

UNION SEMINARY REVIEW

A Presbyterian Quarterly

CONTENTS

	Page
The Source of Religious Certainty.	
By Rev. Holmes Rolston, Jr., Pastor of Bethesda Presbyterian Church, Rockbridge Baths, Va.....	113
The Church and the New Morality.	
By Rev. Cecil V. Crabb, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Clarks- dale, Miss.....	126
Religious Education and Presbyterian Faith.	
By Rev. L. J. Sherrill, Ph. D., D. D., Professor of Religious Education, Louisville Presbyterian Seminary.....	133
The Gospel Which Jesus Preached.	
By Rev. J. B. Green, D. D., Professor of Theology and Ethics, Columbia Theological Seminary.....	151
The Sermon on the Mount for To-day.	
By Rev. Andrew W. Blackwood, D. D., Professor of Homiletics, Prince- ton Theological Seminary.....	162
Justification by Faith.	
By Rev. Thomas Cary Johnson, D. D., LL. D., Professor of Systematic Theology, Union Theological Seminary.....	178
Reviews of Current Theological and Religious Books.....	192

ADDRESS:

UNION SEMINARY REVIEW

Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.

Please give notice of change of address

Published four times a year—January, April, July and October. Annual sub-
scription, \$1.50; foreign, \$1.75. Single copies, 40 cents.

Entered at the Post-Office, at Richmond, Va., as second-class matter.

THE RICHMOND PRESS, INC., PRINTERS

Digitized by Google

205
u582

THE UNION SEMINARY REVIEW

Vol. XLI.

JANUARY, 1930.

No. 2.

THE SOURCE OF RELIGIOUS CERTAINTY.

BY REV. HOLMES ROLSTON, JR.

Pastor of Bethesda Presbyterian Church, Rockbridge Baths, Va.

A boy in a Greek class once said to his teacher, "Professor, when I am locating a Greek verb, I do not merely want to know, I want to know that I know." In expressing himself thus, he voiced an elemental human desire, the desire to pass from the realm of probability to the realm of certainty. Men want to know and to know that they know. Men want to be right and to know that they are right. The mathematician who has worked out the answer to his problem is not satisfied until he has checked his answer and proved that he is correct. The inventor of a new machine is not satisfied with a demonstration on paper. There may be factors which he has overlooked. When he has built the machine and has proved by a thorough demonstration that it will do what he has claimed for it, probability has passed into certain knowledge and then, and not until then, his heart is at rest. Probability may be the guide of human action, but the quest of the human soul is for certainty.

In the realm of religion, the quest for certainty becomes a consuming passion. In religion, men want to know and to know that they know. They may be willing to trifle in other things, but in religion they want certainty. Nor is it difficult to find the reason for this. The heat of the passion for certainty increases in proportion with the greatness of the issues involved. The scientist may be interested in the question as

we were doing by speaking of our dependence when we ought to have been crying forgiveness for our laziness! That servant who honored his Lord most was not he who spoke most feelingly of the power and austerity of his Lord; it was that one who put out the money to use. And so it is with us.

THE GOSPEL WHICH JESUS PREACHED.

BY REV. J. B. GREEN, D. D.,

*Professor of Theology and Ethics, Columbia Theological
Seminary.*

(This is the second of a series of articles by Dr. Green to be published in the pages of the Union Seminary Review.)

The subject of my former article was "The Gospel Which Paul Preached". Paul has given us the substance of his gospel in 1 Cor. 15:3-4. It consisted principally of two parts: 1, That Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; 2, that he hath been raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures. "One is almost ashamed to repeat that this is not Paulinism, but the Christianity of the whole Apostolic Church. What Paul made the basis of his preaching he had on his own showing received as the common Christian tradition." Paul was bold to declare that apart from the historic facts of Christ's death and resurrection, *as he and the rest of the apostles interpreted them*, there was no gospel.

Did Paul follow his Master or depart from Him in so defining the gospel? Did he receive his gospel from Christ, as he claimed? Some, better informed than Paul, say that he did not; but that he modified and so misrepresented his Master's teaching. They allege that Christ did not create the Church and its message, but that the Church created Christ, meaning the Christ we have in Christian tradition.

The only way to settle the matter at issue is to ascertain Christ's teaching as to the two points in which Paul summed

up his gospel. For years the demand has been, "Back to Christ". Let us accede to the demand and go back to Christ. One would suppose that the way to go back to Christ is to go behind the Epistles to the Gospels. But some are not willing to stop there. They insist that in order to find Christ we must go back behind the Gospels. For in the Gospels, the critics tell us, we have the Christ of faith and not the Christ of history.

