

THE GOSPELS OF JESUS AND PAUL.

BY REV. J. C. ALLEN.

WHEN we set out to examine the doctrines of Paul with a view to comparing them with the teachings of Jesus, it is proper to ask in the first place, what relation did this apostle profess to bear to the man and his word? Did he regard himself as a disciple,—an interpreter of the good message that Jesus brought into the world? Or was it rather a Gospel about Jesus, but not necessarily altogether from Jesus, that he was setting forth? We turn to the introduction of his epistles, and find that he calls himself “a slave (δουλός) of Jesus Christ,” one “called through the will of God,” one “called through Jesus Christ and God the Father,” an apostle “set apart unto the gospel of God . . . concerning His Son.” In these phrases it is not indicated whether the gospel came from Jesus, but it is clearly stated that the gospel is about Jesus Christ. We miss in Paul's epistles two expressions that are very familiar to us in the synoptic gospels,—viz., μαθητης, disciple, and διδασκαλος, Teacher. Paul is not a disciple, but a “slave” of Christ. Jesus is not Teacher, but κύριος,—Lord. It is interesting to observe how difficult Paul finds it to give to Christians a name. He multiplies phrases to designate them,—“called of Jesus Christ,” “beloved of God,” “called to be saints,”¹ “in Christ,”² “they that are sanctified in Christ-Jesus,” “the church of God,” “all that call upon the name of the Lord.”³ But the name disciple was ready to hand. It seems to have been the word Jesus himself used to designate his followers; and that they continued its use among themselves after his death is evident from the Book of Acts. It seems probable that Paul deliberately avoided the term, because the Jewish Christians held it as their exclusive possession, and he was not disposed to contest their claim. If this is the case, Paul, who would never yield an inch unless he had to, must have realised

Rom. i. 6-7.

² 2 Cor. v. 17 *et al.*

³ 1 Cor. i. 2.

that he stood on weak ground here. The only other reason we can conjecture for his omission of this term is that it did not occur to him as appropriate.

Next we ask, what acquaintance did Paul have with Jesus? To this the reply must be, little if any. He never quotes Jesus, or refers to him as authority for anything he himself has to say. The only events in the life of Jesus of which he makes mention are those connected with its tragic close. Indeed, to personal knowledge of the life and teachings of the historical Jesus he appears to be indifferent, if not contemptuous. He boasts of his gospel, "It is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it; but I received it through revelation of Jesus Christ. . . . When it was the good pleasure of God, Who set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through his grace, to reveal His Son in me. . . . I conferred not with flesh and blood, nor went up to Jerusalem to those that were apostles before me; but I went straight away into Arabia."¹ Thus it is throughout his career as an apostle of Christ. He refuses to "confer with flesh and blood." His authority is in "visions and revelations of the Lord,"—the "revelations" being probably what we should call "impressions," or some of us "intuitions." Even in regard to matters of history he depends at times upon "visions and revelations" to confirm, as we must think, what he has heard previously as human report. He declares, for instance, that he has "received of the Lord" an accurate circumstantial account of the Last Supper.² Paul's whole gospel was, in fact, "received" in this way "of the Lord,"—that is to say, by "revelations" that he believed to have emanated from the spirit of the risen Christ. Hardly even by implication does Paul profess to be an interpreter of the things Jesus taught in his natural life. If we grant that his revelations were, as he believed, from Jesus, still the thoughts of an emancipated spirit would not necessarily be identical, or even harmonious, with those the same person had held when he lived in the flesh. The gospel Paul "received of the Lord" may have been an enlargement of the message Jesus had taught in the flesh, or it may have been a modification, or again it may have been in part both; but at any rate it did not depend on that message of the historical Jesus.

Let us, in examining Paul's thought, endeavor to trace it, so far as we can, in the order of its logical dependence. First, then, in our consideration must come his doctrine of sin. "All have sinned," he says, and for this reason all men "fall short of the

¹ Gal. i. 11ff.

