *Atonement*, p. 108).

¹¹ 'To say that modern biology teaches that all men will die, and always have died, sin or no sin, does not touch the core of the matter, for biology only deals with the physical event and has nothing to say of the succeeding state' (C. R. Smith, *The Bible Doctrine of Salvation*, p. 129).

¹² My colleague, Mr. F. I. Andersen, has drawn my attention to a number of powerful passages in Dostoevsky in which he denounces as the greatest conceivable inhumanity those methods of execution in which a man knows in advance the exact time at which he will die.

¹³ Cf. H. Lovell Cocks, 'Epicurus, with more insight than some of his modern disciples, saw that what man fears is not that death is annihilation, but that it is not' (*By Faith Alone*, p. 57).

¹⁴ T. B. Strong thinks that this passage may indicate that physical death and sin are closely linked. 'S. Paul, if our interpretation of his words be right, calls sin "the sting of death", as if there might be a mode of departure from the conditions of this world which would be without a sting' (*A Manual of Theology*, p. 260). By contrast Reinhold Niebuhr says that this 'classical assertion... can hardly be interpreted to mean that mortality as such is the consequence of sin' (*The Nature and Destiny of Man*, p. 186).

man cannot be indifferent to its menace. When he dies he has not escaped the consequences of his sin, but rather he goes to face them (cf. the statement in Heb. ix. 27, 'it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this—judgment').

Sin is in some sense the cause of death, and this presents us with some difficult problems. Some have felt that the scriptural view is that sin is the cause of physical death, while others argue that, for bodies physically constituted like ours, death is inevitable, just as inevitable as it is for the animals. Many of the arguments adduced in favour of the former position are not strong, as, for example, when the cases of Enoch and Elijah are put forward. For, in the first place, there is no hint that these men were sinless; and, in the second, the manner of their departure from this life is clearly regarded as exceptional, there being no hint in the narrative in either case that other men might expect a similar mode of passing into the presence of God if they were to abstain from sin. So is it with the suggestion that there is no necessary connection between our bodies and death on the grounds that, at the Parousia, certain people will pass straight to the presence of the Lord (1 Thes. iv. 17), for Paul says expressly 'we shall be changed' (1 Cor. xv. 51). Again, some adduce the case of our Lord, and ask whether it would have been fitting

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for Him to have undergone death apart from the needs of redemption. But as Scripture seems to indicate that the whole purpose of His coming was in order that He might die for man this question is inadmissible.

More to the point is the statement of Paul that 'through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned' (Rom. v. 12), where it is plain that death is linked with the sin of Adam, but not so plain how this linkage is to be understood. Some have confined the meaning of 'death' here to physical death,¹⁵ while there are those who take 'all sinned' to indicate that each man has followed Adam's example,¹⁶ so that we reach the view that Adam sinned and became mortal, and every man since has repeated the process. Such interpretations seem inadequate.

In the Genesis passage to which Paul is referring we read the warning 'in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die' (Gn. ii. 17); but, since Adam's physical death did not take place till long after he sinned and heard his doom pronounced, it is difficult to think that it is this death which is primarily meant. Again, it is at least arguable that 'dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return' (Gn. iii. 19) is a statement of fact, rather than part of the penalty, and points to the essential constitution of man's body (cf. Gn. ii. 7). Further, the reference to Adam's becoming immortal by eating of the tree of life (verse 22) seems better understood as indicating that he was not by nature immortal, than as being a reference to mortality as a punishment. On the other hand it might be argued that 'death' is not qualified in the narrative in such a way as to show that something other than the usual death is meant, and again, that the Old Testament in later passages makes at least a symbolical connection between sin and

¹⁵ Sanday and Headlam notice the view that eternal death is meant, and go on 'But it is far simpler and better to take it of "physical death"' (*Comm. in loc.*).

¹⁶ So Karl Barth, 'We see all men doing what Adam did, and then suffering as Adam suffered. We see men sin, and then die' (*Comm. in loc.*).

death by making physical death the punishment for certain spiritual offences. Cf. also Deuteronomy xxi. 23, 'He that is hanged is accursed of God.' On the whole it seems probable

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that we should understand 'death' to mean a spiritual state, but a state aptly symbolized by physical death.¹⁷ When man sinned he passed into a new state, one dominated by, and at the same time symbolized by death. It is likely that spiritual death and physical death are not being thought of as separate, so that the one involves the other.

It does not appear that in Pauline thought death is understood as the simple consequence of sin. For example in Romans vi. 23, 'the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord', the free gift of eternal life does not mean exemption from physical death, and it seems impossible to think that the wages of sin, which are cancelled by this gift, are to be equated with physical death. While physical death does seem to be implied, it is as a symbol of a deep spiritual reality that it is to be understood.¹⁸ Man dies, not simply as a body, but in the totality of his being, as a unity with physical and spiritual aspects.¹⁹ Death here includes, but is more than, the terminus of biological existence, and it certainly contains the idea of a spiritual death which is more important than any physical manifestation. Or perhaps we should say that the two aspects, spiritual and physical, are not sharply distinguished.²⁰

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It is relevant to this part of our inquiry to notice that the New Testament understands the final state of the believer in terms of the resurrection from the dead, and, as we shall see in a later section, there are many passages rejoicing in the thought of triumph over death. Since it is thus an integral part of Christian thought that victory over physical death is part of the result of Christ's redeeming activity, it seems logical to include physical death as one of the consequences of sin.