I see no light along that road: beyond the Gospels is darkness. If the real Christ is not presented in the four Gospels, then the real Christ is lost. And we must mourn not only that the world is lost, but that the pretended Saviour of the world is lost also. If we have not his words and works in the memoirs of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, then we can never know what he said and did; unless other records shall be discovered. The four Gospels are our present source books. Beyond them we cannot go, in the present state of our knowledge. The reports of the Gospel writers have not been discredited. The appeal to them is final in the matter under discussion. So the question to be determined is this: Can the essence of Paul's Gospel be found in the words of Jesus as reported in the narratives of the four evangelists? As John has least favor with the critics, I shall adduce his testimony first, and then corroborate it by the witness of the other three.

I. The primary factor in Paul's Gospel was that Christ died for our sins. Did Christ's death have any place in his own preaching? If so, what place? He taught with respect to his death, first, the certainty of it: not the certainty only, but the necessity. He foreannounced not only that his death would take place, but that it must take place. To Nicodemus Jesus said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of man be lifted up". This witness of John is confirmed by Matthew and Luke. "From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples that he *must* go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed." Matt. 16:21. "He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spoke unto you while he was yet in Galilee, saying that the Son of man *must* be delivered up into the hands

of sinful men, and be crucified." Luke 24:6-7. By the mouth of these three witnesses it is established that Christ taught the necessity of his death.

Necessary for what? What was the nature of the necessity? Necessary for the success of his mission. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." John 12:24. In these words Jesus clearly expresses his idea of the relation of his death to the success of his mission. Without his death his life would be barren and unfruitful. The condition of reaping a harvest of achievement was dying the death. His death, then, was necessary not merely in the sense of inevitable or unavoidable, but also and especially in the sense of indispensable. The necessity was not blind and fateful, but intelligent and purposeful.

For this view of his death was not the result of experience, not a conviction forced upon him by the determined and deadly hostility of his enemies. It belonged to his vocation, was an essential and original part of his mission. For let it be noted that as soon as his disciples perceived who he was, recognized his Messianic mission, he began to teach them that he must die. Matt. 16:21; Mark 9:31. When he unfolds Messiahship death is seen at its heart. It is clear that he wishes it to be understood that his death is an integral part of his Messianic office, an essential element in it, inseparable from it.

For, according to John, Jesus, facing the cross, said: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour." John 12:27. Earlier he had said: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep." John 10:11. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. . . . This *commandment* received I from my Father." John 10:17, 18. Earlier still he had said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life." That best known and best loved verse of all Scripture enshrines the heart of the Gospel. And not only

is the incarnation there, but the atonement as well. For it says not that the Father *sent* the Son, but that he *gave* him up. The witness of Mark supports the testimony of John. "The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many. Mark 10:45. As Dr. Alfred E. Garvie has said, "Any conception of the Incarnation which does not see its fulfilment in the Atonement is a structure left incomplete".

Jesus further taught concerning his death that it was connected with sin and its forgiveness. Paul taught that Christ died for our sins. Did Jesus teach that? Examine and see. According to the author of the fourth Gospel Jesus accepted the Baptizer's testimony to him as the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This connected Jesus intimately with the whole system of sacrifice in the ancient Scriptures. "Lamb" belongs to the symbolism of religion. Symbolically speaking, the lamb existed in Palestine only to die. The lamb's death was a substitute death. The innocent died that the guilty might escape.

With this Johannine picture of Christ's mission agrees the representation of it given in the other three Gospels. "For the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Mark 10:45. The lives of men were forfeited on account of sin. Jesus gave his life that they might receive theirs back. He gave his instead of theirs. Dr. Zenos, of Chicago Theological Seminary, says that the argument for the substitutionary character of Christ's death based on prepositions is precarious; for the preposition prevailingly used by Paul is *huper* and not *anti*. But the preposition used by Mark in the above passage is *anti*.

A saying of Jesus reported by Luke clearly and strongly identifies his death with sin. I refer to Luke 22:37. Just before the garden agony he said to his disciples, "That which is written must be fulfilled in me, viz., 'And he was reckoned (numbered) with transgressors': for that which concerneth me hath fulfilment". The quotation is recognized as from the fifty-third of Isaiah. That Jesus applied a part of that great sacrificial chapter to himself shows that he saw in the tragic and glorious

experience of the Servant of Jehovah a picture of his own passion. "He was wounded for our transgressions; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Jesus said in effect, "This Scripture is being fulfilled in me." His mission as Saviour could not be accomplished without suffering unto death, according to the Scriptures. Hence the necessity of his death for redemptive ends.

Now turn to Matthew and read his account of the institution of the Supper. "And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sin." 26:27-28. Luke in the parallel account reports Jesus as saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood". The significant words for our purpose are these: "This is my blood of the (new) covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins." His blood is covenant blood. Covenant blood is sacrificial blood. And sacrificial blood, whatever the name and nature of the sacrifice, had reference to sin and its forgiveness. In the opinion of great Bible students like James Denny, Robertson Smith, Samuel Driver, A. M. Fairbairn and others, blood of sacrifice universally, and not in special cases, was associated with propitiatory power. "The atoning function of sacrifice is not confined to a particular class of oblation, but belongs to all sacrifices."