² 1 Cor. xi. 23 f.

glory of God."¹ At the outset, then, of Paul's theology we have his sense of the imperfection of human nature when judged by an absolute standard,—a fundamental contrast between God who is holy, and man who is sinful. Paul is so deeply conscious of human imperfection that he holds it to be as native to man as holiness is proper to God. Man is, he holds, vile in the sight of God, or in other words, when judged by the highest standard. And what is the reason for this depravity? It exists because of men's fleshly nature. "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be."² Sin, then, is not with man a superficial thing, but something deep-seated in him, and it cannot be removed except through supernatural means. "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing,"³ says Paul. However, he admits in the same passage that he "delights in the law of God as respects the inward man." There is, then, an inner core of righteousness in man. He is not totally depraved. Nevertheless, the "inward man," that is, the *νοῦς* or mind, is not strong enough to withstand this power of sin in the flesh; so that no one can attain to righteousness unless deliverance come from outside.

How does this doctrine of sin compare with the teaching of Jesus on the subject? In the first place it is to be noted that Jesus did not concern himself with sin in the abstract or as a principle. He discussed only sins, not sin. He did not regard man as naturally unrighteous, "sold under sin" and unable to free himself from its power. But he taught instead that men are at heart good and godlike, and that every one of his own volition can attain to such righteousness as will make him worthy to be called a son of God. He and Paul agree in recognising a germ of righteousness, an inclination toward the good, in man. But to Paul, unlike Jesus, this is a barren germ until fructified by supernatural aid.

Paul traces the history of sin back to one disobedient act of the first man. "Through one man sin entered into the world," and so "all sinned."⁴ That is to say, all inherited a sinful nature, though some may not have violated an express commandment known to themselves, "after the likeness of Adam's transgression."⁵

Jesus apparently knows nothing of an inherited taint of evil, or of the essential sinfulness of flesh.⁶ He is content to represent sins as the direct work of Satan or of evil spirits.

¹ Rom. iii. 23.² Rom. viii. 7.³ Rom. vii. 18.⁴ Rom. v. 12.⁵ Rom. v. 14.⁶ But in the parable of the sower three hearts out of four are bad.

The sin of man makes him, Paul thinks, abhorrent to God and an object of divine wrath. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."¹ Paul goes on to tell that God, for their sin, gave men up to the most abominable practices. Furthermore, God, he thinks, for the purpose of showing in the opposite way how dreadful sin is, gave to the world His law,—i. e., the law of Moses. "The law," he says, "came in beside, that the trespass may abound."² By this he evidently means that the law shows sin up in all its enormity. It is not, then, a guide whereby a man may attain to righteousness. The rather it discourages man, because no one can live up to its requirements. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them."³

This conception of the law is directly opposed to the view Jesus held of it. When the rich young man asked Jesus how he might have eternal life, the Teacher referred him first of all to the Ten Commandments.⁴ Instead of thinking that the law set up an impossible standard of righteousness for the very purpose of discouraging men, he believed it to be in some respects accommodated to their "hardness of heart."⁵ But the issue here between Paul and Jesus strikes deeper, beyond the Mosaic law, to the very conception of righteousness itself. To Paul's mind man is a sinner and abhorrent to God if in any respect he falls short of perfect conformity to an ideal standard. Jesus also, it is true, is once reported (by Matthew alone) to have said, "Ye shall be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect."⁶ But generally his attitude was more lenient. Characteristic of him, for example, is this saying: "If ye excuse (*ἀφῆρη*) men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also excuse you."⁷ To his mind the soul of goodness consisted, not in obedience, but in love and service. In respect of this issue Paul and Jesus do sometimes approach each other, but in general they are separated by a difference more of temperament than of conviction.

In one respect, however, the views of Paul and of Jesus concerning the law are identical,—namely, in the conception of it as in its essence "spiritual,"⁸—to use Paul's term. This thought both alike enforce repeatedly. Man must refrain not only from murder, but from the murderous passion of anger; not only from

¹ Rom. i. 18.² Rom. v. 20.³ Gal. iii. 10.⁴ Gal. x. 17 f.⁵ Mark x. 2 f.⁶ Matt. v. 48.⁷ Matt. vi. 14.⁸ Rom. vii. 14.

adultery, but from unlawful desires. So Jesus. And Paul,—“Shall not the uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who with the letter and circumcision art a transgressor of the law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, whose praise is not of men, but of God.”¹