The idea that, when we have said that physical death is biologically inevitable, we have said everything has often been vigorously assailed, and the point was forcibly put by James

¹⁷ Cf. the statement of Athanasius, 'Now what else could these words "dying ye shall die", mean, but that they should not die simply, but also remain in the corruption of death' (*De Incarnatione* 3, trans. Bindley, p. 47).

¹⁸ Cf. Brunner, 'It is not the fact that men die, that is the "wages of sin", but that they die as they do, in fear and agony, with the anxious uncertainty about that which lies on the other side of death, with a bad conscience, or the fear of possible punishment, in short, human death' (*The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, p. 129).

¹⁹ 'The New Testament makes no attempt to distinguish between physical dissolution and its spiritual counterpart' (J. G. Simpson, *What is the Gospel?* p. 80). 'The consequences of sin are doubtless more far-reaching than the destruction of the flesh, but they certainly include it. Personality and the bodily organism are too closely connected to admit of our disentangling them. Their interaction is too intimate to divest of moral significance even what looks like an inevitable physical process. The one is sacramental of the other' (*op. cit.*, p. 81).

²⁰ Cf. C. Anderson Scott: 'And by death Paul means neither physical death alone nor "spiritual death" alone but both; or rather he does not make the distinction. Death was due to the principle of decay introduced by sin into the flesh (cf. 2 Pet. i. 4), which from thenceforth became "mortal" (θνητός, Rom. vi. 12; 2 Cor. iv. 11); at the same time it introduced moral as well as physical decay in man who was thus "cut off from the life of God"' (*Christianity According to St. Paul*, p. 49).

Denney: 'The scientific assertion of the natural necessity of death, closely considered, really amounts to a begging of the question. Man, it means, must die, must always have died, because he is a natural being, subject to the universal natural law of birth and decay; there is nothing but this for him. But the whole ground on which the Bible doctrine is based is that man is not simply a natural being, with nothing but the destiny which awaits all nature awaiting him. He is a being invested by his very constitution with a primacy over nature; he is related to God in a way which makes him specifically distinct from every merely natural being, in a way which those who understand it regard as containing at least the promise and the possibility of immortality.'²¹

For reasons such as these we cannot accept the view that the biological aspect of death is all that matters. But on the other hand it is impossible to take up a position which affirms 'Death is biologically necessary, but theologically it is not inevitable'; for our theology and our science should not contradict one

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another. Perhaps a position which does violence to, neither is one which takes seriously man's original constitution as being in a special relation both to God and to nature. Is it too much to imagine that this closeness to God and this primacy over nature found expression in forces of a spiritual character which kept the natural tendency to bodily decay in check? The entrance of sin so radically altered the situation that fleshly dissolution could no longer be held at bay, and thus death became inevitable. At one and the same time, then, it is completely natural and completely unnatural. Viewed in this way physical death is perhaps the most spectacular consequence of sin, but the really important thing is that man is now introduced into a different sphere spiritually as well as physically. The stamp of death is on all of his life.²²

So with Romans v. Even if we hold that in verse 12 physical death is in mind, it seems impossible to hold that the thought is confined to that of physical death,²³ and this impression is strengthened by later verses, as verse 15 'if by the trespass of the one the many died' which indicates that they died when the trespass of Adam took place, rather than at some later time. So, too, with 'by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one' (verse 17), 'through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners' (verse 19), both of which show that the sin of Adam was thought of as itself having consequences on his posterity, and that it is not simply a case of their imitating his evil example. Paul is saying in strong terms that the entrance of sin into the life of men brought about a new condition of affairs

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²¹ *Studies in Theology*, p. 98. The Rev. A. M. Stibbs in a private communication suggests that marriage provides a partial analogy which is not helpful. Mating of the sexes is a biological necessity for the propagation of the species, but in the case of man there is a divine appointment which determines the experience and enjoyment of marriage.

²² C. S. Lewis takes up much this position with his contention that 'Where spirit's power over the organism was complete and unresisted, death would never occur' (*Miracles*, p. 152). Again he says, 'But when God created Man he gave him such a constitution that if the highest part of it rebelled against Himself, it would be bound to lose control over the lower parts: i.e. in the long run to suffer Death' (*op. cit.*, p. 156).

²³ Charles Hodge held that this passage teaches 'that death is a penal evil, and not a consequence of the original constitution of man', and he goes on to show that, while natural death is included, the passage teaches more than this. 'That the death here spoken of includes all penal evil, death spiritual and eternal. as well as the dissolution of the body is evident' (*Comm. in loc.*).

wherein man enters the realm of death,²⁴ he passes into the sphere of the Evil One. As soon as we grasp this thought we see how impossible it is to conceive of the sin of the first man as affecting himself only. His descendants were born into a world where death reigned, and thus from the beginning they were under the sway of the Evil One.

Paul has a closely similar thought in 1 Corinthians xv. 21ff., 'For since by man came death... In Adam all die.' The physical event of death is not being lost sight of, for the resurrection is opposed to death in this passage. But the physical death is the sign and symbol of a deeper reality, a state of soul.²⁵ When we read 'as in Adam all die, so, also in Christ shall all be made alive' we see that the sort of death in mind is that which is opposed to the sort of life that Christ gives. We thus come to the important conclusion that death is the negation of eternal life.

If this is so, then death is not to be thought of as something which exists in its own right, and can be studied as such. It is merely the state of exclusion from the life, which is life indeed.²⁶ As men may enter into eternal life in the here and now (Jn. v. 24 etc.) so they may be dead while yet alive, and we read of men outside Christ as being dead τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν (Eph. ii. 1), τοῖς παραπτώμασιν (Eph. ii. 5), and τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ τῇ ἀκροβυστίᾳ τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν (Col. ii. 13). The meaning of the datives is not quite clear, and for example the AV and Moffatt translate them 'in', while the RV prefers 'through', and RSV and Weymouth translate the Ephesian passages 'through' and that in Colossians 'in'. But however we translate, it would seem that each of these passages contains the thought of instrumentality, so that the death in question is one which is brought about by sin. There is an incompatibility

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between life and sin, so that sin inevitably means death. In the same way sinful practices are associated with death several times as Romans vi. 16, 21, vii. 5. In each case death is the ineluctable consequence of sin, so that it is impossible for sin to exist without death as its corollary.

This inevitability of death where sin is, is stressed by a vivid metaphor in James i. 15, where sin is thought of as the result of lust's pregnancy, and sin, when it is mature (ἀποτελεσθεῖσα), gives birth to death (ἀποκύει θάνατον). The imagery is very expressive. Death is contained within sin, just as the unborn child is in the womb, and what is in the womb must come forth in its due time.²⁷ Something similar may be implied by Paul's thought

²⁴ ' "In Adam", we all stand under the sovereign dominion of death: and "in Christ" under the sovereign dominion of life' (Nygren, *op. cit.*, p. 218).

²⁵ Bultmann thinks that this passage shows death to be as little a natural phenomenon as resurrection (TWNT iii. 14. 16-20).

²⁶ 'Vielmehr bleibt der Tod stets der Schrecken, der die ζωή zur uneigentlichen ζωή macht' (TWNT iii. 14. 11f.).

²⁷ Moulton and Milligan say of ἀποκύεω 'The word, accordingly, notwithstanding Hort's attempt (on Jas. i. 15) to apply it specially to cases of abnormal birth, would seem to have been an ordinary synonym of τίκτω, but definitely "perfectivized" by the ἀπό, and so implying delivery' (*The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*). Moulton's *Prolegomena*, pp. 111ff., shows that prepositions, especially ἀπό, διά, κατά, σύν, are frequently used in compounds in a perfectivizing sense, the distinctive meaning of the preposition being lost, its function being simply to emphasize the meaning of the simplex. A good example is ἀποθνήσκω.

that sin wrought death (Rom. vii. 13), the verb being καταργαζομένη. While it may not be legitimate to press the meaning of the verb too closely, yet it does seem to, signify that death is the necessary consequence of sin's completed work. Where sin reaches its fulfilment,²⁸ there is death. There is almost the idea that sin works with purposeful force as in Romans vii. 7ff., where Paul introduces a favourite idea, namely that the law does not and cannot bring about perfection: all that it does is to bring sin to light and make man conscious of his failure, 'when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died' (verse 9). Not that the commandment is in itself harmful to man, but sin, which is the force bringing about death, makes the commandment its 'base of operations (ἀφορμή) 'working from which it secures its end. Something of the same force may attach to the use of τέλος in Romans. vi. 21.

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c. Death the divine penalty for sin

Hitherto we have considered the enemy territory as being defined for us by the natural connection between death and sin. The nature of sin being what it is, and the nature of death being what it is, sin must inevitably issue in death. The one presupposes the other. Sometimes the imagery makes death the ruler and sometimes sin or the Evil One, but these are in the closest of connections with each other in the nature of the case.

But this does not exhaust the scriptural view of the situation. There is another important way of regarding the matter, namely, that the territorial limits we are considering are defined by God; death and sin are connected by divine appointment, so that we are to discern the hand of God in the death which is visited upon the sinner.