The meaning of Christ's words in connection with the institution of the supper, "This is my blood of the covenant", cannot be better expressed than in the words of James Denny, who excelled in the power and beauty of Christian statement. He says, "What it concerns us to note is that the New Testament, while it abstains from interpreting Christ's death by any special prescriptions of the Levitical law, constantly uses sacrificial language to describe that death, and in doing so unequivocally recognizes it in a propitiatory character; in other words, a reference to sin and its forgiveness. But there is something further to be said. In the thirty-first verse of Jeremiah we have the sublime prophecy of a new covenant—a new covenant which is indeed but the efficacious renewal of the old—a

new covenant the very condition and foundation of which is the forgiveness of sins. 'They shall all know me from the least unto the greatest, for I will forgive their iniquities, and will remember their sins no more.'

"It is this which is present in the mind of our Lord as he says of the outpoured wine, 'This is my blood of the covenant'. He is establishing at the cost of his life the new covenant, the new religious relation between God and man, which has the forgiveness of sins as its fundamental blessing. He speaks as knowing that this blessing could become ours only through his death, and as the condition upon which it depends his death can be presented as a propitiatory sacrifice. . . . Our Lord gives the sublimest expression to his consciousness of himself and his work when he says, 'This is my blood of the new covenant'. It is a word which gathers up into itself the whole promise of prophecy and the whole testimony of the apostles; it is the focus of revelation, in which the Old Testament and the New are one. The power that is in it is the power of the passion in which the Lamb of God bears the sin of the world. It is no misapprehension, therefore, but a true rendering of the mind of Christ, when Matthew calls the covenant new, and defines the shedding of blood by reference to the remission of sins."

Thus it appears from the words of Jesus as recorded in all four Gospels that Jesus regarded his death as certain and necessary—necessary for the fulfilment of Scripture and for the success of his mission. As his mission had reference to sin and its forgiveness, his death was the indispensable condition of forgiveness. This is only saying, in other words, what Paul said when he declared that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

It is sometimes said that the death of Christ has a place in the Epistles out of all proportion to that which it has in the Gospels. That this is a mistaken judgment is perfectly clear in the light of two facts. The first fact is the place of our Lord's death in his own thought and teaching. We have seen that from the earliest days of his ministry he recognized suf-

fering and death as entering into his work and as essential to its success.

The second fact is the place of Christ's passion in the Gospel narratives. Compare the space given to the passion week with the total extent of the Gospel records. Of his twenty-eight chapters Matthew devotes seven to that last week, one-fourth of the whole. Of his sixteen chapters Mark gives five, nearly one-third of all. Of his twenty-four chapters Luke devotes four and a half, nearly one-fifth. Of his twenty-one chapters John gives almost nine, nearly one-half. Here is a striking and significant fact: the fourfold account of Christ's life and work includes eighty-nine chapters. Of these, twenty-five, considerably more than one-fourth, are occupied with the passion week. The Epistles concentrate upon the suffering and death of Christ. So do the Gospels, and so likewise the apocalypse. The New Testament is a unit in its evaluation of the death of Christ. Is this emphasis false? If so, there was in the first disciples a stupendous misunderstanding of their Master's mind and message. That original false emphasis has misguided the Church these nineteen centuries. Hard to believe. Impossible to believe, if we take seriously the promise of the Spirit's guidance. On the other hand, if Scripture emphasis is trustworthy and Scripture truth in Scripture proportion is a good rule for preachers and teachers of the Word to follow, then the death of Christ should be the focal point of our attention and interest and instruction.

II. So Paul did not err in making the death of Christ for our sins the primary truth of his Gospel. Did he err in making the resurrection of Christ the second elemental truth? Did he get his doctrine of the resurrection from Christ? If we can trust the Gospel records, that question also must be answered in the affirmative. Jesus seldom referred to his death apart from his resurrection. Nearly every announcement of his approaching death was accompanied with a prediction of his rising from the dead. "And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples apart, and on the way he said to them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of

man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify: and the third day he shall rise again." Matt. 20:17-19. Even the earliest and dimmest foreshadowings of his death were attended by intimations of his emergence from the grave. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." John 2:19. "Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." John 10:17-18. His life was self-resigned and self-resumed.

Of course, if he had died and remained dead, his mission would have been fruitless. His figure of the grain that dies and lives again implies that the dying is good and hopeful because it issues in resurrection. How could he have said, I am the resurrection and the life, if he himself were to remain under the power of death? He could be the author of resurrection because he was the example and owner of resurrection life. He was the very incarnation and illustration of resurrection power.

