

THE ATONEMENT

A BRIEF DISCUSSION

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If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

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P R E F A C E

THE THREE WORDS which I have used as a sub-title to the thesis are by no means superfluous! Looking at the vastness of the subject - the atonement - and at the limitations of time and space, the discussion will need to be very brief indeed! For this reason I would ask the reader not to look for and expect detailed treatment of any particular aspect of the problem, or history, or restatement of the atonement. In each section I have been able to do not more than outline what I have considered to be the main points ; in section one, for example, I have been able only briefly to survey the problem, the fundamentals of sin and the need it creates, to point out essential considerations for a restatement, and to mention briefly the problem of the 'central' cross (I have attempted to consider the centrality of the cross in a sounder perspective in the final section, relating it, as I believe, more fully with the resurrection).

Section two is if anything, even more abbreviated, for I have treated this historical section as a survey of the main types of theory that have been put forward in the course of Christian thinking on the atonement, seeing what they are, criticising them, all with an upon the final section. For in both the first sections my main purpose has been to draw conclusions which would be useful in going on

in the third to a restatement of the problem. My aim in this thesis then, is not to give a detailed revision of any aspect of the atonement, but to pass briefly over the whole subject, working toward a conclusion which I believe to be important. If I was to name a 'key' to my approach to the atonement, it would be simply the resurrection. My indebtedness goes here first to that little book of Bishop Aulen's, Christus Victor, which, although it does not deal with the resurrection in a satisfactory way at all, did set my own feet on that path; and secondly, I am indebted to my tutor, Professor W.D. Maxwell, who claims the resurrection as the key to all theology, and has made his claim felt to me. There can be no Christian preaching which is not 'resurrection-preaching'; Paul could never have preached Christ and Him crucified had he not first known the Risen Lord on the Damascus road.

There is one more point on which I ask the reader's patience: let him remember as he reads the subject we are dealing with, the 'otherness', the mystery, of the work of God in Christ. For the atonement least of all do we claim a 'final' theology: it has been described as the Christian 'Holy of Holies', and we do well to treat it so. As Dr. Jas. Denney said, when we deal with the death of Christ (and I add the resurrection) it is least possible to urge the familiar distinction between theology and religion; it is

not possible to treat the atonement as though it were a matter of indifference; I feel that I have made use of a certain 'poetic licence', or may I call it 'religious licence', when I have come in my closing pages to deal with my own approach - for that I crave leave.

There are a variety of terms applied to the different theories of the atonement, and all these names bear significance, for they recall some aspect of that theory. Thus I have had at the outset to choose which terms I will use: I have selected the name which I felt portrayed most nearly the essential character of the theory, and which at the same time would bring out clearly the divergence between the types. Thus I have named the three main types Moral Influence (for Subjective, Exemplary etc.), Satisfactory (for Substitutionary, juridical, legal, forensic, Latin etc.) and Dramatic (for Classic, Ransom, Christus Victor etc.).

I should like to express my thanks here for the lectures given on 'The Atonement' to the theology class (Rhodes) which I attended in 1954 by Professor N.H.G. Robinson; I have been helped tremendously in this thesis by those lectures. And finally, my thanks go to Professor M.D. Maxwell for help in the preparation of this work, and

for his great 'tutorial' patience in reading and re-reading my first untidy manuscripts, as well as for his consistent emphasis upon the resurrection (which I trust he will now see to my emphasis).

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S U M M A R Y

-- SECTION ONE --

THE PROBLEM OF THE ATONEMENT.

This first section endeavours briefly to set out the problem, seeing it in its proper context against the need it fulfils and its historical setting. It attempts to shew something of the nature of sin and the need which sin creates; and asks the question Why Atonement? This question can only be answered by an appreciation of the meaning and power of sinfulness. Atonement is necessarily from God's side, and it is costly to God.

An important factor in this section is the attempt to see the wholeness of Christ's work; to set the atonement in its true context within the life of Christ. An attempt is made to relate the atonement to the incarnation, the Word made flesh and dwelling among us; to the resurrection, which is not to be misunderstood as a mere evidential appendage to the cross, but to be seen as an essential factor in the salvation of men; and also to the ascension, to the problem of time and eternity, in that while Christ's work was once-for-all, it is nevertheless continued - it was in history, but is not bound within history.

When this conception of the unity of Christ's work

is grasped then we can turn to a consideration of the cross, always regarded by Faith as the very centre of the atonement. A brief survey is made of the Biblical teaching concerning salvation and the cross; and the centrality of the cross is interpreted sacrificially.

Certain conclusions are drawn from this discussion of the problem which are to be borne in mind when an attempt is later made to form a constructive theory of the atonement: the nature of sin and the needs which it causes will have to be more carefully considered;

we shall have to examine the significance of the cross as the centre of the atonement in the light of the whole life of Jesus, particularly the resurrection;

we must bring our thought back continually to be judged by the witness of Scripture.

-- SECTION TWO --

THE ATONEMENT IN HISTORY.

The historical question is treated by an attempt to discover the main streams of thought on the atonement. The traditional account of the history of the atonement holds that there are only two - subjective and objective. But in reality there are three - subjective (moral influence) and TWO objective theories - the dramatic and the satisfactory. The main contention of the ~~subjective~~ moral theory is that

the atonement is effected through the revealed love of God in Christ upon the cross changing the hearts of men and women.

The satisfaction theory contends that Christ payed the debt which man owed to God, He took man's place in the judgement of God.

The dramatic theory holds that the atonement is wrought through Christ triumphing over the powers of evil.

These theories are criticised and valued: the satisfaction theory is rejected; the moral is seen to be true, but only so far as it goes; the dramatic is seen to be full of promise, but vague of expression.

Another category is examined, the sacrificial, and this is discovered to be not a theory but an important element.

Again conclusions are drawn:
the satisfaction theory must be set aside;
the truth of the moral influence theory must be retained;
the sacrificial idea must be retained, not as a theory, but as an element;
the dramatic theory will require careful consideration, and the attempt must be made to state it more precisely.

-- SECTION THREE --

A RESTATEMENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

It is to this final section that the first two have been working up. The final aim of the thesis is found here - to attempt to restate the doctrine of the atonement in a more comprehensive and integrated way. Various unfortunate factors are observed in the theological field regarding the atonement: oversimplification; the desire for a final theology; the lack of integrating thought; the failure to conceive the wholeness of the work of Christ; and the complete failure on the part of the majority to appreciate the importance of the resurrection.

The line of integration will be adopted, but a closer consideration of the nature of sin is necessary to clarify our thoughts upon the atonement. Sin is seen to result in the formation of the 'world' - a system of man-centred life which rejects God - and holds man in bondage; yet it is a bondage in which he willingly shares. The needs of men are found to become clearer as this 'world' is discussed; he needs release from the power of the 'world'; he needs forgiveness; he needs restoration to the fellowship with God; he needs to be reintroduced into the purpose of God; he needs a new heart, to be at peace with God; he needs life, for he is dead in sin;

The need for atonement is seen to be rooted both in the nature of sin and in the nature of God.

The section then proceeds to a restatement of the story of salvation, and relating the atonement to the establishing of the Kingdom within the 'world'; in doing so it becomes apparent that the crux of the atonement is summed up in the presence of the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit; all things are summed up in Christ, and He is seen to satisfy all the needs which sin has raised for man; at the same time He is seen to act 'before' God as representative man, as the expiation of our sinfulness. The final portion of the section is an attempt to expound the concept of CHRIST'S PRESENCE AS OUR ATONEMENT. It is to this goal that I have tried to lead the thoughts on the atonement, and it is to this goal that I believe we must continually strive in all our discussion upon the atonement.

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1.

SECTION ONE

"THE PROBLEM OF THE ATONEMENT"

(THE ATONEMENT: A BRIEF DISCUSSION)

THEOLOGY IS OFTEN criticised as unreal and irrelevant, as out of touch with life; such criticism has lent special point to the theology of Paul Tillich, which emphasises the apologetic approach and the need to consider the situation. If we are to avoid an unreal and irrelevant discussion of the saving work of Christ it is essential to view this central doctrine of the Christian Faith in the light of the need it fulfils, and in its historical setting; we must consider the divine initiative and purpose, the fulness of the time, the Word made flesh, the cross and resurrection, the ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Atonement will become relevant when we see its necessity in face of the need created by sin, and its purpose working out in the life and death of Jesus Christ. This first section endeavours to set out briefly the problem of atonement, leaving a discussion of the development and valuation of the theories which interpret the problem to a later section.

1. THE NEED FOR ATONEMENT.

A statement of the relevance of the doctrine of redemption would be inconceivable apart from some consideration of the problem of sin and forgiveness. Throughout the centuries the witness of the Old and New Testaments and of Christian Faith has asserted two fundamental aspects of man's condition - his sin, and his need for forgiveness. "The saying is

sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners"¹. Sin remains an embarrassing topic for the modern mind; in spite of the shattering blows reality has dealt doctrines based on the inevitable progress of man, Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, with his wide and critical knowledge of the contemporary situation, is still able to speak of the easy conscience of modern man as the common factor. His conclusion from an analysis of modern views on human nature shews "the complacent conscience of modern man as the one unifying factor source amidst a wide variety of anthropological conceptions...the more surprising since it continues to express itself almost as unqualifiedly in a period of social decay as in the...heyday of a bourgeois culture"². Sin is an irrelevant question to the modern mind until it ceases to be an intellectual consideration and becomes personal conviction; that Jesus came to save sinners may not be disputed as the truth, but even so, without moral conviction, it is not grasped as relevant. To say that there is an irrelevancy attached to the sense of sin is not to say that it is not there, or that it is not felt; it may be acutely felt, but not grasped in its reality and moral seriousness as sin by a conscience conditioned to think in terms of psychological complexes. It is small wonder then that we should face the criticism of irrelevance by modern man, for the atonement is relevant only when a man has become conscious of his guilt before God, and his need

1. 1 Timothy 1:15. 2. The Nature and Destiny of Man(II) p 99.

to be restored to His fellowship - for such a man the words 'reconciliation' and 'forgiveness' will have the ultimate relevance.

To discuss the whole question of the modern understanding of sin would be quite outside the limits of this thesis, as would be too a discussion on the reality of sin. We shall therefore accept the fact of sin, and go on to examine the need for reconciliation to God which sin raises. In this we shall consider sin not only in the sense of individual sins, but also in its deeper sense of sinfulness - a rooted attitude of self-centredness involving the whole personality of the sinner, and involving not only individuals but mankind as a whole, destroying the God-centred fellowship which is essential to man's chief end. Let us then look at the need for salvation which rests in man's self-centred situation, and the need for forgiveness which arises out of his moral guilt before God.

A preliminary question springs to mind at this point, and it is one not without value to our discussion. The question is: If there has been atonement why is there still punishment? It is the age-old problem of the connexion between sin and suffering, and of the relation between suffering and punishment, a problem about which the New Testament elaborates no theory. How, as Dr. D.M. Baillie asks, is forgiveness to be related to suffering, to the punishments that we

have brought upon ourselves and others by our sin, which apparently continue after we have accepted God's pardon?¹ Some theologians argue that God's forgiveness does not entail remission of punishment, but that God allows punishment to run its full course, though He for His part has granted the sinner moral pardon. But this is an indefensible position, for the real punishment of sin, the sting of sin, is alienation from God and destruction of the fellowship between man and God. Sufferings do indeed arise as a result of our sins, but these consequences cannot be regarded as that which is to be taken away by forgiveness; a man may be forgiven in the sight of God, but that does not necessarily wipe out the consequences of his sin, he must still bear them. Forgiveness will change his whole attitude to those consequences and he will accept them with courage and fortitude. When the sting of sin, alienation from God, is removed, a man views his sufferings in a new light, in the light of grace, and not as a punishment; he now sees them as part of the broken material he must change and from which he must build a new life. As Dr. Baillie writes, "If a man's sins are forgiven, that is an end of them; and now the suffering they have left as their legacy is simply part of his lot, a Divine discipline perhaps, but not a Divine punishment. It is part of the situation which, in the providence of God, he has to face, his share in the cross of humanity; and it is God's

1. D.M. Baillie God was in Christ; p. 167

will that he should face it blithely, not with pr
 bitter remorse, refusing to forgive himself, as
 not received God's forgiveness, but with faith and hope
 What is the result of such a conception of forgiveness?
 When a man views the consequences of his sin not as his
 punishment, but as something which he can strive to trans-
 form in the new-found power of God's forgiveness, something
 to overcome and grow by, then, to borrow Professor Hodgson's
 metaphors, "he will have taken the pain which is the child
 of sin and made it the parent, not of further evil, but of
 good; he will have taken the pain which is the product of
 sin and treated it as raw material for increasin the world's
 output of goodness"². If this conception of divine forgive-
 ness is grasped, if forgiveness can be seen as a positive
 restoration to fellowship, and not as the mere remission of
 penalty, we shall be a long way towards clarifying our
 thoughts on the doctrine of the atonement. In the words of
 Dr. H.R.Mackintosh, "forgiveness differs by a whole moral
 universe from the mere abandonment of revenge. It demands
 more by far than the self-mastery enough to veto retaliation"³.

This question will have been valuable if we can now
 begin to see that sin and the need for atonement are not
 just a question of God cancelling the punishment due to sin;

1. D.M.Baillie: God was in Christ; p. 168.

2. L.Hodgson: The Doctrine of the Atonement; p.62.

3. H.R.Mackintosh: The Christian Experience of Forgiveness;p.29.

there are consequences of sin which clearly are not blotted out by an experience of divine forgiveness. The spirit of the prodigal dogs the Christian throughout his life: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son"¹, the spirit of unworthiness, self-consciousness of sin - the bad conscience. There is also bondage to sin² in that doing wrong we lose the power to do right, and the heart is hardened to the appeal of love; there are the consequences our sins have wrought in the lives of others; and above all, there is the loss of fellowship, the breaking down of the fundamental solidarity essential to human life, for the sinner's lot is a lonely one, separated from men, and isolated from God. These consequences are not annulled by forgiveness, but their yoke is broken by it; by forgiveness the sinner is enabled to face them in a new way. As Dr. Hodgson has said, forgiven sinners have "a power of spiritual alchemy whereby they can literally and actually transform sin's evil product into the means of increasing the world's output of goodness and love"³.

But as soon as we have said this, a further question arises. We asked before, If there is atonement, then why suffering? Having said that suffering is not altered by divine forgiveness by being wiped away, but that the sinner

1. Luke 15:21

2. John 8:34

3. L. Hodgson: The Doctrine of the Atonement; p.64.

himself is changed in his attitude to them by that forgiveness, the question now to be put is, Why atonement? divine forgiveness is of such a nature, if God's forgiveness allows a complete re-orientation of our attitude to sin and to Himself, then why the cross? This question remains unanswered until we have been confronted by the meaning and the power of sin. It is when we see sin as self-centredness, as rooted in human nature, as organised¹ against God, that we shall begin to realise the need for atonement, the need to liberate man from self-centredness which is not only personal but racial.

We shall have more to say on the nature of sin and its effects in our final section; let it suffice to say here that we must see sin as mastering man, and necessarily against his will, for often he shares willingly and responsibly in that bondage. He cannot help sinning, yet he is fully responsible for his sin. Thus we are coming now to see sin as something more than a collection of sins, and the need for atonement correspondingly as something more than the need for forgiveness in the sense of forgetting or of forgoing punishment. Here is a simple illustration: we might look on the sinner as a field of grass - the blades are the individual sins, but underneath lie the roots, sinfulness,

1. The meaning of 'organised' will become clear in the discussion of the 'world' in section iii.

which remain no matter how well the surface is attended to. Forgiveness as the forgoing of punishment might serve as a 'top dressing', but if the field is to be cleaned we must strike at the roots. Even such an oversimplification of the problem illustrates the ultimate need for atonement. Man is in bondage to sin, a willing captive, yet at the same time he can hear the voice of God; man loves his sin and at the same time hates it because it separates him from God. It is in this situation that we see God in Christ overcoming the power of evil and restoring the world to Himself. Salvation is 'aimed at the roots of sinfulness'.

The illustration brings out another point; to see the need for reconciliation with God, for a deliverance from the yoke of sin - the destruction of the roots - is to see also the need for divine initiative; it is not in man himself to overcome that which destroys his fellowship with God and his true fellowship with his fellow-men, to reach up and make himself worthy in God's sight, for the destruction of the roots is beyond the ability of self-discipline or self-mastery. The need is rooted in his own being; for it is that which he loves as well as hates, and that to which he is subject freely and responsibly. Salvation cannot then be by works, but only by the grace of God. God's forgiveness is not a mere 'top dressing', a 'wiping of the slate', but a costly work in which He not only 'forgets' sins, but breaks the power of sinfulness.

To this work of God in Christ we now turn; in this section we shall concern ourselves with some of the problems that surround the atonement, leaving to a later section a discussion of the interpretations that have been put forward of how this redemption was achieved. And as we do so, let us retain in our minds the two points we have been discussing: 1. First, the seriousness of sin. To quote Principal Micklem, "Sin...is not just a series of wrong acts, which we, being free and rational beings, could quite well have avoided had we exercised our wills; it is a bondage from which of ourselves we cannot escape; it is an inner perversion of reason and will...from which no man can deliver himself. Nor can we wholly blame ourselves personally for this impotence and blindness. In part at least it is our evil inheritance 'in Adam', that is, as members of the 'fallen' human race. Prior to the actual, deliberate sins that we commit there is 'original sin'¹. This is by no means a full statement of the problem, but it indicates the centrality of sin's corruption in rational and purposive life. It is this self-centredness which excludes a man from God, which turns man's face away from Him whom to know is eternal life.

ii. Our second consideration to be borne in mind arises from the first: it is the helplessness of man to alter the situation; thus atonement is brought about by the costly

1. N.Micklem: The Doctrine of Our Redemption; p.88.

initiative of God. God is not to be regarded as god-natured and indulgent, making nothing of our sin, glossing over our innate delinquency; He is not to be misunderstood as in the dying words of Henri Heine - "Dieu me pardonnera: c'est son métier"! Our reconciliation is infinitely costly to Him. "It comes from the heart of love that has borne our sins, and because the love is infinite, the passion is infinite too...

There is an atonement, and expiation, in the heart of God Himself...God alone bears the cost"¹. "On the green hill far away they raised the cross, but the real cross was in heaven, in the father-heart of the eternal"². The initiative is from God; it is from His side, not man's, that reconciliation is achieved. Without this fundamental insight that atonement is from start to finish the act, purpose, and initiative of God we shall not begin to understand and appreciate the doctrine of reconciliation. The cross is not an accident of the history of man, but is planned and brought about by God acting in Christ for salvation; it is He who has established the way, who continues to call men to repentance and regeneration, who has set us a place in His fellowship, the fellowship of the redeemed; "through him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross"³.

1. D.M. Baillie: God was in Christ; p. 175.

2. J.S. Stewart: Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ; p. 85.

3. Colossians 1:20.

2. THE UNITY OF THE ATONEMENT.

When we turn to the facts of the doctrine of the atonement, the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, we are struck by the outstanding feature of its unity, its wholeness, the more striking in that in the Western Church the tendency has been to atomise doctrines of the faith, and this unity is often apparently neglected. Although it is certainly true to say that Christian Faith has always looked to the cross as the very centre of the atonement, and with justice, yet the death of Christ must be seen against the whole work of God active in Christ from the womb to the mount of ascension. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself"¹. The incarnation without the death would be nothing more than a subjectively effective shewing forth of God, not revelation as understood in terms of God's saving acts; the death is incomplete without the resurrection, and the completed work of God in the resurrection of Jesus is not tied to time and history, but translated into eternity.

"BUT WHEN THE time was fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons"². In some way we have to understand the incarnation

1. 2 Corinthians 5:19.

2. Galatians 4:4.

as the coming of the pre-existent Christ into the arena of human history, the Word becoming flesh, with the purpose of salvation. The incarnation shows Him as the effective agent of that salvation because in Him was God, meeting sin on a cosmic level, and yet He was at the same time man, and so identified with us. As Dr. Ryder Smith points out, it is only by identification that one person can save another: "if any man is to do anything to save another, he must identify himself with that other, he must be 'with him where he is'; next...he must do an altogether paradoxical thing - he must know what it is like to be like that other man, yet not be like him, or, to use other words, he must at once identify himself with that other and not identify himself with him... because of this tension in his experience, he will feel the horror of that other man's sin more than the man himself"¹.

This is not to be understood as implying that the incarnation was itself the saving factor, but only that it was part of the whole saving work of God; it is such a misunderstanding that is implied in a theology of the atonement like that of Dr. Richard Roberts, who stresses the importance of the personality of Christ as the key to the whole atonement - what He was is more important than what He did². He can then go on to interpret "It is finished" as the despairing cry of a failure. Dr. Roberts' whole treatment leaves

1. The Bible Doctrine of Salvation; p.11.
 2. That Strange Man Upon His Cross; p.11.

one with the impression that the atonement is but a justification of the creation of the human race before God, a creation of which He had repented, by the 'one fine hour' of the representative man Jesus upon the cross. And for God that 'one fine hour' was enough; it justified the making of man¹. This purely personal and incarnational approach leaves no room for an objective accomplishment over evil.

It is true, as Dr. Baillie says², "that some of the Greek Fathers seem to give less emphasis than was given by the New Testament and by Latin Christianity to the thought of salvation from sin through the death of Christ, and that they sometimes think of God as assuming human nature in order to transform it by illumination and so make it immortal". But so to argue would be to misrepresent the Fathers. The thought uppermost in their minds when they spoke in this way was the corporateness of humanity in Christ. "Christ is the representative man, the heavenly Adam, the head of the redeemed humanity. By taking our nature upon Him, He identified Himself with all; it is for all to identify themselves with Him by faith and love"³. They interpreted the work of Christ as a victory over Satan, and in the achievement of that victory the whole human race was bound up with Him. As Dr. Baillie continues: "the thought of Christ having come into the

1. That Strange Man Upon His Cross; p.162.

2. God was in Christ; p.160.

3. N. Micklem: The Doctrine of Our Redemption; p.58.

world to die for our sins was never very far away. Thus Christology was continually passing into soteriology, and throughout the whole Christian tradition the supreme human exigency to which the doctrine of the incarnation had to be related and made relevant has been the need of salvation from sin, the forgiveness of sins"¹.

What we must see clearly in the incarnation is that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, God in Christ entered the human field, and because Christ was God the incarnation assures the efficacy of our redemption, but is not in itself the saving factor. God as man dwelt among us, not only that we might behold His glory, not only that He might be truly revealed in the world of men, but that He might bring about our salvation; and that He might do so, not by a mere subjective influence, changing the attitude of individual sinners, but by an objective attack on the power of evil, so that for all mankind a way out of the bondage of sin might be provided. In the incarnation God appeared on the stage of time and history, and from the moment of His appearing the plot was set, and He was ready to carry through the drama of a cosmic redemption, even to the death on the cross.

CHRIST IS RISEN! That was the tremendous battle-cry of the early Ecclesia, the dynamic of its worship and preaching. But today the resurrection of Jesus has too often become

1. God was in Christ; p. 160.

divorced, from His death, forming as it were a separate 'part' of the Christian Faith, instead of seeing in it the miracle and grace of God returning in holy love to a world that had done its utmost to cast Him out; instead of seeing in it far more than an appendix, as it were, to the life and death of Jesus. It is true, as practically all theologians would say, that the resurrection of Jesus is the very seal of His victory over the power of Hell, and that God in the resurrection turned defeat into glorious victory: the death of Jesus drew the sting of sin; the resurrection was the triumph. It is also true to say that if there had been no resurrection the cross would not be the cross of Christianity, and Jesus, if remembered at all, would be just another well-meaning man whom the world had beaten.

All this is true as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough for a full understanding of the resurrection. The resurrection, says Professor F. Platt, "is the starting point of the new experience: the ultimate root of the Apostolic doctrine of atonement was the presence of the risen Christ... now and for always, these two - death and resurrection - stood together. When the Apostles stated one, they implied the other"¹. The resurrection is not merely confirmation or proof of the truth of Christ's claims concerning His person and work; not just something in the way of a 'Q.E.D.' tacked

1. Art. 'Atonement'; Dictionary of Apostolic Church, Vol. I.; p. 112.

on by God, it is an integral and essential part of the gospel of salvation - "we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"¹ As Professor J.M. Shaw writes: "The heart of the Apostolic representation ((of the resurrection)) is not reached until it is perceived that the resurrection is not simply an external seal or evidential appendage added to guarantee certain truths about Christ and His work, but an essential or constitutive element in the work itself, an integral part of His redemptive revelation"².

Although it does not fall within the scope of this thesis to deal fully with the resurrection and its problems, it must be stressed here that it is essential to see our Lord's rising, not as a separate entity, but as fundamentally bound up with His death on the cross. Not to see this would be to damage immeasurably our conception of that death. "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain...if Christ has not been raised your faith is futile and you are still in your sins"³. Through the resurrection, as the culmination of the incarnation and the cross, God's purpose of atonement attains its end. To say that the resurrection attains the end of God's work is to lead into the next point, for the resurrection and ascension of Jesus

1. Romans 6:4.

2. Art. 'Resurrection', Dict. of the Apost. Church, Vol II; p.352.

3. 1 Corinthians 15:14,17.

mark both the finality of the atonement and its continuous and present effectiveness.

CHRISTIAN FAITH FACES a paradox in dealing with the finality of the atonement, for it must be unequivocally affirmed in the face of any pseudo-finalistic idea of the atonement, that it was 'ephapax', once for all; yet at the same time it continues to be 'made over' to men throughout the ages, and will in the purpose of God achieve consummation. The work of Christ is complete, and yet it is also incomplete; final and unrepeatable, yet ever being renewed; once for all, yet never static. Involved in our thought here is the problem of time and eternity, the changeable and the unchangeable (cf. Augustine). It is quite outside the aim of this thesis to discuss this problem in any detail, and it will be sufficient to express here a few leading points which are bound up with our thinking on the atonement in its completeness and incompleteness.

Let us begin by stressing that eternity is not just time without end, for time itself is a creation, and God, for it is only in Him that we can understand eternity, stands outside time in the sense that He is not bound by it. Eternity cannot be interpreted 'everlasting', and on the other hand, although the name of God in Exodus (I Am ~~the~~ I Am) furnishes us with a clue to our understanding, we cannot call eternity merely

an everlasting now. Both these ideas, of eternity as time without end, and as everlasting present tense, may serve as helps in our thought, but to limit our thought to these analogies would be misleading. "Eternity is an idea of which we can have no notion or experience...The Christian term 'eternity' should be distinguished from the Greek term 'aeon' which means 'everness'. For the Greek philosopher, aeonion is that which is always...unending, and conveys the idea of infinite duration. Everness means an everlasting now, a perpetual present...The Christian conception of eternity... means absolute timelessness, something beyond time and incommensurable with it"¹. Once we have said all this, we must add that it is nevertheless true that God, although He is beyond time, although time is His creation, yet He acts in time and history. The eternal does break into the temporal, although time could never break into eternity. And these acts of God in time have not only temporal significance, but are also eternally significant. Thus the truth we must grasp for our understanding of the atonement is that the work of Christ achieved in history is through the resurrection and the ascension related, we might even say is translated, into eternity; that is, the historical work is perpetually and actively effective.

1. E. Frank: Philosophical Understanding and Relig. Truth; p.60

A parallel is to be found in the conception of the humanity of Jesus Christ. Dr. D.M. Baillie points out that it has always been clearly and consistently held by the voice of the Church that our Lord's humanity continued and is permanent: "If we believe in the incarnation, we cannot possibly say that Jesus ceased to be human when He departed from this world"¹. This is so if by incarnation we mean something real, and not some passing, transitory phase. If we can see this point, then we can see too how His saving office did not cease, and this is brought out emphatically in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Christ our High Priest is ascended up on high, and continues His saving work through the Holy Spirit, and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit which is the Ecclesia; He is everliving to make intercession for us. The sacrifice is completed in the history of time, and yet is made effective eternally in the heavens. God in His purpose has summed up all creation and time in Jesus Christ, and in Him by God's grace we have obtained an inheritance.

This representation of the matter seems to be a strong and vigorous one which has its foundations in Biblical truth. When we say that God inhabits eternity, we do not mean that God has no relation to time and no experience of it. Because God is unchangeable it does not follow that time is illusion nor that His experience is limited. What we do say is that

1. God was in Christ; p.152.

while embracing time, while experiencing past, present and future, God is not confined to these limits as we are, but transcends them while knowing them. If God is a God who 'does things', a living and active God, we must think of Him as having a 'positive' kind of eternity which has a direct vertical relation to each moment of our temporal existence; and when we speak of His activity we are bound to use temporal expressions and verbs, though we know that they are inadequate, because the eternal reality is beyond anything that the finite can imagine or express. And thus when we speak of divine atonement we do not hesitate to say that God was uniquely present in Jesus Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. As God was incarnate in Christ, so we may say that the divine atonement was incarnate in the passion of Jesus. And if we then go on to speak of an eternal atonement in the life and being of God, it is not to reduce the significance of the historical nature of the atonement, the ephapax of Christ's mission on earth. God's reconciling work was enacted in history, for man whom He was saving was in history, but cannot be confined to any one moment of history; we cannot say that God was unforgiving before Calvary, nor can we forget that His work of atonement still goes on in every age in a world of sinful men, whose sin He still bears. At this stage in our discussion we have begun to see something of the unity that underlies the whole work of Christ in history, rather than a detached series of events.

3. THE CENTRAL CROSS.

Once the wholeness, the unity of Christ's work is seen in the essential intergrated nature of the incarnation, death, resurrection, and exaltation, we can turn with expectant faith to what the Church has regarded through the centuries as the very centre of the atoning work, the Christian 'holy of holies' - the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. The cross has always been for Christian faith the focal point of God's redeeming contest against the power of sin.

It is difficult at this point not to go into the whole story of the cross as developed in Holy Scripture, and an analysis of the thought of the various New Testament authors on the idea of atonement; to do so would be of tremendous value to our discussion but would far exceed the limits of the thesis. It is self-evident that Scripture is the basic witness to the fact of our salvation, and any adequate account of the doctrine of the atonement must include detailed study of the Biblical material out of which the doctrine originates, not only in the New Testament, but in the Old as well, for the Old Testament belongs to the Gospel and is not merely the preparation for it: man's redemption is not only foretold in the Old Testament, it is begun. "The Bible moves from creation through redemption to the consummation. It no sooner regards the sin and fall of man than it declares the

the promise - 'it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel': Man is no sooner fallen than God sets about the work of his redemption, and of this work the Bible, the Old Testament as well as the New, is the record, down to the arising and first triumphs of the Christian Church¹.

Nearly all religions and philosophies of life seek salvation from four basic evils - suffering, error, evil, and death; both Judaism and Christianity agree that sin, or moral evil, is more fundamental than the rest, and that somehow the others are derived from it, and the cry for salvation is one for deliverance from sinfulness and restoration to fellowship with God, which fellowship moral evil disrupts, and it is the answer to this cry that we see developing through the Bible.

The sacrificial system of the Old Testament is to be understood, not as a pagan propitiation of an angry God, but as the expiation, the 'covering-over' of sin, so that nothing may come between the worshipper and God; and the offering was not the slaying of an animal on which the sins of the worshipper had been placed - that was the scapegoat, and it was sent outside the camp as being unclean. The imposition of the hand meant that henceforth the worshipper would be identified with his offering, regarded as sinless and thus

1. N. Micklem: The Doctrine of Our Redemption; p.25.

fit to be offered to God. Another confusion in thought concerns the nature of the death of the victim, in that it is often not understood that death is the incidental means by which life is released: "It is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life"¹. "When, therefore, we say that we are saved 'by the blood of Christ', we are ascribing salvation, not to the death of Christ...but to the life of Christ, the life that has passed through death"².

Another element in sacrifice in the Old Testament is the later development, after a long struggle - which the modern man finds hard to appreciate, for to us the idea is a platitude - of the idea of self-sacrifice. The climax of Old Testament thought on the atonement comes in the songs of the suffering servant. The theology implicit is a doctrine of representative suffering, suffering as a sacrificial offering in which men might participate. "The essential likeness between the servant and Jesus lies in this: that whereas prophets like Jeremiah suffered in the course of, or as a result of, their witness, for both the servant and Jesus suffering is the means whereby they fulfil their mission and bring it to a triumphant conclusion"³.

1. Leviticus 17:11.

2. N. Micklem: The Doctrine of Our Redemption; p.43.

3. Quoted by W.J. Wolf: No Cross, No Crown; p.45.

When we look at the New Testament the first thing which strikes us is the centrality of the passion; and the disproportionately large space given to the story of the cross. "The men who shaped the traditions and wrote the story down in the four gospels devoted an altogether disproportionate amount of their space to the passion and death of their master, because to them and their fellow-Christians this was of supreme importance"¹. The gospels also acknowledge the fact, even though they were written at a time when Christians could look back and glory in the cross as ordained by God in His purpose, that to Jesus Himself, when He looked forward and saw that the cross was inevitable, and even when He embraced it by faith, it appeared an unspeakable tragedy, right up to the last night when He prayed that it might pass from Him.

At the same time it is important to recognise that Jesus did not die as a helpless victim: "Jesus...was put to death by a coalition of definite historic forces. Church and state and people all combined to destroy Him. Pharasaic blindness and intolerance, priestly exclusiveness and self-seeking...imperial policy and power...popular disappointment and revenge...these were the things that put Jesus on the cross. But it would be a profound mistake to suppose that these historic forces were the final determining factor.

1. D.M.Baillie: God was in Christ; p.180.

Jesus was not driven to death: He went in the freedom of His own unconquered soul... 'No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself'¹.

When the early Christians looked back and pondered the dreadful thing that had happened they saw, and Dr. Baillie describes this as the most remarkable fact in the whole history of religious thought, not only the love of Jesus, but the love of God. And this witness of the New Testament, that the work of atonement was the sacrificial love and purpose of God in Christ, is one which any account of the atonement must include - that the offence of the cross has been seen, from the moment of the resurrection, as the work of the agape, the redeeming love, of God.

Here is not the idea of propitiating angry wrath; there is no contrast between the wrath of God and the love of Christ such as we shall see implicit or explicit in certain accounts of the atonement we shall later discuss. Nor does this mean that there is no place for the wrath of God - the wrath and love of God are one, as Luther declared in his account of 'love's strange work', and an idea expressed *inter alia* by Dr. P.F. Forsyth in his concept of the holiness of God's love. This holy love of God, agape, is love needs no which needs no cause for loving, but which loves the unlovely.

1. J.S. Stewart: Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ; p. 180.

However, the unlovely cannot remain so in the refiner's fire of His love, and will be either purified or destroyed. God's love is a transforming love, burning out the unholy and the unlovely. And it is costly, sacrificial love; we see here the final outcome of the concept that began to appear in the suffering servant passages - the idea which fulfilled and transformed the sacrificial element of the Old Testament. The idea is consummated when the Son of man comes not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to lay down His life for the sinful.

God's redeeming love is a sacrificial love: wrathful, holy, self-giving; and the work of man's redemption was a costly work, a cost which is witnessed to, however we may construe it, by the death of Christ upon the cross. "Salvation is not a thing that can be assumed, or taken for granted; it is not an easy thing about which no difficulty can possibly be raised by anyone who has any idea of the goodness of God. The point of view of the New Testament is the very opposite. Salvation is a difficult thing, an incredible thing, and impossible thing; it is the miracle of miracles that such a thing should be; the wonder of it never ceases"¹. The atonement was costly, and it was God's cost. "You are not your own; you were bought with a price"².

1. J. Denney: The Death of Christ; p.133.

2. 1 Corinthians 6:19,20.

Another New Testament idea of the atonement which must play an important part in our attempt to form a more comprehensive idea of the atonement, is that the atonement is both individual and corporate. On the cross God was not at work to save this one and that one out of the world, He was concerned to save the world. It is true to say that men are individually and personally saved, but it would not be true unless at the same time the whole world was being saved. Whatever may be the errors contained in a doctrine of election reduced to logical formulae, election nevertheless preserves for us this truth, that God is a pursuing God, who is not content to let the world go by in its sin, but ever calls it forth to Himself, and will never let it be. There is a solidarity in redemption, it is humanity that is saved, and the cross reveals how far God has gone to win it.

4. CONCLUSIONS.

In coming to the end of this first section of the thesis, I could do no better than follow the example of Professor W.J.Wolf¹ in quoting from Dr. Vincent Taylor's book, "The Atonement in New Testament Teaching", which is a valuable study of the Biblical foundations of the doctrine of reconciliation in the New Testament. Dr. Taylor sums up the immediate implications of the teaching in the New Testament as follows:

1. NO Cross, No Crown; p.90.

- "1. The atonement is the work of God in restoring sinners to fellowship with Himself and establishing His Kingdom in the world; it is the reconciliation of man and the world to God.
- "2. It is the fulfilment of His purpose for man and the final proof of the greatness of His love, both revealing that love and expressing it for time and eternity.
- "3. The atonement is accomplished in the work of Christ, suffering is vicarious, representative, and sacrificial in character; it is on behalf of men, in their name, and for the purpose of their approach to God.
- "4. The vicarious nature of Christ's ministry is one of the clearest elements in New Testament teaching, but its true content can be discerned only as its representative and sacrificial aspects are more closely defined.
- "5. The representative character of His death is disclosed by the fact that, in the greatness of His love for men, He identified Himself with sinners, and in their service was completely obedient to the will of the Father, entering into and enduring in His own person the consequences of sin and the rejection and gainsaying of men.
- "6. The sacrificial significance of His death is suggested by the frequent use of the term 'blood', by a limited use of the analogies found in the ancient sacrificial system, by references to cleansing, redemption, and expiation, by allusions to the idea of the suffering servant,

and by eucharistic teaching sacrificial in character.

"7. The atonement is consummated in the experience of men, through faith-union with Christ, through sacramental communion with Him, and in sacrificial living and suffering. "¹.

To have quoted this excellent summary from Dr. Taylor's book does not commit us to full agreement with the remainder of his work where, I believe one is justified in saying, he tends to let his ideas of sacrifice dominate his whole outlook, and we shall have reason to mention this point again in section Twom when discussing the sacrificial theory he puts forward. Moreover, in this analysis he has made no mention of the note of victory which sounds in the New Testament, the overthrowing of the ruler of this present age; again, in his first conclusion he points out that the atonement is the restoration of fellowship and the establishing of God's Kingdom, but although they are first-mentioned one feels that their significance is somewhat abated by the time the end of the summary is reached; this impression seems justified when he develops his theme, and these aspects, particularly that of the Kingdom, receive little attention.

Whether or no Dr. Taylor intended this impression we must stress at this point that the coming of the Kingdom of

1. V. Taylor: The Atonement in N.T. Teaching; p.182.

God, and the restoration of fellowship with God through . . . salvation from the power of sin are two fundamental and indeed dominant threads in the New Testament, and two which we shall have to take account of when attempting to outline a positive and comprehensive approach to the atonement.

The claim that all that is needed for theology in discussing the atonement is to study the New Testament, displays, like all such Biblicist claims, a limited understanding of the nature of Scripture and tradition, and a denial of the promise that the Holy Spirit will lead men into all truth, into deeper truth. On the other hand we must never overlook the necessity in all our theological thinking to be brought back continually to the witness of the Bible, to test the soundness of our thought.

Dr. Taylor continues: "No theory of the atonement is presented in the New Testament, but the material upon which theories are based is present in great abundance. The outlines of various theories are present in the teaching of St. Paul, the writer of Hebrews, and St. John, but by none of these writers is the theology of the atonement presented in its fulness, while their combined witness has presented to the Church a living body of truth which in the subsequent history of the doctrine has too often been grasped in part rather than assimilated as a whole. The difficulty of theological

construction is the magnitude of the problem which is such that the best efforts of theologians and teachers must always prove inadequate and incomplete. It is due also to the fact that the New Testament exposes a vista of unsolved ultimate problems, which happily do not foreclose ventures of reasoned faith, but by their nature admit only of tentative and provisional solutions^{#1}.

IT WILL BE useful at this stage to outline three main conclusions our brief study of the problem of the atonement requires us to bear in mind when we come, in our final section, to a positive and constructive theory of the atonement:

1. We shall have to consider more closely the nature of sin and the need which it raises, for to some extent our conception of how the atonement was achieved depends on our conception of these; we must see that sin causes a deep sense of moral guilt, but more also, and this is why a purely subjective idea of the atonement is insufficient; for there is a real power of sin over mankind, individually and racially, and this power must be broken if man is to be restored to fellowship with God; it is because of this same power that we see too the need for divine initiative.

1. V. Taylor: The Atonement in N.T. Teaching; p.182.

2. In accordance with the New Testament witness we shall have to consider the significance of the cross as the 'centre' of atoning work; but at the same time we must see it in the light of the whole revelation, particularly the resurrection, and must never lose sight of the unity of the whole work of Christ by atomising His work into various parts.
3. Finally, we must bring our thought back continually to the witness of the Bible that the soundness of our thinking may be judged; and we shall have to keep continually in mind certain considerations about the atonement which the Bible leaves with us:
 - i. The atonement was an act of love, love which was at once holy and sacrificial, at once judging and saving.
 - ii. The atonement was both individual and corporate, being neither merely an act of salvation for this man and that out of the world, nor merely a cosmic redemption without relation to the faith of the individual.
 - iii. The act of the atonement was in some way the establishing of the Kingdom of God in the world.
 - iv. The atonement in its effects upon sin restored man to the fellowship of God.
 - v. The atonement revealed the love of God because at the same time it was an action of that love.

- vi..The atonement embodied the Old Testament ideas of sacrifice and covenant, and is shewn in the New Testament as vicarious, sacrificial, and representative; and these aspects are interdependent one upon the other.
- vii. The atonement is consummated in men by faith-union with Christ, and by the receiving of Him in the sacraments.

If these considerations are borne in mind, together with the conclusions we shall draw from a survey of the main streams of interpretation of the atonement in the history of the doctrine, we shall have something positive to build upon, as we try to formulate a constructive and comprehensive statement.

S E C T I O N T W O

"T H E A T O N E M E N T I N H I S T O R Y"

(THE ATONEMENT: A BRIEF DISCUSSION)

THROUGH CHRIST GOD has reconciled us to Himself: it was with this tremendous life-giving fact of atonement that the early Church faced the world, and it has always remained the sure and certain note of the Christian message. But while the fact or event has from the beginning been clear and unambiguous in the central stream of Christian thought, the Church's interpretation of that fact has been diverse: THAT it was so is the experience of the Church, and is set forth dogmatically in Christian thought; HOW it was so is a question to which theology has given various answers.

And here the doctrine of the atonement differs from other doctrines; for at a fairly early stage the Church had formulated, through heresies, arguments, and debates, dogmas of the Trinity, the incarnation, and of Christology, leaving to history almost 'official' doctrines; and their development is comparatively easy to trace owing to this 'official' character. But not so the doctrine of the atonement; the Church has never had a dogma of reconciliation in this sense. There is nothing in the history of Christian thought concerning the work of Christ like the Nicene pronouncements upon the Person of Christ. Dr. James Denney goes so far as to write: "It was not until after the Reformation, when dogma in the old sense had become impossible, that the various

branches of the Church began to frame official explicit statements about the way in which Christ reconciled man to God"¹ (This is an overstatement, however, and does not take into account the widespread acceptance of a type of theory of the atonement known as Dramatic, which we shall discuss later.)

However unsettled that question may be, what does emerge clearly from a glance at the history of the doctrine of the atonement is the massive quantity of thought on the subject; at first this thought may show only diversity - although here again we must balance our view of the variety of early patristic conceptions of the atonement with a consideration of their underlying unity: Dr. Gustaf Aulen sees them all mainly of one 'classic' stream - but it comes more and more to be bound up with, and to originate in, the orthodox conception of the Person of Christ.

1. THE MAIN STREAMS.

The purpose of this section is to attempt to find what are the main types of theory or interpretation which have been advanced in the history of Christian thought on the atonement; and any such attempt must take into consideration the conclusions of Professor Aulen in his important little book, 'Christus Victor'. His argument is

1. The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation; p. 28.

that the traditional account of the history of the doctrine has erred in recognising only two main types - objective, linked with the name of Anselm of Canterbury; and subjective, linked with the name of his contemporary and opponent, Abelard.

What is commonly accepted (or was, for Dr. Aulen's work has had a great influence), is that the first important stage in the development of the dogma of the atonement is the work of Anselm (1033-1109). "The beginnings of a thought-out doctrine of the atonement are found in Anselm of Canterbury, who thus come to hold a position of first-rate importance in the history of dogma"¹. In his theory something objective is held to have been accomplished on the cross, a change takes place in God's attitude to man, the unpayable debt is paid by Jesus to God, and God's honour or justice is satisfied.

Contrasted with Anselm is the work of Abelard, who argues a change in man's attitude to God, a subjective or moral change; Christ's death is an example of the love of God. The development of the doctrine is then seen, according to the traditional account, as a continuous line of two opposing views from Anselm and Abelard through scholasticism and the Reformation to Protestant orthodoxy.

1. Christus Victor; p. 17.

In this discussion it is sufficient for our purpose to recognise these two main streams of thought: the subjective and the objective. We shall then grasp the importance of Dr. Aulen's criticism: "There is a form of the idea of the atonement which this account of the matter either ignores altogether or treats with very much less than justice, but whose suppression falsifies the whole perspective, and produces a version of the history which is seriously misleading. This type of view may be described...as the 'dramatic'. Its central theme is the idea of the atonement as a divine conflict and victory; Christ - Christus Victor - fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the 'tyrants' under which mankind is in bondage and suffering, and in Him God reconciles the world to Himself"¹.

The claim of this theory to be a true theory of the atonement has often been neglected, because it has been viewed with contempt and dismissed as inferior in rationale and form; theologians have been understandably blind to a theory which has presented itself in forms described as crude and even unchristian - a ransom paid to the devil, the bait of Christ's humanity on the hook of his divinity, and so on, and which furthermore has often been somewhat obscure in its presentation.

1. Christus Victor; p. 20.

That it is indeed a separate type of theory will be amply borne out in our later discussion. Dr. Aulen writes: "Two points here require to be pressed with special emphasis: first, that this is a doctrine of the atonement in the full and proper sense; and second, that this idea of the atonement has a clear and distinct character of its own, quite different from the other two types"¹. Our immediate task is to attempt to define the main types of soteriological theory advanced in Christian thinking. The traditional account claims that there are but two, the subjective and the objective. But this is a misrepresentation, for it fails to grasp differences within the objective theory which may be even more significant than those between the objective and the subjective, and accordingly we may speak of three main types. It must thus be perceived and remembered that there is a diversity of opinion not only concerning the value of the theories, but also concerning their number: some, with the traditional account, speak of two, some with Dr. Aulen of three, and some with Canon Oliver Quick, of even four.

In dealing with the classification of these main types it will be appropriate to begin with the one theory not in question, the subjective type of theory. We shall be on the safe side if we treat this theory by setting it in opposition

1. Christus Victor; p. 20.

to all other theories lumped together, in the meantime, as objective, following the traditional approach.

2. THE MORAL INFLUENCE THEORY.

This theory is known as the subjective theory because it seeks and finds the effects and achievement of the work of God in Christ in us, the subjects, who are changed by it. Not in any sense are they illusory - for men and women are changed and are really converted and become new creatures in confronting the saving of Jesus on the Cross. These changes are moral changes, and hence the name of the theory - the Moral Influence theory. But the changes are all subjective because they take place within human personalities and lives. In Jesus Christ, and in particular in his death upon the cross, we are confronted with the moral order and with the love of God; this stings us to humiliation and shame before Him, and at the same time kindles hope and trust in that love which is shewn us. "According to the subjective theory the life and death of Jesus Christ in themselves effect nothing except the clear declaration of something which has always been true, viz. the fatherly and forgiving love of God for man. Thus the effect of the atonement, and the change wrought by it, begin only when human souls perceive through the life and death of Jesus Christ the truth of God's love, and are moved thereby to repentance"¹

1.O.C.Quick: Doctrines of the Creed; p. 222.

This main type of theory represents the achievements of the revelation in Christ as consisting in moral changes of character, subjective changes taking place within human lives and in human attitudes to God. That is its essence; but a further point must be raised if we are to understand fully the implications of this theory. If the achievements and consequences of the work of Christ are all subjective, what is to be said of the work of Christ as such? Does it have any intrinsic soteriological value apart from the consequences it effects? Only one thing can be said, and the moral theory says it: the life and death of Jesus are a revelation or demonstration of the divine love; they are an illustration of it (it is from this further point that the theory derives the name 'exemplarist'). It was Abelard's contention that only as men see the perfect do they repent of the imperfect; only as they see eternal love do they repent from sin to God. "Abelard shifts the emphasis from the death on the cross to the full revelation of divine love in the incarnation, in the infancy, youth, manhood, word, and deed of Jesus. We are saved by the knowledge of eternal love in Christ Jesus. The cross is only the utmost consummation of that love"¹.

Dr. Robert Franks, who is described as the most conspicuous champion of the view taken by Abelard, began his

1. A. McRea: The Work of Jesus in Christian Thought; p. 216.

Dale Lectures (1933) by saying that prolonged meditation had led him to the conclusion that the theory which goes to the very heart of the atonement is Abelard's and he sums it up: "It is the doctrine that Christ reconciles men to God by revealing the love of God in His life and still more in His death, so bringing them to trust and love Him in return"¹. (In these Dale Lectures Dr. Franks rejects the description of Abelard's theory as subjective, and describes it as experiential, but his development of this theme cannot concern us in this brief survey; it is not a convincing development anyway).

A quotation from a rather extremist supporter of the Moral theory, Dr. Richard Roberts, will illustrate further the exemplarist aspect of the theory: "It took God in man," he writes, "to show us how to turn the other cheek and to go the second mile. God's punishment is pardon; God's retribution is restoration; forgiveness is the heart-breaking rod of love"².

Abelard himself writes "our redemption is that supreme love manifested in our case by the passion of Christ, which not only delivers us from the bondage of sin, but also acquires for us the liberty of the sons of God; so that we may fulfil all things from the love rather than the fear of

1. The Atonement; p. 2.

2. That Strange Man upon His Cross; p. 149.

Him, who, as He Himself bears witness, showed us grace so great that no greater can be found. No man says He, has greater love than this, that He lay down His life for His friends"¹. The life and death of Jesus, then, are the atonement, inasmuch as they shew us God's love, so changing us morally that we 'fulfil all things'; they do not themselves effect the atonement, they only exhibit that love which changes us when we apprehend it.

3. THE OBJECTIVE THEORIES.

As we have already seen, it has been widely assumed that an objective alternative to the subjective Moral Influence theory was straightforward and uncomplicated, that all particular theories of an objective nature were really closely akin and fell under one main type, and that type was assumed to be the objective theory which found its first full development in Anselm.

It is just this assumption which Dr. Gustaf Aulen challenges in 'Christus Victor'. It has already been pointed out that he has shewn that the theories lumped together as 'objective' are really of two basically different streams; there is the 'satisfactory' stream, which was that of Anselm, but there is also the 'dramatic' stream,

1. Quoted by R. Franks: The Atonement; p.3.

the classic theory of the New Testament and of the Patristic age, which was almost suppressed in Anselm and not revived, he claims, until the Reformation of Luther, and even then was lost again by Luther's followers.

We shall deal with the two theories separately, the satisfactory, or what Dr. Aulen calls the Latin, type on the one hand, and the dramatic, or what he calls the classic, type on the other. As we do so, we shall see his contention that they are separate theories amply supported.

4. THE SATISFACTION THEORY.

We turn now, to that theory which was frequently assumed to be the only objective alternative to the Moral Influence theory of Peter Abelard, viz., the satisfaction theory, so called because it is built upon the satisfaction of God by Christ. Aulen calls it the Latin theory, and it is known also as the juridical or penal theory, and all these names have significance, pin-pointing particular aspects of it; for it was developed by the Latin theologians whose strength lay in the realms of jurisprudence and law.

"It is possible", writes Dr. Aulen, "to fix with precision the time of the first appearance of the Latin theory. Tertullian prepares the building materials; Cyprian begins to construct out of them a doctrine of the atonement"¹.

1. Christus Victor; p. 97.

Although the legality of Tertullian's thought has perhaps been over-estimated, we must nevertheless bear in mind that he was a lawyer amongst a law-loving people, and his work is full of such phrases as 'debt', 'guilt', 'merit', 'compensation', and the fundamental conception which gives the theory its name, 'satisfaction'. Merit is associated with fulfilling the law, and Cyprian supplies the idea that merit can be transferred from one person to another. "The way is now prepared from the Latin theory of the atonement. Cyprian himself begins to apply the principle to the over-plus of merit earned by Christ, and to interpret His work as a satisfaction"¹.

This satisfaction theory, then, began fairly early to appear in the Western Church. But it never grew into domination until its appearance in the 'Cur Deus Homo?' of Anselm. Man stands in unpayable debt to God because of his sinfulness, his failure to render God His due. The satisfaction must be made by man, it is he who has incurred the debt, he who must discharge it, and hence Anselm's great emphasis on the incarnation, Christ as man. Man is helpless, for he cannot fulfil his obligation, until it is fulfilled for him by Jesus. The atoning work of Christ fulfills man's need, for He is able by virtue of His perfect life to pay this debt of honour to God, and by His death He earns merit to pay the debt of all men. His perfect life is enough to pay the debt; His death

1. G. Aulen: *Christus Victor*; p. 98.

is supererogation, earning enough merit to pay the debt of all mankind for all time. And He does all this as a man. God's honour stands insulted by man, for man acting with the devil has stolen what belongs to Him; sin is now insulting theft. Man has no power even if he had the desire to restore to God the honour which he has stolen, for he is destitute of justice and obedience. Only one who was divine could now repay his debt - and yet no deity or angel could pay man's debt - it must be paid by man, the debtor. The incarnation is of primary importance for Anselm because it proves the ability of Christ to pay the debt, being divine, and also His appropriateness to pay, being man. The sufficient merit which He earned through paying this debt which was not His, He shares with His fellow-men, for whom He had substituted as debt-payer (this last point of taking man's place has earned the theory the name of 'substitutionary').

"In general the theories of Lutheran and Reformed theologians followed the main lines of the juridical or Latin type of theory sketched by Anselm, and introduced no radical change into the theology of the atonement"¹. With the exception, as Dr. Aulen contends, that the dramatic idea is revived for a brief period in the writings of Luther. Nothing therefore is to be gained by dwelling on the recurrence of this satisfaction type in the writings of Roman and

1. G.C. Quick: The Gospel of the New World; p.80.

Protestant theologians; it is the theory which has predominated in the Church, and it is still widely held, almost universally by fundamentalists, and to a great extent by so-called 'liberalists'.

The greatest exponent of the satisfactory theory was perhaps Dr. R.W.Dale; but this theory has had its influence not only in those who have consciously defended it, but in theologians like Dr. P.T.Forsyth, who speaks of the achievements of the atonement as threefold: it is triumphant, it is regenerative, and it is satisfactory; the atonement must satisfy God's holiness in order to justify the sinner. One wonders if Dr. Forsyth ever recognised that in rejecting a concept of legal order and substituting holiness he has not changed the position at all; in fact he is very much closer to satisfaction as originally put forward by Anselm - satisfaction of God's honour.

Interpretations of this type of theory vary, but the fundamentals remain unchanged: the satisfaction of God by Christ substituting for men. According to this theory Jesus in His death did accomplish something objective, His death was atoning in itself, apart from its subjective effects in human lives, accomplishing something of the greatest significance to all men. What He did was to bear the due and just punishment of man's sin, having Himself no share in that

sin, but acting as a substitute for the real offenders. In doing so He satisfied the demands of divine justice (or honour, or holiness). The implication of this theory is that the ultimate order must be conceived as a legal order, an order in which the breaking of law carries with it its own due penalty and punishment, and which can only be cancelled out by the infliction of the appropriate punishment, and the satisfactory theory affirms that the due penalty was indeed borne by Jesus in His death.

5. THE DRAMATIC THEORY.

We come now to an equally objective theory, yet one which differs radically from the satisfactory type, of which it was once thought to be a variant. We have already noted¹ Dr. Aulen's description of it as the playing out of a cosmic drama, and his insistence that it is a proper theory of the atonement and has a character quite distinct from that of the other theories. We shall see that this is so if we outline broadly its postulates: that God in Christ contested with evil, and through the resurrection triumphed over the powers that held men in bondage, and thus restores men to the fellowship of God.

There is no suggestion here of satisfaction rendered to divine justice (or any other divine order) , nor of a

1. See above p. 39.

subjective change in human nature; rather what was achieved by the work of Christ is conceived, not as a changed attitude on God's part toward man (in the satisfactory sense), nor as a changed attitude on the part of men (in the moral influence sense), but as a changed situation in which man the sinner stands before God his creator. Restoration, at-one-ment, is achieved because the death of Christ, His 'descent into hell', have drawn the sting of sin, and His resurrection shows the defeat of the powers of sin; the death and resurrection of Jesus have changed the situation in which God confronts man, by removing the barrier which prevented fellowship, and this barrier is not found in the unfulfilled demands of a legal order, but in sin and its power over men. We are then justified with saying in Dr. Aulen that this is an objective theory in that it portrays the achievement of something objective, and yet it is not to be identified with the other objective type, the satisfaction theory. There is no what Aulen terms 'discontinuity', where the work of Christ is shown, as in the Anselmian theory, as having its "origin in God's will, but is, in its carrying-out, an offering made to God by Christ as man and on man's behalf"¹. On the other hand, the objective nature of this theory sets it apart from the subjective stream of thought.

Sometimes the idea was employed that in the atonement a
 I. G. Aulen: Christus Victor; p.22.

ransom, almost a bribe, has been paid not to God (for fundamentally that would be a satisfactory theory), but to the devil, and sometimes in the atonement the devil was hoodwinked. Cp. Ignatius: "The ruler of this age was deceived by the virginity of Mary, her child-bearing, and the death of the Lord"; and Rufinus of Aquileia, c. 400: "The purpose of the incarnation...was that the divine virtue of the Son of God might be as it were a hook hidden beneath the form of human flesh...to lure on the prince of this age to a contest; that the Son might offer him His flesh as a bait and that then the divinity which lay beneath might catch him and hold him fast with its hook"¹.

Such conceptions have perhaps disguised by their rudeness and repellent imagery the truth which lies beneath them, for to the modern mind they do not have the ring of reality; and it may well have been the use of such conceptions which prevented theology from taking seriously the dramatic idea of the atonement, and from finding in them a theory which might be not only objective, but more adequate than the objective theory of Anselm.

Another reason for the failure of theology to recognise the theory for what it was, suggests Aulen², was the unpopularity of dualism, and some type of dualism is essential to

1. H. Bettenson: Documents of the Christian Church; p. 49.

2. Christus Victor; p. 27.

this theory - dramatic atonement implies hostile power(s) which must be defeated if fellowship between God and man is to be restored.

The theory was widespread in the Patristic period, and Aulen goes so far as to say "there can be no dispute that it is the dominant idea of the atonement throughout the early Church period. It is also in reality...the dominant idea of the New Testament"¹. But it gradually lost its place to the growing legalistic or Latin type, until it was dealt a mortal blow by the crisp and more rational theory of Anselm. Although this concept was never lost sight of in the popular preaching of the friars, it disappears from the theological field after Anselm until it is revived by Luther, who no doubt learnt it from the Augustinians to whom he belonged, complete with the crude imagery so popular in preaching.

It is not true to say, as Aulen appears to do, that Luther completely broke away from satisfactory concepts: "One line of thought is mainly related to the old ideas of 'satisfaction'. God's holiness and justice are so great that He cannot overlook the fact of human guilt and disobedience against Himself. Punishment is inevitable. Christ bears our punishment, takes our sins upon Himself, is banned and condemned by God in our place. This doctrine of

1. Christus Victor; p. 22.

the atonement is not developed by Luther once more into a great system as previously by Anselm and the scholastics. But many of Luther's utterances refer to Christ as suffering for us in order to give satisfaction for us to God^{#1}. Nevertheless it is true that this satisfactory element was secondary to his theology, and that in him we do have a real revival of the dramatic type. Dr. Aulen quotes many telling passages from Luther which amply support this claim. "Any doubts that remain," he continues, "are dispelled by the Greater Catechism... 'He has redeemed me from sin, from the devil, from death and all woe. For before, I had not yet had any Lord, nor King, but had been held captive under the devil's power, doomed to death, ensnared in sin and blindness... Now, therefore, those tyrants and gaolers are all crushed, and in their place has come Jesus Christ, a Lord of Life, righteousness, all good and holiness, and He has snatched us poor lost men from the jaws of hell, won us, made us free, and brought us back to the Father's goodness and grace^{#2}."

After Luther the theory does not figure fully in theology until the present time, especially in the influential work of Aulen and Donald Baillie among others, although again the concept of Christ as Victor has never been very far from the devotional life and literature of the Church.

1. H.H. Kramm: The Theology of Martin Luther; p.46.
 2. Christus Victor; p.121

There is one more thing to be said in outlining the 'dramatic' stream of thought, and that is the tremendous difficulty of expounding this theory with any precision of language and thought to say how exactly the situation is changed. In the life, death, and resurrection of Christ God has won a great and final victory over the powers of evil; these powers have been deprived of their dominion over men, and men by faith in Christ are established in a new and triumphant life of communion with God. "It has the great merits of declaring that the atonement is throughout God's work, and of safeguarding the truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. But it is not easy to see how and with what degree of exactness the notions of conflict and victory over an enemy are to be applied"¹.

The question arises whether or not this theory is to remain vague and indecisive. Canon Quick argues that it does necessarily lack precision, and that when precision is applied to it the result is unacceptable, for:-

1. If we say that the powers of evil were completely destroyed, then we cannot account for the obvious presence of evil today; "If we suppose that such powers have held mankind in bondage, and have now by Christ's death and resurrection been utterly and finally defeated, it is hard to explain the remarkable vigour

1. O.C. Quick: Doctrines of the Creed; p.225.

which they still apparently display even within the life of the redeemed community of believers"¹.

2. On the other hand, if we say that He triumphed over the powers of evil in so far as they invaded His own life, then all that He has given us is an example, or an illustration, and if that is so, then the dramatic theory in effect merely reaffirms what has already been said in a different way by the Moral Influence theory; if we "take the victory of Christ to mean simply the victory of perfect holiness over all temptation and tendency to sin, a victory which takes away death's sting and makes death itself the gate of immortality...(then)the enduring power of evil over those who have not yet attained Christ's holiness is fully accounted for; but the way in which Christ's victory benefits them requires further explanation. If that victory is no more than a demonstration of the fact that the perfect holiness of love must always triumph over sin and death, it would seem that it provides for us only a supreme example and a moving appeal; and thus...(the dramatic theory) becomes in principle 'subjective' after all"².

Our immediate purpose is not to criticise the theory but to outline its main theme, and it will be sufficient at this stage to note the criticism of vagueness, and consider

1. O.C. Quick: Doctrines of the Creed; p.225.

2. Ibid; p.225.

later whether or not this vagueness and lack of precision is inherent in the theory, and whether or not the theory can be outlined in a way that will overcome its difficulties. That, then, is in broad outline the fundamentals of the third main type of theory, the dramatic, and an indication of the problem it implies.

WE HAVE NOTED three main types or streams of thought on the subject of the atonement: the moral influence theory, the satisfaction theory, and the dramatic. No mention has been made of the contention put forward by some that there is a fourth main type, the sacrificial theory; and we shall have to return to this contention later, for while it is by no means evident that the sacrificial concept has ever been a main type of atonement theory, it is true that sacrificial language has never been absent from the life of the Church. The task that confronts us now, if we are to attempt to make any restatement of the doctrine of the atonement, is to weigh up these theories, examining their fundamental tenets, and assessing their insights for incorporation into a constructive and comprehensive approach to the problem. Bearing these conclusions in mind, together with the conclusions which we reached in our first section, we shall then be able to proceed to a more positive discussion of the problem of the atonement in the third and final section.

6. CRITICISM OF THE MORAL INFLUENCE THEORY.

Let us begin our discussion of this theory with the general comment that so far as it goes this theory is perfectly true, for it is true that divine love is revealed in the life and death of Jesus, and that this revelation does have a moving appeal for men, and does bear rich fruit subjectively in the life of mankind, more than we may ever realise perhaps. But the critical question we must ask is whether or not it provides by itself an adequate account of the atonement; it has a great deal to say upon the way in which the cross changes men's lives, but is it an adequate account of the atonement as such? Although it is a valid criticism to say that Western theology is too prone to break up the Christian faith into fragmentary doctrines and endanger the wholeness of Christ's work, yet it is essential to our understanding at this point to make some distinction between conversion and atonement, if we are to continue to maintain that the work of Christ achieved something objective in itself. The Moral Influence theory fails to do this. If we ask of this theory, How did Christ achieve the atonement? the reply is: by converting men. And how did He convert men? - by revealing to them the divine love and forgiveness. Now this is true to the Christian experience, but it is not an adequate account of Christ's atoning work as such, apart from its effects upon men. It is when the Moral Influence theory is understood as the whole

truth of the atonement that it must be criticised as failing. We must raise three main objections.

1. The Moral Influence theory maintains that the life and death of Jesus Christ provide an illustration, a demonstration, a shewing-forth of divine love; but that seems a false conception of love. Love is not illustrated with an eye to results - it cannot be a mere illustration. Love must be loving something, whether it be something worthy of that love or not. An act of love done for ulterior motives (even the great motive of renewing men), which is conscious of itself as a planned act of love and of the results it will achieve, is hardly an act of love. We can only say that the life and death of Jesus was an illustration and a revelation of divine love because at the same time it was more than a demonstration, and we must go on to say of this theory that it is true so far as it goes largely because it does not go far enough. "The simplest hearer feels that there is something irrational in saying that the death of Christ is a great proof of love to the sinful, unless there is shewn at the same time a rational connection between that death and the responsibilities which sin involves, and from which that death delivers"¹. Christ's death, we are enabled to see, was a loving death, so far as men are concerned, only because in that death He took the responsibilities of men

1. J. Denney: The Death of Christ; p.176.

upon Himself; deny that, and it will be impossible to shew any ground on which the death may be construed as a loving death at all¹.

If it is finally unthinkable that the life of Jesus, and His actions in dealing with men, were all with an eye to results, that His treatment say of the woman taken in adultery was from ulterior motives, it is more unthinkable that His death was so intended - it is impossible to hold that here the eye of Jesus was upon moral effects! How could the death of Christ illustrate divine love if it were not at the same time doing much more than illustrating it? It may be argued that His death shews the divine patience in the face of sin and perhaps that is an illustration of an aspect of divine love. But if this is so, then there is no difference between the illustration of love in His life and the illustration of love in His death - for His death is the continuation and perseverance of love rather than its climax. It would then be difficult to understand why Christian faith has always singled out of its experience the death of Christ as above all the atoning sacrifice, and the resurrection would become a rather sensational appendage instead of the very centre of the triumph of the cross. If all this were so, it becomes incongruous that Christian devotion should ever have penned such words:

1. J. Denney: The Death of Christ; p.140.

"In the Cross of Christ I glory,
 Towering o'er the wrecks of time"

or "O Saviour of the world,
 Who by Thy Cross and precious Blood
 Hast redeemed us".

2. Our second criticism is that the moral influence theory, perhaps unwittingly, calls in question the finality and decisiveness of the revelation in Christ; for an illustration as such can never be final unless in an arbitrary fashion, as though God has said "I shall put it this way: if you do not see it, then I shall leave you in your blindness". In other words it would be possible to argue that (if the achievements of the work of Christ are to be found solely in its moral effects, and these moral effects fall short, as they do more often than not, of the total conceivable effect to be wrought by a divine illustration) there might have been a better illustration, or that better effects would be achieved if the illustration were repeated, perhaps frequently.

If the achievements of the work of Jesus Christ are to be found only in its effects upon men and women, then we must reckon with the fact that in so many lives these effects have not been decisive in the sense of moral change, and we must cease to speak of the finality of the cross, unless we have in mind an arbitrary finality - that God in His wisdom

has chosen to give us this last chance and no other, implying that He could have done more but did not wish to. There is no room therefore for the affirmation of faith that this is the victory which overcometh the world. And yet Christian faith does assert that, and has always asserted it - God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself; something has been finally and decisively accomplished, and in affirming so Christian faith has committed itself to an objective rather than a subjective view of the atonement, and therefore the moral influence theory does not adequately represent the doctrine of the work of Christ. "The work of reconciliation, in the sense of the New Testament, is a work which is finished, and which we must conceive to be finished, before the gospel is preached".¹ The work of Christ does not need to look at its effects in human lives for its completeness and finality: "...it is a work - as Cromwell said of the covenant - outside of us, in which God so deals in Christ with the sin of the world, that it shall no longer be a barrier between Himself and men"².

3. A third criticism of the moral influence theory is that if it is correct in claiming to be the whole truth of the atonement, then Christ can no longer be called the centre of the Christian faith. The function of an illustration is to

1. J. Denney: The Death of Christ; p. 145.

2. Ibid; p.145.

illustrate something other than itself. This is not a mere play on words, for it is fundamental to this theory that the work of Christ shews us the love of God, thereby moving us to repentance. Christ is not to be identified with that love, for He is an illustration of that love, at the most He is an illustration which must be the centre of our attention; an illustration which may help us to an understanding of God's love, even the supreme help to such an understanding - but we must ask the question: If Christ's work is an illustration to give us moving insight into the love of God, even if He is the supreme illustration, are we not at liberty, once we have reached such an insight, to dispense with that illustration? Just as we may be moved to an understanding of friendship by some concrete examples, but having reached such an understanding, we may dispense with the examples, their point having been grasped and their usefulness over. We may dispense with the steps we used to climb once we have reached higher.

But such an understanding of the atonement is to turn much of the New Testament witness into extravagant nonsense - "...save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world...God was in Christ, reconciling..." The tension which is set up between God and Christ by this theory - for an illustration must always be kept in its place, and must not be allowed

to usurp the position of that which it illustrates, and if Jesus Christ, or His death and resurrection, is a mere illustration, then He must not be allowed to take the place of God - forms a situation which for Christian faith must be finally untenable.

The outcome of our criticism must be that while the moral influence theory expresses truth, and important truth, as it stands, it falls far short as an adequate account of the atonement - it falsifies love, it sets up a tension between God and Christ, and it renders the death and resurrection of Christ meaningless; the theory clearly needs to be supplemented with a more objective approach, an approach of which it might be said: "It does not set forth only or chiefly a change taking place in man; it describes a complete change in the situation, a change in the relation between God and the world"¹. A theory which answers that description will go a great deal of the way to meet the deficiencies we have noted in the moral theory, and would at the same time leave room for the important truth which the theory does contain, "That Jesus' death does shew forth the love of God, and does move men to repentance, though this is neither the whole truth nor the ultimate truth of the atonement.

1. G.Aulen: Christus Victor; p.22.

7. CRITICISM OF THE SATISFACTION THEORY.

We turn next to a criticism and evaluation of the satisfaction theory, which holds that the atonement was something objective achieved by Christ, who substituted as a man for men, paying to God the penalty which was due from man, that the demands of God's justice or honour might be satisfied. Before we begin our general criticism, there is an innate weakness and contradiction in this theory which we must look at. Assuming for the moment, as the theory does, that the ultimate order is the legal or chivalric order, and by-passing the limitations of justice which we shall comment on later, there yet remains a very questionable element, and we must ask: does this theory really do what it claims particularly to do - to satisfy the demands of strict justice? According to the theory Christ bore the penalty of our sins, and without the fulfilment of that penalty divine justice could not be appeased, and fellowship restored. Divine justice could not conceivably forgo that penalty. And yet the exponents of this theory are content to imply that while divine justice or honour could permit no tampering with that necessity for penal satisfaction, it is nevertheless prepared to allow considerable manipulation with regard to who should bear that punishment! But surely, if divine justice insists upon the appropriate penalty being paid, we have a right to expect that divine justice

would equally insist upon the appropriate person paying it. We must question whether this theory adequately reckons with its own view of strict justice.

As in our criticism of the moral influence theory, there are three main points to be made in evaluating this theory

1. The first is a general point, but fundamental in criticising this theory: the ultimate order is not as this theory implies an order of law: the legal order is not the ultimate order. Legal order and systems pre-suppose morality, and are the not the highest or perfect expression of it. Law follows morality, as it were, from the outside and at a distance; it is an attempt to preserve morality, but remains subject to it. God judges men in the last resort not by any external standard or code, imposing penalties accordingly external and arbitrary, but through the inner consent of a man's own conscience. A man that is confronted by God does not learn that he has broken the legal code of the ultimate order, but cries out of his own volition "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned". There is a whole moral universe of difference between God confronting a man and saying "You have broken my law, you must receive punishment: the law must be fulfilled" and God crying to him "Return, my son!". The application of law in human affairs provides at most a very rough metaphor by which God's dealings with men can be described, and that metaphor must always be carefully used lest

it be allowed to mislead. God's dealings with men cannot be understood as strict justice, but only as divine grace; and the theory fails to see this, indeed is based upon a contradiction of it.

2. The satisfaction theory can stress that the atonement originates in God, and is indeed an objective act of God, for it is God who 'provides' Christ and consequently the satisfaction which He achieves; yet in its description of that salvation the emphasis lies on, and must lie on according to this theory, the humanity of Jesus, for it is only as a man that He can bear the penalty of human sin. Anselm as we know laid great emphasis upon the incarnation, but only because it was in the incarnation of Jesus that he found ground for the ability and fitness of Jesus to carry out the atoning work - yet when He comes to perform that work, He must come essentially as a man and for men. Thus no matter how carefully the theory is expressed it will be committed to an element of what Dr. Aulen calls 'discontinuity of divine operation': God acts so far as the atonement, and then allows Himself to be acted upon by the man Jesus. We have here what might be described as almost the converse of a weakness we saw in the moral theory - once again there is an opposition, a tension, between Jesus and God, but here the centre of the Christian faith is Christ, somewhat to the exclusion of God, while in the moral theory it was God in His

love who was at the centre, rather to the exclusion of Christ. "It is at this point, in the payment of the required satisfaction, that the continuity of the divine operation is lost; for the satisfaction is offered by Christ as man, as the sinless man on behalf of the sinners"¹.

3. There is also in this theory what Aulen calls the "continuity of the order of merit and justice" and by that he means that man's position is always understood in terms of strict justice both before and after atonement; for before it he is considered worthy of great punishment according to the legal order and after it he stands justified because the demands of the legal order have been satisfied by his fellow-man Jesus, who has borne the full penalty that was due. But in reality there is no such continuity of the legal order in the atonement: "There is no satisfaction of God's justice, for the relation of man to God is viewed in the light, not of merit and justice, but of grace"². This word 'grace' introduces us to a higher, more ultimate order of spirit than it is possible to conceive under the category of strict justice. We are stressing in particular here the fundamental point which we made in general in our first criticism, viz., that the legal order is not the ultimate order.

Canon Oliver Quick adds two criticisms which appear to be minor ones, not reaching to the heart of the matter. He

1. G. Aulen: Christus Victor; p. 163
 2. Ibid; p.163.

contends¹ that it is impossible to maintain that the sufferings which Christ voluntarily endured for man's sin were the same as those which sinners would have had to endure, and also that it is unbelievable that Christ on the cross bore the penalty for sin strictly in substitution for the sinner. It is clear that he has missed the basic error of the satisfaction theory when he goes on to say "Nevertheless, in the light of the atonement the law of justice still stands unshaken as a moral principle; and it is the main purpose and value of the juridical theory to emphasise this truth. It is only when the sinner acknowledges that the sufferings which another bears for him were justly his own due, that he can know the penitence which brings salvation. Christ's atonement does not therefore make the law of none effect"², for he has not seen that the whole theory is built upon a presupposition concerning law and justice which, to say the least, is a very questionable premise.

Although the satisfaction theory has attempted to say what was not said by the moral influence theory, that something objective was achieved by the work of Christ, it has erred seriously in presupposing that this achievement took place upon the basis of a strict legal order, and in seeing God's dealings with men in terms of this juridical order, instead of in terms of grace. In spite of the revelation of

1. O.C. Quick: Doctrines of the Creed; p. 228f.
 2. Ibid; p. 230.

of God's love in Jesus Christ -- which the moral theory emphasizes, though we must remember that His work was a revelation because at the same time it was more than a revelation, it was an act of love -- this theory draws its foundation from a sphere which does not concern (though at the same time does not necessarily exclude) love. The reason for this failure on the part of the satisfaction theory is not difficult to see: it is its genuine concern with the seriousness of sin that brought this theory into being; men who have been confronted by God in Christ know the deep significance of Paul's cry "I am the chief of sinners!", and shrink from the error of presenting God as an indulgent and good-natured Father who regarded it as His 'business' to forgive sinners. What does not seem to be grasped is that, instead of preserving the seriousness of sin, the theory minimises it; for it is surely an apparent fact of experience that a man does not know the moral seriousness, the sinfulness, of his sin, so much when he says in his heart "I have sinned against Thy holy laws" as when he says "Against Thee only have I sinned". We are nearer the concept of seriousness when we speak of the organised spurning of God's love, than when we speak of breaking His law.

Again, within the context of legality, this theory seems to imply rather that God is the One who needed to be changed - God who needed to settle with Himself this all-

important matter of satisfying the demands of justice, or who must satisfy His own honour or holiness, before He can restore man to His fellowship. The theory fails to see that it is God who frees man from sinfulness, not man who frees God from legal demands; it is man who is bound and not God, and man is bound not by the inability to satisfy God's justice, but by cosmic and individual sinfulness which organises him self-centredly outside the love of God, and needs to be saved from this sinfulness and restored to fellowship with God.

Because the satisfaction theory has failed to see that the ultimate order is not a legal order, and because it represents a discontinuity in God's action, setting up a tension between God and Christ, and also because, even were these crucial considerations overlooked, the theory is not in itself consistent in accounting for the demands of divine justice, this theory must be firmly set aside as an adequate account of the work of Christ.

8. CRITICISM OF THE DRAMATIC THEORY.

The criticism of the satisfaction theory as lacking in a genuine conception of grace brings us onto a discussion of the dramatic theory, which does claim to grasp and interpret the work of Christ as an act of grace. We saw that the moral influence theory was true as far as it

went, but it lacked a real objective achievement in the atonement; the satisfaction theory did indeed fill this need, but we must say that the objective achievement which it presents is an inadequate conception of the atonement, and must be discarded (it is abundantly clear that the satisfaction theory is implied in much of the devotional life of the Church, and it is perhaps necessary to emphasise that criticism does not call into question the genuine faith which this theory expresses, but only the interpretation of that faith). Let us now consider whether the dramatic theory fulfills the need of objective achievement, and if so, whether it fulfills it adequately.

The objectivity of the dramatic theory has already been pointed out; according to this theory God in Christ does achieve something objective, a victory over the powers of evil, liberating men and thus changing the whole situation in which they stand before God. God has acted in Christ, not according to His law, but according to grace, to overcome evil, restoring men to Himself, not merely illustrating His love in a moving appeal. We see in this theory then, one which is objective and thus distinct from a merely subjective approach, but at the same time equally distinct from the objectivity of the satisfaction theory. The dramatic theory then, is one which might offer real promise in constructing a comprehensive and adequate account of the atonement.

The dilemma arises when we shed this theory of its early crudities of expression and attempt to give it precision and clarity of statement. It has been claimed that the theory is intrinsically vague and indefinite, as we noted above¹. If it is represented as holding that Christ's death and resurrection completely defeated the powers of evil, then it has failed to account for the obvious presence of evil still in the world; if it is represented as holding that Christ overcame the powers of evil in His own life, then the theory is a variant of the moral theory. Dr. Aulen avoids this difficulty, for he prefers to call the dramatic or classic an idea rather than a theory, and as an idea he is justified in saying that it is fully definite and unambiguous². But we cannot be content to leave it as an idea in our criticism, for we must evaluate the contribution of this idea to a constructive theory of the atonement, and in doing so we are confronted with the problem of vagueness.

"Our criticism therefore of the 'classic' theory", says Canon Quick,³ "is not at all to suggest that it is false, but rather to point out that, like the subjective theory, it is incomplete. We need to know more of what exactly Christ's victory was. The old forms of the classic theory, that the victory was won by means of a ransom paid to the devil to release mankind, or by deceiving the devil as with a baited

1. Above, p. 54f.

2. Christus Victor; p.175.

3. Doctrines of the Creed; p.225.

hook, certainly supply the lacking precision; but they have never commended themselves for long either to the reason or to the conscience of Christians".

If this dramatic type of theory is to prove to be an adequate theory of the atonement, then it must be stated with the precision and definiteness which is essential to a theory, and the attempt to state the theory with more clarity will be our main concern in the final section. Suffice it here to say that this theory need not necessarily remain vague or unsatisfactory, and the problem is to conceive of the powers of evil with some precision, so that the victory over them will also become clear; to conceive the powers of evil with precision, and at the same time in a reasonable and defensible manner.

The various forms the theory has so far taken have represented the powers of evil either in the form of a personal devil with whom a bargain can be driven or who can be deceived, or as semi-personal power or powers which can be liquidated either in the world at large or in Christ's own life; and these forms all have their difficulties which render them inadequate.

How then are the powers of evil to be conceived? They must not be thought of as something utterly impersonal and outside the sphere of mankind, which can be destroyed

completely without reference to men; that is, they are not to be thought of as a material yoke which can be actually broken, for then we would have ignored their continued presence in the world in spite of the atonement; on the other hand, they must not be conceived individually so that salvation is the turning of this individual and that from the evil to the good, for that is back at the subjective approach. There is, in other words, what American theologians would term 'polarity' in the conception, a polarity which consists of cosmic, non-individual considerations on the one hand, but on the other hand is fully personal and still in existence in spite of the atonement; if the dramatic theory is to express itself adequately, and at the same time avoid the errors of the other theories, then it must represent the accomplishment of the atonement as something more than the overcoming of evil in this man's life or that man's, but at the same time not as the complete destruction of evil externally to man's life. The powers of evil must be understood as such that the work of Christ defeated their ultimate power while not destroying them, so that they continue to exist, but not as ultimate, for a new order or fellowship has arisen, of those who share in Christ's work through the Holy Spirit, though His initial victory over sin is not dependent upon their faith-union with Him. It will be our task in section three to attempt to solve some

of these difficulties, to define our conception of sin and its power, and thus be able to outline more clearly the implications of the dramatic theory. So far we have hardly seen even the direction in which the idea must move to be acceptable as a comprehensive theory; we must leave the position here at this stage, but suffice it to say that we have seen that the dramatic idea of the atonement may not need to remain an indefinite and vague theory, but, if it can take into account the various considerations of the powers of evil and their defeat, may well prove to be an adequate and sound approach to the problem of atonement -- and approach which would leave room for the truth of the moral influence theory and which is at the same time objective, not in terms of strict justice, but in the light of the Christian revelation of the grace of God.

9. THE SACRIFICIAL IDEA.

Early in this section¹ it was mentioned that a fourth type of theory was claimed by some, notably Canon Quick, and this supposed fourth type is the sacrificial theory; to a consideration of this conception we must now turn. Dr. Quick is quite unequivocal in his presentation of this theory; not only is it a theory in his opinion, but it is a theory which links the truth of the other theories into a united whole, which without their sacrificial interpretation he would reject. "Taken then in conjunction with one another,

1. Above; p.40.

the truths of the juridical and sacrificial theories do but give greater precision to the truth of the 'classical' theory that by the cross God in manhood has won the victory which redeems man from the power of evil. And thus, finally, the fullest truth is found in the great principle vindicated by Abelard that the cross is the supreme demonstration of God's love for man"¹.

Unlike the others, he claims, the sacrificial theory finds a systematic exposition in the New Testament itself in the Epistle to the Hebrews². Two factors have combined, however, he continues, to prevent this epistle from taking its due place in the theology of the atonement: 1) the persistent idea that sin-offerings were attempts to propitiate an angry God; 2) the failure of the author to correlate self-sacrifice with love. But properly understood the sacrifice of Jesus was expiation, not propitiation, not a change in God's attitude but a change in man and in his attitude to God. Christ is the God-appointed priest and victim; He was a man, tempted yet without sin; and He was obedient to the Father's will. His death then is the one all-sufficient sacrifice, which passing through death becomes the one availing power for sanctification. "The blood of Christ's offered life is sprinkled on our sin-stained consciences. It enters our souls and cleanses them with its own triumphant purity, so that we also can draw

1. Doctrines of the Creed; p.237

2. Ibid; p.232. A questionable claim - cf. V.Taylor.

near to God and offer ourselves in a like obedience. Christ, then, has indeed done something for us which we could never have done for ourselves. In that sense He has suffered vicariously. But there is no hint of substitution in the thought, Christ's sacrifice avails for us because the sanctifying blood, the symbol of His offered life, is sprinkled upon us His people, and restores us to that communion with God which enables us to follow Him who is our forerunner and pioneer as well as our high-priest... the perfectly obedient life self-offered avails to change, not God's attitude to man, but man's attitude to God, and to remove the barrier between man and God which man's sin has erected"¹.

Elsewhere he says "The new risen manhood of Jesus, which has passed through death to God is henceforth imparted to His followers, so that they in faith partaking of it, may partake at once of the life of the world to come and of the power to complete their own sacrifice of themselves in following their Lord. This is the mystery of the blood of Jesus, giving both expiation and new life"².

Dr. Quick is careful to deny substitution and propitiation, for if the sacrificial theory were to express itself in that way it would be only another form of the satisfaction theory. Yet if ask how this theory is objective,

1. Doctrines of the Creed; p.234.

2. The Gospel of the New World; p. 102.

as Dr. Quick maintains it is, then we are hard put to find an answer. Indeed so is Dr. Quick, and he elsewhere maintains that the theory needs to be fused with the juridical and Abelardian and dramatic ideas to form a single theory¹. What Dr. Quick apparently does not realise is that when he distinguishes the sacrificial theory from any element of substitution or propitiation, and stresses expiation and the change in men, the theory becomes another expression of the moral influence theory, with the modification that subjective changes in man are achieved by the sprinkling of Christ's blood upon His people, and by imparting to His followers His new risen manhood. If these phrases mean anything at all, then they are describing something purely subjective or are implying that the changes are wrought ~~subjectively~~ objectively in man by the application to man of the merits Christ has earned through His self-sacrifice. But such a view of merit as something which can be dispensed in an objective way is a misconception; to conceive grace as something transferrable in the same way as electricity is to distort grace; grace is primarily and properly a personal relationship established by God. We do not attribute such a conception to Dr. Quick, and must therefore say that his theory (unless we do accept the interpretation of sprinkling with blood as the objective dispensation of grace, which would be a new type of theory, but a harmful one) assimilates itself to the subjective stream. On the other hand, if Canon Quick brings in the

1. See above p. 76.

juridical element which at times he seems to think necessary, then this so-called type will assimilate itself to the satisfaction theory. Such is the claim of Dr. Quick for a sacrificial and distinctive theory of the atonement, but one which is either another form of one of the existing types, or else presents grace in an unacceptable manner; as well as this his exposition is shrouded in an obscurity not, even though sacrificial language is difficult, intrinsically necessary.

However, the claim that the sacrificial in itself supplies a fourth type of theory is not the only question which we must raise under this heading. There is also the far more convincing claim of Dr. Vincent Taylor, not for a sacrificial theory, but for a sacrificial category: "The vicarious nature of Christ's work is one of the clearest elements in New Testament teaching, but its true content can be discerned only as its representative and sacrificial aspects are more closely defined"¹. Speaking of ultimate unsolved problems which the New Testament poses, he writes: "...the sacrificial allusions must either be explained as of merely verbal, and therefore of secondary, importance, or must be regarded as indicating the need of a sacrificial category in which room can be found for the reconciling person of God, the representative ministry of Christ, and the approach and return of sinners"².

1. V. Taylor: The Atonement in New Testament Teaching; p 182.

2. Ibid; p.183.

With this claim we cannot but agree whole-heartedly; the sacrificial idea of atonement must be fully taken into account if we are to gain a real understanding of that doctrine; and there is also no argument when Dr. Taylor insists that the sacrificial category must play a definite part in the interpretation of atonement in the New Testament and in Christian theology. But if he moves on from that position, and claims that the sacrificial category in itself constitutes an adequate account of the work of Christ, as his great emphasis upon the sacrificial tends to lead him to do, and goes on as he does in Jesus and His Sacrifice to speak of "the central element in the doctrine of the atonement, namely, the offering, which Christ, as the representative man, presents to the Father on his behalf"¹, then we must recognise that he is treating the sacrificial no longer as a category but as a theory, a theory which if analysed further, is either substitutionary or subjective, according as it emphasises the offering to God or the effects in men. One further defect must be noted which is implied in the claim of the sacrificial element to afford a full account of the atonement, and that is the weakness of certain of its concepts; first it underestimates the power of sinfulness: the barrier of sin, preventing fellowship with God, which man erected and for which he is fully

1. V. Taylor: Jesus and His Sacrifice; p.312.

responsible, disappears when the self-sacrifice of Jesus moves men to repentance: the view of sin tends to be a very personal one, and that is true so far as it goes, but in leaving out the racial factor of sin it does not adequately account for the reality of the power of evil, a power which God had to reckon with if fellowship was to be restored; secondly, it minimises the place of the resurrection of Christ, for the atonement centres around the cross and the death and our share in that death, without the essential note of triumph and our share in that triumph.

This is not a full discussion of the problem by any means, but it will serve to shew two things: that the sacrificial category, like the subjective, should not be expounded as affording a full account of the atonement; but at the same time it must be taken into account, again like the subjective idea, in any comprehensive approach to the problem. This last point is even more clearly brought out when one considers the work of Bishop Hicks¹ in relating the atonement relevantly to the sacrament of communion, shewing that communion is the last stage of sacrifice, the sharing of the once-for-all offered atonement.

10. CONCLUSIONS.

What conclusions are we to draw from this brief survey and criticism of the main historical streams of Christian

1. F.C.N.Hicks: Art. in Ways of Worship.

thought on the doctrine of the atonement, with a view to making a constructive restatement of the problem? There is one negative conclusion: we must finally reject that type known as satisfactionary, representing as it does a false view of God as legal arbiter instead of moral sovereign, and a false view of sin as legal and not moral guilt; also it represents God's dealings with men in the light of strict justice and not in the light of grace; and finally, it sets up a tension between God and Christ, not the Christian concept of tension, but almost an opposition.

But there are three positive conclusions which we are able to make:

1. Although the moral influence theory is inadequate when it is thought of as the whole truth of the atonement, yet if taken in synthesis with an objective approach and not as the whole truth it is of tremendous value and its insights must be taken into account in any comprehensive statement of the atonement.
2. While the sacrificial element likewise cannot be maintained as forming a theory of its own, it is nevertheless necessary to incorporate the sacrificial idea for an understanding of much of the New Testament thought, and sacramental interpretation, of the atonement.
3. We shall have to consider well the theory known as the dramatic theory, for it promises to be a very fruitful

source of understanding for the atonement, and if we can state it with more precision, may well form the basis for a positive, evangelical, and comprehensive theory of the atonement.

SECTION THREE

"A RESTATEMENT OF THE ATONEMENT"

(THE ATONEMENT: A BRIEF DISCUSSION)

IT WILL BE OUR AIM in this final section to attempt to make a positive restatement of the atonement; to put forward a comprehensive approach to the problem, gathering up what has been said before in this discussion into an integrated and more adequate account of the doctrine of redemption. In doing this we must take into consideration not only those conclusions which we have drawn ourselves, from our survey of the problem, and of the main streams of interpretation in the history of Christian thought, but also apparent deficiencies which we find in modern treatments of the doctrine.

This does not mean that it will be our intention or expectation to bring out anything startlingly new; it is the fact of man's redemption itself which is ever startlingly new - renewed to every man who finds himself confronted and confounded by the Living Christ, who dies and is raised with Christ through the Holy Spirit. The task of theology is not to produce new truths, but new interpretations of the old truths; and our task in this constructive section will not be to produce a new theory of the atonement, but to attempt to integrate the theories which have been put forward, to attempt at the same time to overcome difficulties which we have found within them, and to restate the doctrine in a more comprehensive and adequate way.

Before beginning this thesis I felt it prudent to emphasise in the Preface the mystery, and the transcendency, of the work of Christ, which while it is the very centre of the Christian experience, must remain an unfathomable secret to the finite thought of man; at the beginning of this constructive section, I feel that this 'otherness' of our redemption must be re-emphasised: the fulness of this divine mystery must ever elude our rational understanding, must ever break through our attempts to form a final theology, a 'last word' on the doctrine. All that we can hope to achieve, as this account of the atonement is outlined, is the realisation of the vast scope for thought on many points, and to bring into sharp relief some of the inadequacies of the general modern approach to the atonement.

We have already mentioned that some account must be taken of these deficient factors in modern approaches, and it will be well to see what these are at an early stage. This thesis does not give scope for a detailed study of modern treatments, but there are five major considerations which I feel reflect the contemporary approach justly, and not only the contemporary approach, but a great deal of thought in the whole history of the doctrine. They are considerations which may have a very definite contribution to make to any positive approach, even though they are

in themselves negative criticisms: for it is largely in the effort to overcome deficiencies that more adequate interpretations are formulated.

1. In dealing with the atonement theology has shewn a tendency to OVERSIMPLIFY the problem; the atonement is viewed out of its context of complexity, and when this is done then one aspect of the atonement is allowed to pass as a full account of the whole. We see examples of this in various accounts of the sacrificial and moral influence theories, where one truth has become the sole explanation of the work of Christ, inevitably necessitating arbitrary distortion of other elements to fit into their particular scheme, with harmful effects upon our understanding of the doctrine. There are those who have emphasised the sacrificial idea to such an extent that they have made nonsense of the Christian conception of grace; and always with a sole emphasis upon the sacrificial idea goes a tendency to minimise the resurrection, to neglect the power of God, and to ignore the concept of the Kingdom of God which runs throughout the New Testament. Others press a moral influence theory to the exclusion of other aspects, doing away not only with the Christo-centric character of atonement, but also with all possibility of any real objective atonement.

2. Another unfortunate factor present in theology is the desire for a "cut-and-dried" theory of the atonement - an account which "has all the answers". It is the desire, in spite of our inadequacy in the face of divine mystery, to have a final theology - a "last word" theology of the atonement. An obvious example of this is the tremendous popularity of the satisfaction type of theory. This theory has no direct grounding in scripture and also misrepresents the nature of God and of His dealings with men in so far as they have been revealed to us; yet it continues to influence multitudes, particularly the 'Fundamentalist' group, simply because of its finality, its 'crispness' of interpretation, its clear-cut and decisive account of the work of Christ.

3. A third factor is what we may call the "either-or" attitude - the atonement is either one thing or the other, either it is moral or it is dramatic - and this factor is simply the failure to INTEGRATE the various theories of the atonement. This attitude conceives the issue to be between different theories and their claim to be THE theory, rather than the adequate truth and how it is expressed in the variety of interpretations, and furthermore how this variety can be integrated to form a more comprehensive account.

4. Fourthly, there is a failure to conceive the life and work of Christ as a WHOLE, to see that the various "parts" of His life, death, and resurrection are not in reality such various parts, but that there is a unity of mission and character and end which underlies every aspect of the person and place of Jesus Christ. We saw right at the beginning of our discussion¹ that such a conception of the unity and the wholeness of the atonement was essential to any adequate interpretation of it, and that need is reiterated here because of the real lack of such a conception.

5. Finally, and this may be regarded as a particular application of the previous factor, there has been a complete failure in the great majority of theologians to appreciate something of the importance of the resurrection in the work of Christ - when in reality we should see that the resurrection is an essential part of the ^{atonement} resurrection. It would be a false antithesis to set the resurrection in opposition to the cross, to say that it is the resurrection rather than the cross which is the centre of the atonement; but what is true is to say that it is the RISEN Christ who stands at the centre of the Gospel and thus too of the Atonement - Paul could preach Christ and Him crucified only because he was preaching the risen Christ. While the cross can properly be said to be the centre of the atoning sacrifice, that sacrifice is not completed and we cannot

1. Above; p. 12ff.

have a share in it until the resurrection. To point to any particular aspect of Christ's work as THE atonement is to be guilty of a failure to see that work as a united whole; and this has been done with particular regard to the cross as opposed to the resurrection - the resurrection becoming an evidential appendage instead of the very dynamic of the Christian Gospel.

HAVING MADE THESE preliminary and general observations, let us now pass on to attempt to supply a more adequate account; if we bear in mind our previous conclusions, and try to fulfil the needs that we have just mentioned above, then I suggest that this thesis will not have been in vain, even if we do no more than begin that task. Our previous conclusions¹ have pointed out the direction in which a discussion of the atonement must move, the line of thought which a comprehensive account must take - it is a line of integration: the integration of the sacrificial and subjective or moral influence elements of the atonement into a dramatic theory. An adequate account of the atonement will be one which sets forth the basic conception of the dramatic theory - Christus Victor - while not neglecting the moral and subjective effects of the atonement on the one hand, nor the sacrificial elements of expiation and

1. See above; pp.32,81.

vicarious and representative suffering on the other. To say this is to make an important implication, and that is the rejection of the satisfactory interpretation of the atonement.

The satisfaction theory, or the substitutionary and juridical element, has no place in an account of the work of Christ; and we must say this in spite of the fact that this type is held by almost all biblicist and even by many more "liberal" theologians. To reject the juridical type of theory is not an attempt to oversimplify the problem, and thus to fall into the error we have just noted in much theological thought; I believe we are justified in saying that to set this interpretation aside is to rid Christian thought of an intolerable burden, a non-Christian concept. Satisfaction has no basis in the scriptures, for the teaching of the Bible is not propitiation but expiation. The satisfaction type is mainly linked up with the Pauline metaphors of slavery and the law-courts; but if we look at these metaphors we see the slave metaphors teach a ransom or dramatic concept of atonement, and those taken from the law-courts portray, not a continuity of justice, which the satisfaction theory implies, but a discontinuity - God declares the unjust to be just, the guilty to be innocent. Another source for the theory is found in the debt metaphors, but here again we see

a misinterpretation, for it is always debt seen as forgiven, not payed. However, these are somewhat superficial criticisms, and the real grounds for rejecting this theory are to be found in the major criticisms which we made when discussing this theory in section two¹.

It is not enough, however, to say that an adequate account of the atonement must take the form of a dramatic theory integrating the sacrificial and moral elements, for integration must not be a mere "bringing together" or sum of the different theory-types, but must transcend all its integrating factors: our account of the atonement must be lifted from the sphere of this theory and that, to the sphere of a unified theory, an account that presents us with a "wholeness": and this account is the concept that runs throughout the whole New Testament - the atonement is the establishing on earth of the Kingdom of God.

We have spoken up to the present of the dramatic theory of the atonement, and the name perhaps carries with it, if we were to continue to use it, the implication that it is a single theory standing in opposition to the subjective and sacrificial ideas; this implication must be avoided in a more integrated approach. Moreover, it is an inadequate title, for although Dr. Aulen claims that the

1. See above, pp. 64ff.

2. Christus Victor; p.22.

classic idea is the dominant note of the New Testament, he too is guilty in his further discussion of oversimplifying and exclusiveness; what is more true to say - and this is a more inclusive term - is that from Matthew to Revelation, and indeed in a sense even in the Old Testament, the work of salvation is conceived as the establishing of the Kingdom of God in the world, with the presence of the living Christ as its centre and foundation. The crux of the atonement, we shall see, is the presence of the risen Christ among men and before God, and the effects of the atonement is the founding of the Kingdom, of which He is the centre.

To give an account of the atonement, I believe, is to tell a story, a gospel: it is not to relate THAT something has happened which has made us right with God, some incident or transaction in the past which is valid for all time - but to tell the story of what did happen and what does happen now in our midst. It is a story which has its beginning in the fact of sin and its effects upon men, which must go on to tell how Christ came to this world and brought with Him the Kingdom of God, a story which ends always with the present, and remains even then unfinished. To attempt to restate the atonement, then, is to attempt to re-tell this story in a more adequate way.

With all the conclusions and considerations which we have discussed in our minds, we turn to the task of re-telling that story - the gospel of our redemption.

1. THE NATURE AND EFFECTS OF SIN.

It has already become apparent that our conception of the atonement will depend largely upon our conception of sin and its effects; and our immediate need therefore is to attempt to define these more carefully, for it is insufficient to call it moral evil, rebellion against God, or any other term which, while true, does not bring out clearly the power of sin over men and the needs which sin^g raises. We must avoid two errors in doing this. On the one hand sin is not to be conceived as impersonal force operating upon man from the outside, for this is to make nonsense not only of personal guilt but also of the atonement, because sin is present in the world today in spite of the atonement. On the other hand we must see that while sin is individual personal guilt it is more than that, for it is a real fact of experience that man is in the power of sin even when he would escape from it -- the evil that I would not, that I do.