There are several passages where specific deeds are said to be, or not to be, worthy of death, and we come across expressions like ἄξιον θανάτου (Lk. xxiii. 15, etc.), αἴτιον θανάτου (Lk. xxiii. 22), ἔνοχος θανάτου (Mt. xxvi. 66, etc.), κρίμα θανάτου (Lk. xxiv. 20). But for the most part these are the expression of fallible human judgment, and do but indicate that there is in man the conviction that certain sins are so heinous that they are properly punished with death. But some passages go further, as Romans vi. 23, 'the wages of sin is death', where death is the penalty for sin, and clearly it is the divine penalty that is meant. 'Wages (ὄψωνια)' denotes that which is due, and the expression gives us the thought that sin not only results in death, but that it deserves to result in death. Many commentators take the verse to refer to physical death, but this cannot be its only or primary reference. The second part of the verse refers to the gift of God as eternal life, which does not mean exemption from physical death, and any true exegesis must understand death in the former part of the verse as corresponding to life in the latter part. It may well be that there are two ideas included in the 'death' in question as when C. H. Dodd speaks of 'bodily death as the symbol of final separation from God',²⁹ but it is the final separation that is important here.

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²⁸ Sanday and Headlam (on Rom. ii. 9) give the meaning of the verb as 'carry to the end'.

²⁹ *Romans*, p. 81. Similarly L. S. Thornton writes. 'Death, as we know it, is both the symbol and the penalty of sin' (*The Common Life in the Body of Christ*, p. 265).

There may be a similar thought of death as God's appointment in the Johannine passage which speaks of 'sin unto death' and distinguishes it from 'sin not unto death' (1 Jn. v. 16f.).³⁰ It is certainly to be found in the first chapter of Romans where, after a tremendous catalogue of evil deeds, Paul goes on, 'knowing the ordinance of God, that they which practise such things are worthy of death' (verse 32), thus explicitly assuring us that he is not giving a personal opinion, but referring to a well-known divine condemnation. It is due to God that death is the penalty for sin.

It is important to be clear on this. While, as we saw earlier, from one point of view the connection between sin and death is the most natural thing in the world, yet that is not the whole story. There is not simply an automatic process, for the hand of God is in it all. Death is the penalty decreed by Him.³¹ This means that the sinner's plight is not hopeless as it would be if he were caught in the vortex of remorseless cosmic laws, or involved in some grim sequence governed by an inexorable fate. If death is God's penalty, life is His gift.³²

d. Death and mankind

Hitherto we have thought of the enemy territory as being defined with reference to sin, so that where sin is, there is death's sphere. With a rather different emphasis we might define this territory with regard to mankind, and then we find that 'death passed unto all men' (Rom. v. 12). Death has its sway over the whole of the race. This is something rooted in the very nature of things since the Fall, and is not dependent on the individual's giving

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way to sin. For we read 'death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression' (Rom. v. 14). Every man lives in the shadow of death (cf. 'them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage' Heb. ii. 15), and as long as he lives he cannot escape its dominion. His body is so thoroughly dominated by death that it can be termed 'the body of this death' (Rom. vii. 24), and this is linked specifically with sin—'the body is dead because of sin' (Rom. viii. 10). The inevitability of physical death is a symbol of the deeper spiritual truth, that man, because he is man, because he is sinful man, lives only within the sphere of death, and must regard himself as condemned to death. This body and death cannot be separated. This is brought home almost in incidental fashion in 2 Corinthians ii. 15-16 where the apostle says that Christians are a 'sweet savour of Christ', and to those who are perishing 'a savour from death unto death'. For those who are outside Christ there can only be death, and contact with those who are His does but press home this fact.

e. The nature of death

It is along these lines that we get some indication of the nature of death in its New Testament sense. Thus Paul writes 'the mind of the flesh is death' (Rom. viii. 6). Sanday and Headlam

³⁰ Cf. C. Ryder Smith, 'The separation between man and God that sin brings may be called either "death" or "the wrath of God", the fundamental truth being that there cannot be fellowship between the holy God and sinful man' (*The Bible Doctrine of Salvation*, pp. 261, 262).

³¹ 'It is the verdict and award of the Judge. It is not as a creature, but as a criminal that man dies' (R. S. Candlish, *Life in a Risen Saviour*, p. 333).

³² Cf. J. Laidlaw, 'We are not in the grasp of dead, cast-iron laws, but in the hand of the living God, who will surely punish sin, but who can also say, "Deliver from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom" (*Foundation Truths of Scripture*, p. 33).

suggest that φρόνημα here denotes ‘the general bent of thought and motive’,³³ and the passage thus tells us that when man’s bent is directed towards the things of his lower nature, or perhaps towards that which is merely physical and earthly, then man is in a state of death.³⁴ It is not merely that such an attitude inevitably brings death about or deserves death, it is death. In the verse following we find that the mind of the flesh is ‘enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be’, which seems to give the essence of death as enmity with God. it is this which is the real horror of death,³⁵

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for no greater calamity could be envisaged by men with a serious purpose in life, men who valued communion with God. In view of the Christian concept of God as love it is not surprising that this is also expressed by saying that ‘he that loveth not abideth in death’ (1 Jn. iii. 14) or that the proof of having ‘passed out of death into life’ is love of the brethren (*ibid.*). To live with a concern primarily for the things of the flesh,³⁶ to live without love is to live at enmity with God. And this is death.

f. The second death

We have seen that death’s territory is as wide as sin. and that it is co-extensive with the human race. It remains to notice that it extends through time and beyond, so that the seriousness of death is underlined with references to ‘the second death’. This is a Rabbinic expression, and Strack-Billerbeck point out that, although the term itself is comparatively late, the idea contained in it is much earlier. They give as its meaning ‘a. Exclusion from the resurrection, remaining in the tomb. b. The handing over to eternal perdition’,³⁷ and they cite copious examples to illustrate both meanings. a typical example of the second being in Targ. Onk. Deuteronomy xxxiii. 6, ‘Let Reuben live in eternal life, and let him not die the second death’.³⁸ This is clearly the sort of thing that is meant in the New Testament, though some at least of its examples are more vivid.

The Epistle of Jude has a section which shows us the meaning plainly. It speaks of certain sinners as ‘twice dead’ (verse 12), and this is explained in the next verse where it is said that for them ‘the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever’. Their crimes are so heinous and they are so set in the ways of

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sin that, although they are still physically alive, their condemnation is certain in the next life as well as in this.

³³ *In loc.*

³⁴ Cf. Dodd’s comment on Jn. v. 24ff., ‘the death which is in view is rather the mode of existence of unenlightened, unredeemed humanity’ (*The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 148, 149).

³⁵ Cf. A. Richardson, ‘the real horror which attaches to death is the fact that death is the symbol in the natural order in a fallen world (cf. Gen. iii), of rebellion and separation from God’ (*A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, p. 61).

³⁶ S. Kierkegaard’s view that ‘despair is the sickness unto death, this agonizing contradiction, this sickness in the self. everlastingly to die, to die and yet not to die, to die the death. For dying means that it is all over, but dying the death means to live to experience death’ (*The Sickness unto Death*, trans. W. Lowrie, p. 25).

³⁷ *Kommentar zune Neuen Testament aus Talmud and Midrasch*. iii. 830.

³⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 834

In the Apocalypse twice it is said that believers are delivered from the second death (Rev. ii. 11, xx. 6), and twice this second death is explained, 'And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire' (xx. 14); 'for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death' (xxi. 8). The lake of fire is in keeping with the vivid imagery of this book, and it conveys forcefully the thought that the second death is not mere quiescence or sleep, but a painful evil, something to be feared and avoided.³⁹ It is to be understood together with other passages in the New Testament which speak of punishment as the eternal lot of those who reject Christ, teaching which has its roots in the words of the Master Himself, for He said that the verdict on the day of judgment for some will be 'Depart from me ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels.... And these shall go away into eternal punishment' (Mt. xxv. 41, 46). Likewise He spoke of 'hell; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched' (Mk. ix. 47, 48), and defined hell as 'the unquenchable fire' (Mk. ix. 43). He said that though men from divers places shall sit down in the kingdom 'the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness' (Mt. viii. 12; cf. also xxii. 13, xxv. 30). In 2 Peter ii. 17 and Jude 13 we read of sinners for whom 'the blackness of darkness path been reserved'. Jude adding 'for ever'. In addition to eternal fire and outer darkness, this eternal fate is spoken of as 'perishing' or being 'lost', the verb used being commonly ἀπόλλυμι (Jn. iii. 16, xvii. 12; Rom. ii. 12, etc.).

Since the final condition of the unsaved can be variously des-

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cribed as being in torment, being in eternal fire, being in outer darkness, perishing, and being lost, it would seem unwise to equate it with any one of them. What is quite clear is that this final condition is one of deprivation and suffering. Objection is taken to this aspect of biblical teaching on the grounds that God, being, a God of love, could not allow those whom He has created to continue in such a state. There is a profound mystery here, and without making any attempt to plumb its depths it is germane to the present inquiry to point out that, as commonly stated this objection to the Bible view ignores the nature of death. As we have seen, death is not simply an event, it is a state, it is the sphere in which evil has its sway, and sinners are, and must be, within this sphere with all that that means, until they are redeemed from it. If a man continues in sin he continues in death, and if the implications of this can be made clearer by referring to the second death. or to eternal fire, or to outer darkness, or to being lost. or perishing, so much the better.

III. The Enemy in Battle

Hitherto we have concerned ourselves with the nature and extent of death, with the way it operates among mankind spreading its blight over all, but the New Testament does not seem to regard this as the really important thing, it being merely the prolegomena to something

³⁹ S. A. McDowall speaks of the second death as 'banishment from God, and everlasting bitterness. Not extinction: modern thought leads us to believe that the extinction of personality is impossible, and this is certainly the teaching of Christ. This is far worse—the death of the power of becoming like God, the eternal impossibility of entering into the communion of Love' (*Evolution and the Need of Atonement*, p. 135).

important. It is a striking fact that if we take a concordance and look up νεκρός we find that a majority of passages cited is concerned not so much with death as with life, with resurrection from the dead.⁴⁰ This is consonant with the nature of God, who may be characterized as Him 'who quickeneth the dead' (Rom. iv. 17), or 'who only hath immortality' (1 Tim. vi. 16), and immortality is His gift to man (1 Cor. xv. 53, 54). The Bible is interested in life rather than death, and death must be thought of not so much as having existence in its

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own right as being the negation of eternal life, the life which is proper to man.

Deliverance from death is associated with the death of Christ. To go fully into this would involve a discussion of the way in which atonement has been effected, and this is beyond the scope of this lecture. Here we can but note briefly that through the death of the Saviour God has dealt completely and adequately with sin, and we have seen that it is sin which gives death its power. His death is explicitly connected with sin, sometimes in passages presenting us with some difficulty, as in 'the death that he died, he died unto sin once' (Rom. vi. 10) where it is, not easy to see what Christ's dying to sin can mean. It may be explained along the lines of 2 Corinthians v. 21 'Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf', indicating that in His death Christ became one with sinners,⁴¹ bearing their sin that sin might be put away. Or it may be more general, signifying that His death was with reference to sin. Either way it is clear that by His death sin has been decisively dealt with. It is perhaps the same thought in Hebrews ii. 9 'that by the grace of God he should taste death for every man', or it might be the similar thought that we have a few verses later, that Jesus became man 'that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death' (verse 14). Such expressions make it clear that the death of Jesus has been instrumental in delivering men from the sphere of death.⁴²

On this point there is some misunderstanding of the New Testament position, as when H. L. Goudge writes 'what chiefly makes the Lord's death of value to us is surely that, because He gave His life for us at Calvary, He can impart His life to us now.'⁴³ While no one would wish to belittle that gift of life which the Lord imparts to us, it is unnecessary to depreciate the part played

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by His death. J. K. Mozley has a truer insight when he says 'It is not true that the New Testament speaks with many unharmonious voices on the death of Christ. One thought recurs again and again: that death is God's answer to and settlement with sin; in Christ shedding His

⁴⁰ There are 129 occurrences of the word, of which forty-two speak of Christ's being raised from the dead, twenty-seven of the believer's being raised, eight of miraculous raisings, and three of the report that John Baptist had been raised, while of the remainder a good proportion is concerned with life in one way or another, as Rom. vi. 11, 13; Acts x. 42; Rev. xiv. 13, etc.

⁴¹ 'Sinful man can only be saved from sinfulness by One who shares the experience of the results of sin, yet is Himself sinless' (C. Ryder Smith, *The Bible Doctrine of Salvation*, p. 214).

⁴² Cf. C. S. Lewis: 'Death is, in fact, what some modern people call "ambivalent". It is Satan's great weapon and also God's great weapon: it is holy and unholy; our supreme disgrace and our only hope; the thing Christ came to conquer and the means by which He conquered' (*Miracles*, p. 151).

⁴³ *Sin and Redemption*, p. 48.

blood for the remission of sins, bearing sins, putting away sins, made sin, we are brought to the moral centre of things where the supreme righteousness of God is manifested, and God justifies Himself for ever'.⁴⁴

A principle is laid down in Romans vi. 7, 'he that hath died is justified from sin'. The meaning of this is not immediately obvious, but δεδικαίωται is essentially a legal term, and Sanday and Headlam's explanation, 'a dead man has his quittance from any claim that Sin can make against him',⁴⁵ seems to give us the sense of it. No claim can be preferred against one who has departed this life.

It seems that death may be regarded as in some way effecting remission.⁴⁶ Thus there are passages like Genesis ii. 17; Romans vi. 23 which think of death as sin's penalty, but usually where a penalty has been paid the crime is no longer laid to one's charge. Then in Hebrews ix. 22 there is the principle that 'apart from shedding of blood there is no remission'.⁴⁷ Death is not only an evil, it is a means of expiating sin.⁴⁸

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Coupled with this is the view that the believer is closely associated with Christ in His death, 'one died for all, therefore all died' (2 Cor. v. 14). We 'were baptized into his death' (Rom. vi. 3). 'buried with him through baptism into death' (Rom. vi. 4; cf. Col. ii. 12), 'we have become united with him by the likeness of his death' (Rom. vi. 5), 'our old man was crucified with him' (Rom. vi. 6. and so Gal. ii. 20, 'I have been crucified with Christ'), 'we died with Christ' (Rom. vi. 8). In Philippians iii. 10 we have a reference to becoming 'conformed unto his death', and one of the faithful sayings refers to dying with Him (2 Tim. ii. 11). His death is our death, and we may be said to have died in Him.

The death of Christ, then, appears as a great battlefield with the conflict between God on the one hand, and sin and death and all the powers of evil on the other. While the New Testament does not give a detailed explanation of the conflict, it makes it clear that in His death Christ was waging decisive war with death. By death He overcame death, and those who are His are associated with Him in His death, so that what that death achieved, it achieved for them. But this leads us on to the next section wherein we consider the victory.