The death and resurrection of Christ—let it never be overlooked or forgot—are companion facts: they together constitute a vital whole. The resurrection apart from the death would have been impossible; the death apart from the resurrection would have been impotent. The death conditioned the resurrection, and the resurrection crowned and consummated the death.

(Now Christ, as Paul did after him, declared that his death and resurrection were accomplished in fulfilment of Scripture. This phase of the subject is reserved for treatment in the next article.)

It thus appears that the Gospels and the Epistles are one in teaching that Christ died for our sins and rose again, according to the Scriptures. If Christ is correctly reported in the Gospel narratives, the apostles did not invent their message; but they received it from Christ, and gave it to men without

corruption or addition; save in the way of amplification. That more should have been said about the death and resurrection of Christ after the events than before them is perfectly natural. Before these mighty works there were intimations of their redemptive values; after them there were express and ample assertion and exposition of the same. So the only way to make it to appear that the teaching of Jesus differed substantially from the teaching of his apostles, and thus destroy the harmony of the New Testament, is to deny that the words which we have been studying are the genuine words of Jesus. Some do not hesitate to do that. But there is no sufficient evidence for impugning or expunging the record.

Wherefore according to Old Testament and New, according to Law, Prophets and Psalms, and according to Gospels and Epistles, the Gospel is this: Jesus our Lord was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification. Rom. 4:25. The Gospel is not something said, but something done. Fundamentally the Gospel consists of the mighty deeds of the Son of God, whereby he hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light—into the light. 2 Tim. 1:10.

III. The condition or conditions on which Jesus offered life and salvation to men.

First, faith. The testimony of John is abundant here. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." In this and the three following verses "believe" or "believeth" is used five times. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." John 3:36. "And Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me." John 12:44. And so in many other passages. The testimony of John is supported by the witness of the other evangelists. "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and saying, . . . repent, and believe in the gospel." Mark 1:14, 15. "If thou canst believe! All things are possible to him that believeth." Mark 9:23. Healing, life, salvation—all blessing—conditioned on faith, promised to faith. See Matt. 9:2-22. Again and again

Jesus said in effect, "Be it unto you according to your faith". No faith, no blessing.

But what kind of faith? Faith in what or whom? Not faith in general, but faith in particular; not faith in a proposition, but faith in a person: faith in him! Re-read the citations from John: "Whosoever believeth on or in him." "He that believeth on the Son." "He that believeth on me." "To as many as believe on his name." And so on. Is this teaching peculiar to John? No; consider Matt. 11:28. "Come unto *me*, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and *I* will give you rest." The blessing promised was in Christ, and was only for those who came to him. And to come to him is in Scripture language to believe on him. For compare John 6:35: "Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." "Cometh to me" and "believeth on me" are parallel and equivalent expressions. The saving relation is a personal one, and the nexus is faith. Two blind men cry unto Jesus for light. He said unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? That is, believe ye *in me* as able to do this? Saving faith is no doubt faith in God, but it is faith in him as he is in Jesus Christ.

Jesus himself is central in his own message. The vital question is the Person of Jesus. The centre of gravity in theology is the Person of Christ. The centre of gravity in the Gospels is the same. "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" "Who say ye that I am?" Who is he, and what is our relation to him—these the important questions now and always. He came preaching a kingdom and himself as King. None can enter the kingdom except through him—faith in him, obedience to him. He is the door. To accept the King is to enter the kingdom. "Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

How then do some say that Jesus has no place in his Gospel, in the Gospel preached by himself? How do they say that Jesus in his own thought was not an object of faith, but an example of it; and that he called men not to faith in himself,

but to a faith and life like his own? In "The Church's One Foundation" Sir Robertson Nicoll quotes Harnack as saying, "Not the Son, but the Father alone, has a place in the Gospel as Jesus proclaimed it". One wonders with what sort of spectacles the great Doctor had read the Gospel records.

The first condition of blessing according to Jesus is faith—faith in him, the Forgiver and Life Giver, on the basis of his life laid down and taken again. A second condition, or another aspect of the first condition, is repentance. Jesus closes his opening message in Galilee with the words, repent and believe in the Gospel; thus endorsing and continuing the message of his great Forerunner. In Matthew and Luke he says, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance". According to Luke, he solemnly declared once and again, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish".

A third condition of salvation the Master mentions, namely, endurance. "Many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray. And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold. But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." Matt. 24:11-13. "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." Mark 13:13. Endurance is not different from faith and repentance; endurance is faith and repentance keeping on, holding out to the end.

So according to our findings Jesus preached the same Gospel and offered salvation on the same terms as his apostles did in their addresses and Epistles. This same Gospel is offered unto us for our acceptance or rejection. "How shall we escape if we neglect (or reject) so great a salvation? Which, having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard".