

AN EVALUATION OF THE SUBJECTIVE ELEMENT
IN ARGUMENT DOCTRINE

by

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Thesis submitted in part-fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Divinity

At Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa.

January, 1967

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Professor W.D. Maxwell, Ph.D., D. Litt., D.D., for his encouragement and criticism in the preparation of this thesis. I would also like to thank my wife Valerie for typing the manuscript, and my parents whose nurture and admonition first led me to "faith in Christ Jesus".

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
I. <u>RECONCILIATION AND THE WRATH OF GOD</u>	5
1. A study of <i>καταλλαγή</i> and <i>ὀργή</i> reveals an incorrect use of 'subject' and 'object' and provides the basis for restatement of the 'subjective' aspect.	5
2. Rashdall and Dale provide examples of Inadequate Subjective and Objective Doctrines.	18
3. The Love, Wrath and Initiative of God.	24
II. <u>JUSTIFICATION</u>	31
1. Justification (or reconciliation) describes a process leading to the eschatological event of salvation.	31
2. Development of the New Testament meaning of <i>δικαίος</i>	32
3. Righteousness: Imputed or Imparted?	41
4. The Indicative/Imperative of God's Word.	50
5. Justification and Sanctification.	53
6. Justification and Conversion.	57
7. Recapitulation.	61
III. <u>JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH</u>	62
1. The Enigma of Faith.	62
2. Luther on Justification by Faith.	63
3. Misinterpretations of 'Faith'. (a) A condition fulfilled by man. (b) A passive moment.	70
4. Faith is 'believing-obedience'	72
5. "Faith in Christ Jesus"	80
IV. <u>THE RELATION OF SUBJECT TO OBJECT</u>	82
1. The Nature of the Problem.	82

IV.	<u>THE RELATION OF SUBJECT TO OBJECT</u> - continued	
2.	The Subject-Object Relation	83
3.	Bultmann's Interpretation of "Faith in Christ Jesus".	90
4.	History and Reality	102
5.	Tillich and the 'Reality of the Christ'	106
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	112

INTRODUCTION

The Church has never formulated an official doctrine of the atonement. Unlike the Trinitarian and Christological doctrines, the atonement was never a major issue in the early ecumenical councils. This central mystery of the faith, which speaks of the restoring of the relationship between God and man through Jesus Christ, has resisted every attempt at a formulation or 'statement in a nutshell'.

Tillich¹ has suggested that the Church's refusal to state the doctrine in definite dogmatic terms, is the instinctive recognition of the indefiniteness which is introduced by the human element. This element means that the doctrine has a subjective as well as an objective element. Since in his view the subjective element depends on the incalculable reaction of men to God's provision of a Saviour the formulation of the doctrine must remain uncertain. While we will agree with Tillich that the atonement has an objective as well as a subjective side, we cannot agree that the failure to formulate a doctrine has only to do with the uncertainty implied by the will of men.

As the act of God is reconciling men to himself, and justifying them in his sight, the atonement must retain the character of a divine mystery.² What we can know of it is through revelation and thus we must guard against easy and superficial formulations.

However not all our perplexity stems from the mysterious character of the action of God. A great deal of the difficulty in helping people to 'understand' the atonement arises because much of the traditional teaching depends on thought forms no longer commonly understood. For example, reconciliation through the shedding of Christ's blood is often proclaimed

1 Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol.II, p.197

2 cf. E.L. Mascall, Words and Images, for an indication of the character of 'divine mystery' and its distinction from 'problems and puzzles'

from pulpits, but until we see this figure in the context of the temple sacrifice of the Old Testament, and understand some of the meaning which these sacrifices had for the ancient Hebrew we cannot clearly recognise the point that is being made. A favourite Pauline image understands the atonement in terms of the conquest of the principalities and powers of the world. In terms of the demonology of his day Paul could personify Sin and Death and understand Christ's victory in terms of the conquest of these two persons. In a world that has generally rejected a belief in demons, this figure is not as readily acceptable, and needs some reinterpretation. We have quoted only two of many New Testament images which attempt to convey the meaning of the atonement. Others include the legal image of justification, the ransom or redemption image, the reconciliation of an enemy, and the recapitulation of the fall of Adam.

Our task is further complicated by the reinterpretation of the images throughout the course of history. Theologians of varying cultures and in different situations have rationalised the scriptural images in ways which could be understood by people of their own generation but which are difficult and even distasteful to our minds.

The rationalisation and combination of the 'ransom' image with the idea of Christ's victory in the theology of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa in the fourth century is an example. By his sinfulness man had become a slave to sin or Satan, and Jesus death was seen as the ransom money which had to be paid to redeem a slave. By his resurrection Christ conquers the Satan but the comparison of this with the idea of 'ransom' duly paid, leads to the conclusion that the devil was bluffed by God. Can the devil have rights over God so that God must pay a ransom? Does not God's bluff amount to a fraud? These are the questions which try us if we go so far as to entertain this theology. To some extent, recognising that in the markets of the East, bargaining and bluffing is not regarded as unethical helps us to understand these ideas even when we cannot accept them.

St. Anselm's rationalisation of the ideas of sacrifice and ransom in terms of the satisfaction of honour demanded in the Feudal system of his day provides another startling example of the way in which the scriptural images were transformed.

To attempt to trace the history of the application of the New Testament images is a task beyond our scope. There appear to be two lines which the present theologian must follow. First to seek the meaning which the scriptural images had in the context in which they were written, and second to try to translate them into forms which can be generally understood today. Neither of these tasks is simple.

We agreed with Tillich that the atonement has subjective and objective elements. A popular tendency among some modern protestants has been the rejection of those images which are most easily interpreted in an 'objective' way, that is independently of man. This is understandable though not excusable for at least two reasons. Firstly, since the enlightenment Western thought has been greatly concerned with men as individuals so that theology has concentrated on the personal and subjective. Secondly, the rejection of the traditional cosmological metaphysics with the rise of scientific thinking led theologians to seek an alternative stage for the action of the atonement. Some found it in the hearts and minds of men, and for them the atonement became 'subjective'. Were they too liberal? Were they selling out to the 'new learning'? There were some who thought so. They reacted by emphasising the 'once for all' aspect of Christ's work. An 'objective' atonement theory had to be maintained. But too often this was accompanied by a literalistic interpretation of the scriptures. There thus arose a conflict which continued throughout the nineteenth century. The battle is no longer so savagely joined but the conflict is still unresolved and the expositor on the atonement is faced with two apparently conflicting approaches to his task. His dilemma has been created by the dichotomy that has developed between subjectivism and objectivism in theology.

In the philosophy from which the terms are drawn the relation between subject and object has been the source of many problems, but it is clearly recognised that knowledge essentially involves both elements. Theology might well bear this in mind and seek to overcome its own dilemma by recognising subject and object as terms of a relationship rather than as alternatives in a dichotomy. This thesis is an examination of those New Testament terms most suited to a subjective interpretation of the atonement. It is a study which has led the writer to the conclusion that greater emphasis must be laid on the Church, Sacraments and their corporate nature in relating the objective event of Christ to the reconciliation of the individual.

CHAPTER 1

RECONCILIATION AND THE WRATH OF GOD

1. A study of *καταλλαγή* and *ὀργή* reveals an incorrect use of 'subject' and 'object' and provides the basis for restatement of the 'subjective' aspect.

The one occurrence of the word 'atonement' in the English Authorised version of the New Testament is at Romans 5:11. The Greek word there translated as 'atonement' is *καταλλαγή*. Elsewhere in Paul's Epistles and in other books of the New Testament *καταλλαγή* and its derivatives are translated as 'reconciliation' or 'to reconcile'.

It has often been imagined that the interpretation placed on *καταλλαγή*, particularly in the context of Romans 5:10-11 and in II Corinthians 5:18-20, would determine or depend on whether we placed the emphasis on the subjective or the objective idea of the atonement. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself". The English seems to be clear that it was the world that was being reconciled. That if there was a change taking place anywhere it was taking place in the world, and more specifically in man. Thus the text may be used to support the subjective viewpoint. It is not in God but in man that the action of atonement takes place. The assumption that Infinite and Almighty God is the other party in the changed relationship seems to add weight to the argument that it is man who must be changed. But this is by no means a generally accepted explanation.

The verb *καταλλάσσειν* ordinarily meant to change or exchange, and so where it is used of a relationship in which there is enmity, it means to change that state, or to exchange the state of things for the opposite state of reconciliation. According to Cremer¹ it is used both in mutual and onesided enmity. Where the enmity is onesided the context must show on which side it is active. Paul provides us with an example taken from everyday life.² If a wife should separate from

1 Cremer, Biblico-Theological Lexicon of the N.T., p.93

2 I Corinthians 7:11

her husband 'let her remain single or be reconciled to her husband'. It is possible that the change of feeling indicated is on the part of the wife. The change must take place in the logical (not necessarily the grammatical) subject of the reconciliation. It is the wife who has been estranged. It is she who must become reconciled. If it is assumed that it is man who is hostile to God and not God to man, the example suggests that the reconciliation takes place subjectively. However, the use of personal examples or analogies seems to force some compromise in the description of the unique event of the atonement.¹ We have not taken into account that one of the parties in the estrangement is traditionally regarded as almighty, transcendent and infinite.²

Can we simply assume that the active hostility is on the side of man only? The context of Romans 5:10 would appear to imply this. "For if, when we were enemies we were reconciled..." (ἔχρῳ ὄντες καταλλάγημεν). Cremer points out that the use of ἔχρῳ in the context does not settle the question, for the word can be taken actively as it is in Romans 8:7; Colossians 1:21, or passively as in Romans 11:28.

1 The attempt of Dr. H.E. Fosdick to 'explain' vicarious sacrifice on a popular level provides an illustration of this sort of compromise. He writes "Wherever there is ignorance or sin there is only one way out. Someone who does not have to do it, for the sake of those who do not deserve it, must voluntarily take on himself the burden of their need. Someone always has to do that if there is to be any salvation: Wilberforce for the slaves, Florence Nightingale for the wounded, Octavia Hill for the slums, Dr. Sweitzer for the sick in Lambarene, Christ for the World". (H.E. Fosdick, Dear Mr. Brown p.130.)

Here the work of Christ is made meaningful by placing it alongside the abolition of slavery and slums and the care of the wounded and sick. The device succeeds because these things are commonly applauded by our society but it is not a genuine explanation. It does not tell us how Christ achieves our reconciliation with God. The atonement is not reckoned as a unique event. It is reduced to a disguised form of exemplarist subjectivism; the very thing which teachers of the vicarious sacrifice theory try to avoid.

Christians have traditionally regarded it as the essence of their faith that Jesus Christ is the saviour of men; that he saves them not only by setting a good example, but from their sin; that he overcomes the estrangement between God and men; that he enables men to overcome death; that he brings eternal life to "whosoever believeth on him". Perhaps Christians have never been very clear what they meant by sin, salvation, and eternal life, but they have certainly always implied more than social problems like slum clearance and slavery and their solution.

2 Cf. discussion of religious language, footnote 2, p.17 below.

Gustav Aulén has claimed that God is both Reconciler and Reconciled.¹ He is the subject of his own reconciliation. Presumably for God to be the Reconciled and the Reconciler we must suppose that by Christ's death some change is brought about in the attitude of God to man. In this sense, it may then seem possible to claim that the atonement is objective. Any attempt to conceive of the workings of the mind of God by speculation must be of the most presumptive nature. We would prefer not to have to attempt to do this, and this may be one of the reasons for preferring a subjective view of the work of Christ. It is much easier to recognise the changes in man than to attempt to explain if and how God has changed. Nevertheless the scriptures, as the revealed Word of God, do present us with some insight into the mind of God, and if the prominent concept of the wrath of God implies that God is actively hostile to man, then it may be possible to argue for a change of attitude from hostility to love, and thus for an objective achievement in the Cross.

C.H. Dodd² commenting on Romans 1:18 tends to the idea that the unchanging 'personal' attitude of God to his creatures is one of love. 'The Wrath' is dismissed as "a thoroughly archaic idea". "Paul retains the concept of 'the Wrath of God not to describe the attitude of God to man, but to describe an inevitable process of cause and effect in a moral universe."³

The evidence which he presents for this point of view is largely based on the context in which Paul uses ὀργή . Dodd shows that God is made the personal subject of love, grace and faithfulness but he is never made the subject of 'to be angry'. 'Wrath of God' is used by Paul in only three places, but he constantly uses 'wrath' or 'the Wrath' in a curiously impersonal way. Commenting on 5:9 (Having been justified now by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath.) Dodd writes: "If wrath stood for an attitude of God, there would be no need for this 'much more', for justification means that God is not in a wrathful attitude towards us."⁴ The context of Romans 1 adds weight to the

1 Aulén, Christus Victor, p.51

2 Dodd, The Moffat Commentary on Romans, p.21

3 *ibid*, p.23

4 *ibid*, p.77

idea that the Wrath is a "process in the realm of objective facts". Here it is seen as a consequence of "all ungodliness and wickedness of men". It is God "giving them up to the lusts of their hearts... to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies (vs 24)..., to dishonourable passions (vs 26)..., to base mind and improper conduct (vs 28)".

Anders Nygren¹ and C.K. Barrett² both react to Dodd's point of view. "It means much more than a passive discountenancing of sin" writes Nygren. "To Paul the wrath of God is terrifying reality.... (iv) is not an unimportant appendage that could be dropped without loss."³

According to Barrett: "When Paul speaks of wrath, it is in general quite clear from the context that the wrath is God's.... Wrath is God's personal (though never malicious, or in a bad sense, emotional) reaction against sin."⁴ The consequences in Romans 1 are the consequences of "God handed them over...." A thrice repeated phrase at vss 24, 26 and 28.⁵

It may perhaps be argued in favour of Dodd and against Nygren that the 'terrifying reality' of the wrath of God may be conceived of at different levels. Taking an analogy, it may be claimed that extreme cold is a terrifying reality to the man without a coat. To the physicist, per se, it is not a reality at all, but only the absence of a certain amount of that form of energy which he calls heat. In similar fashion it may be argued, the terrifying reality of the wrath of God for the convicted sinner may be more accurately regarded by the theologian as separation from the love of God. This will depend on whether the theologian conceives of his task as that of creating speculative systems, or providing the background for the confrontation of men with the Gospel.

From H. Kleinknecht's⁶ treatment of the concept of wrath it would appear that Dodd's conclusions are closer to those of Philo than to the New Testament. "The numerous passages

1 Nygren, Commentary on Romans

2 Barrett, A Commentary on the Epistle to Romans

3 Nygren, op cit, p.97

4 Barrett, op cit, p.33

5 ibid, p.38

6 H. Kleinknecht, Kittel: Bible Key Words: Wrath

in which such things are mentioned in the Old Testament present to Philo a cause of offence and a theological problem."¹ In the face of Philo's stoical view the wrath must be controlled by reason. Therefore, he finally interprets the wrath "as an accommodation of the divine word to the receptive capacity of the foolish who are incapable of true knowledge of God; this is a means of helping them to have right ideas; accordingly there is no reality corresponding to such statements, yet they are of value to the learner."²

Nygren has said that God "meets sin with a mighty and annihilating reaction..."³ We are tempted to think that the reaction of which the New Testament speaks is not annihilation but reconciliation, not anger but love, and certainly the message of love may be seen to be the more dominant theme of the New Testament, but the idea of wrath is also clearly present and to ignore it is to oversimplify. "Jesus and the Baptist bring a gospel which includes the announcement of the ὀργή Θεοῦ⁴, and like them Paul and John testify to a message which proclaims not only the grace and the mercy, but also the wrath of God."⁵ The wrath of God is therefore to be regarded by no means as a piece of the Old Testament religion of the law, dragged in as an irrelevance, as though speaking of God's anger belonged by its nature to the Old Testament, while speaking of his love similarly belonged exclusively to the New Testament. For the Old Testament proclaims the love and mercy of God beside his wrath as impressively as the New Testament preaches the wrath of God together with his mercy."⁶

The Hebrew conception of God as 'personal' has given its stamp to the concept of the wrath of God. This is a feature which the New Testament despite the Hellenistic influence has been loathe to discard. There is a tension between God, conceived of as transcendent and omnipotent, and God as 'personal'. It is the tension between the 'Greek' speculative theologian and the believer who finds anthropomorphism an essential part of his thought. It is a tension which exists even to the present.

1 *ibid*, p.72

2 *ibid*

3 Nygren, *op cit*, p.97

4 Luke 3:18; 21:23; Mat 3:7 & par

5 e.g. Romans 1:18; John 3:36; Rev 14:10

6 Kleinknecht, *op cit*, p.82

For the ancient Hebrew the source of wrath could not be an unknown deity or even a feeling of the power of fate. As he looked to the future he saw not a dark problematic force, but the will of Yahweh, like that of a person, with whom it was important to come to terms. Israel had to do with only one God and thus the outlet to the pantheon and the world of demons was barred. Thus the wrath of God is a vital process in God himself, an 'emotional disturbance' of God.¹

The wrath was conceived of, achieving its purpose by drought, famine, pestilence, and plague, when the very existence of a man of the Old Covenant was at stake. The wrath achieved its purpose in the nation as a whole by the action of their surrounding enemies and supremely in the exile. God vented his anger on the 'nations' and on Israel herself; on the individual within the group, but also on the group because of the sin of the individual within it. Monotheism and the common experience of a man forced on him the conception of the wrath as somewhat irrational, enigmatic and mysterious.² "Even in the later period when a man's fate was measured by the standard of individual retribution, men were aware of being exposed to the behaviour of God which was so incomprehensible as to amount to caprice."³ But as the history of the nation progressed increasing attempts were made to take Yahweh's actions out of the sphere of the unaccountable. In Job we see evidence of the earnest seeking for an answer to the cause of divine wrath.⁴

The wrath was seen as striking the people, or groups among them, because of their apostasy and revolt against Yahweh's will. It was against the continual emphasis of what Yahweh had done for Israel that the prophets delivered their message of wrath. It is Yahweh's wounded, holy love which arouses his wrath. His wrath is analogous to his holiness and to his mercy. It is the correlate of his love for his people. His wrath and his grace appear in polar tension to speak to us of his love.⁵

1 *ibid*, p.25f

2 e.g. Genesis 32: 23-33, Jacob at Jabbock

3 Kleinknecht, *op cit*, p.36; cf Exodus 4:24f; II Samuel 21:14; Job 19:11

4 Job 3:11; 7:20 et al, cf Kleinknecht, *op cit*, p.38f

5 Aulén describes the judgment of God in similar terms claiming: "When the divine and loving will is not dominant, the consequent desolation and suffering may be characterised as divine judgment, with the qualification that: a) this viewpoint must not be used to establish

Deutero-Isaiah allows us to catch a glimpse of the struggle between wrath and compassion in God.

In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says Yahweh your Redeemer.

Kleinknecht comments: "We do not look into the heart of a tyrant dispensing wrath and love at random but we see how mercy and compassion can restrain the overflowing wrath of Yahweh and how finally compassion retains the victory."¹

Ultimately, the divine wrath is seen as active throughout all human life as a result of the hubris² of men. All human life is a life of sin and subject to the ever active wrath of God. It rests entirely within Yahweh's love and merciful countenance to prevent the wrath spending itself to the full.

In the later writings - Wisdom, Apocrapha, and Pseudipigrapha - human anger comes to be regarded as a passion leading to sin and disaster, and is condemned. We should expect this tendency together with the rationalising influence of Hellenism to affect the concept of God's wrath, but only a few apocalyptists consider that God's justice and mercy exclude the effects of his wrath, and most of the writers speak of it without embarrassment.³

To a certain extent this movement towards rationalism can be traced in LXX. The translators have several times replaced the concrete means or effects of God's wrath in action by the abstract word 'wrath', thus allowing for the more ethical and

a rational explanation of the universe, and b) the punitive activity of God is designated as his opus alienum and not his opus proprium." (Faith of the Christian Church, p.169). Elaborating on b) and the terms which he has drawn from Luther he writes: "Since faith includes a certain type of suffering in its conception of divine judgment, it must be assumed that such punishment is, as Luther termed it, an "alien work" of God, which ultimately serves his "proper work", that is to say, the work of divine love.

1 *ibid*, p.50, ref Isaiah 54:8-10; cf Jeremiah 31:20; Psalms 30:5

2 Hubris is not a translation of a Hebrew word though as Tillich points out (Systematic Theology Vol.2 p.57f) "the reality to which it points is described not only in Greek tragedy but also in the Old Testament. It is most distinctly expressed in the serpent's promise to Eve that eating from the tree of knowledge will make man equal to God. Hubris is the self-elevation of man into the sphere of the divine.... It is not one form of sin beside others. It is sin in its total form, namely the other side of unbelief or man's turning away from the divine centre to which he belongs."

3 *ibid*, p.62, 65

rational idea of God as it appears in Hellenism.¹ The same tendency can be seen in the New Testament but the concept is certainly not unconditionally rejected in the manner of Philo and C.H. Dodd.

The constant use of ὀργή in St. Paul's letters is an illustration of this development. The meaning of ὀργή is best seen by the terms with which it is used in the New Testament, in parallelisms and contrasts alike. It stands beside ἐκδικήσις and δικαιοκρίσις;² and thus excludes the Old Testament notion of the unbridled anger and unjust vengeance of God. It is found in parallel with θλίψις, ἀνάγκη, στενοχωρία;³ showing that it is the effect rather than the emotion that is indicated.⁴

Kleinknecht examines such evidence as that advanced by Dodd. He admits: "At times in the New Testament, wrath does seem to be, as it were, detached from God, like an independent active power... It is undoubtedly striking that Paul in fifteen out of eighteen passages speaks of ὀργή without the qualification τοῦ Θεοῦ." But Kleinknecht also shows that this independent absolute usage is found in the Old Testament as well as in Paul. The use of ὀργή in the New Testament may have been influenced by the Greek and Roman ideas of fate, but it differs from them by the fact that it is always subject to God and guided by him. "It must not be concluded from the fact that Θεοῦ is frequently lacking that ὀργή is felt, even by Paul, to be an independent hypostasis. On the contrary this usage enables the power to be recognised which makes all men conscious of God."⁵

Those objections to the ὀργή Θεοῦ based on a belief in God's love - the sort which says that if God is really love, surely he cannot be angry - overlook the fact that even before the New Testament it had been recognised that the wrath of God and his love do not exclude each other, but actually

1 *ibid*, p.56f

2 Luke 21:22 (vengeance); Romans 2:5 (righteous judgment)

3 Mark 13:19 & par (tribulation); Luke 21:23 (distress); Romans 2:8f (straightening)

4 Paul's use of ὀργή is in contrast to the θυμός of the visionary author of Revelation. θυμός implying the idea of 'passion breaking out' is well suited to apocalyptic, but not to denote Paul's concept.

5 *ibid*, p.86

include each other.¹ In prophets as well as apostles the preaching of God's mercy is accompanied by the announcement of his wrath. "Only he who knows the greatness of the wrath is overwhelmed by the greatness of the compassion."² Christ is the touch-stone which divides mankind into those who are exempt from wrath because they have allowed themselves to be rescued by his compassion, and those who remain under wrath because they scorn his compassion.³

The 'firm' view of the wrath of God is thus clearly a part of the New Testament witness, and the modern theologian, wishing to discount it will have to do so by the device of demythologising or something similar, rather than on the grounds of New Testament exegesis. And not only so, but the content which he can give to 'the love of God' will be consequently shallower; a high price to pay for the simplification of his theological rationale.

Earlier on, it was suggested that if the wrath was regarded as an active hostility on the part of God, then reconciliation would involve a change in God independently of a change in man, and Aulén's thesis that God was Reconciler and Reconciled (in the active sense) could be granted. The atonement might then be regarded as 'objective', the work of Christ achieving its object in reconciling God. If on the other hand the attitude of God was conceived in terms of unchanging love, the atonement would be 'subjective', for the change that it wrought could only be in the hearts of men, who responded as they recognised the love of God revealed in the life and death of Jesus.