The first thing we are forced to recognise concerning evil is that there is a definite dualism in the world between it and God; we are not committing ourselves in saying this to any conception of eternal dualism of good and evil -- we do believe that God will in the end of time perform "love's strange work" in destroying that which

is opposed to it, that God will in the end completely destroy all evil. What we are recognising is that in time at least, man is subject to the dualistic order of evil versus God. The Christian conception of dualism must be clearly contrasted with any idealistic monism, which tends to merge the boundary between divine and human and to fit evil into the divine scheme of things; also with any other idealistic approach which tends to merge the boundary between good and evil so that they become mere relativities one of the other; and thirdly it is in contrast to any Gnostic concept of matter as evil, which sees the contrast between good and evil as infinite and finite, spirit and matter, heavenly and earthly. "In Christian faith the antithesis is between the divine will, defined as love, and the hostile forces which oppose this will"¹. There is a dualism in life between God and sinners, a dualism which needs no elaboration for it is painfully evident in our everyday experience. There is a yearning in men to be one with the will of God, yet at the same time there is that in man which opposes him to God's will - man is under the power of sin. How does this power arise, and what is it?

There is no more helpful or clearer definition of the nature of sin than to say that it is self-centredness; self-centeredness as opposed to God-centredness. Not only is each individual self-centred, striving to usurp the place

1. G.Aulen: The Faith of the Christian Church; p.203.

of God as judging authority of its being, but society too is self-centred, because it is made up of self-centred men; men are sinful, and the societies which they form are therefore sinful too. This must not be confused with the conception that society as such is a sinful institution, or that the institutions of life such as marriage, the family, the state, are sinful as institutions, but they are sinful because they are concerned with sinful men. A state is not sinful because it is a state: it is sinful because it is made up of sinful men. It is true to say that not only is each individual a sinner, is self-centred, but that each society made up of men is sinful, self-centred; sinful dealings and attitudes are characteristic of states and families as well as of each man or woman.

At no time does this self-centredness cease to be personal; sin is not an impersonal force or 'disease' which comes to man from 'the outside'. But if we look at the effects of sin we shall see that it is no less powerful for being personal, but in truth it is in this that the real power of sin lies. The effects of this self-centredness is the cration of the 'world' in a theological sense. To describe this 'world' presents us with a problem, not of experience of knowledge - for we do experience this 'world' and we know only too well what it is - but of expression; it is difficult to put this 'world' into words. It is the word we use when we say that the Christian must be in

the world but not of the world. One might almost say it is 'man's world' inside God's world; man's order within God's order. God so loved the world - that is His world, the world He desires to save unto Himself; I have overcome the world - that is man's world, the effects of sin, the man-centred world which He condemns.

The 'world' is the system of 'organised' self-centredness, organised being a way of saying, however inadequately it expresses the thought, that while this sinfulness, this self- and man-centredness, is entirely personal, yet there is a 'unity of disbelief' - sin presents a 'united front' against God. I would like to ask the indulgence and patience of the reader at this point, for I am trying to express something which I have not seen expressed before, and which is extremely difficult to express. It is the power which sin has over us in so far as it is a personal thing which we confront in the course of our normal relationships. The power of sin is not the devil; by saying that I am not trying to deny the existence of the devil, but drawing attention to the fact that it is inadequate to explain the power of sin by the existence of a powerful devil. If the devil does have a power over us, then that is not the power of sin, but the powerful ability to TEMPT us to sinfulness; if sinfulness were forced upon us by an external devil then it could hardly continue to be called sin; sin IS sin because

we acquiesce in that sinfulness - it would cease to be so if that sinfulness were forced upon us as arbitrarily as if we were struck blind by an accident during the course of study, and were thus unable to continue. The power of sin does not lie outside of man, it must lie within man and his 'world'. The power of sin over man must lie within mankind, it is a personal power within the 'world'. This is the effect I have tried to convey in using the word 'organised' to describe the 'world'. It is not that men are altogether disintegrated through their sinfulness; the 'Oneness' which is the purpose of God is indeed destroyed, but it is replaced by an ungodly unity, the unity of sin, the unity of the 'world' in its opposition to God -- manifested most clearly when God came to His own, and His own received Him not.

It is in the 'world', and each man's relationship with that 'world', of which he is part, and to which he contributes, that the power of sin lies. The 'world' is a fallen 'world', because it is made up of fallen men. The 'world' is a personal term, for it is made up of persons and personal relationships; and these persons and personal relationships are sinful. Each man is a part of this 'world', each man is a fallen man, and is born into a fallen world, where all his relationships are within a sinful 'world'. We are born into the 'world' as sinful men, know nothing beside this 'world', (I am thinking now of the state of men before God confronted the 'world' with Himself), are conditioned by it, contribute

to it, receive from it, and share in it. That is why we can be confident in affirming that whatever be the theory concerning original sin, in practice it is a reality; for we do not begin life as 'second Adams' and then fall by the wayside - we are born as fallen men in a fallen world, we are born into a sinful 'world' as part of that world. That is what makes salvation mean salvation: we have not to be preserved from falling into the 'world', we have first to be lifted out of that 'world' in which we began - we have to be set on a path, not from which we erred, but upon which we never even began. The power of the 'world' holds every man from before his birth, and holds him increasingly as he progresses in that 'world'.

This, it need hardly be stressed, is not to suggest that we are mere 'pawns in the hand of fate', that we are not responsible for our sin. It is a fundamental fact of experience that we are morally responsible, and feel morally guilty, for our share in this 'world'. My whole stress upon the (if I may coin a phrase which I think is particularly suitable) PERSONALNESS of sin and the 'world' has been to shew that its power does not rid us of the burden of guilt, for we are part of that 'world', and while ourselves in its power we add to that power; we contribute to the 'system' of self-centredness, or man-centredness, by our own self-centredness. As natural man we affirm the 'world'

not only in all our deeds and thoughts, but in our very nature; we identify ourselves with the 'world', we 'make it our own'. To argue that self-centredness came before the 'organised world', or the world before self-centredness, is, if I may put it lightly but succinctly, a chicken-or-the-egg question. The two poles stand ~~in~~ tension to one another; both are real - the cosmic nature and power of 'organised' yet fully personal sinfulness, and the individuals who form that world' and share individually and responsibly in its guilt.

Something more must now be said about the nature of this self-centredness. We have attempted to shew up to this point the power of sin and the individual guilt of every man. These are involved in sinfulness, which we have defined as self- or man-centredness, the attitude of opposition to God, to oust Him from His position as judging authority and sustainer of life. This was the temptation described by Genesis, and it is a description we can hardly better - ye shall be as gods! No discussion of sin and its effects as short as this can hope to give a full account of the matter, but I believe that we have made the main issues clear, and arising out of what we have said, we must consider four effects which are not unimportant to our aim, although they are all implied in saying that self-centredness is an opposition to God which

seeks to usurp His place as God, and results in the formation of a man-centred world. To mention these four effects of sin, then, will be to make clear what is really implicit in what has been said before.

1. The first result of sin is that it puts us 'outside' the fellowship of God; we are no longer in fellowship with Him because our own sinfulness has alienated us from Him; it is not that God has 'expelled' us from His presence, but that we have gone 'to a far country': because of sin we are lost, like sheep that have wandered astray.

2. At the same time we have alienated ourselves from His purpose in so far as we have any idea of that purpose; we are not one with God, not one with man, except in the 'united front' sense of which we spoke concerning the 'organised' sinfulness of the world - we are united only in our sinfulness and opposition to God; but there is no oneness. This is the dividing-power of sinfulness: the shepherd is gone and the sheep are scattered.

3. Thirdly, there is a real sense in which we are at 'war' with God; God's presence and love are a continual threat to the existence of the 'world', and must be opposed, and if possible destroyed (cf. the parable of the hirelings in the vineyard) who destroyed the son that they might have the inheritance); a definite change takes place

in man's attitude to God - in place of love there is hatred, a deep-seated hatred, or war: as deep-seated as his desire to be as God. An aversion grows in the sinner to anything that is of God, to all that reminds him of his rightful place of belonging; the sinner loves the darkness rather than the light. (I am trying here to pin-point something deeper than conscience, something that is a real change in human nature - a change, that is to say, from what we should conceive unfallen man to be - which can only be described as a fundamental attitude of 'hate' and 'war' in the place of an attitude of love and worship.)

4. Finally, involved in sin and the 'world', is death. If God is the source and giver of life then to be alienated from Him is to be alienated from life; to use a very simple illustration (which is meant as no more than an illustration) we are like mirrors that are turned away from the light and therefore reflect only darkness - we are turned away from life and therefore reflect only death. To call this 'spiritual' death does not make it any clearer, for it is almost true to say that 'death' is the wrong word to use of our physical passing - the word 'death' does in fact often jarr when used of physical passing, and I suggest that that is because it carries with it the wider conception of spiritual death. The wages of sin are death, and we know even if we cannot express it with precision what this means. Away from God, we are dead in trespass and sin.

2. THE NEED FOR ATONEMENT.

The question was raised in section one, "Why atonement?", and we said that this question would remain unanswerable until we had been confronted by the meaning and power of sin, until we saw sin as self-centredness, as rooted in human nature, as 'organised' against God.¹ I think we are now more in the position to give an answer to the question; the need for atonement is rooted in the nature of sin, and in the nature of God.

We have already said sufficient to make it clear that man is in bondage to sin, because of the power of sin over him, because of guilty acquiescence in that power; that is to say because he is in the 'world', and because he shares in that 'world'. All that we have said about the nature and effects of sin points to the fundamental needs which it creates. We need to be freed from the power of sin, to be saved from the 'world'; to be restored to His fellowship, to know Him as God and Father; we need to be forgiven, to have our guilt covered over by God; we need to be made at peace with God, willing to render Him our worship as Lord, to surrender ourselves willingly to His will; and we need to be raised from death, to be quickened again in new life, God-given life. We need to be restored to His purpose, and to be made one with the 'oneness' that is of His will - as faith perceives it "His eternal purpose was that mankind

1. See above; p.8.

should be 'one body'...a free and harmonious fellowship of persons united in the love of God...the true life of mankind is found in the corporate enjoyment of God, a life of complete community with God and man¹. These are not all separate factors, as it were, but together they describe the state of man and his need for atonement.

And man is unable in the very nature of his sin to do anything himself to alter the situation; it is God who must act if anything is to be done to meet the need for restoration to fellowship. God must forgive man his sin, He must break the power of the 'world' over man, bring man into peace with Himself, and make available for him that life which is in God, life which man has never known, for which he has yearned for and at the same time hated. Our revelation-knowledge leads us to be sure that God does desire to alter the situation; for His attitude to man is one of holy love - agape - God loves and judges man at the same time. And His attitude towards sinfulness is one of wrath, or holy love. Luther describes it as 'love's strange work', where love will eventually destroy all that opposes it, simply because it is love: God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Holiness and wrath are not opposed to love, but they are one with love; to deny God's holiness and ~~love~~ wrath is to deprive His love of its true meaning and depth: "One wants to have love alone, not seeing that by denying

1. D.M.Baillie: God was in Christ; p.203.

God's holiness and wrath, God's love is deprived of its true depth and meaning. Is it not so even in human experience? The man who cannot become angry, cannot truly love. The man who passes over treachery, infidelity, breach of confidence as if it were nothing cannot be a true friend and cannot be faithful himself...he who refuses to hear of God's wrath, judgement, and condemnation, will never understand Jesus Christ. The living God is the God whose love is united with holiness. This paradox of holiness and mercy is... the essence of the biblical doctrine of God¹.

In saying all this we are not attempting to bring back that 'continuity of the order of justice' which we rejected when dealing with the implications of the satisfaction theory; it is an attempt to show that forgiveness for God is costly: God does not forgive automatically. Sin is a reality, and therefore a real barrier to fellowship with God. We are bold to say in the light of what He has done for us that our sin is not a matter of indifference to God, but a matter of infinite concern.

If atonement is to be wrought, the power of the 'world' broken, then it must be done on a personal level; personal power and sinfulness must be combated on their own level. Against the reality of this guilt and dividing-

1. E.Brunner: The Scandal of Christianity; p.78.

power of sin we can begin to appreciate and understand the work of God in Christ, entering the human field to seek and to save, to judge and condemn. His work is the work of holy love - it is judgement as well as salvation. The light which destroys the darkness reveals at the same time the error of that darkness. "Love destroys, as its strange work, what is against love. It does so according to the justice without which it would be a chaotic surrender of the power of being. Love at the same time, as its own work, saves through forgiveness that which is against love. It does so according to the justifying paradox without which it would be a legal mechanism"¹. In His work of holy love, of condemnation and salvation, God in Christ lays aside, as it were, His divine glory, becoming a man among men, that through Him mankind might be judged and saved.

3. THE GOSPEL OF REDEMPTION.

"Though he was in the form of God, (he) did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross"². The incarnation assures us of this, that God enters man's

1. F. Tillich: Love, Power, and Justice; p.113.

2. Philippians 2:6f.

sinful history and situation; God wants to meet man where man is; just as someone wanting to help us must enter into the conditions and situation in which we stand, so God desiring to save man must enter into the curse under which human life stands as a result of sin¹. In order to save man, God must enter into man's 'world', into man's order, which man in his sinfulness has created in opposition to God's order. As shewn forth in particular in the baptism of Jesus as identification with sinners, in general the whole life of Jesus is the saving action of God in His identification with men. We shall do well to remember here the words of Dr. Ryder Smith on identification in order to save; the saviour identifies himself with the one to be saved, at the same time not being like him: the tension between knowing what it is ~~like~~ to be like that other, and yet not like him, leads the saviour to feel more acutely the other's sin, until finally that very tension is the means of bringing the other over to the saviour's side². "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"³. The mission of Christ is vicarious - on behalf of men, and at the same time representative - as man (but it is never substitutionary in the satisfactory sense - in the place of men); as by man came death, so God in Christ prepares, as man, to restore life, so that as in Adam all men die, so also now in Christ may all be made alive.

1. Brunner: SofC; p. 87. 2. BDofS; p. 11. 3. 2 Corinth. 5:21.

At the centre of the story of atonement is Easter: the cross, and the resurrection. We have said before that it would be a false antithesis to say that the crux of the atonement is either the cross or the resurrection; both are essential in the 'playing out' of the divine drama of salvation. The cross would be meaningless without the victory and dynamic of the resurrection; the resurrection can only be understood as God's triumph when seen against the background of Good Friday.

The first thing to say is this: had there been no cross, there would have been no Crown. We are speaking here not of the logical necessity that death must precede the resurrection, but of the necessity of the cross if the resurrection is to have meaning. God's victory is meaningless until He has faced the foe - and that is precisely what the cross is. On the cross Jesus Christ faced the ultimate challenge of the 'world' in its efforts to exclude God from its order → "afterwards he sent his son to them, saying, They will respect my son. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him and have his inheritance. And they took him and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him"¹. Christ is fulfilling on the cross His own teaching that He must give His life a ransom for many, that a seed cannot bear fruit unless it first fall into the ground and die
1. Matthew: 21:37f.

In the cross the power of sin, the power of the 'world' reached its ultimate; it is we might say the 'peak' of the creation of the man-centred order - the 'world' can never do more than it did then: it crucified God. However sin may continue in the world, however much the 'world' may continue to be in the world, faith can rest on this. Man's order, as it were, 'shot its bolt' on Calvary. God came to His own, and His own received Him not.

On the other hand, we must say that the cross is incomplete without the resurrection; for Christ drew the sting of sin in facing its utter rejection of Himself, BECAUSE He triumphed over the 'world' in the resurrection. The resurrection is no appendage to the atonement, it is essentially part of that atonement - it is the victory of God over the power of evil, breaking the bondage in which the 'world' held mankind. In Christ God not only drew the ultimate challenge of the 'world', He triumphed over it by raising Christ from the dead. Christ's death is our 'ransom' not because we are caught up out of the 'world' created by our sinfulness, but because that 'world' no longer has dominion over us. To put it metaphorically, God in Christ, through the cross and resurrection, has made a 'breach' in the 'world'; God's order has penetrated man's self-centred order. He has established His Kingdom within the 'world', a "Kingdom that cannot be shaken".

This is the dominant note of the New Testament when it speaks of the work of Christ - the coming of the Kingdom. Our Lord Himself saw His task as the bringing of God's Kingdom into the world of men (or the 'world' of men), and all His teaching in the gospels centres around the Kingdom and belonging to it. His mission of salvation was to overthrow the power of the 'world' created by sin by establishing in its very midst the victorious Kingdom of God. What is then to be said of this Kingdom?

Our whole understanding of the Kingdom depends upon our grasp of this - that the Kingdom is not only established by, and founded upon, the work of Christ, but is eternally centred in Him. To be united with Christ is to belong to the Kingdom, to belong to it is to be united with Christ. The Kingdom is identical with the Church where the Church is seen, not as an institution in any human sense, but as the mystical body of Christ - it is made up of those who have been "born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"¹, who are united with Christ through the Holy Spirit. He is the vine, we are the branches. The Kingdom is summed up in Jesus Christ, for He is its living centre and head.

1. 1 Peter 1:3.

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus a new way has come into the human situation; an alternative way to the way of the 'world' is presented to man, and it is the way of Christ, it is the way of dying to the world and rising victorious with the living Christ. Those who travel this way are no longer man-centred, but Christ-centred, they belong to the unique society of Jesus, a society which is in the world but not of the 'world'.

The effect of the atonement is not to destroy the 'world', so that sin is utterly swept away; for the 'world' still exists. But at the same time it is more than the rescue out of the 'world' of this individual and that; it is the creation by God in Christ of an alternate system of life, centred in Christ, within the 'world'. Men remain in the human situation, indeed remain in the sinful 'world', but through the Holy Spirit they are united to the living Christ who has overcome that 'world'. In the coming of the Kingdom God's purpose for man and for human life no longer, as it were, hovers over the world as a futile (from the point of view of natural man) and ignored order, but is actually realised within man's situation. ¹

1. In this development we can see that the dramatic approach need not necessarily remain vague and indefinite. Cf. difficulties raised above, pp. 54, 73.

In the atonement God's purpose has become a part of man's life; it is embodied in a community which is centred in Him, which is identified with Christ through faith by the Holy Spirit. For the centre and head of this community is Christ, and in Him God's purpose for man is found - "for he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth...to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realised in Christ Jesus our Lord"¹.

In a real sense the judgment of this 'world' has come with Christ: now is the judgement of this world. In Him not only is the 'world' judged and condemned, but the new creation has begun, the new and living way, the Kingdom, has in actual fact been established, but at the same time the 'world' has not been destroyed, and sinfulness is still a reality. The two orders exist side by side, or rather one within the other: the man-centred 'world', and the Kingdom within the 'world'; the old order dominated and defined by

1. Ephesians 1:9,10; 3:9-11.

man's pride and rebellious spirit and his self-sufficiency, having its roots in man's self-centred sinfulness, and the new order, which is dominated by God's grace and mercy, and centred in Christ, involving the response and glad surrender of convicted sinners who are become forgiven sons.

I suggest that it is now becoming fully apparent in all that we are saying concerning the atonement and the establishing of the Christ-centred Kingdom within the 'world' what is THE ESSENCE OF THE ATONEMENT; what is the final development of the line we have taken in following through the dramatic idea of the atonement - it is summed up in this: THE ATONEMENT IS THE VICTORIOUS ENTRY, AND THE ABIDING PRESENCE THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT OF THE LIVING CHRIST WITHIN THE 'WORLD'. This may sound rather like a platitude, an oversimplification of the whole problem; but I believe it is the outcome of the dramatic approach which we saw to be the direction that must be taken in trying to restate the doctrine of the atonement; it also the outcome of any attempt at integrating the three main strands of atonement conceptions. This will become more apparent if we look at some of the implications of this account of the atonement.

It is a two-sided account; for it relates the atonement both to mankind in his sinful 'world'-order, and to God in

His holy love. On the one hand His risen presence in the 'world' represent His victory over sin's bondage; He has opened a new way for man, and that way is Himself; His presence is made over to men through the Holy Spirit, through whom they are united with Him, sharing in His victory, and sharing too "in Him" - they are made fellow-heirs with Christ. We shall have to discuss this further, and in doing so it will be brought out how sharing in Christ meets the needs of men. On the other hand His presence before God as man is the expiation of our sins - to put it very simply for the moment, God looks at our sins through Jesus Christ as man.

Christ's victorious presence meets the need of men. If we may sum up briefly, we saw that man's sinfulness and the resulting creation of the 'world' left man in this position: natural man stands in need of salvation from the 'world' and the power of that 'world' over him; he needs forgiveness, for that 'world' is not an impersonal force imposed upon him, but a sinful system of which he is a contributing part and in which he shares; he is outside the fellowship of God through his own volition, yet needs that fellowship for which he was made; he is alienated from God's purpose, caught up in the dividing-power of his own sin; he has grown to be fundamentally 'at war' with God, hate has replaced the love which should be there; he is

thus in his very nature shy of God, though he was made to know and enjoy Him; finally he is in need of new life, he is in need of eternal life, God-actuated and -centred life.

We have already tried to shew how the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ meant the establishing of His Kingdom within the 'world', so that while the 'world' is not destroyed it is nevertheless no longer all-powerful over men, for it is 'breached', its ultimate has been faced and overcome. But this 'world' was not an arbitrary and external power over man, it was something in which he willingly shared; man is morally guilty and responsible. Jesus Christ meets this need. Forgiveness is essential to the gospel of salvation: "Let it be known...that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you"¹; and this forgiveness is found in the victorious work of Christ, in the sacrificial offering which was His death, and which was completed in His resurrection, in that He has become the eternal expiation for our sins before God, a living expiation, in whose completed sacrifice we share through faith. His life was the perfect and sinless offering self-offered to God, not as a propitiation, buying off as it were an angry God, but an expiation, a covering-over of sin. And it was offered not for Himself, for He knew no sin, but on behalf of the men with whom He was, and is, identified.

It is not, as in the old form of sacrifice, man who draws near to the offering, pressing his hands upon the victim's head - a solemn identification of himself with it - for it is Christ who takes the initiative, it is as it were the offering identifying Himself with the offerer. As Bishop Hicks points out¹, in the later stages of theological history, when the eucharistic controversies arose in the West, there was no technical knowledge concerning the sacrificial system available, and the nature of sacrifice was seriously misunderstood. But when we view Christ's sacrifice and vicarious suffering as an expiation of sin, we are facing something we can readily understand - the idea of self-sacrifice and suffering on behalf of another is fundamental in life. Through the sacrifice of Christ God has covered-over our sin, our sin is 'hidden' under His expiation.

This leads us in to the fulfilment of man's need for God's fellowship, for Christ breaks down the middle-wall of partition for in Him man and God are brought again into fellowship. When a sinner yields himself to the love of Christ and accepts Him as Victorious Lord and God, he is brought in the community of the Holy Spirit and united in fellowship, not only with God, but in Christ he can know true fellowship with his fellowmen - for fellowship is communion, both with God and with man.

1. F. Hicks: Art. in Ways of Worship; p. 204.

Closely linked with the question of fellowship is the need to be re-introduced into God's purpose of unity, as our Lord prayed, that they may be ONE. It is in Him that this purpose is fulfilled, for it is in Him that we become one. He is the mediator of the New Covenant between man and God. And it is in this office of mediator that we see another interpretation of the death of Christ. In the Old Testament, when a covenant was 'cut', there was a literal cutting - the animal offering symbolising the covenant was cut in half, and the two parties contracting the covenant passed between the two sections to shew that their covenant was sealed. In the covenant made upon Sinai, however, there was no question of God passing between the animal nor was He a mere co-covenanter, for He made the covenant which Israel agreed to accept. The Sinaitic covenant was therefore symbolised by sprinkling the blood of the animal upon the altar and upon the people. And the death of Christ has always been understood in this sense as well: in Him the New Covenant was 'cut' between God and the new Israel; God accepts man into a new relationship with Himself, and Christ is the mediator of this New Covenant: "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins"¹. Here again the interpretation is not complete until we see in the light of the resurrection that Christ is the living and continual mediator of this covenant; He is the new covenant which unites man in the purpose of God.

1. Matthew: 26:28.

There is too a need for a fundamental change in the nature of man; he must be changed from 'shyness' before God to the freedom of a son; he must be changed from hating to loving God; from war he must be changed to know peace with God. And in the presence of the living Christ this need is met. Here the maxim that 'you can't change human nature' breaks down, for God has to and does change human nature; He sanctifies it, He makes it holy. And this change takes place when a man is 'in Christ'. By his union with Christ he becomes sanctified, till new replaces old, till the old man is crucified with Christ, and the sinner has become a new creature. His hate and shyness of God are replaced as he grows in Christ by love and freedom, by a growing willingness to continue in the new situation in which he finds himself, a learning to love the light and hate the dark.

For man in his fallen nature does yearn rather for the dark than the light. Men and women have known the truth, have been confronted by Christ, yet strive to escape from Him even while they serve Him. What is needed is thus not only release from sin and forgiveness, not only restoration to the fellowship and purpose of God, but a new desire to continue so; the answer is in a continual growing in Christ, as in the Holy Spirit mastery is gained and one is emptied of self to be filled more and more with the new Christ-centred self, until "for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain".

And finally, we have said that man is in need of life; our Lord spoke often of this need and of His mission to fulfil that need - "I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly". There is hardly any need to outline this fact - the New Testament is full of references to the life-bringing mission of Jesus. What is important to see is that Christ does not as it were issue us with a gift of eternal life - we have that life by being united with Him, for He is the source of our life - our lives are hid with Him in God. He is the bread of life which we must eat, the fountain of life from which we must drink. When men are united with Christ through the Holy Spirit they have life - he that hath the son hath life.

We spoke above of a two-fold relation in the interpretation of the atonement as the presence of the risen Christ; it is related to man and His needs, but it is also related to God in His holy love. I believe that even in the New Testament this is easier to feel and know than to express; we are limited in even the most fundamental thinking of the relationship of the atonement to God; our most elemental thinking must be shrouded with the obscurity which comes from the 'otherness' of God and His ways.

We cannot really say more than this: Christ in the incarnation did not adopt our human form as a garment to wear while He was on earth - He became man, and if the

incarnation and resurrection of Jesus are to be taken as realities and not as fictions of piety, then we must believe that in some way He remains the representative man. And it is in this office that Our Lord Jesus Christ 'appears before the throne of God' - as representative man. His presence is at once two things: it is the forgiving love of God, for He is the expiation of our sins - if I may put it like this, God sees humanity through Christ and His work; at the same time His presence is judgement, for man is 'measured' by the yardstick of the perfect man.

This emphasis implies a new attitude to the cross and to the resurrection; rather not a new attitude, for faith has always been aware of this, but has been lacking in its interpretation. It is that we must cease to interpret atonement as act completed years ago, a past transaction which still holds good, for the atonement consists in the manifest presence of Jesus in the world through the Holy Spirit. This is not to minimise the position of the Cross and the resurrection; something was achieved there once-for-all: "It needs no supplementing or enlarging and it does not bear repetition. The last word of Christ on the cross... is...in words closer to the Greek, 'It is perfected'. Perfect for ever"¹. The Kingdom did break into the 'world' in the work of Christ, His presence was established ; it is

1. E. Brunner: The Scandal of Christianity; p.98.

a kingdom that shall not be shaken. The seed is planted and will grow. Christ is in the 'world' and has established Himself in it by triumphing over its ultimate power. There is no question of the finality of Christ's work, no question of repetition. What we can discern is that atonement is not a past event; the saving act of God took place in history, but the atoning presence of Christ is an ever-present reality.

The Kingdom may be opposed and shunned by the 'world', but it can never be defeated, for its centre and head is Christ, who has overcome the 'world'. It is within the world, awaiting the final consummation outside time and history. The finality of Jesus' work is not a static finality, but a 'growing' finality, a living finality, a living and all-conquering Lord. The atonement is not bound to the temporal, but is continued throughout eternity by the work of the Holy Spirit of Christ. It is not "confined to the days of His flesh or to those who had known Him in the flesh: it is available in an even fuller form to everybody, everywhere, and in every age, through the Holy Spirit"¹. The work of Christ is completed, and yet it is still being continued, the Kingdom is established and is active, until the kingdom of the 'world' has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever².

1. D.M. Baillie: God was in Christ; p.153.
2. Revelation 11:15.

The fact that the Kingdom is within the ekeise 'world' constitutes salvation and judgement; for the Kingdom is summed up in Him whom to know is life eternal, whom to shun is death. There is a challenge and call to men for commitment "He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already"¹. If a man does not commit himself to Christ, he is already committed to the 'world', for he is already in the 'world'. We are called to draw near by faith to participate in the sacrifice which Christ has made on our behalf. Our participation in that sacrifice, our belonging to the Kingdom, is our union with Christ by faith: when we are confronted by Him, and are made one with Him through faith we are 'born again', sharing in His death and resurrection. As we die with Christ so we are raised with Him by God's grace to be living members of His victorious community, a watching community, and a waiting community, TILL HE COME.

SUCH THEN, IS THE STORY which is always new and always unfinished at the time of telling. It is my hope that it has been told in a way that is fresh, and that it puts into words some thoughts which were never quite said in this way; I have fulfilled an earlier promise - there is nothing startlingly new. What there is, is an emphasis on some of the partly neglected aspects of our redemption. The line I

1. John 3:18.

have followed is the line of integration of the three types of theory, and I feel that we have followed it to its end. His presence in the world as Risen Lord, and before God as representative man, His eternal mediation: this is the atonement! It is because He is with us now, because we are united with Him now through the Holy Spirit, that we know salvation; it is because He is the expiation now for our sins that we may approach the throne of God: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading,..."

"Thine be the glory, risen,
conquering Son,
Endless is the victory
Thou o'er death hast won."

124.

A P P E N D I X

ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT the aim of this thesis to relate the atonement to any other spheres of the Church's life, there are several points which I feel are suggestive when examined in the light of the above account of the atonement I should like in this brief appendix to draw attention to some of these points.

The first interesting aspect of the Church's life when related to this atonement account is the Christian attitude to other religions. If we conceive as a living reality the central Christ as our source of life; if we grasp something of the meaning of "our lives are hid with Christ in God", "I am the bread of life", "He that hath the Son hath life", can our relation to other religions be anything other than evangelical? By that I mean can we tolerate them in any other sense than to understand them, but to say that they have fallen far off the mark, and their adherents must be missionised with the news of the gospel? It seems to me to be in accordance with the New Testament to interpret the atonement as I have done above, and if so, then we must say, and again we shall be in agreement with Scripture, that when our Lord said "he that hath not the Son hath not life", and "no man cometh unto the Father but by me", He was not stating an ultimatum, as it were, but the truth. If this is so, if life is in Christ alone, can

we ever rest content to leave the other religions be, to leave them at peace in a spirit of toleration, whether they be Jew or Hindu or Moslem or anything which we see is not truly centred in the Risen Christ? If our faith is one among many, we can leave them be; but if we have found a pearl of so great a price as such an account implies, dare we rest in our possession?

Another vital point involved is our attitude to the mission of the Church in the 'world'. If atonement is the presence of the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit, then we begin to see that our ministry is a continuation, as the community of the Holy Spirit, of the ministry of reconciliation. "There is only one 'essential ministry' in the Church, the perpetual ministry of the Risen and Ever-present Lord Himself". We are indeed the 'body' of Christ; we are indeed His very hands and feet, to continue His ministry. "The Church is God's instrument of reconciliation through the ages. And to that end the perennial function of the Church is to proclaim, by Word and Sacrament and by its whole life, the message of what God has done in Jesus Christ. It is the Church, and it is only the Church, that can tell the story, the 'sacred history', because it is a confession and a testimony among men: TO WIT, THAT GOD WAS IN CHRIST, RECONCILING THE WORLD TO HIMSELF, NOT IMPUTING THEIR TRESPASSES UNTO THEM; AND HATH COMMITTED UNTO US THE WORD OF RECONCILIATION".¹.

1. D.M. Baillie: God was in Christ; p. 209.

Which brings us on to the question of the sacraments. So much confusion can be sown, and is sown, concerning the sacraments, when they are discussed without relevance to the resurrection. What could they possibly mean without the resurrection? What would communion mean, unless the communicant knew that he was united in the Holy Spirit to Christ, and in the Living Christ he was in communion with the whole body of Christ? What would the sacrifice of communion mean, unless he realised that he was participating in the sacrifice that was completed in the resurrection of Christ? What could it mean to him to feed on Christ if he did not do so knowing that he is feeding on the risen, living, source of all life?

The resurrection naturally has its relevance to the sacrament of baptism, in the death and resurrection of the believer in union with Christ; but there is one point I would like to throw up as a suggestion for thought. We distinguished in our discussion the sinful order of the 'world', and the new order within the 'world' - the Body of Christ, the Community of Believers. Is there perhaps a distinction here which has bearing upon the controversy of infant baptism? Might there be some distinction made between children born into the 'world' of 'natural' parents, and children born into the 'world', but within the Kingdom, as it were, of Christ-centred parents?

These points are not intended to have any bearing upon the aim of this thesis, but are, as it were, afterthoughts which struck me as being worthy of mention. Two more things I must say here. First, I have omitted in the final section to bring in any particular reference to the moral influence theory; this is because I feel that the subjective appeal and effects of the atonement are self-evident, and attention having been brought to them, and to the fact that the truth of this 'theory' is always part of any adequate account of the atonement, I felt that it was unnecessary to break the line of thought in order to mention what I took to be the obvious.

Secondly, I have omitted any interpretation of the 'blood', because it would have been a confusion metaphor. Blood is properly understood as life, and the symbolism I refer to is that which interprets the blood of the cross as the life of Christ; His death was the means of releasing His life. It is a highly symbolic way of including the resurrection in the cross as it were, and here one felt that the inclusion of this Old Testament ritual would have been more confusing than beneficial.

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