⁴⁴ *The Heart of the Gospel*, p. 38.

⁴⁵ *In loc.*

⁴⁶ Cf. James Denney: 'It was not an arbitrary appointment of God that made the death of Christ *ἰλαστήριον*; it was the essential relation, in all human experience, of death and sin. Christ died for our sins, because it is in death that the divine judgment on sin is finally expressed. Once we put law and necessity out of the relation between Christ's death and our sin, we dismiss the very possibility of thinking on the subject; we may use words about it, but they are words without meaning' (*The Death of Christ*, 1951 Edition, p., 102).

⁴⁷ In J.T.S., Oct. 1952, I have given reasons for thinking that in Scripture blood points us to death rather than life.

⁴⁸ E. A. Knox finds this idea widespread. 'Further we find not only in the Old Testament but very largely among mankind a strongly operative connection between sin and death. Death is accepted as a token of divine displeasure: blood shed cries to heaven for vengeance, and by vengeance or some other method peace must be restored. We find also the acceptance of means of expiation, and codes built upon theories of expiation. Death is not only a sacrament of sin, it is connected in human conscience with the redemption of sin' (*Glad Tidings of Reconciliation*, p. 144).

IV. The Enemy Defeated

‘Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him’ (Rom. vi. 9). This is the basis of man’s triumph over death, the tyrant who exercises sovereignty over the entire race so that, strive as we will, we cannot break free. But the resurrection of our Lord is the great event on which the whole New Testament turns, and it marks a signal and complete victory over the enemy. He died, as all men must, but on the third day He rose triumphant over all the powers of death and hell.

‘Death cannot keep his prey,
Jesus my Saviour;
he tore the bars away,
Jesus my Lord.’

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The whole New Testament thrills at His victory. Death no longer has dominion. This is reflected in some of the titles accorded the Victor, as ‘Prince of Life’ (τὸν Ἀρχγὸν τῆς ζωῆς Acts iii. 15), ‘Lord of both the dead and the living’ (Rom. xiv. 9), ‘The Judge of quick and dead’ (Acts x. 42), ‘the Logos of life’ (1 Jn. i. 1), and in striking statements like ‘In him was life: and the life was the light of men’ (Jn. i. 4). ‘as the Father bath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself’ (Jn. v. 26), ‘the life was manifested’ (Jn. i. 2).

As Christ is Himself life (Jn. xiv. 6), so He is the source of life to His people. It is certain that death will ultimately be destroyed (1 Cor. xv. 16; Rev. xxi. 4), and Paul can utter a paean of triumph: ‘then shall come to pass the saying that is written. Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory?’ O death. where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ’ (1 Cor. xv. 54-57). Clearly death has no more terrors, and just as clearly this assurance is grounded in Christ’s saving work. Twice we are assured that the second death has no power over the believer (Rev. ii. 11, xx. 6), and again, the seer quotes. Christ as saying ‘I am.... the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades’ (Rev. i. 17, 18). It is an integral part of His resurrection triumph that He not only broke free from the prison house but became possessed of the keys, so that His own are no longer to be bound there.

This is emphasized in the biblical insistence that everlasting life is to be understood in terms, not of the immortality of the soul, but of the resurrection of the body. If they are right who feel that physical death is connected with sin as being at once its symbol and its penalty, then it is most fitting that the effects of physical death should be cancelled in the victory won by Christ. This does not mean that the resurrection body is identical with the body that died (‘it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body’, 1 Cor. xv. 44), but it is a strong affirmation of the completeness of the triumph of Christ over all the forces of death.

There is thus a note of tranquil assurance in the New Testa-

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ment. Believers, it is true, must still live out their fleshly life within the sphere which is death's own—their physical existence is the common lot of man and is stamped with the seal of death. But for them is the certainty that the last word is not with death, but with death's Conqueror, and whether they live or die they can rest in Him.

But though they will not know the full meaning of victory over death until they learn it on the farther shore, yet believers here and now enter into the experience of triumph over death. Christ has nullified death (καταργήσαντος μὲν τὸν θάνατον, 2 Tim. i. 10), and the believer has passed out of death into life (1 Jn. iii. 14). He is 'free from the law of sin and of death' (Rom. viii. 2), death cannot separate him from God (Rom. viii. 38, 39), and in reply to the question 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?' the answer may be made 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom. vii. 24, 25). In a lyrical passage Paul can speak of death as belonging to the Corinthians (1 Cor. iii. 21, 22), and while it may not be legitimate to press the language too closely, yet clearly the believers are thought of as having nothing to fear from death. The victory obtained by their Saviour has so transformed the situation that they, being sharers in that victory, may be thought of as in a sense superior to death. Certainly they are no longer subject to the tyrant.

One of the great themes in the Johannine writings is life, and, as the writer speaks on occasion of that death which is the lot of sinners, his emphasis on life implies the defeat of death. Thus, when in John v. 24 he gives us the saying of Jesus, 'He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, bath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but bath passed out of death into life', he means us to understand that, although men live this life under the sway of death, being quite unable to break free from the tyrant, yet in Christ all this is so altered that they can be said to have passed out of death already. They are no longer under its power. The use of the perfect tense here is interesting, because the verse is set in a context which deals with the final judgment, and both before and after the words quoted there are references to the Son as judging. In each context it would be natural to think of the overcoming of death as in some way

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connected with the resurrection of believers at the end of the world, and the ushering in of a new age. But the verse we have quoted gives expression to a profounder thought—death is defeated long before that day, because from the moment a man believes he enters into life.

There are also several Johannine passages which assure us that certain men will never die. Thus Jesus said, 'If a man keep my word, he shall never see death' (viii. 51), 'I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this. bread, he shall live for ever' (vi. 51). It is impossible to think that either Jesus or John understood such words as indicating the doing away of physical death, and plainly the thought is that the believer has entered into a new existence as a result of Jesus' work for him. He is no longer subject to the enemy, death, and his liberation is effective for ever. That physical death is excluded from consideration is made clear in the great saying to Martha, 'I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die' (xi. 25f.). In these words we see that the believer, like other men, will undergo biological death, but that is not the point. He will never die in the sense that matters, for he that believes. on Christ has entered into a new existence where death has no part. In John viii. 21 Jesus refers to dying 'in sin', and it is this that is the horror. But in verse 24 the

believer is excluded from the number of those who die in sin. It is the death which is connected with sin from which Christ frees men.

So certain is, the writer of the First Epistle of John of this deliverance from death, that he is ready to offer a proof of its having taken place, 'We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren' (1 In. iii. 14). In a world dominated by death, men's preoccupations are with all manner of things which render impossible such a quality of living as we see in the characteristic Christian attitude of love. Or, to put it another way, such a body as the Christian Church, united in the bonds of Christian love, is quite impossible within the sphere of death. The very existence of such a body is clear proof that its members have passed clean out of death into that life which is life indeed. In passing we may note that the perfect

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tense has its full meaning here, and denotes the abiding result of a past experience.

Not dissimilar is the thought of 2 Timothy i. 10 that Christ 'abolished death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel'. Here the overthrow of death and the emergence of life are viewed in close connection with the gospel. Through Christ's atoning work the victory is won.

It may be well to mention also the saying in James v. 20, 'he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death', where death again is used of the consequence of sin from which a man is saved at his conversion. The logion has the importance of showing that, although we do not find it mentioned frequently outside the great theologians of the New Testament, the thought of the work of Christ as bringing deliverance from the sphere of death is not confined to Paul or John, but was part of the accepted Christian way of looking at salvation.

Finally let us notice that the Christian victory over death with its consequent abundant life may be gauged by a comparison with other systems. Paul, for example, writing to the Corinthians points out that he has no need to produce a letter of commendation, and he apparently has in mind people who thought so highly of Judaism that they regarded it as an integral part of Christianity. Paul deals with the situation by reminding his readers that God has made him sufficient by virtue of the fact that he is a minister of a new covenant, which is inherently superior to Judaism, being 'not of the letter, but of the spirit for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life'; and he then goes on to characterize the old as 'the ministration of death' (2 Cor. iii. 6ff.). The highest and best that the world had seen prior to Christianity, that in which Paul could see the hand of God,⁴⁹ when it was set over against the Christian way must be adjudged nothing more than 'the ministration of death'.⁵⁰ From such a side glance at the creed in which he had been nurtured, we may discern something of Paul's estimate of the life-giving quality of

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⁴⁹ 'The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good' (Rom. vii. 12).

⁵⁰ Cf. Bultmann, 'serving the Torah leads with inner necessity to death' *The Theology of the New Testament*, i. 247).

Christianity, and of the defeat of death that is the basis of it all.

There is probably a similar glance at the best paganism can do in 2 Corinthians vii. 10, where Paul is dealing with sorrow for sin. He speaks of a proper attitude of repentance and its effects and goes on to say, 'the sorrow of the world worketh death'. The pagan may reach a state where he realizes something of the evil he has done, but he cannot attain what Paul calls 'repentance unto salvation'. The best he can manage is what we would more properly call remorse, and this can but issue in death. There is no saving power here.

V. Conclusion

There are other New Testament passages which treat of death, for example, those which speak of the believer as 'dying with Christ', or which call upon him to reckon himself as dead to sin. But these properly belong to a different section of Christian theology, and we may accordingly pass them over in the present inquiry.

What emerges clearly from our study of the New Testament documents is the fact that death characteristically is regarded as something completely unnatural, an alien, a horror, an enemy. It is not simply an event, but a state, and it is connected very closely with sin. But the important teaching of the New Testament is not that death is an evil, or that man cannot overcome it, but that death has been decisively defeated in the atoning death of the Saviour, who 'abolished death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel' (2 Tim. i. 10). On this we rest our hope.

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