Our examination of wrath has shown us that neither of these alternatives is acceptable in terms of the New Testament concept. The wrath of God is a reality, so that an explanation of the atonement which teaches that man is hostile to God, that God is pure love, and that man achieves

1 *ibid*, p.85

2 Mat 18:34; Mark 3:5; Rom 2:5

3 Luke 2:34; Mat 3:12

reconciliation simply by repenting in the face of the example of Jesus Christ, is oversimplified and can at best be only partly true. On the other hand the teaching which says that the work of Christ was to change God's attitude from that of wrath to love, is also an oversimplification and distorts the New Testament teaching that the wrath and the love of God complement each other. It fails to recognise that the mercy of God was a feature of the Old Testament as well as of the New Testament and that the wrath of God is not exclusive to the Old Testament. To conceive of the Old Testament as one of law and wrath and of the New Testament as one of love undisciplined by law or wrath is again to oversimplify, and is in danger of reducing the idea of God's love to sentimentality. Furthermore, it is basically incorrect to regard the 'mind' or 'heart' of God as the place in which something objective is achieved. Yet if the reconciliation of God through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is taught as an objective counter, the only meaning which 'objective' can have in this context is the incorrect one. A change of heart or mind would appear to be a subjective occurrence whether this figure is applied to man or to God. An objective event would seem to have to be one to which we can point. The sort of 'objectivity' which sees a change in God and makes him reconciled is therefore unacceptable. It also divides the will of the Father from that of the Son, creating difficulties in the sphere of Trinitarian Dogmatics.

Two other points relating to the wrath are relevant to the view of reconciliation presented in the New Testament. Firstly, it is particularly clear in Revelation that it is the powers opposing God who become the instruments of the divine wrath against the world. "The power and the rights of Satan and his hosts are depicted as derived from the wrath of God."¹ Even where the devil apparently places himself independently beside and in opposition to God he is never more than 'God's agent' without knowing or wishing it; he is an instrument of God's wrath, whose function he has only apparently taken over on his own account.² But at the same time the

1 *ibid*, p.118, cf. e.g. Rev 17:17

2 I Corinthians 2:3 (cf. Aulén: *Christus Victor* p.70,71 where the patristic use of the idea is discussed)

devil is also the object and victim of divine wrath. "Thereby", concludes Kleinknecht, "a fundamental law for the divine control of the world is observed, namely that being an instrument of God's wrath involves eo ipso being also its victim, a σκεῦος ὀργῆς in the active sense is also a σκεῦος ὀργῆς in the passive sense."¹ This principle is also applied in the Old Testament, to the nations round about Israel.² It was true of Judas,³ of the devil himself, and of the powers of the persecuting state.⁴ It was particularly true of the Jews who crucified Jesus. "That the Jews did and that for which they are blamed so severely, had to happen in accordance with God's own plan. Even they, with their hatred of God venting its furious rage on Jesus, were the instruments of this purpose of love and salvation, and yet on that account God's wrath fell upon them."⁵ The very thing which caused the anger is imposed on them as a retributory punishment, namely complete rejection of Christ. We find ourselves here in a sequence which appears to human logic as a vicious circle of guilt and punishment, and this belongs to the most terrible discoveries in the Bible. Sin and unbelief, the two main causes of the ὀργή Θεοῦ, are at the same time its effects. This is what Paul is driving at in Romans 1.⁶ Just as the σκεῦος ὀργῆς may be unaware that his chosen course is the wrath of God, so the vessel of mercy - σκεῦος ἐλέους may be unaware that his response is not his exclusive of God, but the love of God working in him.⁷ As the σκεῦος ὀργῆς is both active and passive, so the σκεῦος ἐλέους is inseparably active and passive. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." God is the reconciler and man is reconciled.

It is much more pleasant to dwell on the 'snowballing' effect of God's love, than to recognise that the New Testament teaches a doctrine of wrath whose modus operandi is essentially similar. We tend to emphasise the nearness of God to man in his love, teaching that sin and wrath are separation from God. Kleinknecht's careful examination of the scripture demonstrates the one-sidedness of this. Man cannot separate himself from

1 Romans 9:21f

2 Isaiah 10:5f; 25-30; I Chronicles 27:24; II Samuel 24:1

3 Luke 17:1

4 Romans 13:4; Revelation 13

5 *ibid*, p.127

6 Page 8 above

7 *cf.* Matthew 25:31f - Parable of Sheep and Goats

God, for God is as near to unresponsive man in his wrath, as he is to responsive man in his love. Both the wrath of God and the love of God speak of God's nearness to the world. There is no separation between God and men which by its nature makes possible the conception of an 'objective' atonement which has taken place 'there' with God, or a 'subjective' atonement taking place 'here', in the world, and more particularly in man's hearts and minds. We must reject the idea that the atonement is 'subjective' in the sense that it takes place by man's volition, as a response to the example of Jesus. Rather it has its subjectivity in that God works in man. He is the unchanging God; the God of love and of wrath, both of these attributes witnessing to his work in man. God is the Reconciler. Man is the reconciled. God can be spoken of as reconciled only in the weakest passive sense of that term: In the sense that it takes two to make a reconciliation. Certainly not in the sense which makes it possible to regard the atonement as 'objective' because the work of Christ changed God. Subjectively speaking reconciliation is God's work in man. Yet this is not to deny that the atonement has an objective aspect to which the subjective is related.¹

This point of view can be illustrated by the development of Karl Barth's thought on Christology. In a lecture entitled The Humanity of God,² Barth discusses his early opposition to the anthropocentrism of German Evangelical theology at the beginning of the century. His emphasis on God's transcendence and the concept of 'wholly other' had been necessary to stem the tide of humanism that was placing man at the centre of the theological stage. "Were we right or wrong?" he asks of his early theological standpoint. "We were certainly right!"³ But he goes on to say

"we were wrong exactly where we were right, that at first we did not know how to carry through with sufficient care and thoroughness the new knowledge of the deity of God....⁴ But did it not appear to escape us by quite a distance that the deity of the living God.... found its meaning and its power only in the context of His history and of His dialogue

1 Chapter 4 below
 2 ET published under this title
 3 Barth, op cit, p.41
 4 ibid, p.44

with man, and thus his togetherness with man? Indeed it is a matter of God's sovereign togetherness with man, a togetherness grounded in Him and determined, delimited, and ordered through Him alone. Only in this way and in this context can it take place and be recognised. It is a matter, however, of God's togetherness with man. Who God is and what He is in His deity He proves and reveals not in a vacuum as a divine being-for-Himself, but precisely and authentically in the fact that He exists, speaks, and acts as the partner of man, though of course as the absolutely superior partner. He who does that is the living God. And the freedom in which he does that is His deity. It is the deity which as such also has the character of humanity..... It is precisely God's deity which, rightly understood, includes his humanity..... In Jesus Christ there is no isolation of man from God or of God from man. Rather, in Him we encounter the history, the dialogue, in which God and man meet together and are together....."¹

The response which man makes to God is not to be conceived as 'meeting God halfway', or even the merest fraction of the way. What man does is something of an entirely different order. It must be recognised that when we speak of God's action we are using the word 'action' in a way which is 'analogical', 'parabolic', 'symbolic' or 'odd' in comparison to man's action and the two uses cannot be compared quantitatively.²

1 *ibid*, p.45f

2 The question of propositions of which 'God' is the subject is one that has become a chief concern of modern apologetics. The Roman Catholic Church, following Aquinas, has favoured the opinion that theological language is analogical. (cf. F. Copplestone, S.J., Contemporary Theology p.37f for a modern exposition.) The modern British theologians concerned with the challenge of linguistic analysis are generally in favour of regarding theological language as 'parabolic'. The idea of analogical language has been rejected for it is felt that too much unwarranted speculation is based on the language thus applied to God. The 'parable' in this sense, is the application of those propositions to 'God' authorised by the teaching of Jesus in Scripture. These ought not to be used to gain a concept of God, but rather to teach us what attitude we should adopt towards life. (cf. Flew and MacIntyre, New Essays in Philosophic Theology, Chap. VI; Basil Mitchell, Ed., Faith and Logic, Art. by I.M. Crombie, 'The Possibility of Theological Statements'; Religious Studies, Vol.1, No. 2, Arts. by T.R. Miles, 'On Excluding the Supernatural', and A.R. Gualtiari, 'Truth Claims for Religious Images'). I.T. Ramsay in Religious Language has attempted to outline a logic of religious language involving words used as 'models' and then qualified by an obviously 'odd' characterisation. Paul Tillich preferred to regard religious language as 'symbolical'. Whereas Bultmann was concerned to demythologise religious language, Tillich called for a recognition of symbols as conveying reality. He pointed out that it was contradictory to speak of 'mere symbol'. (cf. Systematic Theology, Vol. 1, p.265; S.P.C.K. Theological Collections No. 7, Word and Symbol, Arts. by Dillistone, Tillich, and Bridge). Bultmann

2. Rashdall and Dale provide examples of Inadequate Subjective and Objective Doctrines.

Speaking in terms of the wrath, the importance of the atonement is that it enables men to escape from the wrath. The extreme subjective view claims that the wrath is averted solely by man's repentance. This appears as the application of a quasi-natural principle exemplified in Jesus. The New Testament is interpreted accordingly. It is claimed that in the synoptic Gospels Christ himself taught this point of view. It is further claimed that the other scriptural witnesses present a distorted interpretation which grew up in the early Church and which was derived from the ideas of Old Testament prophecy. Rashdall¹ attempts to re-present the teaching of Christ, as Jesus himself conceived of his Messiahship.

"He had come to seek and save that which was lost: He did that by teaching the poor and the ignorant, the men and women of ill-repute, whom no one had troubled to teach before. He came as a physician of souls; like the bodily physician, He effected His cures by advice, by warning, by prescribing a remedy; and the remedy was to repent, to sin no more,² and to obey the will of God as He declared it. It was in giving commands that he most definitely claimed exceptional authority for Himself: 'It was said to them of old time, but I say to you:'³ He called upon men to come to Him, but it was just that they might learn of Him. He called upon men to follow Him, but it was in order that they might imitate Him - particularly in the case of those whom He called upon to follow Him most closely by becoming, like Him, preachers of His message to other men. Acceptance of Jesus meant acceptance of His message. If He ever spoke of his Messianic glory or dignity it was always to that future manifestation of His Messiahship to which He looked forward; and at that manifestation the question would not be what men had

is interesting in regard to the particular idea with which we are concerned in the text, namely, that of 'God acting'. (cf. his Jesus Christ and Mythology, Chapter 5). He recognises that provided God's action is not thought of in terms of 'links in the chain of casual events' it does not fall within the sphere of his demythologising programme.

"The action of God is hidden from every eye except the eye of faith. Only the so-called natural, secular (worldly) events are visible to every man and capable of proof." (p.62)

Two important points emerge:

1. Language used of God is not precisely the same as language used of persons or objects in the world'.
2. Yet there is the possibility of using this language of God provided that its figurative nature is remembered and taken into account.

1 Hastings Rashdall, The Idea of the Atonement in Christian Theology, p.22f

2 John 8:11

3 Mat 21:31

believed about Him, but whether they had obeyed Him. 'Everyone therefore which heareth these words of mine, and doeth them shall be likened unto a wise man, which built his house upon the rock:¹...' Nor does it appear that the teaching must necessarily be obeyed from conscious respect for the teacher. Words spoken against the Son of Man might be forgiven, but not conscious resistance to the voice of conscience. Those who were rewarded for having given meat to Christ when He was anhungered and drink when He was thirsty, are not the people who acknowledged His claims, but those who fed and clothed the least of His brethren."²

For Rashdall, Jesus' teaching differed from that of the Jews "merely in the fact that for Him 'works' had a different signification". Side by side with this teaching of judgment according to works, was the teaching of the need for repentance, and the certainty of forgiveness when there was such repentance. For Rashdall these two facets of Jesus' teaching cohere, because "For Him judgment according to works meant judgment according to the present state of the heart, not the striking of a balance between the whole of a man's good deeds and the sum of his bad deeds in the past. And therefore it followed that, where there was sincere repentance, the man would be pronounced good at the judgment."³

It is true that from the beginning in the Synoptic Gospels the message of repentance is preached. The message of John the Baptist was "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."⁴ The Pharisees and Saducees fleeing from the wrath to come were instructed to "Bear fruit that befits repentance."⁵ The first indication that we have of Jesus' teaching consists in the call to repentance. "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."⁶ But the exegetical approach of the type exemplified by Rashdall has been generally discounted. The failure of the 'quest for the historical Jesus' has made the reconstruction of a 'simple Gospel' undistorted by the developments in the Pauline and other epistles impossible. We are not concerned with the details of this past controversy, but it is significant for our purpose to notice that Rashdall has overlooked the close

1 Matthew 7:4f

2 Matthew 15:34f

3 Rashdall, op cit, p.23

4 Matthew 3:2 and par

5 Matthew 3:8

6 Matthew 4:17

relationship between the proclamation of repentance and baptism in the early part of the Synoptic Gospels. Kleinknecht writes:

"The promise of deliverance is baptism, in so far as it anticipates the judgment of wrath as a symbol, which is more than a symbol, and by means of the anticipation ensures that the judgment itself will be averted."

But this is not to say that deliverance is to be obtained ex opere operato.

"Genuine πιστις, ... accepts God's verdict by taking upon itself the judgment of wrath in the symbol of baptism, and ... proves its genuineness precisely by the fruit it bears.¹ John's baptism is the prefiguring of a more worthy baptism.² It is this link with baptism which gives the lie to the subjectivist."³

We have previously emphasised that reconciliation is not something which man achieves. Now we see that repentance is not a thing of personal volition either, for repentance is linked with baptism, and clearly, as demonstrated in Jesus' baptism, it is here that God acts.⁴ The mistake of the 'subjectivist' is revealed by his failure to produce 'fruits of repentance' by his own efforts. This was the experience of Paul who confessed: "I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."⁵ A similar failure awaits the 'objectivist' who thinks in terms of ex opere operato. The fruits of repentance are achieved only when God acts in the subject. The subsequent action of the subject is the reaction to movement of the Spirit in him, and thus he brings forth fruits of the Spirit, fruit befitting repentance.

While admitting that no-one has ever claimed that man is saved in spite of himself, it is possible to conceive an absolutely objective doctrine in which it would be taught that reconciliation is an act of God independent of a change of heart in man. The sort of 'objective' doctrine which teaches that Christ changed the attitude of God to man approximates to this position, and so also the rationalisation of the ransom figure in which the death of Christ by some means buys off the claims of the evil one.

1 Matthew 3:8f
 2 Matthew 3:11f
 3 Kleinknecht, op cit, p.129
 4 Matthew 3:13f
 5 Romans 7:15

A major issue of the Reformation was the condemnation of the presentation of the sacraments as a means of salvation conceived in a mechanical way. Thus the Protestant 'objectivist' is to a great extent protected from the error of regarding the 'once for all' death of Jesus in terms of ex opere operato. But the consequent 'lowering' of the doctrine of the Church and its sacraments by those who came after the original Reformers has left the Protestant 'objectivist' with a curious dichotomy between his theology of atonement and his injunctions to man to 'repent and be converted'. On this analysis the atonement is an accomplished fact in the crucifixion, yet men are called upon to repent and be converted with no explanation of how their repentance relates to the crucifixion. The atonement theology of Dr. Dale is a relatively modern illustration of what is meant.¹ In Dale the tension between subjectivism and objectivism is clearly seen. He is absolutely emphatic in stating that the atonement is an objective Fact, and the greater part of his book is concerned in showing that the various New Testament authors are chiefly concerned to testify to this Fact.

After seven chapters establishing the Fact, he proceeds to the construction of a theory introduced with the question:

"The FACT that Christ died to make Atonement for sin having been established, is it possible to construct a THEORY of the Atonement?"²

He answers his own question in the following terms:

"The inquiry upon which we are about to enter is different in kind from that which is now closed, and is of inferior importance. It is not the theory of the Death of Christ that constitutes the ground on which sins are forgiven, but the Death itself; and the faith, which is the condition on our side of the receiving 'redemption through His blood', is trust in Christ Himself as the Son of God and Saviour of men, not the acceptance of any doctrine which explains how it is that salvation comes to us through Him."³

Certainly Dale's assertion that the atonement is independent of a man's formulating of a theory of atonement can and will be

1 R.W. Dale, The Atonement

2 *ibid*, p.313

3 *ibid*, p.314

sympathetically received. But any adequate theory must include an explanation of this fact. To attach the label 'objective' to the 'Fact' in this way, that is, before the formulation of a theory, is to prejudice the issue.

Dale's use of 'objective' is an attempt to be empirical. He 'proves' the 'Fact' by means of the historical evidence of the scriptures and of repentance in the lives of individuals. Even the 'subjectivist' would not deny that the atonement has some relation to the events described in scripture or to changed individuals. Logically he could even accept the atonement as 'objective' in this way, for it is an event or events with which he is concerned, and still maintain the 'subjective' view that Jesus effects men by his example.

Dale's theory as eventually set forth¹ revolves around the idea of 'our trusting in Christ'. His discussion makes generous use of the first person. It is in fact very similar to the 'subjective' position. There is fragmentation between theory and practise. Practically and apologetically Dale tends to the 'subjective' while in the other hand he waves the banner of 'objectivity'.

It is notable that Dale has used 'objective' in a different sense to that which we outlined in the beginning of the chapter, namely, that 'objective' refers to a change in God. He has referred to Jesus' death as the 'objective Fact' of the atonement, and although his treatment suffers from various shortcomings, in this particular aspect he represents an advance. 'Objective' here no longer refers to something which is entirely metaphysical, representing a change in the mind of God, or a changed status for an other-worldly Satan. It refers to an event in the world. Its use is thus closer to the ordinary or philosophic meaning derived from Kant, the world being the place of objects which stand over against the personal subject. But Dale's weakness is the failure to connect the 'objective Fact' to the personal subject within the theory he outlines. This failure means that his theory is subjective despite emphasis on the objectivity of the Fact.

1 *ibid*, preface p lvii

In Rashdall and similar subjective theologians the events of the passion are underplayed in favour of the teachings and example of the life of Christ. In Dale the emphasis is placed almost exclusively on the death, and this is a common shortcoming of many Protestants who claim to be objective in their attitude towards the atonement. Not only is the death of Christ separated from his life, but little or no account is taken of the resurrection and ascension. In consequence the atonement is not bound up with the victory of Christ in the fullest sense of its overcoming of death, or with the outpouring of Spirit and the creation of the Church, sharing in his suffering and partaking of his victory. In the same manner the connection between the atonement and the sacraments is overlooked. The Lord's Supper is not recognised as the eucharistic sharing in his sacrifice and victory and becomes a memorial of his death; while baptism is reduced from the initiatory rite to something which appears in the popular mind as simply dedication and naming of the child.

The tendency in Protestant circles towards 'subjectivism', which we have detected even in such an emphatic 'objectivist' as Dale, may be the result of attempting to rationalise the 'objective' Protestant view which lacks coherence because it places too little emphasis on the doctrine of the Church and Sacraments.

Like the subjectivist, the objectivist places undue emphasis on certain parts of the scripture at the expense of other teachings. However the objectivist is not driven to the extreme position of wanting to discount an area of scripture as a distortion of the teaching of Christ. Rather he treats sacramental and ethical teaching as loosely connected addenda to the fact of Jesus' atoning death. This is not to say that he does not take the sacramental teaching seriously, but it becomes a memorial of the saving event and is not vitally connected with the growth in grace. It is not to say that he does not take the ethical teaching seriously, but he fails to see it as the progress of the Church in promoting the Kingdom on earth 'as it is in Heaven' and thinks almost exclusively in terms of personal sanctification. He is often

driven to becoming fanatically ascetic and austere. The words he uses 'cross', 'sacrifice' and 'blood' often have too much emotive and too little rational value. If he is asked how men are saved he will usually reply in words to the effect: 'Through Jesus' death', as though this were some tautological statement needing no further elucidation. Theologically opposed to the subjectivist he is often very close to him in his practical approach to religion, for his failure to give real context and significance to the atoning death, by linking it to the Church and Sacraments leaves him with the task of demonstrating as an individual how God has acted. His failure to recognise that the 'once for all' event of the Cross must be held in tension with the eschatological function of the Church, is paralleled by a failure to recognise that the reconciliation of an individual is a continuing process within the Body of the Church.

From our consideration of the wrath of God in relation to reconciliation two main conclusions have emerged. Firstly, there is no separation between God and man the nature of which enables us to conceive of the alternative of atonement achieved 'there' with God (objective), or 'here' with man (subjective). The atonement is subjective in that God acts in the world and in man. Secondly, the atonement is essentially related to the Church and Sacraments.

3. The Love, Wrath and Initiative of God

We have discarded those ideas in which reconciliation is seen merely in terms of God's love, where no account is taken of His wrath. We are in danger of the other extreme; of conceiving of reconciliation only in terms of the averting of wrath. We have made the point of the nearness of God to unrepentant man. Nevertheless, it is true that the scripture gives witness to man's experience of the wrath as abandonment by God,¹ and that man finds the expression of God's nearness more especially in terms of love. The wrath of God is a complement to his loving-kindness, but man's hostility to God,

1 Deuteronomy 31:17; 32:19f; Isaiah 54:8; Psalms 27:9; 59:47

of which indifference is the culmination, has no similar double-sidedness. Man living under the threat of wrath is loved, God exercises His forbearance, but hostile man is simply hostile and eventually indifferent. God is never indifferent and the wrath persists until reconciliation is achieved.

In purely human situations we tend to think that it is the moral duty of the primarily hostile party to make the first move in reconciliation, and that is why we try to attach blame. He who needs to be reconciled must be the reconciler. The attaching of blame fails to recognise that estrangement is a relationship between parties. In the ethical teaching of Jesus the placing of blame plays no primary part. The turning of the other cheek, or the loving of one's enemies is predominant, not only in his teaching but in his actions. Thus he died not reacting to the hostility of His crucifiers but praying for them: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."¹ We must assume that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ includes this facet. God loves even in the fact of man's hostility and estrangement. We conclude that it is mankind, or the world that is hostile to God, but in terms of the New Testament insight it is not the hostile party which has to act first. Rather, God takes the initiative in Jesus Christ. He becomes the Reconciler. Man is properly regarded as the reconciled. This theme is clear in John 3:16. It is clear in St. Paul and particularly in Romans 5:8-11.

8. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. 9. Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 10. For while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. 11. Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation.

Commenting on verse 8 Dodd writes:

"Observe the perfect naturalness with which Paul passes from the sacrifice of Christ to the Love of God ... There could never have been for him any question of

1 Luke 23:24

setting mercy in Christ against justice in God. The love which we see in Christ is qualitatively divine ... that love is the love of God ... It is because divine love became incarnate in Him that it floods our hearts. Thus Christ's self-sacrifice could never be thought of as something through which an angry God might be induced to treat us lovingly, since it is the love of God himself, existing from all eternity, which was expressed in the sacrifice of Christ. Thus the principle of the Cross, so far from being set over against the righteousness of God, is inherent in his character and attitude towards us."¹

Every emphasis that Dodd makes in this passage we may echo, though we might be a little suspicious of the clause which he underlines. Does the idea of the divine love 'flooding our hearts' smack of an exemplarist subjectivism? Perhaps, but we must allow that a warm and loving response in man is an essential part of his recognition of God working in him through the event of the cross, though it certainly is not the whole of what we mean by atonement or reconciliation.

Nygren writes: "It was not the case that Christ showed only His own love by giving his life for us. Paul says 'God shows his love for us in that Christ died...' Christ's action is God's action. Christ's love is God's love.... After the sacrifice of Christ we could not speak conclusively about God's love without referring to the Cross of Christ... The passage here under discussion may be called the classic test on the oneness of God's love and Christ's cross. The simplest expression for this is 'the love of the Cross'."²

We see that Nygren who gives the idea of the wrath its full scriptural emphasis, can at the same time give as full an emphasis to the love of God as a commentator who tends to 'play-down' the wrath in favour of the love of God.

There is a parallelism of 'justification' and 'reconciliation' in versus 9 and 10. Dodd elucidates it thus: "Justification, or reconciliation, is, ... the initial act of a process; but it carries with it the assurance that the process will be completed."³

1 Dodd, op cit, p.75

2 Nygren, op cit, p.201

3 Dodd, op cit, p.77

The alternative process is that of wrath, "whereby sin brings its own retribution, conceived as reaching consummation in the Last Judgment. It is from this second process, that the divine love, having already acquitted us of our past sins, will surely save us."

We may eagerly accept the idea of eschatological process with which Dodd presents us, but we reject the way in which the process of wrath is regarded as merely a process in the inevitable and impersonal nature of things: as 'sin bringing its own retribution'. If the wrath can be manifest in an unconscious $\sigma\kappa\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\rho\gamma\eta\varsigma$, it can also be manifest in "blind" circumstance. We cannot deny God's wrath without denying his Creatorship and omnipotence. The dilemma of the loving God who permits suffering has led exponents of the 'new theology' to doubt the Creatorship and omnipotence of God. Their conclusion is drawn logically from their premisses, but the conception of love in the major premiss has not been held in tension with the wrath of God, so that their loving God reminds us of a spoiling father rather than of a wise one.¹ The thought tends towards the idea that if God is loving he must make life comfortable for his creatures. The opposite view, that we wish to maintain must accept correlation between suffering and the wrath of God, and this is not without its difficulties. But we need hardly abandon it just because the rationality of men is unable to work out anything approaching a perfect correlation. We shall maintain that the Last Judgment speaks of a reality. It is not a redundant piece of Old Testament apocalyptic to be summarily dismissed. We recognise that it is symbolically conceived and that the symbol is old, and perhaps out-of-date, but it remains a reality. We may follow Tillich in questioning the validity of talking of 'mere symbol', maintaining that symbolic language must point to a reality beyond itself in order to merit the label metaphor or symbol.²

1 See esp. "The University Discussion" published in Flew and MacIntyre, New Essays in Philosophic Theology, Chapter 6

2 cf. footnote p.17 above

Another point of importance arises out of the belief in the initiative of God. This is a dominant theme of the particular passage out of which our discussion arises. "But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."¹ The love of God must be made manifest to the sinner, that is before repentance and until repentance. This manifestation must appear in the guise of wrath, remembering that the wrath is as much a part of God's love as is his compassion. Where the wrath of God is conceived as the natural fate of unresponsive man, and nothing more, there is no vehicle of God's initiative. God can hardly be said to be working in unrepentant man if we conceive of his work as an abandoning of that work. This manifestation of his wrath is his initiative at work. Man aware of abandonment by God is likely to seek God, and thus the prior act of the love of God is worked out. We have previously suggested that man's hostility towards God culminates in indifference towards God; in this situation the awareness of abandonment by God has been lost. The only logical way in which the initiative of God can be conceived in terms of Dodd's account of the wrath, is that it acts through the example of the love of Christ for us. To be consistent Dodd would have to accept an exemplarist or subjective theory of the atonement. It is not to be denied that God acts through the example of Jesus, but this is not the limit of his action.

The discussion of Nygren on this passage of scripture is particularly interesting in terms of the subject-object dichotomy. Commenting on Romans 5:10 he says:² "Jesus died to take away enmity and bring about reconciliation. Reconciliation took place, Paul says, 'while we were God's enemies'. That is a troublesome statement for every subjective theory of the atonement which sees in the atonement only a change in man's attitude to God."

It certainly is a troublesome statement for the more extreme forms of subjectivism which maintain the reconciliation is simply the consequence of repentance, independent of the

1 Romans 5:8

2 Nygren, op cit, p.204

work of Christ, but it would not clash with the sort of subjectivism which teaches that the change is brought about in man by this unique action of God. Nygren continues:

"When Paul speaks of the atonement he does so in a way that breaks down the traditional alternative 'subjective or objective atonement'. The atonement does not consist either in a change of God's mind because man makes satisfaction, or in a change of man's mind because he sees the love of Christ. The atonement is not brought about by the change of our mind from enmity against God to love for Him. It has already taken place, and when it took place we were yet enemies of God. But, there can be no talk of a change in the mind of God through the atonement, for the atonement is, to Paul, exclusively the work of God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself..."¹

Nygren then seeks to place the atonement objectively. He contrasts 'the objective reality' of the wrath of God, with the 'objective reality' of the new covenant of peace.

"Peace with God is not merely a state of feeling in us. When we believe in Christ, we thereby have, in a purely objective sense, a new status before God... They who through faith in Christ are justified are no longer at enmity with God but reconciled with Him."

We will make three comments on these statements. Firstly, in what sense may we regard 'the wrath of God' and the 'new covenant of peace' (presumably written on men's hearts, Jeremiah 31:31) as objective realities? Secondly, we note that peace with God may not be "merely a state of feeling in us". A sounder New Testament expression would be to say: Peace with God is the state of grace in which we find ourselves. Can one's state of grace be regarded as objective? Thirdly, in what sense can our "status before God" be regarded as "purely objective"?

Nygren supports and emphasises the theological points that we have made, but we must question his use of 'objective' as that which is not merely a matter of feeling. This implies that 'subjective' applies merely to matters of feeling. Nygren's use of subjective is in agreement with theological tradition, but it is an incorrect tradition insofar as the theological usage is different from the philosophical usage from which it is derived. Subjective is that which takes place in the subject, it is not merely his emotional reaction.

1 Nygren, op cit, p.204f

Nygren comes closer to correct objective placing when he emphasises that "Christ lives in us, and we in Him. Through his life we possess final salvation..."¹ We will go so far as to say that the objective placing of reconciliation is in the Church: In its ministration of the Word and Sacraments and its preservation of the witness to the life of Christ. Paul wrote to the Colossians: "And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him... Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christs afflictions, for the sake of his body, that is, the church...."² The 'once for all' event of Jesus life and death is mediated objectively in His body, the Church.³

1 ibid

2 Colossians 1:21f

3 It is notable that in the comments of both Dodd and Nygren the reference to the resurrection in verse 10 ("much more..... shall we be saved by his life,") has been overshadowed by emphasis on his death and crucifixion. A similar criticism was made in regard to Dale when it was pointed out that this concern with the Cross to the exclusion of the other events of the passion minimises the meaning of the Church and Sacraments. (cf. p.23 above)

CHAPTER 2

JUSTIFICATION

1. Justification (or reconciliation) describes a process leading to the eschatological event of salvation.

The close similarity between the ideas of reconciliation and justification make it appropriate for us to proceed to an examination of justification, at this stage. Barrett, in particular, has drawn attention to this similarity. The double parallelism of Romans 5:9,10, in which Paul contrasts present justification (δικαιωθέντες νῦν) with the future salvation (σωθησόμεθα ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς); and the present reconciliation (καταλλάγέντες) with σωθησόμεθα has led Barrett to conclude that "Justification and reconciliation are different metaphors describing the same fact. The meaning of the verb 'to reconcile' is determined by the noun 'enemies'; it puts an end to enmity, just as 'to justify' puts an end to legal contention. 'Reconciliation' evokes the picture of men acting as rebels against God their king...; 'justification' that of men who have offended against the law."¹

Before examining the legal metaphor we may note the significance of the contrast which Paul draws between 'salvation' and 'justification' and 'reconciliation' alike. In Romans 5:9,10 'reconciliation'/'justification' is present continuous but 'salvation' is from the eschatological wrath. Barrett says that Paul's "teaching on salvation belongs essentially to the future". That it is salvation ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς, shows that "it refers to the final deliverance at the last judgment. As such it is already guaranteed by justification (or reconciliation), in which God anticipates his favourable verdict."² 'Justification' or 'reconciliation' is thus the deliverance ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς and a continuing process culminating finally in salvation. The progress towards the eschatological event of salvation is illustrated in Romans 1:16 where the Gospel is described as

1 Barrett, op cit, p.108

2 ibid, p.102

"the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes." Barrett translates it as, "the operation of God's power working towards salvation, effective for everyone who has faith".¹ We note, firstly, that "salvation was begun, though not completed, in the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus... This proleptic enjoyment of salvation in the power of the Gospel.... is an important key to Paul's thought". His doctrines of justification and the Holy Spirit are built upon it.² Secondly, it is to be noted that the power unto salvation is God's power. The role that man plays is "having faith". What is involved in 'having faith' will be discussed after 'justification'.

2. Development of the New Testament meaning of δίκαιος

In Greek society δίκαιος denoted one who was correct according to the traditions of polite society, observing δίκη as opposed to ὑβρις. It covered a man's duty towards his fellows, and in a religious context towards his god. Moral philosophy extended the idea to embrace all the social virtues, making it equivalent to that is beautiful, good and fitting. Δίκαιος thus came to be regarded as one of the four cardinal virtues; wisdom, temperance, justice, and courage. It came to signify an innate quality of human nature.³

In Hebrew thought the author of justice was God. "Yahweh is the fountain of justice from which all Old Testament codes of law were derived."⁴ He was conceived as the righteous judge⁵ and it was from legal proceedings that Israel drew its picture of the world.⁶

Δίκαιος in the LXX is then to be seen as a Greek word expressing a Hebrew concept. It is closely linked with the thought of the judgment of God, and the Greek idea of virtue has given place "to the fundamental question of man's standing in the light of that judgment, as made known in the law".

1 Barrett, op cit, p.27

2 ibid, p.28

3 Quell and Schrenk, Kittel: Bible Key Words: Righteousness, p.14

4 Deuteronomy 1:17; Exodus 28:30; Genesis 18:25 et al

5 Psalms 11:7; 7:12

6 Quell and Schrenk, op cit, p.5f

Thus, while in the rest of Greek literature it indicates one who does his duty as a citizen and subscribes to the common good, in LXX it means one who obeys God as a member of the theocratic community.¹ Furthermore, there was added the conviction that God himself was *δίκαιος*. He was the righteous judge inflicting just punishment, but he was also *δίκαιος* as the bestower of salvation.² Quell and Schrenk point out that the Hebrew *ḥ dhaqah*, for which *δικαιοσύνη* occurs one hundred and thirty-four times in LXX, belongs to the terminology of relationship.

"He is just who does justice to claims made upon him in the name of a relationship. Thus God's righteousness is manifested first in that he rules according to the covenant in fellowship with his people. This concrete, rather than abstract way of conceiving it, means that it includes both a forensic and a soteriological element."³

This is most clearly illustrated in Deutero-Isaiah where frequently the language adopts the imagery of a lawsuit. Yahweh's judicial righteousness secures justice for his oppressed people in the proceedings against their conquerors. Psalms 65:5; 71:5 express a similar usage.

In Rabbinical Judaism the ideas became formalised. The righteous man called upon the righteous God to vindicate him, and there developed a doctrine of rewards and punishments. They took an optimistic view of man's ability to achieve a balance of righteousness before God. Righteousness was a chief characteristic of the Messiah in late Old Testament literature; thus the Rabbis taught the righteous would obtain the greatest rewards in the day of salvation because of their good works.⁴

The New Testament use of *δίκαιος* is largely determined by its LXX use, but a new emphasis and feature emerges. The righteousness of the Messiah is contrasted with the righteousness of men. On every occasion Jesus does the will of God perfectly. The Jewish distinction between righteous and ungodly men is still recognised; but in the light of the normative righteousness of

1 *ibid*, p.16f

2 Psalms 116:5

3 Quell and Schrenk, *op cit*, p.29

4 *ibid*, p.17

the Christ, complacent and self-righteous men are exposed as hypocritical. "What the Gospels do is to put a question mark after the word 'righteous', as applied to themselves by men who were hypocritical, complacent, and scornful of others."¹ It is when the New Testament questions the righteousness of men in the light of Christ, that a new problem arises for the link forged between salvation and righteousness in Deutero-Isaiah. The idea of God as judge remains, but his absolute justice is seen not only in judging but in reconciling the unrighteous. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."² The ideas hinted at in the Psalms and in Isaiah 40-55 are brought out clearly and linked with the work of Christ, in which God is proved to be *δικαίος*. The soteriological aspect is now primary. In Deutero-Isaiah Yahweh's justification of his people could be conceived rationally because they were the righteous remnant; they had "drunk at the hand of Yahweh the cup of his wrath", and had drunk it to the dregs.³ At the same time, Deutero-Isaiah recognised that redemption was of God and for his own sake. "I am he who blots out transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins."⁴ The enigmatic Servant of Yahweh forges the link between Old and New Testament thought.⁵

In the light of the New Testament Messiah, it is recognised that, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."⁶ The optimistic view of man's righteousness can no longer be taken. "Who then can be saved?" The antithesis between justice and salvation emerges; but the New Testament message does not allow the logical inference to be drawn, and this is its wonder. God justifies not because men have been found righteous but in spite of their unrighteousness, through the merits of the righteous Christ. "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."⁷

Accordingly, Dodd can point out that to Paul and his

1 cf. Luke 16:14
 2 1 John 1:9
 3 Isaiah 51:7f
 4 Isaiah 43:25
 5 cf. p.36f below
 6 Romans 3:10, 21f, cf 1 John 1:8
 7 Matthew 19:25,26

fellow-pharisees this must have appeared to be startling paradox, as it would have appeared to anyone familiar with the Jewish conception of Yahweh's righteousness. Particularly as the phrase, 'to justify the wicked', is constantly used of unjust judges in the Old Testament.¹ Dodd attempts to resolve the paradox:

"the real moral is that the personal relations of God to men cannot be described in legal terms at all. The revelation of His righteousness is 'apart from the law altogether'."

This is to oversimplify. We can neither ignore the legal metaphor nor attribute it to Paul as a rhetorical device to gain his readers' attention. The reality of the New Testament message emerges from the Old. The ethical if not the ceremonial law of the Old Covenant is retained. "Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary we uphold the law."² The antithesis remains. Attempts to rationalise it result in various odd and unlikely theories of the atonement. They are chiefly concerned to explain the operation of Christ's merit. In the fourth century Gregory of Nyssa conceived of Christ as the bait by which Satan is hooked. Peter Lombard in the twelfth century likened the Cross to a mousetrap baited by the Lord's blood. More generally the Son of God was conceived as placating a righteous and indignant Father. The idea was taken to its rational climax in the satisfaction theory of St. Anselm and in the juridical theories of the seventeenth century. The paradox is unresolved, but very gradually a new concept of civil justice has emerged out of it with its motive rehabilitation and not revenge.

The Christian concept of the justification of the unrighteous is experiential rather than deductive. It is experienced by those in close relationship with the Christ. Those of his disciples who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled.³ It is for those who will deny themselves to follow him, those who are prepared to lose their lives for his sake and the sake of his Gospel.

In I Peter 2:24, Quell and Schrenk recognise the suffering-servant of Deutero-Isaiah portrayed in Jesus' crucifixion, and

1 Dodd, op cit, p.52

2 Romans 3:31

3 Matthew 5:6

in I Peter 3:18 Christ's death is presented as the suffering of the righteous for the unrighteous.¹

Gottwald concludes his examination of the content of the four Servant songs of Isaiah 40-55:

"Suffering appears for the first time in Jewish tradition as a positive good. It is not always the result of wrong; the sufferer need not be a sinner. In truth, individual or national suffering, if borne as a mission from God, may be the means of untold blessing to others. The Servant is disfigured by the abuse heaped upon him, none of which is due to his own wrongdoing. The onlookers who have slain him are the penitents who now confess in awe that he bore their sins. It is hard to convey in English the tremendous effect of the Hebrew with the reiteration of the pronouns he and his and we and our creating an onomatopoeic dirge of mournful and awe-struck regret. What an astonishing disproportion between his suffering and our abuse of him, his innocence and our guilt, his patience and our callous mockery!"²

The authorship of the songs and the identity of the Servant remain a contentious issue, but that Jesus identified himself with the Servant and with the principle of vicarious suffering we cannot doubt.

"Were the poet himself in our presence, he might be no more articulate in advancing a precise theory than we are. But the central point he has not left in doubt: Yahweh's love and power are to be made manifest to the nations through Israel, and through some person or persons within Israel who participates in the love of Yahweh to the extent of self-obliteration. Supreme power is in love rather than in coercion... Deutero-Isaiah's insight was not immediately taken up. Judaism was too engrossed in survival in a hostile world to care much about converting the heathen. But the ideal did not die; it erupted in the early church. Jesus was deeply influenced by his reading of Isaiah 40-66. The universal salvation promised in Deutero-Isaiah finally came to birth in Christianity. In what sense then may we speak of Jesus Christ fulfilling the servant prophecy? He fulfilled it by recognising himself, his purpose and method in the Servant figure."³

Thus the link between the Righteous Judge and the God who loves and forgives is forged in human thinking. The principle that the righteous may suffer for the unrighteous is revealed. But it is more than a workable principle, it is the plan of God.

1 Quell and Schrenk, op cit, p.24

2 Gottwald, A Light to the Nations, p.418

3 Gottwald, op cit, p.425f

As Gottwald presents it to us it might appear that Judaism could have provided a means of reconciliation by operating this principle, only it was too concerned with the matter of its own survival. The Servant reveals that "supreme power is in love rather than in coercion". But the Servant must precede the principle. If we try to recognise the principle independently of the Servant we shall have to accept the extreme subjectivist view of the atonement. This is similar to the theory of Washdall who maintains that redemption through repentance is always a possibility, even independently of Christ. It suggests that reconciliation without a saviour is possible provided only that the correct principle is discovered and used. In this view, Jesus is not the Incarnate Son of God, but arbitrarily the one who first recognises and applies the principle. In the face of this we must maintain that the principle of the suffering Servant is an abstraction drawn from the experience of the apostles of their Lord. It is first an experienced reality. We may even go so far as to suggest that Jesus realised the Servant in himself; and this is essentially different from saying that he recognised the principle of suffering as depicted in the Servant figure. This is why it is possible to suggest that our modern concept of justice as rehabilitation is an outgrowth of Christianity. The paradox of God's justification of the unrighteous is slowly becoming the new norm. Vicarious suffering is realised as a way of atonement only through Jesus Christ and his Church.¹ Deutero-Isaiah presented the principle, temporally prior to Christ, and that is why it was presented as prophecy and not as gospel. The justification of the unrighteous through the suffering of the righteous remains paradoxical until its significance is experienced in Jesus Christ. Experience here is not to be confused with subjectivism. It is the historical witness of Jesus Christ mediated through his Church.

H.A. Hodges² attempts to resolve the paradox of the justification of the sinner by drawing an analogy between a god and a king.

1 cf. the criticism of H.E. Fosdick, p.6 above, footnote 1

2 H.A. Hodges, The Pattern of the Atonement, p.63

'A man is righteous if he is and does what is appropriate in his station and in his relations with other people. (A king is righteous, that is, he does what is required of him as king, if he ensures that his subjects do what is required of them.) The king's righteousness is not merely a matter of private conduct; it involves the active promotion of righteousness among his people. This is even more true of a god, who is indeed the real and ultimate king, of whom the earthly king is only a deputy. The god shows his righteousness by maintaining and even creating righteousness among his people.'

The analogy here seems to rest heavily on some form of belief in the divine right of kings. It is true that a great many societies have regarded the king as representative of the deity. Only if we accept this unquestioningly in our own society does Hodges' appeal become a logically based one. The appeal is in fact based on scripture, and on the fact that the Hebrews regarded Yahweh as the ruler of the nation. "The Bible," he says, "accepts this view of the relation between God and his people."

Continuing his argument Hodges says that the sinner as such deserves nothing but condemnation and chastisement. But he is only a sinner "because he has yielded to Satan's advances and fallen under his power; and from this point of view God's righteousness should surely show itself in delivering him from that tyranny. Surely, too, God will make known his righteousness not by destroying the offender, but by converting him and writing his righteous law in his heart. So interpreted, God's righteousness becomes equivalent to his salvation, and it is thus that the Bible constantly regards it."¹

From Hodges' argument it would appear that God is pledged to destroy iniquity and justify the sinner because he is God. The argument is circular for iniquity must be defined in terms of God's righteousness. Righteousness cannot then be defined in relation to iniquity independently of God. "For God's will", wrote Calvin, "is so much the highest rule of righteousness that whatever he wills, by the very fact that he wills it, must be considered righteous."² Also, a king is not obliged to rule justly, unless he believes that he rules by the consent of God (or by the consent of the people if it is a constitutional monarchy) for his obligation must be derived in relation to some

1 *ibid*, p.67

2 Calvin, Institutes, 3:23:2

other party. It is ridiculous to suggest by analogy that God rules by the consent of the people unless one is ironically rejecting theism. That God should rule by his own consent is entirely acceptable but that hardly places him under any obligation. Alternatively a king may rule righteously for righteousness' sake. God reveals himself as a righteous God. That he has revealed this fact through the incarnation and that he judges and justifies the unrighteous is of the revealed wonder and mystery of God. It is not the logical necessity of man's conception of what God should be like. Justification is a free gift of God. We do not acknowledge God because he meets our conception of righteousness. Rather the Christian obtains a conception of what righteousness really involves only through the revelation of God in Christ. This is why the lex talionis is replaced in the New Testament by love (ἀγάπη) which is also a law - but a law which transcends the old law. The New Testament reveals to us a norm of righteousness which in terms of the Old Testament and in natural terms is paradoxical. This is expounded by Paul in Romans 2 and 3. It is paradoxical just because it is a new revelation.

In the New Testament, the idea of the righteous God justifying his people of the New Covenant is most clearly and systematically developed by St. Paul. He takes seriously the Old Testament teaching that the righteous man is one whom God pronounces righteous because he has kept the law. But another axiom has also to be stated: "There is none righteous, no, not one."¹ Paul acknowledged that Moses had given the law as the standard of righteousness,² but he is adamant that no one has fulfilled the law because we are all under sin. There is in fact no 'righteousness which is of the law'. Paul had come to understand that the law cannot produce true righteousness before God.³ The self-righteousness which it does produce is only 'loss'⁴ and 'refuse'.⁵ The failure of

1 Romans 3:10

2 Romans 10:5

3 Galatians 3:21

4 Romans 10:3; Philippians 3:9

5 Philippians 3:8; cf. I Corinthians 13

righteousness by the law is illustrated by the fact "that Gentiles who do not make righteousness their aim, have attained righteousness - the righteousness that rests on faith; but that Israel, whose aim is a law purporting to give righteousness, never reached that law. Why? Because they did not pursue their aim by faith, but as if it could be reached by works".¹

Paul's position must have been derived from personal experience in an effort to define his position in relation to the law after exchanging Christianity for pharisaism. Barrett interprets the ideas of Romans 7:9-10 autobiographically as follows:

"In the first innocence of youth Paul was alive. Death is the consequence of sin, and there was at that time no sin to incur it. Life is from God and there is nothing to interrupt the child's natural and instinctive communion with him. Then came the moment when the Jewish boy became a 'Son of the Commandment', and assumed responsibility before the law. With this new legal responsibility sin took its place in the boy's experience. The forbidden world appeared upon his horizon, and he longed to enter it. He desired to gratify himself and to achieve independence of the God who placed unwelcome restraint upon him. This was death."²

In Romans 2:17-29 the status of the Jew is examined, and Paul could not have written this without being conscious of his own previous zeal for the law. The Jew relies on the law to provide him with a secure standing before God. He makes his boast before God on the grounds of the law but he is very vulnerable at this point. For the law on which he would rest himself accuses him. More clearly than ever it is recognised that the righteousness is of God, and just because it is God's righteousness it can only be imparted to man as a free gift. The matter is described concisely in the passage Romans 3:21-31. God's righteousness has now been manifested apart from the law (21). It is manifested to those who have faith in Jesus Christ (22). All have sinned, all lack the glory of God (23). Justification is a free gift, by God's grace through the act of redemption which God performed in Jesus Christ (24). God

1 Romans 9:30f Barrett's translation

2 Barrett, op cit, p.144

publicly set forth Jesus Christ in his bloody sacrificial death as his means of dealing with sin. It is received through faith (25).

