

## THE MESSAGE OF THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS TO OUR OWN AGE.—IV.

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[CONTINUED.]

Closely connected with the Divinity of Christ is:

3. *The Titles of Our Blessed Lord.*—The following expressions are of frequent occurrence: The Son of God—the Lord—our Lord—Jesus Christ our Lord. The following among many others also occur:

The High Priest and Guardian of our souls [Clement, 61]; the Eternal High-priest [Polycarp 12]; the Saviour and Prince of immortality [Homily, 20; the Son of Mary and Son of God [Ignatius ad Ephes. 7]; the Lord and future Judge of quick and dead [Barnabas, 7; the unerring Mouth of the Father [Ignatius ad Rom. 8]; His only Son [Ignatius ad Rom]; the Beloved [Ignatius ad Symr.]; our God [Ignatius ad Rom. 3]; our common Hope [Ignatius ad Ephes. 21]; our inseparable Life [Ignatius ad Ephes. 3]; our only Teacher [Ignatius ad Mag. 9]; our Jesus [Homily, 14]. Clearly eighteen hundred years have awakened no new emotions towards the Person of our Blessed Lord.

4. *The Atonement.*—The Epistle of Barnabas is remarkable for its uncompromising attitude towards Judaism. In his opinion Christ died at the hand of the Jews, "that He might sum up the complete tale of their sins"; and that He might rise again to "show forth the resurrection of the dead" [5]. But he did not fail to see in the Passion a deeper mystery still. He says: "For to this end the Lord endured to deliver His flesh unto corruption, that by the remission of sins we might be cleansed, which cleansing is through the blood of His sprinkling. For the Scripture concerning Him . . . speaketh thus: He was wounded for our transgressions, and He hath been bruised for our sins; by His stripes we are healed" [5]. And again: "If then the Son of God, being Lord and future Judge of quick and dead, suffered that His wound might give us life, let us believe that the Son of God could not suffer except for our sakes" [7].

The Epistle of Barnabas is largely taken up with his subject. He sees everywhere in the Old Testament types of the Cross and Passion. Thus, in an exposition of the treatment dealt out to the scapegoat in his day, he says: "Attend ye to the commandments which He gave. Take two goats, fair and alike, and offer them, and let the priest take the one for a whole burnt-offering for sins. But the other one—what must they do with it? Accursed, saith He, is the one. Give heed how the type of Jesus is revealed. And do ye all spit upon it and goad it, and place scarlet wool about its head, and so let it be cast into the wilderness. . . . What then meaneth this? Give heed. The one for the altar, and the other accursed. And, moreover, the accursed one crowned. For they shall see Him in that day wearing the long scarlet robe about His flesh, and shall say, Is not this He Whom once we crucified and set at nought and spat upon? verily this was He. Who then said that He was the Son of God. For how is He like the goat? For this reason: it says the goats shall be fair and alike, that when they shall see Him coming, then they may be astonished at the likeness of the goat. Therefore behold the type of Jesus that was to suffer" (7).

St. Clement says: "Let us fix our eyes on the blood of Christ and understand how precious it is unto His Father, because being shed for our salvation it won for the whole world the grace of repentance" (7). And again: "For the love which He had towards us, Jesus Christ our Lord hath given His blood for us by the

will of God, and His flesh for our flesh and His life for our lives" (49). In St. Clement's opinion the scarlet thread hung out by Rahab was a "prophecy," that through the blood of the Lord there shall be redemption unto all them that believe and hope on God" (12).

St. Ignatius, in opposition to the Gnostic heretics, frequently refers to the Passion of our Blessed Lord. He salutes the Ephesians as "having their hearts kindled in the blood of God" (1), and tells them that "the Cross" is the engine of Jesus Christ," by which, as "stones prepared beforehand," they are "hoisted up to the heights" of God's temple; "the rope" being "the Holy Spirit," "while faith is the windlass, and love the way that leadeth up to God" (9). He exhorts the Magnesians to be "fully persuaded concerning" these three things, "the birth, and the passion, and the resurrection" (11). He gives glory to God that the Smyrncens "are established in faith immovable, being as it was nailed on the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, in flesh and in spirit, and firmly grounded in love in the blood of Christ" (1).

St. Polycarp says: "Our Lord Jesus Christ endured to face even death for our sakes. . . .

Let us, therefore, without ceasing, hold fast by our hope, and by the earnest of our righteousness which is Jesus Christ who took up our sins in His own body upon the tree, who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, but for our sakes He endured all things, that we might live in Him" (1, 8).

In these passages we meet with no exhaustive theory to explain this greatest of mysteries. All that the Apostolic Fathers do is to state the Atonement as a fact, and to attribute to it all the efficacy that was supposed to belong to the Old Testament sacrifices. Have our greatest theologians been able to do more?

5. *Justification.*

St. Clement carefully distinguishes between faith and work in their relation to justification. Combining the language of St. Paul and St. James, he says: "Let us clothe ourselves in concord, being lowly-minded and temperate, holding ourselves aloof from all back-biting and evil-speaking, being justified by works and not by words. . . . Let our praise be with God, and not of ourselves; for God hateth them that praise themselves. Let the testimony to our well-doing be given by others, as it was given unto our fathers who were righteous. . . . They all were glorified and magnified, not through themselves or their own works, or the righteous doing which they wrought, but through His will. And so we, having been called through His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified through ourselves, or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety or works which we wrought in holiness of heart, but through faith, whereby the Almighty God justified all men that have been from the beginning."

What then, must we do, brethren? Must we idly abstain from doing good, and forsake love? May the Master never allow this to befall us at least; but let us hasten with instancy and zeal to accomplish every good work. . . .

We have seen that all the righteous were adorned in good works. Yea, and the Lord Himself having adorned Himself with works rejoiced. . . . He exhorteth us therefore to believe on Him with our whole heart, and to be not idle nor careless unto every good work" (30-34).

## EMMANUEL—GOD WITH US.

The beautiful German story of the Christ-child has a moral which speaks feelingly to the heart. Ever as the gracious time draws near when God is manifest in the flesh, a little child—so the tradition runs—forlorn and destitute, with rugged garments and bare feet, appears

among men. Almost perished with cold, suffering the pangs of hunger, he wanders from house to house and from door to door. Wherever is heard the sounds of festivity and mirth, where brilliant lights add splendor to the scene and warm fires lend their comfort, where the merchant is busy at the counter and the lawyer labors at his desk, where the farmer reckons up his harvest, where poverty sits glooming by the fireside and wealth flashes in the parlor, there the timid wail of the Christ-child is heard, there he knocks at the door. If he is kindly welcomed and made to share the genial warmth and pleasant feast, if his wants are supplied, if festivity is for a while relaxed, if business is put aside to attend to his appeal, if kind hearts are filled with love and pity for one so suffering and so young, then he reveals his true nature, and becomes Emmanuel—God with us. There he leaves a blessing upon the basket and the store.

But if his claims are overlooked; if the sound of revelry drowns his cry; if selfishness shuts the door upon him, and refuses or delays to assuage the pangs of hunger and of cold; if he is turned away from the lighted hall and bid to take up his abode in the manger; if their own enjoyment makes their ears deaf and their hearts hard to the outcry of humanity—if there is no room in the inn, then the Christ-child turns away, and with him parts the hope of peace, of happiness, and of heaven.

The fulness of time came when the nations were to rejoice and be glad; it was Christmas Eve in Bethlehem. The busy city was thronged with visitors, come up from far to look once more upon the home of their fathers. Every house was filled to overflowing; even in the inn there was no room left. What a reunion of long-separated friends; what occasion for joy and festivity! Among the visitors were Joseph and Mary of the royal lineage of David, but a lineage which has sustained all the vicissitudes of fortune. Step by step they have descended from a throne to private station, from wealth to penury. Humble, poor, unfriended, two of the royal house stood at the door of the inn. They beheld its illuminated windows, its blazing hearths; they heard the sound of music and of mirth.

Suddenly there was a pause in the revel, the flying feet forgot the chase, the petition of Joseph, Mary's mute and touching appeal, broke upon their ear. A poor man, a sick woman, asked for shelter and comfort. It was the knock of the Christ-child at the door. They were weary and footsore with the length of the way; both were feeble—one was pale with suffering. It was a strong claim upon human sympathy. Their own happiness should have made the dwellers in the inn kind. But what was a suffering woman that she should interrupt their cheer! There was no room in the inn. She was friendless and poor, and for such there was the stable and the manger—the couch of down for the lordly Pharisee, for the lowly Virgin the litter of straw. They forgot the history of their fathers, how Abraham and Lot, when given to hospitality, had entertained angels unawares. They saw not through the Christ-child's disguise, and in their blinded ignorance shut their doors upon Emmanuel—God with us. Fools were they and slow of heart not to have perceived that the Lord was at hand—fools and blind to have thought that their own selfish pleasures could, even for a moment, exempt them from the duties of humanity and religion. They turned the Christ-child from their doors. Cruel was the sin, and cruel was its punishment, though just. Soon was there a voice heard in Rama, Rachel, the fathers and mothers of Bethlehem weeping for their children because they were not. They had driven mother and Child to the stable, and, as a punishment, their own children found a bloody grave. There was no room for the Christ-child in the inn, and