Paul thinks that death is due to man's sin, and to his fleshly constitution. First, it is a penalty. “The wages of sin is death.”² This Paul regards as a clear matter of justice, which even God has not the right to set aside. Secondly, death is not only the penalty of sin, but also the natural effect of man's fleshly constitution. “The mind of the flesh is death.”³ Man is, then, naturally mortal, because he is mainly material. As eternal life is not natural to him, neither has he a right to it. It is merely “the gift of God”⁴ to “them that are in Christ,” and is to be given to them at the time of the general resurrection, when they, who are now mortal, shall “put on immortality,”⁵ as if it were a new garment to be worn in place of the discarded flesh.

The subject of death and immortality is one in which Jesus was not so deeply concerned as Paul was. His mind, too, was practical, Paul's speculative. Jesus apparently said so little on this subject that no comparison can be made.

Since man is, in Paul's thought, fleshly, “sold unto sin” and therefore subject to death, and the law only “entered in beside, that the trespass might abound,” how then may any be saved from this destruction that awaits all,—the death without hope of resurrection? That is Paul's great problem; but it was, as we have seen, a matter of only secondary importance to Jesus. Paul believed it was through the dying of Christ on the cross that man might escape the doom of a hopeless death. “One died for all, therefore all died.”⁶ That is to say, Christ, in dying on the cross, paid the penalty for the sins of men,—“redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.”⁷ But there is a condition attached to this redemption. “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the word that Jesus is Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved,”⁸—that is, delivered at the day of general resurrection from death to the new life. In what sense did “one die for all”? and on what ground is the benefit of his death appropriated by the believer?

¹ Rom. ii. 28-29.² Rom. vi. 23.³ Rom. viii. 6.⁴ Rom. vi. 23.⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 53.⁶ 2 Cor. v. 14.⁷ Gal. iii. 13.⁸ Rom. x. 9.

There seem here to be two lines of thought, the one forensic and the other mystical, which are confusedly blended in the apostle's argument. In the first place, it is argued that Christ paid the penalty of sin, as an innocent person might perchance be sentenced for another's crime. In such a sense it is that Paul says, "Christ died for our sins,"¹—was "made sin" (that is, treated as the sinner) "for us."² And again,—“While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being now adjudged righteous (*δικαιωθέντες*) by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath through him.”³ The believer is “adjudged righteous because of faith,”⁴—that is, his own faith,—as “Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him for righteousness (*ελογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην*).”⁵ This does not mean that Abraham's faith is regarded as a virtue and as such accepted, nor yet that it works a transformation in the character; but it means that faith may be accepted as a substitute for the righteousness that God exacts but man cannot attain. And it is only by means of faith in the substitutional sacrifice of Christ that a man may be saved from God's wrath and everlasting destruction.

It has been already shown that this idea of a substitutional sacrifice for sin is repugnant to the whole teaching of Jesus. The idea of faith as a substitute for righteousness is no less repugnant. Jesus regarded faith as a virtue, and as a source of power. But the only substitute he knew for shortcomings was not faith, but love. “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much.”⁶

Blended with Paul's forensic doctrine of atonement and justification, we find a spiritual mysticism, which indeed pervades all the positive part of his gospel. Christ, in his view, has some mystical relation with the human race. He is “the last Adam”;⁷ and the first was a type of him.⁸ “As through one man's (Adam's) disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.”⁹ Christians by their act of faith have come into so vital a relation that Paul often speaks of them as “in Christ,” or of Christ as being in them. “For ye are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptised into Christ did put on Christ. . . . Ye all are one man in Christ Jesus.”¹⁰ “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away,—lo, they have become new.”¹¹ Clearly, then, faith is not in Paul's conception

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 3.² 2 Cor. v. 21.³ Rom. v. 8-9⁴ Rom. v. 1.⁵ Rom. iv. 3.⁶ L. vii. 47.⁷ 1 Cor. xv. 45.⁸ Rom. v. 14.⁹ Rom. v. 19.¹⁰ Gal. iii. 26 f.¹¹ 2 Cor. v. 17.

nothing more than a substitute for righteousness, nor is the atonement simply a substitution of Christ for guilty men. But faith effects, or perhaps we had better say completes, a mystic union whereby a man enters into fellowship with the sinlessness of Christ, his sufferings, his death, and his resurrection.

It is in a mystical sense that Paul conceives of the person of Christ. Christ, "the last Adam," is "a life-giving spirit."¹ As such he may dwell within men and transform their sinful natures. As Spirit, too, he is of divine essence, "out of heaven,"² a part or emanation of Deity. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God."³ And in another place Paul explains, "The Lord (that is, Christ) is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."⁴ Again,— "Ye are not in the flesh (that is, actuated and controlled by it), but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ ("Spirit of God" and "Spirit of Christ" are here identical) he is none of his. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life to (*ζωοποιήσει*) your mortal bodies through His spirit that dwelleth in you."⁵ The use of the term Spirit is somewhat vague with Paul, but not ambiguous. Our chief difficulty in grasping his thought is our habit of conceiving personality as a metaphysical unity. Dismiss this conception, and we can appreciate Paul's thought of the Spirit. The Spirit is to God as a man's mind is to himself. The Spirit also constitutes substantially the personality of Christ Jesus, and raised him from the dead. And the Spirit may pass through Christ into the receptive soul, making him that receives it victor over sin and death. It is a Grecian thought, developed through Neoplatonism and the school of Philo, and grafted on the root of Jewish Messianism. Jesus, as we have seen, knew nothing of such mysticism.

Connected with this is the doctrine of the "fruit of the Spirit," and of the opposition of the Spirit to the flesh. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," etc.,—in short, all the virtues.⁶ The Spirit does not compel Christians to practise these things; but it gives them an inclination to do so, and also sufficient strength for

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 45.² 1 Cor. xv. 47.³ 1 Cor. ii. 11.⁴ 2 Cor. iii. 17.⁵ Rom. viii. 9 f.⁶ Gal. v. 22-23.

this end. The nature of the Spirit brings it into opposition to the flesh. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death (that is, conducive to death); but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. . . . But ye are not in the flesh (that is, under its power), but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you."¹

The Spirit also gives "liberty,"² that is, freedom from any external or hard-and-fast standard of right. For "he that is spiritual judgeth all men, and he himself is judged of no man."³ And so the law of Moses, like every other external standard, is abrogated for those that "Christ did set free."⁴

The law, for that matter, merely "entered in besides" in Paul's theology. To him it appeared to be merely a makeshift,—a "curse" that was to be done away with by the vicarious sacrifice of Christ. Here we get at the root, deep in his personal experience, of Paul's doctrines in their legal and forensic aspect. The vicarious atonement, justification by faith, the imputation of Christ's righteousness upon the believer,—what is the purport of all this but a way to get rid of the accursed law? It was essentially a revolt against pharisaism, in which Paul gave up his Judaism as well. This was not the vital and durable part of his gospel. It served its purpose, and, that purpose accomplished, it has become meaningless. For Paul the purpose was freedom from pharisaism. For the world it is that the principles of the gospel of Jesus, intended at first for Israel, have become the heritage of mankind.

Side by side with these doctrines, by which he reduced legalism to its *reductio ad absurdum*, is his positive spiritual gospel of the indwelling Spirit, whereby a man comes into a vital relation with God, so that he can say, "Abba, Father,"⁵ in a sense of which even Jesus apparently did think. Jesus taught the nobility of man and showed how men might attain to such godlikeness in harmony with the purposes of the Eternal, as to be fitly called sons of the Most High. Paul saw how the divine nature might reside in man so that he, inheriting God, united with him as child with parent, in this deeper, spiritual sense, may say, my Father. They are two gospels. It is unjust to Jesus to make Paul his interpreter. It is equally unjust to Paul, the loving "slave" of Christ, to confuse his speculative and mystical theology with the simple ethical teaching of the man of Nazareth. These two gospels were separately derived, separately worked out; but they were brought into relations with each other through historical conditions, and finally have become merged together, because they are essentially harmonious and each has need of the other.

¹ Rom. viii. 5 f.² 2 Cor. iii. 17.³ 1 Cor. ii. 15.⁴ Gal. v. 1.⁵ Gal. iv. 6.