Three points emerge. Firstly, for Paul the old word 'righteousness' takes on added meaning. It is of God not merely in the sense of the God-given law, but in the sense in which man is righteous only because God has given him that status. What this meaning is and how it has been interpreted will be our next point of enquiry. Secondly, in contrast to justification by works of the law Paul says that justification is 'by faith'. We shall conclude our discussion on justification with an examination of the content which can be given to the phrase 'by faith'. Thirdly, this act of redemption is somehow linked to the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

3. Righteousness: Imputed or Imparted?

Dodd points out that the terms righteous, just; righteousness, justice; justify, are all derived from the same Greek root. He maintains that the root righteous more aptly translates the New Testament Greek than justice. It is therefore unfortunate, in his view, that there is no verb derived from righteous, corresponding to justify.

"The Greek word translated justify, means in Greek writers, 'to account or pronounce right' or 'to treat justly'. It does not mean 'to make righteous'... Sinful men before the divine tribunal are acquitted for nothing, by God's decree as judge.... Paul uses (the words) in a way which hovers between their wider Hebrew and their narrower Greek connotation. When he says they are justified for nothing by his grace, the idea uppermost in his mind is that of deliverance. But as he is stating it in legal, forensic terms, deliverance takes the form of an acquittal in court."¹

The question arises whether the justified are made righteous by God or whether they are merely treated as if they were righteous. Dodd clearly favours the second sense. Here is the same approach as we found in his consideration of the wrath. The vigorous language of the imagery is softened to simplify the issue to our understanding. We have caught a glimpse of the unfortunate theological consequences of taking

¹ Dodd, op cit, p.51f

clear rationality so far as not to be able to take the wrath seriously. The consequences may be equally serious for a theology of justification which rests on a legal fiction.

It is far easier for the Church to pronounce a man righteous in the sight of God, by 'the touch of a wand' as it were, than to care for his growth in grace. If justification is merely the treating of men as if they were righteous then there arises the weakness that justification and salvation may be regarded as two automatic operations in the scheme of things. We may be blinded to the fact that 'justification unto salvation' is a process. As conceived by Paul it culminated in the eschaton, but it also consisted in 'dying every day'.¹ The justification is not of the works of the law, or by good deeds, or by any achievement of man. It is God's free gift, but it costs discipleship. Bonhoeffer has warned us:

"Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church.... It means forgiveness of sins proclaimed as a general truth, the love of God taught as the Christian 'conception' of God.... Cheap grace means the justification of the sin without the justification of the sinner... (It) is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without Church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ living and incarnate. Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock.... Costly grace confronts us as a gracious call to follow Jesus, it comes as a word of forgiveness to the broken spirit and the contrite heart. Grace is costly because it compels a man to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him; it is grace because Jesus says: 'My yoke is easy and my burden is light'.²

Once again, as in the context of reconciliation, we must avoid apportioning achievement between God and man, or even thinking in these terms. Justification is God acting in man. Paul could speak of completing in his flesh "what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body,.. the church".³ But Paul of all the New Testament authors is most adamant that justification is of God and not the achievement of men.

1 I Corinthians 15:31

2 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, p.35f

3 Colossians 1:27

Paul's achievements are 'fruits of the Spirit', they are consequent on his being 'in Christ'. To follow Christ costs a man a great deal, not because Jesus Christ failed to pay the whole price but because he follows Christ who paid so much.

"Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: 'ye were bought at a price', and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us."¹

We have now entered upon a discussion which may be more suitably dealt with under an examination of the 'ransom' image. It does, however, serve us with an example of the intimate inter-relations between the various images and points to the danger of conceiving a theory of atonement in terms of only one or some of the biblical images.

Barrett is sympathetic to the problems an exegesis such as that of Dodd seeks to solve or avoid. He acknowledges that "it is very generally recognised that in Paul's usage 'to justify' cannot mean 'to make righteous' in the ethical sense - 'to make virtuous'. To mention no other consideration, the epistles depict countless Christians who, though justified, are certainly not perfectly good".² He notes that the suffix in δικαιόω is sometimes used not in the sense 'to make...', but in the sense 'to count...', or 'to treat as...'. It is from these two observations says Barrett that "the most popular modern interpretation" of justification is drawn, viz: Justification means that God treats sinful men as if they were of complete and unstained virtue. But to this interpretation he brings two radical objections. The first is linguistic. The Hebrew verb hitzidiq which the LXX links with δικαιόω and which lies behind Paul's usage is, unlike the Greek, regularly causative in meaning and it cannot be weakened so far as to mean 'to treat as righteous'. The second objection is that this account of justification must lead either to Pelagianism (since faith will be treated as a righteous work) or it will

1 Bonhoeffer, op cit, p.37

2 Barrett, op cit, p.75

lead to the kind of legal fiction which men feel instinctively is not legitimate, even for God. "Not even he may pretend that black is white." Barrett prefers the view that 'to make righteous', is "a creative act in the field of divine human relations". It is not a legal fiction. It does not mean to be made 'virtuous' but to be made 'right', 'clean', or 'acquitted'.

Barrett, however, appears still to be dodging the issue, for the contradiction of the guilty man acquitted remains, and this is more than the consequence of the forensic metaphor. The Christian's righteousness must exceed that of the pharisees. Christian virtue cannot be discarded or loosely attached to the faith. It must be seen as the consequence of reconciliation. Despite the linguistic difficulties of tense, it must be acknowledged that to say a man is justified means that he is being made right. The use of the perfect tense for a continuing process may be excused on the grounds that the beginning of the process is marked by a distinct event - objectively, it is the incarnation and work of Christ, or subjectively, the incorporation of the individual into Christ's work.¹ It is to be noted that this is not the same as 'objectivity' conceived in terms of a change in God's attitude, or the devil's status, or 'subjectivity' conceived in terms of a man's response to an example. In another context Barrett does allow that justification has a continuing implication.¹ Commenting on Romans 3:21² he writes:

"In 1:17 Paul said, God's righteousness is (being) revealed (ἀποκαλύπτει, present tense). Here he says, God's righteousness has been manifested (πεθκνέρωται, perfect tense). There is little difference. The present tense emphasises the continuation of the process in the proclamation of the Gospel, the perfect the fact that the process has a beginning."

With this quotation in mind it is difficult to see why Barrett has found it necessary to draw a distinction between 'virtuous' on the one hand and 'right', 'clean', and 'acquitted' on the other. He is only hiding the 'legal fiction', which he has taken care to point out. Justification conceived as a process in which man grows in grace being perfected through Christ in the eschaton, while demanding the application of the scriptural idea of forbearance,³ it does not depend on a legal

1 See page 50 below

2 Barrett, op cit, p.73

3 Romans 2:4; 3:25

fiction. It is only when justification is regarded as a pronouncement of God, unaccompanied by a process culminating in man's final perfection¹ through Christ, that it becomes fictitious in any sense.

Nygren's interpretation of $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\eta\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ in terms of the new aeon is more acceptable than that of either Dodd or Barrett.

"Righteousness is primarily God's rather than man's... Indeed, Paul contrasts 'the righteousness of God' not merely with man's sin, but with man's own righteousness. Thus it is of God that Paul speaks all the time - first of the wrath of God, and now of the righteousness of God. That does not mean that he is silent about man. Rather does he speak of man at all times - formerly of man under the wrath of God, and now of man translated to the realm of the righteousness of God.

We may say, therefore, that by the expression 'the righteousness of God' Paul does not refer to something which is solely the property of God, or solely a property or inner quality of man. The latter is precluded by the very words. It is the 'righteousness of God', not of man. But also to preclude the former - that righteousness as solely a property of God - it is truest to translate $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\eta\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ as 'righteousness from God'. The righteousness of God is a reality in our midst which God has manifested on earth. It has come from God and is revealed through Jesus Christ. Just as 'the wrath of God' is the inclusive state of the old age (aeon), so 'righteousness from God' is the characteristic of the new."²

The question: Does Paul mean God's own righteousness in the sense of property belonging to him, or does he mean that man thus has a righteousness by reason of which he can stand in God's presence? is regarded as improper by Nygren. God's righteousness is not a property that lies in him. "Such a view is very natural for us, with our persistent Greek way of thinking; but it is utterly foreign to Paul's view. The righteousness of God is a righteousness which He reveals to us and permits us to share. Hence it is man's righteousness too."³

1 Matthew 5:48; 19:21; John 17:23; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:13*
Colossians 1:28

$\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$ here translated as 'perfect' is often translated in the R.S.V. as 'mature'. It is of the same root as $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ - end, in the sense of 'purpose' rather than finis. These associations add weight to the idea of 'justification' conceived as process.

2 Nygren, op cit, p.146

3 ibid, p.74

H.A. Hodges also takes up the problem of whether God's justification of the sinner means that the sinner is made righteous, or treated as if he were righteous. His discussion is illuminating for he manages to combine the idea of justification as a completed act of God, with the conception of justification as a process of actual moral reform, or sanctification.

The first aspect he calls Justification as acceptance and forgiveness in Christ. This is the main aspect of justification as it is presented in Romans. "St. Paul has nothing to do with post-dated forgiveness." In Paul's epistles the Christian does not hope that he will be forgiven, he has the assurance that he is forgiven here and now. 'There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus'. This justification is more than formal forgiveness. "The discharged prisoner is drawn back, nay, welcomed back into the life of the family of God". Thus he is set free from servitude to sin, he is adopted into the household of God, addressing God as Father, he enjoys what St. John calls 'freedom of speech' (παρηγοία)¹ in the Father's presence.

No man is righteous before God but "to be in Christ is to stand before the Father in the Son, and when a man so stands the Father sees in him not the sinner that he has been and is, but the member of Christ that he is and is to be." The double conception appears clearly in this statement but we are here concerned mainly with the first aspect, "man is treated not as the sinner he has been and is."

This must appear as a paradox: "We are and we are not what we appear to be." We are in Christ and in the Spirit, but we are also in the flesh. "We are already in faith and hope what we are to be, and not only do our own faith and hope present us in this light, but God himself sees us thus."²

Our examination of 'faith' which follows below³ may place a query behind Hodges' use of 'own faith' in terms of Paul's qualification "saved by faith, and that not of

1 I John 1:28

2 Hodges, op cit, p.66

3 Page 62f below

yourselves."¹ But insofar as it deals with justification the statement is acceptable. Faith and hope are the relations which enable us to have the assurance that God sees us thus; but faith and hope, it will be argued, are not entirely subjective qualities.

The paradox which Hodges points out is reflected not only in the individual but in the Church. He paints it vividly: "The Church is dwelling in the heavenly places at the very same time that its members are fuddled with drink and fornication, for all that is of the earth, though it continues in time, is already dead in the eyes of God, and our real life is hid with Christ in Him."² While we admit that the members are 'fuddled' and not only by the two vices which Hodges has somewhat puritanically chosen, and though we acknowledge that the Church or its saints on earth have never been perfect, we must suggest that the paradox is not an absolute one in the sense that it is to be merely accepted. The role of the members is to attempt to resolve the paradox, not logically but by moral effort.³ So closely interwoven are the strands of justification, faith, and works that it is difficult to resist leaping ahead and qualifying what we mean by 'moral effort' to affirm that justification is by faith and not by works, but this must wait its proper place. The resolving of the paradox is the process which forms the second aspect of Hodges' treatment of justification.

He introduces this aspect by asking whether righteousness is imputed or imparted. In the first place, where righteousness is conceived as "forgiveness in Christ" righteousness appears to be imputed, but: "Is God content, while pronouncing the sinner righteous, to leave him in his actual unrighteousness?" No! says Hodges, righteousness must also be imparted by God to the Christian. He laments, as Bonhoeffer has lamented,⁴ that Protestantism has so often taught that it is Christ's righteousness that is accepted instead of man's in payment of the debt which man owes to the Father. The true formula of salvation

1 Ephesians 2:8

2 Hodges, op cit, p.66

3 Romans 12:1f; I Peter 2:1-10

4 Page 18 above

is not 'Christ instead of me' but 'Christ in me and I in him'.¹

A theory of merely imputed righteousness becomes incredible.

"How can I be in Christ, who is all righteousness and not myself be made righteous?... How can I receive his life without also receiving the character of that life?"

The righteousness of God, made mine in hope and increasingly mine in fact through Christ, is only as his gift, and in this life I open myself to receive it only imperfectly. There is thus an element of anticipation in everything that is said about the Christian while still in this life; we are now in hope, i.e. in expectation, what we shall be afterwards in actuality. But still the difference between then and now is not a difference between being and not being; it is the difference between the full grown plant and the quickening seed, between the mature and the inchoate. What we shall one day fully be, that we already are in part. God's judgment in counting us righteous is therefore never wholly false in fact (how could it be?), there is never a moment when we have been pronounced righteous but have not yet begun to be made so. Acquittal and restoration, forgiveness and the beginning of the new life go together. God sees in us what we are and what we are to be. This is in accord with the Old Testament principle that the Word of God is a creative Word. If God calls us righteous, He at the same time makes us so."²

Can the two aspects of justification be united? More particularly, can their unity be detected in St. Paul? As we have previously noted, Hodges sees the aspect of forgiveness clearly portrayed in Paul's discussion of justification in Romans. When Paul uses the verb 'to justify' does he mean to make righteous as well as to acquit? The question needs to be sensitively handled.

Firstly, it must be remembered that in Romans and Galatians Paul is working out an argument directed to a particular point and he does not necessarily say all that is on his mind. His argument is conceived in terms of a man before his judge. "In this context, to be justified must mean primarily to be reckoned as righteous, and the overt logic of the argument does not require it to have any other meaning. On the other hand it does not exclude the other possible meaning."³

1 Hodges, op cit, p.70

2 ibid, p.70f

3 ibid, p.72

Secondly, Hodges detects, and rightly so, a development in the idea of justification as the argument of Romans progresses. The second aspect of justification begins to shine through. In 5:18f the transgression of Adam which spreads to all men is compared with the spreading of justification to many through the righteous act of Christ. The sinfulness of Adam is imparted to man, not imputed, otherwise the myth could never have performed its task in the Hebrew mind, if explaining the experienced reality of evil. The reality of the righteousness imparted by Christ is thus implied. The contrast of disobedience with righteousness in verse 19 links righteousness with obedience, and obedience cannot be other than actual. Comparing 4:25 with 6:4 suggests the equivalence of justification and newness of life, and clearly in Chapter 6 newness of life means a real repudiation of sin and actual liberation from it. "In Chapters 7 and 8 the original argument is swallowed up into... a hymn of the risen life of Christ... The word 'justification' grows with the theme, and ends by meaning nothing less than the risen life itself."¹

In addition to Hodges' two arguments we also note that both Romans and Galatians, the epistles in which Paul most clearly sets forth his doctrine of justification, are concluded with an ethical exhortation.² Being consequent upon the exposition of justification by faith they clearly imply that the justified man should behave in a righteous manner. Introducing Galatians, the Oxford Annotated Edition of R.S.V. has: "The central part of the letter states the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Lest some should imagine that this doctrine leads to a life of indifference to the moral code, Paul concludes with certain practical applications of his teaching."³

The argument for Christian ethics is thus not of the form be good and you will be saved. It is unfortunate that a popular misconception of religion - religion is not distinguished from Christianity on this level - has this idea. It is a part of everyone of us until we think ourselves out of the childhood myth, that good children are rewarded by being sent to heaven and naughty ones are punished in hell.

1 *ibid*, p.73

2 Romans 12:1f; Galatians 5:1f

3 The Oxford Annotated Bible, p.1403

Rather, as it is found in St. Paul the argument runs: You are justified by God in Christ, therefore behave in a manner befitting one who is in Christ, or in his Spirit. "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."¹ In more ecclesiastical terminology we might say: Since you have been made a member of Christ's Body by your baptism, behave as befits one in whom God is working through Christ. Seen this way there is no contradiction between the Epistle of James - 'faith without works is dead' - and Pauline 'justification by faith'.

4. The Indicative/Imperative of God's Word

When we follow St. Paul in arguing from the fact of justification to a demand for righteous behaviour we appear to fall foul of what philosophy calls the 'naturalistic fallacy'. We have deduced an ought from an is. The Christian is righteous therefore he ought to behave in a righteous manner. We have confused the indicative with the imperative. At this point we have again to go beyond ordinary logic. Our language becomes 'odd'.² Christian theology asserts again and again that God's indicative is imperative. Of several examples the most explicit is that of Bonhoeffer. Commenting on the Word of God in Creation he writes:³

"God speaks. This must first of all be understood in its fullest sense. 'Word' means 'spoken word' - not 'symbol', 'meaning' or 'idea', but the concrete thing itself. That God, speaking, creates means that the idea, the name and the work are one in the created reality in God. The essential point is therefore not that the Word has 'effects' but that God's Word is itself work. That which in us breaks hopelessly asunder is for God indissolubly one: the word of command and the event. With God the imperative is the indicative. The latter does not follow from the former. The indicative is not the effect of the imperative; it is the imperative. We cannot describe God's creating as an 'effect' either, because his word does not contain the character of command, the absolute freedom of creating which comes to expression in the Word that encompasses a definite reality - the freedom of the Creator from the creature. The 'Word' expresses that it is done out of freedom, the event expresses the fact that it is done from authority. The fact that

1 Galatians 5:25

2 cf. p.17 above, footnote 2

3 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Creation and Temptation, p.22

it is absolutely impossible for us to think the indicative and the imperative at one and the same time indicates that we no longer live in the unity of the active Word of God, that we are fallen. For us the connection of indicative and imperative is only conceivable when they are mediated by a continuum, mostly under the scheme of cause and effect. This scheme then attributes the end of the 'effect' to the 'cause'. But this does not apply to the creation. Creation is not an 'effect' of the Creator whence we could derive a necessary connection with the cause (Creator). It is a work created in freedom in the word."



The Word that is spoken in Creation is the same Word as is spoken in the reconciliation and justification of the creature. When God pronounces man righteous he is righteous and it is imperative that he strives to behave in a manner befitting his status. The 'fallen creature' is raised up to become the indicative embodiment of the Word, which for him becomes God's command.

The indicative/imperative of God's word is also implied in Kleinknecht's discussion of the wrath of God which we examined in the previous chapter. There we saw how the *σκεῦος ὀργῆς* is a vessel of wrath both in the passive and in the active sense. Passive because God uses the vessel, active because the vessel acts as if it were an independent source of evil. A similar analysis was made of the *σκεῦος ἐλέους*. Translating this into our present image we might say that a man is justified in the passive sense because he is justified by God in Christ. Actively, he behaves as a seemingly independent source of right behaviour.

Bultmann¹ discussing 'faith' in the Johannine writings says that to give credence to the preaching of Jesus means the same thing as to believe in Jesus who is being preached. John developed the idea of the kerygma so that the Jesus who is being preached is himself encountered, it is he who 'speaks'. Jesus is designated 'Logos', and John hereby gives expression to the idea that God's word and action are a unity. "In the word God's action is encountered and God's action is his word." To 'believe in him' is the same as 'coming to him',² 'receiving

1 R. Bultmann, Kittel: Bible Key Words: Faith, p.98

2 John 5:40; 6:35,37,44f

him',¹ or 'loving him'.² The combination indicative/imperative is more difficult to see in Bultmann's example. He has introduced the Christological ideas which are necessary for a complete statement of justification. Jesus is the word made flesh, the clearest manifestation of the indicative of God's word. To give him credence is to recognise who he is, and it is at the same time the acceptance of the imperative to follow him and to obey him. Wherever the logos idea is employed in Christian theology the indicative/imperative is implicit.³

Cox makes the same point. He does not like the traditional idea that the Church should exhort people, but he says that the message of the Church, in the indicative mood presents them with a crisis in which they have to choose either of two courses of action. The Church's announcement produces what theologians call the 'crisis of the Kingdom'. Cox prefers to call it a catalytic gap in which people have to make a decision. Using a political metaphor he says: "It is the coming of the new régime into the midst of the old which requires this response..... the revolutionary régime has seized power but the symbols of authority are still in the hands of the old displaced rulers.... Each man is confronted by a crisis. Shall he obey the new authority; or shall he obey those who still claim the right to govern.... The citizen cannot answer the choice theoretically.... His choice is expressed in what he does."⁴ Once again we see how the statement of what is, arouses in man the question of ought.

In Chapter 1⁵ we pointed out that 'God's action' and the action of man are not to be conceived on the same level. The indicative/imperative of God's Word is another figure illustrating the same point, and a very similar idea must have been in St. Paul's mind when he wrote to the Philippians.⁶

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

Brown⁷ comments on the apparent contradiction:

1 John 1:12; 5:43

2 John 3:15,36; 6:40

3 cf. R. Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, p.76

4 Harvey Cox, The Secular City, p.130

5 Page 17 above

6 Philippians 2:12,13

7 James Brown, Subject and Object in Modern Theology, p.81

"But does not the contradiction arise from conceiving God and man as two similar agents co-operating in analogous ways within the same field of reference? God's share in human action cannot be distinguished from man's either by dogmatic definition or psychological inspection... All is from God, from whom, through whom, and unto whom are all things, but looked at from the human end of the process, from below, there is much that men must do, of and for himself."

Have we said enough to show that God's pronouncing man righteous is no legal fiction, and to show how this imparted reality appears in man as an obligation to strive after righteousness, that is, perfection, maturity, the achieving of his purpose in God's sight?

5. Justification and Sanctification

The problem of imputed or imparted righteousness was one which also exercised the minds of the Reformers and the Counter-Reformers. It was linked with a verbal dispute concerning the use of 'sanctification'. The Reformers could not deny that the faith demanded the effort of moral renewal, but they were determined to associate 'justification' with 'forgiveness' and to emphasise their point, they tended to deny that it meant anything else at all. The word 'sanctification' was reserved for the process by which the Christian shares in the virtues and gifts of life in the spirit, and in a growth in grace. They regarded justification and sanctification as entirely separate. Expounding the doctrine of justification by faith in his lectures on Galatians Luther says:

"We concede that good works and love must also be taught; but this must be in its proper time and place, that is when the question has to do with works, apart from this chief doctrine."¹

The distinction is also implicit in Calvin:

"Since faith receives Christ as he is offered by the Father, and he is offered not only for righteousness, forgiveness of sins and peace, but also for sanctification..."²

The clearest statement of this distinction, Hodges suggests is to be found in Wesley's sermon on justification by faith:

1 Luther's Works, American Edition, Vol.26 p.137

2 Quoted by Hodges, *op cit*, p.75

"What is justification?.... It is evident.... that it is not being made actually just and righteous. This is sanctification, which is indeed in some degree the immediate fruit of justification, but nevertheless is a distinct gift of God and of a totally different nature. The one implies what God has done for us through his Son, the other what he works in us by his Spirit."¹

This passage not only illustrates the distinction which Protestants have made between justification and sanctification, but it also shows how this distinction is related to the dichotomy which has been drawn between the objective idea of the atonement "what God has done for us through his Son", and the subjective work which he achieves "in us by his Spirit". The Pauline interchangeability of 'in Christ', 'in the Spirit', and 'in the Body' has been lost.

The Tridentine Decree on Justification, recognises sanctification, not as separate from justification but as an aspect of it:

"Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inner man... whereby a man, from unrighteousness is made righteous.. We are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and are not merely accounted righteous, but are truly called so and are so... This comes about when... by the Holy Ghost the love of God is shed abroad in the hearts of those who are justified and inheres in them, so that in justification itself, along with the remission of sins, a man has all these things simultaneously infused into him through Jesus Christ, into whom he is grafted."²

Apart from the suggestion of instantaneous rather than progressive sanctification suggested by the words 'simultaneously infused' the statement is entirely in accord with the attitude which we have previously expressed. It accords also with the one occasion where we have previously used the word 'sanctification'.³

Given over as they were to uncompromising polemics, it is understandable that the Reformers should have emphasised the aspect of forgiveness, separating it from sanctification, while the Roman Catholic theologians favoured that aspect of justification which is sanctification. Hodges⁴ points out that the Protestants' desire to safeguard the character of redemption

1 *ibid*

2 Quoted by Hodges, *op cit*, p.73. Chapter 7 of the Decree

3 Page 46 above

4 Hodges, *op cit*, p.77

as the free and unmerited gift of God is the reason why they have so often made heavy weather about good works, and the cultivation of virtues. For the Roman the remission of sins is no standing problem, for he is baptised and thus absolved. His thought turns to the matter of his growth in grace, and this naturally includes the effort of discipline. It seems that Protestantism is often so anxious to insist that forgiveness cannot be earned that it regards with suspicion anyone who points to the complementary truth that, having been forgiven, the Christian is expected to work out his own salvation, growing in holiness and righteousness, by the help of sanctifying grace.

Protestant teaching thus favours the separation of the ideas of justification and sanctification. Justification is closely linked with a moment in which the individual recognises that he is forgiven by God. Sanctification appears as the process of moral purification. At first sight the etymological difference between 'justification' and 'sanctification' seems to favour a separation of meanings, supporting the sharp distinction drawn by Protestant teaching and opposing the merging of the two concepts which we find in the Tridentine Decree. But on closer examination it will be seen that the separate meanings which Protestantism has given to these two terms precisely reverses their etymological derivations.

Sanctification is etymologically related to holiness rather than to righteousness. Tillich reminds us that holiness was primarily cultic, and only afterwards did it gain moral significance. Unclean originally designated something demonic and opposed to the holy. Only later was unclean associated with immoral, and this association when it becomes exclusive, deprives the holy of its depth.

"If the holy is completely identified with the clean, and if the demonic element is completely rejected then the holy approximates to the secular...(It) loses its depth, its mystery, its numinous character."¹

In Calvinism particularly, the moral significance is emphasised at the expense of all else. Tillich remarks:

1 Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol.2 p.240

"Fear of the demonic permeates Calvin's doctrine of the divine holiness. An almost neurotic anxiety about the unclean develops in later Calvinism. The word 'Puritan' is most indicative of this trend. The holy is the clean; cleanliness becomes holiness. This means the end of the numinous character of the holy."¹

Under the influence of Puritan extremism separatedness is conceived not for the purpose of mediating the holiness of God, but seemingly as a moral end in itself, so that fear of the moral law and pride in personal self-control once again replace the confidence in God, which Pauline justification by faith teaches. A development has taken place which may be described as the leapfrogging of justification and sanctification.

Holiness and sanctification have always been associated with the action of the god. In the Old Testament holiness was primarily a quality of Yahweh² and the holiness of Israel, the people and their cult objects, was derived from him. Righteousness and justice were demanded of men.³ St. Paul's exposition of justification through faith in Christ marks the culmination of the recognition that men are incapable of righteousness independently of God. At the Reformation Luther recalled men to the recognition of their utter dependence on God, but when sanctification was separated from justification it became the vehicle in Puritanism for the persistent legalism which men prefer to dependence on God.

Sanctification has become related to moral rightness, while justification is that medium through which God acts. This is almost a complete reversal of the etymological derivations of these words in which it is the sanctified which mediated the holy, and righteousness meant legally and morally right. We conclude that 'righteousness' and 'sanctification' must be used together to denote the reality and the purpose of the changing behaviour of those who are in Christ. The New Testament has transformed the meaning of 'righteousness', but this does not mean that we can retain its previous meaning in theology by substituting the label 'sanctification'. Hodges wonders whether Trent has overlooked the difference between righteousness and holiness. Rather, it seems that Protestantism

1 *ibid*

2 Isaiah 6

3 Micah 6:6

has overlooked their similarity in effect. Being made righteous and being sanctified are the same thing conceived from different viewpoints. Justification is the change wrought by God in man in terms of the legal metaphor. Sanctification is the same change, seen in terms of the purpose for God, which becomes evident in the man.

6. Justification and Conversion

Another matter raised by Hodges is that of Christian experience, the idea of conversion, and its relation to justification. We have indicated the importance of personal experience for Paul's teaching, and as we shall see below, Luther's rediscovery of the doctrine of justification by faith was accompanied by a similar experience. The problem is also concerned with the question of subjectivity in atonement. There are many Christians, not only those with sectarian affiliation, who believe that the effectiveness of God's act in Christ for an individual depends on his experiencing 'a spiritual rebirth'. The term is certainly scriptural, and particularly Johannine, but it is more closely associated with baptism than many of these people recognise.¹

Chronologically Paul's exposition was preceded by his conversion. This has led many Protestants to suppose that justification must be preceded by conversion. It is taught that a man must recognise and repent of his sinfulness, before God can act in reconciliation or justification. Logically the teaching is accompanied by a doctrine of believers baptism, for if baptism is to be related to regeneration and regeneration is dependent on the consent and confession of man, consent and confession must precede baptism. It is not to be denied that there is some correlation between the Christian's willing consent and the working of the Spirit in his life, but at the same time it must be recognised that in New Testament teaching, any confession or conviction in man is initiated by God. Once again we are faced by an apparent contradiction arising out of misconceiving the 'action' of God and the action of man on the same level. In chapter one² it arose in the context of co-operation between man and God. Here it arises in the idea

1 John 1:33; 3:5

2 Page 17 above

of the clash of will between man and God. On the one hand we want to say that God acts before man consents, and that the very consent which a man eventually gives is the proof that God has been acting. On the other hand it cannot be denied that man can resist God's will, temporarily at least. Man can deny the action of God, but ultimately man's will and action can stand over against God only because God permits it. It is his will to allow a man free expression of himself. In these terms we can reiterate our earlier conclusion that the action of God and the action of man are not ultimately on the same level.

In Romans 5:6,8 Paul has no hesitation in implying that God acts independently of man's conscious response. It is action which takes place not only in the objective events of Christ's death and resurrection (v.8), but also subjectively in man - while we were enemies we were reconciled to God (v.10). God's action in man which is described by both terms reconciliation and justification is not completely limited by the unresponsiveness of man. It is possible or rather necessary, for the Spirit to move in man before man consciously acknowledges the fact, that is, before he is converted. The experience termed conversion is therefore psychological rather than theological. We must not allow the fact that Paul's conversion precedes the formulation of his doctrine to deceive us into thinking that conversion precedes justification, or reconciliation, or regeneration, though the second term admittedly has implications of consciousness for both parties involved. The experience of conversion, as Hodges with perspicuity points out, is produced not by the fact of justification, but by the consciousness of justification. "Much confusion could have been avoided if this distinction between the fact and the consciousness of the fact had always been kept in view. Without it there is a tendency for what is ostensibly a discussion of justification to turn into a discussion of the consciousness of justification, and for justification itself to be identified with conversion - a mistake which can have unfortunate consequences."¹

1 Hodges, op cit, p.80

One particularly unfortunate consequence arising from this error is the confusion between faith and conversion. We are justified by faith; if we regard conversion as the moment of justification, then it seems that faith is the emotion which accompanies conversion, the conscious recognition of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. This emotion is a momentary thing, a feeling which the convert thereafter continually tries to evoke in his worship and devotion. This is the worst sort of subjectivism, for in it our Christianity is introverted and individualised, so that we fail to see the corporate significance of the Body of Christ, and the Kingdom of Heaven. Worship and communion fail us, for they cannot continually arouse the original ecstatic feelings.

Nevertheless, the consciousness of God's saving action in the subject is rightly regarded by Protestants as important, but for a psychological and pastoral reason, rather than a theological one. The psychological aspect was largely neglected in Christian literature from Paul to Luther, maintains Hodges. He describes it thus:

"Man is guilty and he knows he is...It is the knowledge of one's guilt, the knowledge that one stands in the wrath of God, which creates the psychological problem, the thought of God can only be terrible.¹ His impulse will be to escape into forgetfulness or to raise the persistent cry of Bunyan's pilgrim, 'What shall I do to be saved?' Nothing can solve his problem which does not remove the burden of anxiety by substituting for the angry judge the figure of the merciful father, and when this substitution is made, man's attitude to God is wholly changed. For insecurity he now has confidence, for fear he now has trust."²

This was the experience of St. Paul. It was also the experience of Luther, Wesley, and countless others. Out of this kind of experience Protestantism has tended to foster what Hodges calls 'a particular type of spiritual case-history'. This involves a concern on the part of an individual for his spiritual state followed by a sudden experience of illumination and release, when he recognises in the Christian message of justification, that his salvation depends not on the achieving of merit or a certain standard of 'goodness', but on God's gift of grace in Jesus Christ. The moment of recognition of what God has done and is

1 See p.15 above and p.63 below

2 Hodges, op cit, p.78

doing is the moment of conversion. It is not the moment of justification or the moment of faith, for neither justification or faith are characterised by momentariness. It is the moment of recognition.

In primitive Christianity the Gospel was proclaimed to adults. They necessarily became consciously aware of the good news in a relatively short period of time. Among children brought up in Christian homes the recognition of the true doctrine of justification may have been fostered at an early age. As children are not weaned from their parents in an instant, and as the grow into independence there may be no point at which they become suddenly responsible for their own decisions, so that an individual, brought up in the faith need not necessarily experience a momentary conversion. He may simply be aware that his justification does not depend on his own achievement. Having been brought up to trust in God he does not experience the concern which characterised a conversion like that of Luther. Christian children correctly trained should not have to be suddenly converted. Rather, their active response to the faith should be fostered by pointing them to the significance of their baptism. They are justified by faith and by this mercy of God we may therefore appeal to them to present their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.¹

The fostering of a patterned spiritual case-history is often criticised on the ground that it tries to create the problem that it can solve, and often this is a valid criticism. Preachers do tell men that they ought to feel guilty, in order to be able to say to them, 'Your consternation is unnecessary if you believe'. When this happens preaching becomes artificial. On the other hand this psychological aspect is important insofar as it enables the pastor and preacher to give real aid to persons genuinely distressed.

"Man is guilty and he knows that he is." asserts Hodges. There is no way of testing this statement. It does not appear to be of a theological nature. As a statement of fact it often appears to be contradicted since many deny that they have an

1 Romans 12:1; cf. Romans 6

awareness of guilt and few display the anxiety of a Saul or a Luther. We cannot attempt a decision based on psychological analysis without departing from our field. From the theological point of view, however, we have previously emphasised the importance of the wrath of God. It was stated that God is near to unresponsive man, and that the wrath of God was concomitant with the love of God. Thus we may proclaim the wrath of God in justification trusting that the seed will not fall on unresponsive ground.

7. Recapitulation

Recapitulating our conclusions concerning justification: We understand that it is closely paralleled by the reconciliation metaphor. Both refer to a process of the Christian life. 'Justification' underwent a modification in meaning in the New Testament so that it appeared paradoxical to law and nature. Paul touches on this in the first three chapters of Romans. The paradox sets a new norm for justice, "righteousness is apart from the law altogether". Righteousness is not a property of man, it is a God-given status imputed in forgiveness, but not limited to imputation, for by grace man grows into maturity. This growth culminates in the eschaton, but it ought to be real and detectable in time, for the Word of God has the quality of the imperative as well as the indicative mood. Justification is God's action in man and as such it is not limited by man's will, though by our God-given freedom we may hamper the movement of the Spirit. We have no control over God's gift of grace, but it is associated in scripture with the sacrament of baptism rather than conversion. Conversion is the recognition of God's grace, but grace is not limited by our recognition of it. It may rather be said that this recognition is a consequence of grace. Finally, the Christian can never be regarded as righteous in himself. He has some relationship to the righteousness of God which the ungodly man lacks. Paul expresses this in the antithetical structure of Romans 1:7 where he contrasts the righteous with sinners, but he never goes the length of saying 'we are now righteous'. The distinction is indicated in the New Testament by the word 'faith'.¹ Christians are righteous insofar as they are 'justified by faith'. It is to the concept of faith that we must now turn.

1 Quell and Schrenk, op cit, p.25

CHAPTER 3

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

1. The Enigma of Faith

The idea of faith is most enigmatic in Christian theology and yet faith is a particularly important and widely used term. In considering the subjective element of the atonement we must attempt to give a clear placing and description of 'faith'. We have attempted to show that reconciliation and justification are almost parallel descriptions of the subjective element, where subjective is taken as the sense of the 'atoning' change which God works in man. We have rejected the subjectivism which suggests that atonement depends entirely on our operating the right principle, whether this principle be moral rectitude, or repentance, or a particular emotional state. We have insisted that conversion is the recognition of God's initiative, that it is of great psychological importance in the Christian life but not that which finally limits God's action in the subject.

The New Testament, Paul in particular, and the Reformers have related justification to faith. We are justified by faith, so that it appears that faith is the condition of justification. The New Testament urges men to have faith, so that faith appears to belong to man. The infinitive πιστεύειν is often translated 'to believe'. To give credence to someone or the statements which he makes seems to be to commit one to a certain pattern of behaviour towards that person. Thus 'to believe' or 'to have faith' is an activity. Barrett suggests that the content of faith may be indicated in Romans 1:5 where reference is made to ὑπακοήν πίστεως - 'believing obedience'.

On the other hand, Paul draws a contrast between faith and works. Righteousness is not by works but by faith. In this way the idea of faith is the necessary activity, condition or prerequisite of man seems to be negated. The contrast is startlingly stated in Ephesians 2:8 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of your own doing, it is the gift of God." Man is called upon to have faith but the

faith that he can have is the gift of God. This can also be illustrated from the synoptics, in the prayer of the father of the epileptic: "I believe, help thou my unbelief."¹

This is the enigma of 'faith', that it is the condition that man must fulfil for salvation, yet it is not an achievement of man but a gift of God.

2. Luther on Justification by Faith

The Reformers underscored the negation of faith as an activity. Justification was sola fide, 'by faith alone'. Luther is credited with rediscovering the doctrine of justification by faith. In his lectures on Romans and Galatians he expounded it with great emphasis and at great length. No discussion on justification by faith would be complete without some brief examination of what Luther taught. At the same time such an examination will provide us with an illustration of what we have called the negation of faith as an activity.

Luther as clearly as Paul, came to his theological conclusions through personal experience. His works are filled with references to his monastic experience and to the 'papist' doctrine which had burdened him. For Luther the mediaeval doctrine of merit played the same role as the Pharisaic Law in St. Paul's experience. He too was aware of that coming of the law in which sin sprang to life and death loomed as the consequence.²

"Before the law came we were living at ease, secure, thinking nothing was wrong, but afterwards the law entered in, and showed us what kind of people we were, and commanded those things which even if we had wished, we could not have performed. Then I simply was driven to despair, so that I began to hate and blaspheme God, who seemed to deal so unfairly with me."³

Luther recounts how he hated the words Justitia Dei which he found in the first chapter of Romans, for by the use and consent of all his teachers he had learned to understand it

1 Mark 9:24

2 Romans 7:10f

3 Quoted by Rupp, The Righteousness of God, p.111

as the formal or active justice "with which God is just and punishes unjust sinners".

"However irreproachably I lived as a monk, I felt myself in the presence of God to be a sinner with a most unquiet conscience nor could I trust that I had pleased him with my satisfaction. I did not love, nay, rather I hated this just God who punished sinners and if not with open blasphemy certainly with huge murmuring I was angry with God....and yet I knocked importunately at Paul in this place, thirsting most ardently to know what St. Paul meant."

Luther recounts how he meditated day and night on the words "the just shall live by faith" and at last, "God being merciful" he began to understand the justice of God, "as that by which the just lives by the gift of God, namely by faith". He recognised that "the justice of God is revealed in the gospel", to refer to that passive justice, with which the merciful God justifies us, by faith".

"This straightway made me feel as though reborn, and as though I had entered through open gates into paradise itself. From then on the whole face of scripture seemed different...And now, as much as I hated this word 'Justice of God' before, so much the more sweetly I extolled this word to myself, so that this place in Paul was to me as a real gate of paradise." ¹

It is clear in Luther's account that the sense of release which he experienced was the result of his recognition of the meaning of scripture. The insight is the gift of God but it is not the only gift, nor is the grace of God limited to the moment of insight. Luther's recognition was of a fait accompli and a continuing mercy, although this is not so clear in his teaching as it is in his autobiography.

In his exposition of the great truth that had come to him Luther contrasts the righteousness of faith with the righteousness by works.

"In the first place, there is the external way, by works, on the basis of one's own strength. Of such a nature are human righteousnesses which are acquired by practice (as it is said) and by habit.... For they (the contemporary philosophers, the State, and the Church) think that one becomes righteous by doing righteous things... This is the kind of righteousness the Law of Moses... brings about, namely when one serves God out of fear of punishment or because of the promise of a reward... This is a servile righteousness, it is mercenary,

1 *ibid*, p.122

feigned, specious, external, temporal, worldly, human. It profits nothing for the glory to come but receives in this life its reward... this is how Christ describes the Pharisees.

In the second place, there is the inward way, on the basis of faith and of grace, when a man utterly despairs of his former righteousness...and casts himself down before God, sobs humbly, and confessing that he is a sinner, says with the publican: "God be merciful to me a sinner!"... This righteousness is nothing else than calling on the name of God....Therefore if your conscience troubles you and you are a sinner and seeking to become righteous, what will you do? Will you look around to see what works you may do or where you may go? No! On the contrary see to it that you hear or recall the name of the Lord..."¹

To avoid any confusion in the matter of righteousness Paul's phrase "works of the Law" must be taken in its very widest sense. The distinction which Jerome had made between ceremonial law and Decalogue is not to be conceded.

"Even if you do the works of the law, according to the commandment "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, etc." you would still not be justified in the sight of God, for a man is not justified by works of the law."²

Thus, any subjective doctrine which simply depends on a loving response to the sacrifice of Christ would be in direct contradiction to the teaching of Luther. Even love is a consequence and not a prerequisite of justification.

There is no possibility of justification before the acceptance of grace 'For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin'.³ Luther enlarges on this:

"Trying to merit grace by preceding works, therefore, is trying to placate God with sins, which is nothing but heaping sins upon sins, making fun of God and provoking his wrath."⁴

The Law has a very limited though necessary purpose for Luther. It "shows sin, terrifies, and humbles; thus it prepares us for justification and drives us to Christ". In this passage justification is linked with our recognition of the work of Christ. It thus contradicts some of the conclusions we have already drawn.

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- 1 Luther's Works, Lectures on Galatians 1519, American Ed., Vol.27, p.219
 - 2 Luther's Works, Lectures on Galatians 1535, American Ed., Vol.26, p.122
 - 3 Romans 14:23
 - 4 Luther's Works, Vol.26, p.125

We shall also disagree with Luther when he says:

"God cannot defend this deity of his against the self-righteous people who are unwilling to accept grace and eternal life from him freely but want to earn it by their own works.... In order to retain it He is compelled to send forth his Law, to terrify and crush those very hard rocks." ¹

We have disagreed with Hodges' notion that God is compelled to justify the sinner. Our position is also different to Luther's for we cannot agree that men can limit God, but to the extent that we have recognised God's wrath (Law in this passage)² we are agreed with Luther. The compulsion and limitation of God which Luther speaks of we could recognise only as the self-limitation and compulsion of love. Doing this we recall the close relationship we have drawn between the love and wrath of God.

Taught by the law to know himself a man becomes truly repentant, "for true repentance begins with fear and with the judgment of God". He understands what Paul meant when he said men are slaves and captives of sin.

"Now he begins to sigh... he despairs of his own strength, he looks about and sighs for the help of the Mediator and Saviour. Then there comes at the appropriate time, the saving word of the Gospel... this is the beginning of salvation." ³

It is striking that Luther can give a phenomenological description of "the beginning of salvation" without any mention of faith. We have to read on to find a description of faith.

"Faith takes hold of Christ and has him present, enclosing him as the ring encloses the gem. And whoever is found having this faith in Christ who is grasped in the heart, him God accounts as righteous....

We define a Christian as follows: A Christian is not someone who has no sin or feels no sin, he is one to whom, because of his faith in Christ, God does not impute his sin." ⁴

Once again we come face to face with the enigma of faith.

Righteousness or salvation is not a consequence of faith, and yet according to Luther the absence of faith limits God. This

1 Luther's Works, Vol.26, p.130

2 Our synonymous use of 'law' and 'wrath' is consistent with our recognition of 'justification' and 'reconciliation' as different images describing the continuing process leading to salvation.

3 *ibid*, p.131

4 *ibid*, p.133

limitation is not final however, for the Law (Wrath) breaks through. Faith is the negation of activity, even love, and the acceptance of grace. It is conceded by Luther that "good works and love must also be taught; but this must be in their proper time and place".¹

Luther also suggests, in a somewhat contradictory fashion that "when we are involved in a discussion of justification, there is no room for speaking about the law".² The statement is contradictory for it is out of the despair created by the law that Luther recognised the "beginning of salvation". This recognition he then calls faith. Faith is a grasping of what has been revealed as justification. It is then claimed that the justification is by faith alone, as though faith preceded justification. It is also claimed that the law is a thing apart, while it is out of the law that the despair arose - the despair, which was the condition in which the true nature of justification became apparent. We need to separate the elements of experience and teaching.

Phenomenologically there is no doubt about the order of events. They are confrontation of the law; despair; the revelation of righteousness; a grasping and holding of this righteousness by faith in which the despair is held at bay; and finally, the psychological phenomena of a feeling of freedom and a willingness to serve God.

Theologically, it is then taught that faith is of first importance and law is something of secondary concern. In the context in which Luther and Paul taught, namely, the legalism of the Mediaeval Church and of the Judaisers in the Early Church, it was necessary to reassert the importance of faith. Disassociation of faith and works is rather than an accurate description, a rhetorical and didactic device to assert the importance of faith. Luther's phenomenological description of faith shows that it is a continued holding on to the revelation. It issues in and is associated with a zeal to do God's will. Faith and works are closely associated and to this the behaviour of both Paul and Luther bear witness. The

1 *ibid*, p.137

2 *ibid*, p.137

works of the law and the works of faith are indistinguishable as such. Indeed they must be the same, as we see for example in Matthew 5:17-20 and Romans 13:8. The difference lies in their motivation only, though zeal may depend on the manner of motivation.

For persons who find themselves in the situation of Paul or Luther, overburdened by a sense of guilt, driven to despair by the inadequacy of their achievements in God's sight, the type of "case-history fostered by Protestantism"¹ provides a genuine solution. The teaching of justification by faith issues in a genuine sense of reconciliation and release from anxiety and leads to a truly Christian life. But very few persons confronted by a protestant preacher at the present time find themselves in this situation. We have previously suggested that this leads to the sometimes artificial practice of suggesting to congregations that they should feel guilty, and, assuming that the object of this exercise is achieved, they are then quietened by the proclamation that justification is by faith. This brand of Protestant Christianity may be literally "apart from works altogether", for the subject of zeal for the Kingdom of God may easily find no place in the scheme at all. The strength of Paul and Luther in their particular situation may become the weakness of Protestantism in a different situation.

Bonhoeffer is one of the theologians who has pointed out the need for the preaching of discipleship and its costliness. He comments on the Reformation and the experience of Luther:

"When the Reformation came, the providence of God raised Martin Luther to restore the gospel of pure costly grace... Luther had left all to follow Christ on the path of absolute obedience... The call to the cloister demanded of Luther the complete surrender of his life. But God shattered all his hopes. He showed him through the scriptures that the following of Christ is not the achievement or the merit of a select few, but the divine command to all Christians without distinction... The monk's attempt to flee from the world turned out to be a subtle form of love for the world. The bottom thus having been knocked out of the religious life, Luther laid hold upon grace... He saw God in Christ stretching forth his hand to save. He grasped that hand in faith, believing that 'after all, nothing we can do is of any avail, however good a life we live'. The grace which gave itself to him was costly grace, and it shattered his whole existence... Luther did not hear the word:

1 See page 59 above. The term is Hodges, op cit, p.78

'Of course you have sinned, but now everything is forgiven, so you can stay as you are and enjoy the consolations of forgiveness'. No, Luther had to leave the cloister and go back to the world, not because the world in itself was good and holy, but because even the cloister was only a part of the world...

It is a fatal misunderstanding of Luther's action to suppose that his rediscovery of the gospel of pure grace offered a general dispensation from obedience to the command of Jesus, or that it was the great discovery of the Reformation that God's forgiving grace automatically conferred upon the world both righteousness and holiness... It was not the justification of sin, but the justification of the sinner that drove Luther from the cloister back into the world... Far from dispensing him from good works, it meant that he must take the call to discipleship more seriously than ever before... That was the secret of the Gospel of the Reformation - the justification of the sinner.

Yet the outcome of the Reformation was the victory, not of Luther's perception of grace in all its purity and costliness, but of the vigilant religious instinct of man for the place where grace is to be obtained at the cheapest price. All that was needed was a subtle and almost imperceptible change of emphasis, and the damage was done... Luther always implied as a corollary that it cost him his own life, the life which was now for the first time subject to the absolute obedience of Christ... Luther had said that grace alone can save; his followers took up his doctrine and repeated it word for word. But they left out its invariable corollary, the obligation of discipleship... Judged by the standard of Luther's doctrine, that of his followers was unassailable, and yet their orthodoxy spelt the end and destruction of the Reformation as the revelation on earth of the costly grace of God. The justification of the sinner in the world degenerated into the justification of sin and the world. Costly grace was turned into cheap grace without discipleship." ¹

The teaching of St. Paul and Luther are appropriate in a particular situation where the law is already being taken seriously. In the other situation it needs to be balanced by such teaching as that of Bonhoeffer and St. James.² Indeed Paul himself, as we have noted above, did not fail to conclude his expositions in Romans and Galatians without a reference to discipleship.

1 Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, p.39f

2 James 2:14f

3. Misinterpretations of 'Faith'

(a) A condition fulfilled by man

There are two other notable misinterpretations of faith, arising out of the misunderstanding of 'justification by faith'. Firstly, the negation of faith as an activity and the discounting of 'works' has led to the teaching that faith is the only condition necessary for salvation. Secondly, the process of negation is taken further and faith is thought to be a moment of passivity. The danger of these is the emergence of passive Christianity.

Nygren has provided a host of examples¹ of the first error. We shall quote only three. "Faith is the indispensable and only condition of salvation" (Althaus). "Faith is the condition on the part of man without which the gospel cannot have power for him" (B. Weiss). "Nothing but faith is demanded in order that man may experience the righteousness of God" (von Hoffman). Against this chorus of interpreters, Nygren declares that nothing was further from Paul's mind than the idea that man offers faith as the condition for his justification. Paul's thought was wholly positive, but the formulations quoted introduce a negative element. They imply that without faith the Gospel cannot be effective. In this seemingly fine-spun distinction, suggests Nygren, "there lurks a fateful disorder of the whole Pauline view". Paul's words are made to mean the exact opposite of what he intended. In the same way Luther's expression sola fide was intended to withstand everything legalistic, but this very phrase can be understood legalistically as soon as faith is regarded as something demanded of man. Concluding this argument Nygren relates it to two points we have touched on before. He writes:

"From such a source has come the psychological view of faith which makes it a subjective quality in man, necessary as a condition of his salvation. Starting from that view some have assigned co-operative roles to God and man, attempting to determine what each must contribute in the work of salvation. In the gospel God meets man with his message of salvation: but as long as man has not taken his stand as to that message it remains a

1 Nygren, op cit, p.68f

powerless word. So the crucial question is how man on his part reacts to the gospel....

Paul's thought is utterly different from this.... he has no thought of apportioning to God and man respective contributions to salvation. For him faith is not a subjective quality which must be present in man if the gospel is to be able to show its power. It is truer to say that one's faith is evidence that the gospel has exercised its power on him. It is not man's faith that gives the gospel its power; quite the contrary, it is the power of the gospel that makes it possible for one to believe. Faith is only another word for the fact that one belongs to Christ and through Him we participate in the new age. Paul looks at faith in a much longer perspective than we usually do, a perspective resting on his view of the two ages."

(b) A passive moment

The second misinterpretation of faith to regard it as a passive moment in the experience of man, is found in the English-speaking commentators. Barrett says: "Only when a man is prepared to stand still and see the glory of God can he apprehend God's action as salvation."¹ In view of his other well-balanced statements it is hard to condemn Barrett on this issue. He does not directly relate this "standing still" to faith, and one suspects that he is using the metaphor to convey the cessation of anxiety concerning one's status before God. Dodd makes the 'standing still' far more explicit. He defines faith:

"It is an act which is the negation of all activity, a moment of passivity out of which the strength for action comes, because in it God acts." ²

Again, provided the moment of passivity is regarded as merely metaphorical of time, there is no danger. But if it is taken literally it is possible to conceive of faith as a series of passive moments, which, if God does not act overtly, may stretch into an indefinite period of inactivity. The Protestant trait which Bonhoeffer radically opposes can be conceived in different terms. Its excuse may also be that of waiting for divine guidance. It fails to see that guidance lies within the action. Paul never suggests to his readers that they should wait for assurance and conscious maturity of their faith before they attempt to practise it. His appeals for Christian action are all based on the

1 Barrett, op cit, p.28

2 Dodd, op cit, p.16

assumption that God has acted and is acting. As God acts man must act, and as man acts the acts of God become evident. This is implicit in what we have already said about the vessel of God being both active and passive, and it is implied in the idea that God's word is indicative/imperative. To wait upon God is to serve him. The message of action is clear in the instructions of Jesus to the disciples: "And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious how or what you are to answer or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."¹

However faith is conceived it is clearly not something momentary. When we talk of faith as a moment, we are confusing it with the moment in which one becomes conscious of justification. But we have previously shown that this moment of conscious recognition of justification, if it takes place, is not to be regarded as the moment of justification itself. Thus we are not led incorrectly to assume that since justification is by faith, faith is the moment in which we become conscious of God's action. 'Having faith' or 'believing' is continuous in whatever way it relates to man.

4. Faith is 'believing-obedience'

Having explored some of the merits and demerits of Paul's (and Luther's) dichotomy between faith and works as a counter to legalism, we must now return to an examination of faith in its broader aspect.

There is even in St. Paul himself, an idea of faith running counter to the Reformation emphasis, or the misunderstanding of it. In the face of the passivity and inactivity which has been deduced from the Pauline distinction between faith and works, the New Testament links faith with obedience to Jesus Christ. This far from demanding only a passive and negative restraint from the world demands of the Christian that he be the salt of the earth, the light of the world.² He is not the man who cries "Lord, Lord", but the man who does the will of the Father.

1 Matthew 10:17

2 Matthew 5:13-16

He is recognised by the fruit that he brings forth.¹ The Christian is to be a hearer and a doer. He follows Christ as a disciple (one under discipline), hears his words and does them.² Paul, even in the middle of his discussion on justification by faith is able to say: God "will render to every man according to his works."³

Faith in this larger sense is epitomised in the words which Barrett has chosen from Romans 1:5 - 'believing obedience' or 'the obedience of faith'.⁴ Enlarging on the idea contained in these words, Barrett writes:

"He who believes accepts the power of God which is at work in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the power of God, and therefore submits himself to it, claiming no rights over against his Creator but ready to trust himself wholly to his grace and wisdom."⁵

Faith is thus seen to be double-sided in that it includes both believing and obeying. It is neither merely belief nor merely obedience but believing obedience. If we fail to recognise either of these two sides we incorrectly conclude, either that faith is an achievement of men, or that men play only a passive role in the business of faith. When obedience is exclusively emphasised faith is regarded as a merit. When believing is emphasised to the exclusion of obedience faith is reduced to passivity so that man has no way of reacting to the call that is made on him to 'have faith'.

The double-sidedness of 'faith' is shown by Weiser⁶ to derive from Old Testament usage. In a way similar to the transformation of καταλλαγή and δικαιοσύνη which we have seen above, πιστεύειν underwent a marked change when it was used almost exclusively in the LXX to translate the Hebrew he^emin.

In classical Greek πιστεύειν was not fundamentally a religious attitude but it moved towards this when used in philosophical discussions against atheism. In those

1 Matthew 7:15-20

2 Romans 2:6; 13

3 Matthew 7:24

4 RSV

5 Barrett, op cit, p.21, 28

6 Bultmann and Weiser, Kittel: Bible Key Words: Faith

circumstances where it was claimed that the deity led the unbeliever into belief, the word became associated with piety and it began to show the tendency which was to become radical in the Old Testament translation. In the proselytising mystery religions 'faith' became a key word in religious propaganda, but even here it contained no more than a nuance of the idea of obedience. Basically, the Greeks regarded 'faith' as a quality of whoever possessed it, and Stoicism particularly, urged man to have faith in himself.¹

By an examination of the other derivatives of the -mn- root, of which he^emān is the hiph'al form, Weiser enables us to gain some insight into the depth and richness which LXX gave to πιστεύειν and πίστις, and consequently to the New Testament concept of faith.

The niph'al derivative, ne^emān, is usually translated as firm, certain, reliable, but these miss its fundamental meaning. It is usually associated in profane usage with a substantive, and it adds weight to the particular purpose of the object indicated. For example: "I will fasten it as a tent peg in a ne^emān place." (Isaiah 22:23). Here it is best translated 'a sure place', indicating the suitability of the place of fastening for its chosen function. Another illuminating usage is its application to the idea of dynasty, where it strengthens the implication of continuance in order to say that it will not die out.² Thus, Weiser concludes: "It declares that in any given instance the qualities to be attributed to the subject in question are actually present."³

When the term is applied to God, in Deuteronomy 7:9 for example, the faithful God is He who keeps the covenant and hesed with those who love him and obey his commandments, He who performs the oath which He swore to the fathers. It underlines the essential; "that which makes God to be God."⁴

1 Weiser, op cit, p.38

2 ibid, p.4, cf I Samuel 2:35; I Kings 11:38

3 ibid, p.5

4 ibid, p.7

Incidentally, this particular example raises the question: Is it not in some sense God's faith, which is indicated by the Pauline phrase 'justification by faith'? The New Testament is not entirely unaware that the description 'faithful' can be applied to God as well as man.¹

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- 1 Any acceptable conclusion on this aspect would require an exegetical study which we are not competent to make. But some points are worth noting. Firstly, 'faithfulness' is applied to God in I Corinthians 1:9; I Thessalonians 5:24; II Thessalonians 3:3; II Timothy 2:13; I John 1:9; Revelation 19:1. Only the adjectival references are quoted here and there may be others.

Secondly, where Paul states the doctrine of justification by faith it is clear that it is faith in Christ that is referred to; cf Galatians 2:16 "Justified by faith in Christ." Faith is spoken of not as an attitude which man brings to this revelation in Christ, but it comes with Christ; cf Galatians 3:23 "Before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith could be revealed."

When Paul speaks of "redemption...to be received by faith" in Romans 3:25 it is "redemption in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith", and "faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe." Thus the act of believing, which is man's act depends on God's act in Jesus Christ. We have treated this theme elsewhere in relation to righteousness (p. 68).

In Galatians 3:26,27 Paul's readers "are sons of God in Jesus Christ, through faith "because they have been "baptised into Christ" and have "put on Christ". Faith is not independent of baptism, and the efficacy of baptism depends on the promise of God so that man's faithfulness is not only man's but God's also. It may be argued that baptism is the initiation of an individual into the New Covenant in Jesus Christ. The concept of faith in the Old Testament arose out of the covenant idea, which clearly depended on the faithfulness of both man and God.

Ephesians 2:8 is unmistakably clear: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of your own doing it is the gift of God."

Finally, it may be suggested that in Romans 1:17a ("the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith" - ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν) Paul is referring to both the Godward and manward sides of faith. The commentaries that we have used do not give this explanation but none of their explanations is very satisfying. Dodd dismisses it as a rhetorical device, giving emphasis to 'faith' (op cit, p.13). Barrett has a similar explanation (op cit, p.30). Only Nygren enlarges on the phrase (op cit, p.78f). He says that the particular emphasis thus given to faith is that "Faith is both the beginning and the culmination". Faith is not merely the means, that is, of fulfilling the law. It is the end itself. Here Nygren clearly reveals his Lutheran background in the determined separation of faith and law. We have already attempted to show the shortcomings of this separation. Faith is faithfulness to the will of God. It is the willing co-operation with the will of God, and the fact that this relation is aptly described by 'love' rather than the 'hate' (cf Luther's experience) does not mean that it has to be antinomian in character. Nygren goes on to suggest that the phrase in question modifies, not the verb, but the whole statement, of which 'righteousness' is the

When ne' man is applied to man before God, it emphasises this same covenant relation of man to God from the manward side. It is the recognition of a man that he is before God. In Nehemiah 9:8 Yahweh finds Abraham's heart faithful, and so he makes a covenant with him. "The idea of -mn- expresses the attitude of man towards God which corresponds to the claim of God in the case concerned, it denotes not only the correctness of the external behaviour, but just as much the disposition."¹ That is, presumably, it is not merely obedience but believing obedience.

The applications of ne' man to God and to man both illustrate the close relationship between the Hebrew idea of faith and the covenant. It is faith which makes the covenant a reality. Yahweh is faithful and provided Israel remained faithful the promise of the covenant would be fulfilled. The New Covenant in Christ, as a covenant relation depends upon the faithfulness of God and the faith of the people. Faith appears as that which makes Christianity a reality. As Christianity is not entirely subjective, so faith

outstanding thought. He restates it thus: "In it (the Gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed - a righteousness through faith and for faith." The argument is ingenious but artificial. The obvious conclusion is that the revelation of righteousness is through faith and for faith. We have already suggested that this double-sidedness of faith may be construed as believing and obeying (p.73 above). Where believing means recognising the power of God and obeying involves submitting oneself to this power. In other words, faith is God's faithfulness and man's faithfulness dependent upon it. Nygren suggests that his rendering should be accepted in conformity with the second part of verse 17 "...righteous by faith..." and with the almost technical phrase δικαιοσύνη ἐκ πίστεως. Directly contrary to this it seems that 'justification by faith' may indeed be shorthand for the prior, and thus more primary statement: "righteousness... is revealed through faith by faith". Taking the more literal form of the Greek we might even translate it thus: "Righteous is revealed from faith to faith". Revelation, God's act is thus recognised as an act of faith. 'Justification by faith in Christ' encompasses man's response and God's action. It refers to the subjective and objective aspects of the atonement, demonstrates the intimacy of these aspects, and the error of separating them. Faith viewed externally, that is, as a religiously neutral observer might see it in the practice of another, is an attitude of man. Viewed from the inside, the very faith of man must recognise itself as the faithfulness of God.

We may only ask the question, since we cannot adequately demonstrate the answer: Have we not, in our Protestant emphasis on faith, regarded it only externally, that is, as a human attitude? An attitude, indeed passive and waiting for God to act, but too readily failing to recognise that he has acted and is acting.

1 Weiser, op cit, p.8

cannot be entirely a manward quality, or effort, or virtue, but it is the reality of the relationship between God and man. Since the Incarnation is pre-eminently the manifestation of this relationship in Christianity, faith is 'in Jesus Christ'.

The use of the verbal adjective 'amēn points in the same direction as the niph'al. Thus when in I Kings 1:36 Beneniah replies 'amēn to the king's command to appoint Solomon as king, this implies that Beneniah has understood the command, agrees with it, and desires that Yahweh may bring the King's word to pass, but also at the same time expresses his own obligation to contribute himself, all that he can do towards the execution of the order. Here too the idea of the relationship between the claim made by the saying and its realisation is present. It is also reflected in the LXX in which 'amēn is translated fourteen times by γενότο - 'Let it be thus', and only three times is it transliterated as ἀμήν. Thus, says Weiser,

"the term -mn- when used in this reference, comprises a double reference; the knowledge and recognition of the relation between the obligation and its realisation, and the fact that this obligation with all its practical consequences is binding on him who says amen." ¹

The reality of which faith speaks is thus seen to involve recognition and response. It is ὑπακοήν πίστεως - 'believing obedience'.

It may appear circular to describe 'faith' as 'believing obedience' because of the usually accepted synonymity between 'having faith' and 'believing', but 'believing' is thus rescued from its Greek use and meaning and clearly given the richer LXX connotations. We have no clear evidence of the Greek influence in Paul's context, but some idea of the Hellenistic Judaism which confronted the makers of the New Testament may be derived from Philo's concept of faith. Weiser sketches it for us. Philo was greatly influenced by the Greek and Platonic traditions, and the turning to God which he describes is not the response to God's Word or to His activity in history. Rather it is the result of contemplation, an attitude of mind, the most perfect of virtues. "Πίστις is therefore basically the firmness of a man, that which cannot be shaken." He replaced the Stoic idea of belief in oneself by belief in God, but it was still a goal for which man trained himself. "Indeed, πίστις is not a

1 Eultmann and Weiser, op cit, p.9

relationship of man with God, but, as in Stoicism, it is a relationship of man with himself." It is a psychological achievement rather than faith in the God who acts in history. Paul in writing of faith may well have been faced by a confusion of this largely 'classical' meaning with the Hebrew meaning which LXX tried to convey. Both meanings survive in English, but as Paul links ὑπακοήν and πίστειν he clearly opts for the Hebrew sense, thus we may regard 'believing obedience' as the real Pauline and New Testament meaning of faith.

The same doublet assists in protecting the concept of faith from corruption in the opposite direction. In reaction to Hellenisation, the Judaism of the intertestamental period 'legalised' faith so that it acquired the character of obedience to the Law. In consequence of the canonisation of the tradition and the solidifying of the relationship in static Law, faith was no longer loyalty to the activity of God experienced in history while trusting to his activity in the same sphere. "History is, as it were, suspended and a real sense of being bound up with it is lacking... Faith loses its character as decision... in a historical situation, and presents itself as a form of consciousness which having entered into the teaching of the scriptures may be experienced in them."¹ The working of the Spirit and the divine activity are limited to the past. Faith now looked forward to supernatural eschatological events. Salvation is no longer to be bestowed on future generations of the nation, but upon those who remained faithful to the letter of the Law. This in turn led to a doctrine of merit. The righteous man depended on his own merit. It was only the unrighteous who needed to cast himself on God's mercy and this act of faith became itself to be regarded as a meritorious act.² The New Testament retained something of the eschatological teaching of this period and broadened the idea that salvation is not of the nation but of the faithful, so that not only the faithful of Israel were included, but the faithful among the gentiles also. However, following the condemnation of legalism and Pharisaism by Jesus, the New Testament rejects the formalism of the law and the doctrine of merit. The most developed reaction to this formalism is Paul's doctrine of faith. But even the act of faith may come to be regarded as a meritorious act. This was

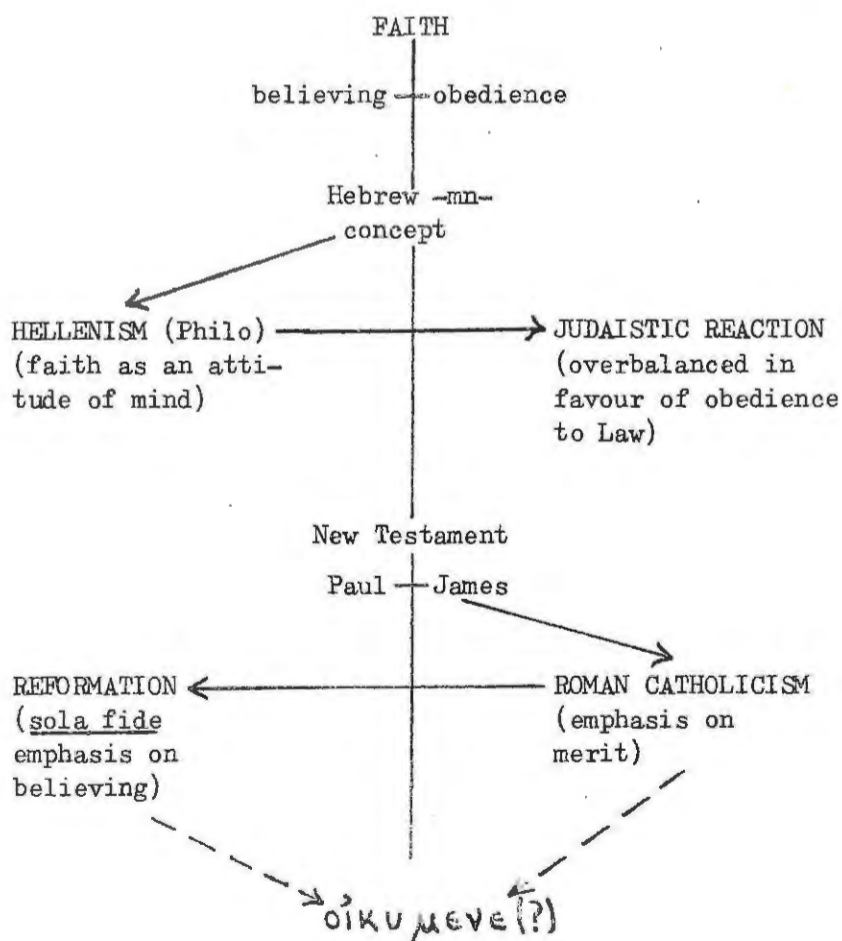
1 Bultmann and Weiser, op cit, p.51

2 ibid, p.50-52

apparent in the intertestamental period and more clearly in post-Reformation Protestantism.

The doublet 'believing obedience' protects faith from this formalism, for although it appears at the Reformation as something of a contradiction to sola fide, it speaks against the Pharisaical idea of faith as obedience, and it speaks to us (heirs of the Reformation) preventing us from negating faith as an activity. And clearly, what we have said of Pharisaism in this paragraph may equally well be applied to the Roman doctrines against which Luther reacted.

The concept of faith derived from the classical Hebrew idea via the LXX is double-sided. This double-sidedness may be epitomised in Paul's phrase 'believing obedience'. It is believing, trusting, fearing, and acknowledging God, and it is also obeying and being loyal to his commandments and will. The double-sidedness maintains a tension and a balance which may be represented diagrammatically.



5. "Faith in Christ Jesus"

We thus see how the New Testament adopted the Hebrew concept of faith. Πίστευεν when it was used to translate he^emīn took on a much stronger connotation of obedience than it had in Greek usage. It was believing and obeying and it also became related to the covenant idea. Both of these relations are carried into the New Testament meaning. Recognising this the question still remains: What did the New Testament add to the concept of faith to give it a specifically Christian sense? We have seen a transformation in the New Testament of the meanings of both 'reconciliation' and 'justification'. We may well expect a similar transformation in the meaning of 'faith' as we proceed from the Old Testament to the New.

Bultmann¹ says that there is such a transformation and that it is most clearly indicated by the formula πίστις (or πίστευεν) εἰς ...² which is almost exclusive to the New Testament. The πίστευεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν formula where it appears in the New Testament is seen always as the "gateway to salvation", but the πίστευεν εἰς ... formula is never applied to God, not even in the New Testament. In addition, it is also to be noted that the LXX forms which describe the faith relationship to God, namely, πίστευεν or πίστευεν ἐτι with the dative, are never applied to Christ. Thus there is a formal linguistic difference in the New Testament, between 'faith in God' and 'faith in Christ'. 'Faith in God' where it is used in the New Testament is retained in its LXX form.³

We conclude that faith is neither passive believing nor mere obedience to a divine law. It is a whole-hearted and zealous endeavour to seek and to do the will of God. But it is more than this for faith is not only the attitude or actions of the believer, but the relationship of God acting in men. This relationship is probably best illustrated by the Old Testament concept of covenant in which men willingly seek to obey what they believe to be the will of God, believing also that in so doing the ultimate purpose (God's and therefore

1 Bultmann, op cit, p.68f

2 John 2:11; Galatians 2:16 et al

3 Hebrews 11:6

theirs also) will be worked out. We have described this as God acting when men act.

To the covenant conception of believing-obedience we must attempt to add the specifically Christian content which is signified by the phrase "faith in Christ Jesus" - ΠΙΣΤΕΥΕΙΝ ΕΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΝ ἸΗΣΟΥΝ.

CHAPTER 4

THE RELATION OF SUBJECT TO OBJECT

1. The Nature of the Problem

When we seek to give content to the formula "faith in Christ Jesus" we come face to face with the problem of relating the subjective element of the atonement to the object of faith, Christ Jesus.

Thus far we have made a detailed study of the subjective aspect. We have concentrated on the details of what is meant by 'reconciliation', 'justification', and 'faith'. We have rejected the doctrine teaching that the atonement is objective because it represents a change in God. We have also rejected the so called 'subjective' teaching that the atonement is something which man achieves merely by following the example and moral teachings of Jesus. We have repeatedly emphasised that the atonement is subjective in so far as it is an action of God in man. It also appears as man's action for when man acts in accordance with the will of God, then God may be said to be acting. The action or the Word of God is indicative/imperative; by this we understand that what God speaks is, but it also appears to man as a call to act in accordance with the will of God. The subjective element is summed up in the word 'faith'. The object of faith is Christ Jesus.

Dale's attempt to understand the atonement, we have criticised as a disguised form of exemplarist subjectivism, but we were forced to acknowledge that he used the philosophic term 'objective' in the correct sense by relating it to facts or events in the world rather than metaphysical changes 'in the mind of God' or the 'status of Satan'.

Faith (God's action in man), the subjective element of the atonement must be related to Christ Jesus (God's action as history), the objective element. This relationship is expressed in the formula "faith in Christ Jesus". But what content can be given

to the formula? How does faith in a present individual relate to the event of Christ Jesus nearly two thousand years ago? What is the reality of the event of Christ Jesus? Theologians have tried to answer the last question in varying ways. Kierkegaard has emphasised the Incarnation. A great many believers have placed the emphasis exclusively on the crucifixion of Jesus. We have already criticised Dale and Nygren on this score. So extensive is the idea that the atonement is generally believed to be merely an explanation of how Jesus' death affects us. Rashdall placed more emphasis on the teaching of Jesus than on any other event recorded in the Gospels. The recorded events of the resurrection, ascension, and pentecost have caused a great deal of trouble for the historical critics of the New Testament. For this reason they have not played an adequate role in modern Protestant attempts to expound the atonement.

The questions of the reality of the event of Christ Jesus and the medium through which it is effective for us two thousand years afterwards cannot be answered separately for the medium must depend on the nature of the reality. The question of the reality of the Christ event raises questions on the meaning of history and also on the nature of the subject-object relationship. We will proceed by examining the subject-object relationship and then studying and criticising the way in which it has been applied to the historico-theological question of the atonement by Bultmann in his exposition of πιστεύειν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν.

2. The Subject-Object Relation

James Brown¹ writes: "It may be that this relation, instead of being the fixed quantum it has the air of being, may prove surprisingly variable in different contexts." He points out that the subject-object relation is one of the fundamentals of epistemology and suggests "that the truth will involve some sort of correct relation or proportion between these two elements of knowing - not necessarily an identical... proportion in all kinds of knowing - and that human thinking is liable to distortion when this correct balance is upset on one side or the other, in the peculiar circumstances of the reality investigated".² He also

1 James Brown, Subject and Object in Modern Theology, p.19

2 *ibid*, p.12

suggests that the popular distinction, which tends to identify truth with objectivity, and error with subjectivity, is a "confusion resulting from a failure to understand that, within the all-embracing subject-object relation... there is room for variation, according to the matters studied". While elimination of the subjective is a virtue in natural science it would not be a virtue in poetry, or in Christian theology where the question is complicated by the special relationship of its truth to history. We may add the suggestion that the success of science has prejudiced men in favour of regarding objectivity as truth to the extent that the necessary role of the subject is overlooked or minimised and the truth in areas where subjectivity must play a greater role is unappreciated.

It was in the critical philosophy of Kant that the modern formulation of the relation clearly emerged. His usage reversed the mediaeval terminology and linguistic survivals of the old usage survive and complicate our understanding of these terms. Thus a subject for discussion may well be an object or an event in the world. But this is not the only complication. Primarily subject and object are terms in epistemological theory. "To the generalities of knowledge belongs the fact, that it involves the appearance of an object to a subject, in a unique kind of relation which is constituted by their togetherness in which each implies the other. In this context the subject is not yet an existent; it is a logical (or epistemological) presupposition."¹ As soon as we begin our epistemological inquiry we transcend the subject-object relation (the relation becomes the object and I become the subject attempting to know about knowing).

In order to examine the subjective element of the relation we must place it in a personal knowing subject, and in this way the epistemological presupposition is given existence and ontological status. When we transcend the subject-object relation in order to examine it we make an object of the subject. This may appear to be a strange procedure, but it is what we in fact do, and so long as we recognise this we can avoid much confusion. More particularly we will avoid the mistake of regarding subjectivity as feeling or error, and also avoid the complementary mistake of regarding

1 *ibid*, p.21

'objective' or 'object' as reference to that which is unchangeable and true.

A further complicating factor, this time more especially in regard to the nature of the objective element of the relation, is the scientific description of sense experience. While similar illustrations may be drawn from a description of each of the five senses we will content ourselves with sight and colour. The scientist tells us that the door we see as blue is really colourless. It merely reflects a certain wavelength of electromagnetic wave which impinges on the eye and is interpreted by the brain, giving us the sensation which we describe as 'seeing blue'. By this and similar descriptions the scientist may attempt to persuade us that reality is a colourless, odourless, tasteless, and possibly even weightless and shapeless 'thing-in-itself'. It has its existence 'out there' in a sphere which can only be reached through instruments and scientific deductions. Because we generally assume that reality is a unity and unchanging we are often dismayed at the thought that the world which we commonly experience is 'unreal'. In so doing we make a complementary error to the one which regards objectivity as truth and subjectivity as error.

In contradiction of this error we must reassert that knowledge involves a relation between subject and object, that reality is the experience of this relation. John Baillie has defined reality as that which stands overagainst us.¹ Tillich's analysis of subjective and objective reason is even more useful and enlightening. He writes:

"Subjective reason is the structure of the mind which enables it to grasp and shape reality. The description of 'grasping' and 'shaping' in this definition is based on the fact that subjective reason always is actualised in an individual self which is related to its environment and to its world in terms of reception and reaction. The mind receives and reacts. In receiving reasonably, the mind grasps its world..."

The division between the grasping and shaping character of reason is not exclusive. In every act of reasonable reception an act of shaping is involved, and in every act of reasonable reaction an act of grasping is involved. We transform reality according to way we see it. Grasping and shaping the world are interdependent. In the cognitive realm this has been clearly expressed in the Fourth Gospel, which speaks of knowing the truth by doing the truth."²

1 J. Baillie, A Sense of the Presence of God, p.33

2 Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol.1, p.84f

Here is the clear recognition that reality is not independent of the subject. He grasps reality but he also shapes it. Man changes his world. Reality stands overagainst him but it is not immovable and unchangeable. It is ironic that science, which provides us with the technology for changing our world more rapidly and radically, has sometimes led men to believe that reality belongs to unchanging and impersonal objects.

Having described subjective reason as the rational structure of the mind, Tillich describes objective reason as the rational structure of reality which the mind can grasp and according to which it can shape reality. He gives examples:

"Reason in the philosopher grasps the reason in nature. Reason in the artist grasps the meaning of things. Reason in the legislator shapes society according to the structures of social balance. Reason in the leaders of a community shapes communal life according to the structure of organic independence."¹

He notes that:

"Objective reason is rational if, in the twofold process of reception and reaction, it expresses the rational structure of reality. The relation... is not static... (but) reason unites a dynamic with a static element in an indissoluble amalgamation. This refers not only to subjective reason but also to objective reason."²

Tillich's thought at this point is derived from Hegel, but fear of Hegelian immanentism should not discourage us from recognising the usefulness of the analysis. It is only when we equate God with reason and consume the individual subject in objective reason that we fall into the Hegelian error which has been so roundly condemned, by succeeding theology. What then is objective reason? What gives my world, that which stands overagainst me, its rational form?

Some interesting analysis by John Wilson³ may help us to give an answer to these questions. Wilson is concerned with the difference between 'experiential' and 'existential' statements. One of his examples concerns the 'seeing of a penny on the table'. A subject may describe his experience of seeing the penny in various ways. So long as he phrases his report in experiential language, for example, "I see what seems to me to be a penny on the table", he cannot be refuted for no

1 *ibid*, p.86

2 *ibid*

3 John Wilson, Philosophy and Religion, p.81f

other persons can be sure just what the subject experiences. If, however, he commits himself to a generalisation from experience and claims that "There is a penny on the table", he is making an existential claim, and if the experience of others does not corroborate his claim then he may be persuaded that he is mistaken. That is, he has committed himself and has been proved wrong. While the experiential claims cannot be refuted they are practically unimportant unless the additional claim, that they refer to objective reality, is made or implied, and this claim involves the taking of a risk. Normally the risk in this type of instance is not very great and we are almost unaware that we are taking it. For this reason we usually always assume that the experiential statement "I see a penny on the table" implies the existential situation of a penny on the table.

Enlarging on Wilson's analysis and example, let us suppose that a particular subject A is very insistent in claiming that there is a penny on the table despite the fact that his fellow B cannot see it. B knowing that his faculty of sight is usually trustworthy, may suggest to A that he is deluded, and behaving irrationally in this matter. While only A and B are present A may confidently counter with the contrary suggestion that it is B who is irrational and out of touch with reality. If B can call on another witness C who agrees with him that there is no penny on the table A may be persuaded that he has made a mistake, or he may claim that both B and C are out of touch with reality, though he may privately begin to doubt himself.

Our development of the analysis may now follow two routes. We will explore them both. Firstly, suppose that B and C gather an increasing number of witnesses to deny that A's penny exists. A may at some stage acknowledge that he is mistaken. If he persistently maintains his point of view and continually sees things that nobody else does he will generally be regarded as irrational and out of touch with reality. We might say that he has been caught up in his subjectivity and that he is out of touch with the objective world. It is probably because of this type of case history that subjectivity has become associated with error, but it is subjectivity functioning abnormally and not subjectivity in its essence which leads to error. Each of

the witnesses who found A to be in error did so on the basis of his experiential (subjective) judgment. The objectivity which they achieved depended on the correlation of their subjective experiences. That which stood overagainst them was not only the table-top-less-penny object but the corporateness of their subjective opinions. It was the radical breakdown of correlation between A's experiences and the experience of the majority of his contemporaries which led to their labling him as irrational. Objectivity and reality are thus dependent on corporateness. It is an important but not the only factor. If A had chosen to agree with the majority while still experiencing the phenomena of the penny, they would not have doubted his sanity but he would have. It would have seemed to him like a bad dream or an unreal experience. The other factor in reality is thus the subjective experience of what appears as, and normally is, reality and objectivity. We conclude that reality is not unchangeable and that it depends on the experience of the individuals in a community. Reality is the common experience which I share with others. My relation to the/my world is both intimate and shared.

Following the second line of possible development of our analysis, let us go back to the situation where A is opposed by B and C and let us suppose that A finds a witness D to support his contention. The A and D faction will then be able to stand firm against B and C and both parties will claim that the other is out of touch with reality. If both sides gather an increasing number of witnesses, both will gain in confidence in regard to their particular claim. They may try to persuade individuals from the opposition to see it their way. The two groups may accuse each other of a lack of objectivity and reality, although it would be increasingly difficult to accuse the opposition of subjectivism in the bad sense. An individual uncommitted either way would be unable to decide which group was in touch with reality without making a committal not merely of opinion but of himself to one or other of the groups. This personal committal would be necessary whether or not he was present at the time of the penny spotting, and his decision may well depend on the reality in regard to other matters which he has found among the individuals of either side.

In concluding the first line of analysis we said that reality is the common experience which I share with others. Now we have seen that communities can arise which differ on what they regard as reality. The communal aspect is important in deciding what reality is. The size of the community will play its part but this is not the sole or final criterion. A small community convinced by the vividness of their experience may well maintain the reality of what they believe against the contentions of a larger group who do not share the experience and claim that it is unreal. The communal and experiential factors are thus both important. We have been warned by Brown¹ against seeking to compare their relative importance. The correct proportion of subjective to objective will vary with the matter in hand. In our simple example which we have extended to an almost ridiculous degree, the communal factor may well carry more weight than the experiential, though the latter can never disappear altogether in the judgment of an individual. The same may be said for scientific judgments. But even here the matter is not straight-forward for one experiment (that is one scientific experience) may lead to the questioning of a generally accepted hypothesis. In matters of art and aesthetics experience is more important than objectivity or acceptance by the wider community, yet the artist must also take communication and the community into consideration.

In the matter of religious belief the complexity of the relation of subject to object is increased for in addition to the communal factor and experience there is the historical element. All these are interrelated and experience in religion must necessarily be more complex than 'seeing a penny'. Thus far we have confined ourselves to an untheological examination of the relation of subject to object. We must now seek to 'correlate'² the theology of the Christian revelation with our analysis. We will begin with a critical examination of Bultmann's exposition of *πίστευεῖν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν* and examine his, and some points of Tillich's understanding of the historical aspect of the faith.

1 See page 83 above

2 The term is Tillich's and it refers to the relation between reason and revelation. Systematic Theology, Vol.1, Part 1.

3. Bultmann's Interpretation of "Faith in Christ Jesus"

What content can be given to the distinction between the Old Testament idea of 'faith in God' and the New Testament 'faith in Christ Jesus' which is expressed in the formula $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\iota\varsigma \epsilon\iota\varsigma \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu \text{ } \text{'}\text{Ιησοῦν}$. Bultmann bases his answer on a conception which, he says, is taken for granted by every Christian teacher. It is expressed by St. Paul in Romans 10.9 "if you confess ($\delta\mu\omicron\lambda\omicron\gamma\epsilon\iota$) with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe ($\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\iota$) in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." The two tenets herein expressed form an important unity. The resurrection is not merely a remarkable occurrence, but it is "the fact of salvation on the strength of which Jesus became Lord". When either Lordship or resurrection is stated this whole relationship is meant. Even when the saving event is described in other terms it is always this whole that is meant. A useful point is made here but when we come to examine the historical analysis which Bultmann makes of the Christ-event we shall find it inconsistent with this emphasis on the resurrection.

In the Old Testament as we have seen, faith was related to the covenant of God with Israel, and it applied to the history of the nation. The individual practised faith as a member of the nation, and his faith was directed towards the future of the nation.¹ Bultmann writes:

"If the Old Testament relationship with God is called 'faith in God', then faith of this kind is different from the $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\iota\varsigma \epsilon\iota\varsigma \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu \text{ } \text{'}\text{Ιησοῦν}$ owing to the fact that the Old Testament faith - as being obedience and loyalty - is directed towards the God whose existence is always already taken for granted. But faith in Jesus Christ in its original and proper sense, is not obedience to the Lord who has always been known. On the contrary it is by faith that the existence of this Lord is first perceived and acknowledged. Faith lays hold of 'the conviction that for the believer this Lord, Jesus Christ, exists.'" ²

It is here that Bultmann's familiar emphasis on the Word emerges and also his particular view of history, as demanding existential decision. He continues:

1 Bultmann, op cit, p.41f

2 ibid, p.75f

"For this Lord first meets the believer only in the kerygma, and he believes in the strength of the kerygma... This never becomes a mere instructive piece of information, which might be dispensed with once it had become known, but always remains the foundation of the faith. For God instituted the word of reconciliation together with the Christ-event.¹ Therefore faith in the kerygma and in the person mediated by it are inseparable, and faith always remains a bold venture in the sense that it is based on the kerygma." ²

For Bultmann the risen Lord is mediated in the kerygma so that the formula πιστευεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν comes to express what is really a personal relationship. The bridging of the gap between the objective Christ-event and the subject's appropriation of it lies in the personal subjective confession of his Lordship. Belief in him means to acknowledge him as Lord and this is its own confirmation or verification. There can be no public proof of his Lordship, that is, his having been raised or his power of resurrection. Within the framework of πιστευεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν the relationship is personal and this is expressed, claims Bultmann, by calling upon the Lord;³ by sharing fellowship with him. Bultmann recognises this fellowship in the sharing of death and resurrection, prefigured by baptism;⁴ sharing in his suffering for his sake;⁵ and sharing in a fellowship of love, exultation, and joy.⁶

It will be noticed that Bultmann's concept of fellowship in Christ is rather limited to an individual and his Lord. Fellowship 'in Christ' may well have a far wider meaning than he allows. The word of the kerygma which comes to an individual does not come in vacuo, but it is mediated by the preaching of the Church. It is true that there can be no public proof of Jesus' Lordship, but as we have seen in the first part of this chapter, objectivity and reality are possible within a limited group. The Lordship of Christ while it is not public, is certainly acknowledged as a reality within the fellowship and community of the Church. The confession of Lordship which Bultmann has linked with the resurrection must also be linked with the corporate aspect of the Church which is expressed in the figure 'Body of Christ',⁷

1 cf. II Corinthians 5:18f

2 Bultmann, op cit, p.76

3 Romans 10:14

4 Romans 6:4,9; Galatians 2:20

5 Philippians 1:29

6 Bultmann, op cit, p.83

7 cf. J.A.T. Robinson, The Body. In this study of Pauline theology Bishop Robinson convincingly demonstrates by exegetical methods the importance of 'the Body' in describing the corporate nature of the

for it was by confession of Lordship and baptism that individuals were incorporated into the Church. A closer inspection of what Bultmann claims to be the expressions of a personal relationship, will reveal that the relationship is not merely personal but communal.

Summing up the distinction between the Old Testament and the New Testament conceptions of faith, Bultmann recognises that the Old Testament conception remains but fresh meaning is added. The new and old meanings are not necessarily exclusive of one another. Firstly, in the Old Testament 'belief' (involving loyalty and obedience) centres upon Yahweh by reason of his acts. There is no need to 'believe' in the acts since these are plain to see in the history of the nation. In the New Testament it is God's act itself which has to be believed, namely, "that the crucified Christ is also he who rose again, who is exalted, who is the Lord, that thus, what was done to him is a divine act of salvation - all this is not plain to see but is only made plain by the words of the preaching".¹

Secondly, the Old Testament covenant involved trust in the fate of the nation. In the New Testament trust is in "God's power to awaken life out of death, which will awaken us too as it awakened Christ. It looks forward to the completion of the work of salvation begun in Christ, which is brought to an end not in the glorious conclusion of national history but in the fulness of the Church".²

Finally, the 'obedience of faith' in the New Testament is not obedience to the commandments regulating law and justice in the nation's life, but believing obedience to the way of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Again we see Bultmann emphasising the personal and overlooking the communal. Here the communal aspect of the Old Covenant and the nation is contrasted with the belief of an individual in Jesus Christ as Lord. We may venture to suggest that the New Covenant is as corporate as the Old Covenant. It

Church and its significance in understanding the resurrection and the sacraments.

1 Bultmann, op cit, p.83

2 ibid, p.84

is only the manner of incorporation into the covenant community which differs. The Jew was born into the community of the nation. The Christian has to be 'reborn'¹ into Christ by baptism and the Spirit. The use of the birth image strikingly emphasises our point.

Turning to the subjective element in the formula, Bultmann sees πίστις as "the act in virtue of which man separates himself from the world and turns round completely towards God in response to God's eschatological deed in Christ. It is the act on which the new eschatological existence of the Christian is founded and it is the attitude which goes with it. πίστις, being the attitude which constitutes man's existence, has complete control over his life."²

We must immediately record our suspicion of faith described as 'the act' particularly when it appears as simply a man's act. We reiterate our previous conviction that faith is more than a conscious response on the part of a man. We have rejected the idea that faith is the moment of conversion or that faith is the condition in a man through which his salvation is achieved. Described as 'the attitude' it is saved from the implication of momentariness and given the idea of continuity, yet an 'attitude' is in danger of being conceived passively. It might be more accurate, in our view, to describe faith as the continuing action of a man responding, or corresponding, to God's action in Christ.

Faith described as 'attitude' may be conceived as psychological, but Bultmann guards against this interpretation. His work is not psychological, he claims, but depends on an existential dialogue with history.³ He writes: "Faith is exhibited by Paul as a historical, not a psychological possibility."⁴ And he points out that the synoptic gospels do not attempt to describe the personality of Jesus. The quest for the historical Jesus has proved that this is impossible. We must reject the psychological approach and find enlightenment on the contingencies of our existence through history.⁵

1 cf. John 3:3f

2 Bultmann, op cit, p.85

3 Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, p.11

4 Bultmann, Kittel's Key Words: Faith, p.87

5 Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, p.13f

In Bultmann's concept of the faith the subjective and objective aspects of the atonement are drawn together, but in a puzzling manner. Bultmann's is an existential description and the emphasis is laid heavily on the subject. Subject and object are drawn together in the faith of the subject. What are the consequences for the object? C. Wehrung¹ has said this about it:

"While orthodoxy as a whole speaks of an event which can be objectively established, something which happens, and remains outside of us, to which faith is ultimately related, Bultmann - and this is something which he has very much at heart - relates this event so exclusively to faith that faith absorbs it entirely..."

Can this mean that when Bultmann has de-mythologised the saving event, it appears to have done nothing outside the believer? Does the reality of the divine act consist wholly in an intimate approach to the soul?² Can such an event have any objective reality?

Bultmann himself appears to have been ambiguous on this point in some of his early writings, and many of his critics and interpreters have concluded that the reality of the response to the Word, preached or read, is entirely subjective. The subject merely chooses to say that he owes his salvation to the grace of God.

But Malevez suggests that Bultmann can be interpreted 'objectively'. It may be said that:

"The divine event has an objective reality, that God has done something in Christ, apart from us; but, says Bultmann, we cannot see this 'something', this 'object', nor can we prove it; on the contrary it eludes all our methods of historical investigation; reason cannot fathom it; it is apprehended by faith alone."³

This 'objectivity' rests upon Bultmann's claim that his existential interpretation is historical rather than psychological. Because the atonement is historical it is objective. But Bultmann does not understand history in the commonly accepted manner.

1 Quoted by L. Malevez, The Christian Message and Myth, p.67

2 *ibid*

3 *ibid*

The essence of history cannot be grasped by 'viewing' it as we view our natural environment in order to orient ourselves with it... When man observes nature he perceives there something objective which is not himself. When he turns his attention to history, however... he is considering a living complex of events in which he is essentially involved. He cannot observe this complex objectively... for every word which he says about history he is saying at the same time something about himself... Our seeing of Jesus as a part of the history in which we have our being... must be in the nature of a continuous dialogue with history.

Dialogue does not come as a conclusion, as a kind of evaluation of history after one has first learned the objective facts. On the contrary the actual encounter with history takes place only in the dialogue. We do not stand outside historical forces as neutral observers; only when we are ready to listen to the demand which history makes on us do we understand at all what history is about.¹

Can this view of history be regarded as objective? Bultmann maintains that it can, and he calls into question the commonly accepted criteria of objectivity.

"This dialogue is no clever exercise of subjectivity on the observer's part, but a real interrogating of history, in the course of which the historian puts this subjectivity of his in question and is ready to listen to history as an authority... Such an interrogation of history does not end in complete relativism... Precisely the contrary is true; whatever is relative to the observer - namely all the presuppositions which he brings with him out of his own epoch and training and his own individual position within them - must be given up, that history may actually speak. History, however, does not speak when a man stops his ears, that is, when he assumes neutrality, but speaks only when he comes seeking answers to the questions which agitate him. Only by this attitude can we discover whether an objective element is really present in history and whether history has something to say to us.

There is an approach to history which seeks by its method to achieve objectivity; that is, it sees history only in a perspective determined by the particular epoch or school to which the student belongs. It succeeds indeed, at its best, in escaping the subjectivity of the individual investigator, but still remains completely bound by the ² subjectivity of the method and is thus highly relative".

Bultmann's analysis of history is illuminating even if not wholly acceptable. The attempt to achieve a methodological objectivity by adopting some general criteria of historicity does appear to be somewhat arbitrary as he claims. For example, the idea that an alleged historical event requires the corroboration

1 R. Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, p.11f

2 *ibid*

of at least two independent witnesses before it may be taken as true is arbitrary. What is the criterion of 'independent'? No two people witnessing the same event can be absolutely independent of each other. They have at least to be in a temporally and spacially similar circumstance, and they may very likely be sharers of the same 'world view'. Thus the historians attempt to be objective is limited by a certain arbitrariness derived from the subjective element in the choice of criterion. The acceptance of a criterion within a group or a school does however give them a certain objectivity within their group. Since even the 'seeing of a penny' has a necessary subjective element it is not surprising that historical decisions have a similar element. There is no way of deciding on the reality of the past without taking some existential risk. Even the most carefully derived historical method must contain some remnant of subjectivity. The historian cannot escape from his interpretation of history, so that he can stand over against it and declare "that is history, objective and independent of my interpretation of it". Thus to some degree at least Bultmann is right in saying that history must be existentially confronted.

If we could not entirely escape from subjectivity in the matter of 'seeing a penny' it is clear that we cannot escape from subjectivity of some degree in history, and the disparaging of various attitudes towards history because they involve this element is futile. At the same time it would seem to be necessary to recognise the importance of the objective facts and events.

Bultmann is not very clear about what he means by objective or explicit on how he would relate objectivity to history. Malevez's study of Bultmann has not led him to any certainty in this respect. All he can assert is that Bultmann sometimes appears to be subjective in his exposition and sometimes objective. When Bultmann is interpreted objectively the object is qualified as that which can only be apprehended by faith.¹ But Bultmann's understanding of faith lacks corporateness and therefore objectivity.

At first sight Bultmann's division of history into historisch (an event or fact which took place on a certain date, which can be verified in our ordinary experience with the aid of the historical method) and geschichtlich (an event not necessarily

1 Malevez, op cit, p.67-68

connected with a date, and not provable by 'historical evidence') appears to be unacceptable.¹ We wonder how an event which has no place in time, and which cannot be shown to have taken place can have any connection with history. In Bultmann the geschichtlich significance of an event depends on its existential effect on those who are confronted with it, independently of whether or not it can be historically verified. Is Bultmann cheating when he claims in this analysis that faith rests on history and objectivity rather than psychology and subjectivity? Can an event be said to be historical and thus objective when it is significant only to separate individuals?

Bultmann's distinction between historisch and geschichtlich emerges clearly as we see it applied to the event of the Cross. It is an historisch event, he says, and can be understood by an historian when it is viewed simply as the fact of the crucifixion of Jesus. But in the Christian message this 'historicity' has assumed 'cosmic dimensions' expressed in mythological representations that 'objectivize' in a manner unacceptable to Bultmann. These representations include the idea of the crucifixion of the pre-existent Incarnate Son of God, the victim whose blood expiates our sins making vicarious satisfaction for the world. These and similar myths or symbols Bultmann wishes to reject for they speak in terms which he regards as no longer meaningful or understood. Faith should express something entirely different from this mythical conception. The Cross means, not only remission of punishment but liberation from sin and victory over its power. He claims that if the meaning of the Cross is divested of this mythical form its true character will emerge more clearly. He suggests that the mythological representations were originally employed to help the readers or hearers of the Word to understand the significance and the geschichtlich implication of the Cross. The Cross has the value of a geschichtlich event, that is, it affects the whole of humanity in relation to God for it achieves the 'liberating judgment' on men.

It is apparent that Bultmann regards the mythical representation as archaic, and thus the need for de-mythologising arises. The new formulations which he envisages will not be mythological, but that does not mean that they cease to be geschichtlich, or

1 The descriptions and following discussion are drawn from Maloney, op cit, p.73f

that they now become literal statements about historical events.

Not only are the New Testament representations archaic but they also 'objectivize' in a manner unacceptable to Bultmann. Does the demythologised 'Christ-event' avoid this objectivization? We find Bultmann confusing at this point for he tries to discredit these objectivisations and substitute an existential encounter with the Word, but in other contexts he claims that the dialogue with history is 'no mere subjectivity'.

When Bultmann says that the Cross achieves a liberating judgment he does not mean that Christ has earned our salvation by his death, for he rejects the idea of vicarious satisfaction as mythological.

"The judgment of God upon us is an act of God, which, considered from the point of view of its divine principle, is in some way outside of time; the Cross accomplishes judgment in this sense, that it gives it its temporal expression; on the historic Cross of Christ God manifests the condemnation which he has passed upon all men; it is there that he makes known to us our personal condition as sinners, .. To sum up: the Cross of Christ is rather a statement of fact than something 'done'."¹

In Bultmann's conception this 'statement of fact' is prolonged by God himself, all through our history. To do this the act of God, after having erected the Cross of Christ in history, through the apostles creates the kerygma. By means of the apostolic kerygma from that moment the judgment is always present and always contemporary. Thus an eternal act of God, in the act of preaching becomes an act which is always temporal, and a truly geschichtlich event, since it accompanies us throughout the course of history and continually summons us to obedience in the duties and claims of the present moment.² The judgment has to be appropriated by us by faith, for the historisch event of Jesus' crucifixion does not reveal any sign of its transcendence and that is why it escapes the speculative impersonal consideration of the historian; he cannot grasp the geschichtlich significance. It is in the confession of faith alone that the authentic liberation is reached.³

1 Malevez, op cit, p.75

2 ibid

3 ibid, p.76

"The end of history has not to be pushed back into a state of the world to come; it realises itself from today, in the encounter; the end is already present, the age of the eschaton has begun".

We make three observations on this analysis of Bultmann's. Firstly, the confession of faith in Jesus as Lord has significance only when it is made within a community which shares the experience it seeks to convey. If 'authentic liberation' is only private existential encounter and not shares in a community there is no point in making a confession. It will only be a noise from which those who hear us make it may try to deduce some indication of our changed psychological state. The Church plays an essential part in confession. This role is not fully recognised by Bultmann and many other Protestant theologians.¹

Secondly, a remark on the 'realised eschatology' to which Bultmann here subscribes and which is favoured by many theologians: Eschatology which is only a transliteration of the Greek for 'doctrine of the last things' is often invested with undue 'mystery' and thrown like a blanket over all the New Testament promises of the Kingdom. Eschatology may be 'realised' as parts of Scripture seem to suggest but it is only a partial realisation. The Gospel is not made more acceptable to man by divesting it of its promised rewards.

Finally, without the continuing care of the Church there could be no guarantee that the kerygma will survive. Essentially it is not our preaching but the apostle's' preaching, deriving from their common experience of Jesus life and death, his appearance to them after the resurrection and the outpouring of his Spirit upon them when "they were all together in one place".² The gift of the Holy Spirit is imparted through baptism or through the laying on of the apostle's hands. Thus if in our present preaching the kerygmatic Word is conveyed it is because we preach from message of the apostles preserved by the Church in the Holy Scriptures and because we are guided by the Holy Spirit given to those who are incorporated into Christ.

1 Where the Church does appear in Bultmann's theology it is conceived in a vague eschatological sense unrelated to the common use of the word and the historic Church. "The community (ἐκκλησία) is an eschatological conception, and when it is described in terms of the 'Body of Christ',... it is a geschichtlich phenomenon, in this sense, it is accomplished within (divine) history." (cf. Malevez, op cit, p.19)

2 Acts 2:1

It is very difficult to see just how we can apply 'objectivity' to Bultmann's understanding of the Cross. 'Objectivizing' is rejected and yet the Cross or the kerygma somehow presents the objective element accepted by faith. The content of the kerygma in its demythologised form cannot claim any traditional objectivizations. What then is the content of the Word?

It has been suggested above that one of the common errors in theories of the atonement is the exclusive emphasis which is given to the Cross. This appeared in the teaching of Dale which we examined in Chapter One. Bultmann is guilty of the same error but he does not make it unconsciously. The resurrection is not overlooked, it is rejected as mythical. While he admits the historic reality of the crucifixion of Christ and builds his idea of geschichtlich significance of the Cross around it, the resurrection is treated in a different way. Demythologising involves the total rejection of the resurrection as an empirical event. Not only the New Testament setting, but the phenomenon of the return of a dead man into this world is rejected. Barth has remarked that Bultmann thinks there is nothing to be said about the risen Christ, about his life after death, about the assurance of his victory over death which he brought to his disciples, about his fellowship with them before they were called to be the bearers of the message. The disciples did not really behold the glory of God in his Incarnate Word, risen and living before their eyes.¹ In Bultmann's terms we cannot even say that the resurrection was a transcendent and not an empirical event. It forms no part of the 'saving event' as elucidated by him rather the mythical story of the resurrection introduced into the kerygma is seen as an attempt to assure its hearers of the victory which accompanies the acceptance of the judgment of the Cross.² Faith in the Cross and in the resurrection is for Bultmann faith in the Word of the preaching. We cannot demand of it any credentials in the firm of this-worldly phenomena, not without resorting to mythology. He acknowledged that on his interpretation faith is saved from blind arbitrariness only because it answers our secret longings.

1 *ibid*, p.83

2 *ibid*, p.87

This attempt briefly to outline Bultmann's understanding of the Cross and resurrection and their relation to history and objectivity certainly fails to do justice to all the intricacies of his thought. However it is not on the basis of intricacies that we criticise him, but on the broad issue that his attempt to demythologise and avoid the scandal of unnecessary confusion in order to present the necessary scandal of the Cross demanding decision, has failed. He presents us, not with the Word demanding our decision, but with a Word based and yet not based on the crucifixion of Jesus, a Word to confront us objectively yet devoid of any objective or intelligible content. Bultmann has rejected the criterion of authority in his method of presenting the Word, and seeing that intelligibility is his only remaining criterion our criticism must be particularly damaging.

Malevez, rightly observes:

"As a typical Protestant theologian Bultmann assigns to preaching an outstandingly soteriological role, which is far more important than that of the sacraments, of which he simply says in passing, and rather vaguely, that in these also, in some way or another, the eschatological presence is realised."¹

Going back to Bultmann's exegetical article on faith², we find one of his rare references to the sacraments, in this instance baptism. In attempting to guard against the psychological interpretation of what he has to say about faith he points out that,

"Faith is exhibited by Paul as historical, and not a psychological possibility. According to Paul the salvation effected in history is made real for the believer not in religious experience, but in the baptism performed on him."

He refers us to Galatians 3:27-29:

"For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

It is remarkable that Bultmann can call upon St. Paul in support of his exegesis and yet give so little emphasis to what Paul has to say. The confrontation of the Word may be suitably called

1 *ibid*, p.89

2 Bultmann, Kittel: Bible Key Words: Faith, p.87

a religious experience, but it is clearly distinct from baptism. We shall illustrate with one dilemma in which this error lands Protestant theology.

As we have seen the reality of faith is described by Bultmann as an encounter with the Word. Where infant baptism is practised the kerygmatic confrontation of the children does not precede the performance of the sacrament. This is possible only in denominations or sects where 'believers' baptism' is practised. Assuming that we have other good reasons for maintaining the practice of infant baptism, we cannot associate faith exclusively with a conscious response to the kerygma, not unless we reduce baptism to something less than the sacramental initiation of the child into Christ's Church. The dilemma is particularly acute in a subjective theology of atonement. We need to relate subject to object in our doctrine of atonement in such a way as to allow the sacrament to have its full significance, even where the baptism is performed on infants.

We have criticised Bultmann's lack of objectivity in expounding on the 'Christ-event'. We have tried to show how this error is linked with the placing of almost exclusive emphasis on the Word, at the cost of an adequate consideration of the Church and the sacraments. We have found his division of history into geschichtlich and historisch unconvincing and yet this analysis leads us into the recognition of a common and equivocal use of 'historical'.

4. History and Reality

'Historical' is often used in two different senses and the failure to see this is partly responsible for the difficulties which the nineteenth century historical criticism of the New Testament has given Protestant theologians. It must be recognised that history can only provide us with a measure of probability that an event has occurred in a particular way. It is impossible to lay down any fixed criterion by which we may ascertain that a past event, or the description we give of it, is absolutely true and accurate. Even when we confine ourselves to the barest outline of an event and claim factuality for it we are taking some measure of risk, however small. The more detail we attempt to give the greater becomes the probability of error. Some events

are well attested and some not. An attempt to set down some standard of attestation proves to be extremely difficult. We can never escape from a certain arbitrariness in deciding whether an alleged event is historical or not. There is no distinct point on a scale of probability above which we can claim factuality without involving risk and decision. There is not even a clear scale of probability. The historian is equipped with only a very broad concept of what is likely to be acceptable evidence for himself and for his contemporaries. He has to examine the evidence that he can find and on the basis of this make a reasonable claim.¹ Strictly, history, or rather an historian, (for on this analysis there can be no absolutely fixed store of history) can only examine the evidence and then make a claim about it in general terms, for example: 'Event A probably happened at a certain time'; or 'It is unlikely that A happened'; or 'A might have happened'. Yet, we often claim that events in fact happened. As historians we are allowed a small leeway. If we claim too much we become suspect as historians, but for practical reasons it is often necessary to take a risk and make a claim which goes beyond the available historical evidence. It must be understood that we are not then necessarily going contrary to history but beyond the limits of the usefulness of the discipline.

Events of the past determine our attitudes and reactions in the present and future. Knowing what may have happened then determines our expectation of what may happen now or in the future. We assume that there is some connection between past reality and present reality, and we have to make a decision on what the past reality was. For this reason we have to assume that certain events happened in fact, and when we act upon them we commit ourselves to them. Although history provides us with only a probability we often have to behave as though we were certain. This is genuine behaviour and the 'as though' should not be understood to imply a tongue-in-cheek attitude or anything like it. The dialectic of

1 M. Rowe, Law, Reason and Religion, a thesis presented to the Faculty of Divinity of Rhodes University, 1964, provides a useful discussion of 'reasonableness' in law, and illustrates its close similarity to the evidence on which faith is based. cf. p.79f

doubt and certainty in faith is apparent when we behave as though we are certain. The as though is meaningful and the certainty is genuine.

The past is often a factor when we have to choose one line of action rather than another, or one attitude rather than another. Our choice involves commitment and risk and this includes commitment to what we believe of the past. We make an existential decision, in the true sense of the phrase. We decide what is reality and act upon it. This sort of decision and risk applies to every existential claim. Certainly the size of the risk varies greatly and often it is so small that we are not usually aware that we are taking it.¹

All historical statements of any significance imply this risk, and generally the chance taken is far greater than in our example of 'seeing a penny'. In the Christian faith, often characterised as a historical religion, and based on events of nearly 2,000 years ago, commitment involves a great deal of risk, and the acceptance of this risk is a part of what is meant by faith.² We conclude that history has both a historisch and a geschichtlich aspect, but the two cannot be separated as Bultmann has tried to do. History always involves a factual claim and these factual claims are made (when they are not trivial) for practical reasons. We base our attitudes, actions, and decisions on them. The practical and existential risk is taken in order to bring us into contact with what for us is reality. When Bultmann separates the historisch from the geschichtlich he is assuming that reality (the historical facts) is independent of the existential (geschichtlich) aspect; whereas the existential risk that we take is an attempt to bring us into contact with reality, the reality which consists of both the events and

1 p.86f above

2 Kierkegaard has placed great emphasis on the existential risk. He talks of it in terms of a 'leap' from reason to the passionate grasping of the paradox of the Incarnation. The medium of this 'leap' is faith. In relating personal faith to the Christ-event he speaks of an infinite passion of subjectivity hanging on for very life to an objective uncertainty. Kierkegaard's quarrel with the Danish Church and his personal reserve may well have prevented him from giving expression to the corporate aspect of faith. In this respect he shares the common weakness of many Protestant theologians, including Bultmann.

the significance that is claimed for them. Events do not consist only in men being born and dying but also in what they did, what they taught and what they said, and the effect they had on those with whom they came in contact. All this is the concern of history.

But history has limitations which must be recognised. We have seen that it can only present us with probabilities which we have to turn into significant fact by risk and decision. There is another limitation which is not so readily recognised. It is the limitation which we overlook when we dismiss an alleged event as non-factual on the grounds that there is insufficient evidence for it. Correctly we should not dismiss any event unless we have sufficient evidence that it did not happen in fact (but we must, of course, be careful not to argue from silence). Bultmann maintains that the Christ-event has geschichtlich significance, but it is only loosely related to the events of Jesus. When, as in 'historical criticism', events are dismissed as non-factual simply on the basis of a lack of evidence, the factual basis of Christianity appears to be in grave danger, and this is the motive behind Bultmann's separation of geschichtlich from historisch. We have tried to show that factuality is reached not only by historical examination, but by both historical probability and existential decision, working together in the same direction. Where the historical evidence is weak the existential risk must be greater. Yet the risk must be taken where a decision about events greatly influences our lives.

Bultmann has shown that in the specifically Christian usage of the New Testament πιστεῦσαι εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν, consisted in "recognising Jesus as Lord and at the same time accepting (that is, 'believing to be true') the miracle of the resurrection."¹

1 Bultmann, Kittel; Bible Key Words: Faith, p.70

However, some modern Protestant theologians, including Bultmann, appear to be reluctant to accept the reality of the resurrection. They have consciously or unconsciously assumed that the absence of non-Christian historical verification 'proves' that it was not a factual event. They have failed to discern that this circumstance really only implies that the event cannot be supported by 'independent' (that is, non-Christian) witnesses. That there should be no independent witness is not surprising, for the experience inevitably led to committal and confession of Jesus' lordship.¹

The evidence of interested parties is commonly assumed to be suspect and this assumption is partly responsible for hesitation in accepting the Christian witness to the fact of the resurrection. It overlooks an important difference between the nature of Christian witness and, say, the witness of a man in court, or a second-hand car salesman. In court or in second-hand car sales the testimony commits another without committing the witness or salesman. The Christian witness is one who is himself committed. As one who also takes the risk into which he attempts to persuade his hearers, he is more likely to present reality than a used-car salesman. The witness of the Apostles and the early Church in the scriptures should therefore not be minimised on account of their committal to "Faith in Christ Jesus".

5. Tillich and the 'Reality of the Christ'

In dealing with the reality, of Jesus as the Christ, Tillich points to the importance of recognition and committal in establishing the 'Christian event'. He writes:

"Jesus as the Christ is both a historical fact and a subject of believing reception. One cannot speak of the truth about the event on which Christianity is based without asserting both sides."²

He speculates on the consequences of a breakdown in the continuity of the believing reception of the Christ:

"If Christ is not the Christ without those who receive him as the Christ, what would it mean for the validity of this message if the continuity of the church as the group which receives him as the Christ were interrupted or destroyed?"³

1 John 20:29

2 Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol.2, p.113

3 ibid, p.114

He attempts to answer this question by recognising that Jesus is the Christ for us, and suggesting that in another historical continuum or in another world (supposing that the earth is not the only populated heavenly body) there may be other Christs. Tillich's transcending of our world is made more of a reality by the possibility of world-wide conflagration, but this issue need not concern us here. What is important for our point of view is Tillich's recognition that the reality of what he calls the 'Christian event' depends not only on bare fact but also on our reception of the fact. We would prefer to draw the fact and its reception rather closer than Tillich does, recognising that reality and fact while they must stand overagainst us have no meaning except in relation to subjects for whom they are realities. While Tillich claims that Jesus as the Christ is both historic fact and the subject of believing reception, we would prefer to say that there is no historic factuality without believing reception, and that Tillich's division follows a popular misconception. There are no bare facts. Factuality is seen differently by different subjects. It has its objective nature as a result of the correlation of the experience of different subjects. While we may discuss the idea of factuality in the abstract in this manner, allowing it to vary with the reception of different subjects, it must be noted that what the individual accepts as fact he must support by his committal to it so that reality for the subject is stable and unvarying and has a distinctly different quality to dreaming for example. This is the sort of quality which David Hume found in his game of blackgammon when his philosophic scepticism led him to 'doubt' his own existence.

Here Tillich also recognises the Church as the community which preserves the message of Jesus as the Christ, but for him the Church appears to fulfil only the historical task of reception and preservation. He coins the term New Being to indicate the medium through which the statement as he understands it¹ becomes effective for us, and he says that there is a type of theology which, in the name of the 'uniqueness' of Jesus Christ cuts off the contemporary Christian of today from direct connection with the New Being in Jesus Christ.

1 Tillich describes the doctrine of atonement as the description of the effect of the New Being in Jesus Christ on those who grasped by it, are enabled to overcome their state of estrangement.

"(The contemporary Christian) is asked to jump over the millennia to the years '1 to 30' and to subject himself to the event upon which Christianity is based. But this jump is an illusion because the very fact that he is a Christian and that he calls Jesus the Christ is based on the continuity through history of the power of the New Being. No anti-Catholic bias should prevent Protestant theologians from acknowledging this fact." ¹

While recognising the New Being "as appearing in a personal life", he points out that it has "a spatial breadth in the community of the New Being..."

The appearance of the Christ in an individual person presupposes the community out of which he came and the community which he creates." ²

We can agree with Tillich on this description of the Church, prefigured in the Old Testament and created through the life, death, resurrection, and glorification of Jesus Christ and by the outpouring of his Spirit on the community of his disciples. What is difficult to discover is his motive for the title New Being. As a description of the Church in its New Testament conception 'New Being' has its value, but Tillich appears to want to hide the true nature of the Church behind this title which he has coined. It may be that he hopes by this device of terminology to overcome the Protestant bias against recognising the Church as the community in which the atonement is effectively realised, or it may be that he entertains no hope that "Church" can be rescued from its commonly understood application to the buildings in which Christians worship or the denominations into which they have divided themselves.

In dealing with the 'Christian event' itself Tillich concentrates on the Cross and resurrection. The crucifixion of Jesus is recognised as a historically attested fact which has taken on great symbolic meaning for the believer. Contrarily, the resurrection is regarded as first a symbol and then a fact. Tillich recognises in the resurrection claims of the Scriptures, a familiar myth "which plays a major role in some mystery cults". He attempts to discover the nature of the fact which the resurrection symbol seeks to convey. The Scriptural description of the resurrection he regards as a rationalisation of the event interpreting it in physical categories. Spiritualistic and psychological attempts to describe the reality

1 Tillich, op cit, p.156

2 ibid

of the event are also dismissed, Finally, he suggests that the reality of the resurrection may be discovered in the negativity which is overcome in it. This is the overcoming of the "disappearance of him whose being was the New Being.

It is the overcoming of his disappearance from present experience and his consequent transition into the past except for the limits of memory... In an ecstatic experience the concrete picture of Jesus of Nazareth became indissolubly united with the reality of the New Being. He is present whenever the New Being is present. But this presence does not have the character of a revived body, it has the character of a Spiritual presence." ¹

Tillich suggests that this may be called the 'resuscitation' theory of the resurrection and claims that it keeps nearer to the oldest source in the New Testament (I Corinthians 15) than the physical theory in the Gospels. This claim is based on an overemphasis of the time factor in the comparatively short period between the writing of the Pauline letters and the synoptic Gospels. It is true that Paul has no references to the empty tomb, but it is a matter of opinion whether his references are more concomitant with the Gospels or with Tillich's resuscitation idea.

Although Tillich talks in terms of an historical examination unprejudiced either by faith or science we must suspect that the difficulties which he and other Protestant theologians have in accepting the reality of the Christian event are based on an overriding emphasis given to scientific thinking. The modern success of science has prejudiced our thinking in other fields. Science suggests by induction that men do not rise from the dead. But if the Christ-event is unique we should not expect science or the inductive method to help us in theology. This is often overlooked. Kierkegaard has emphasised the uniqueness of the Incarnation. The uniqueness of Christ's resurrection, as the earnest of all who will be raised in him, may be proclaimed in similar fashion.

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We conclude our discussion on the relation of the subjective element of faith to the objective events of Christ Jesus, by suggesting that when the resurrection is given its rightful role in atonement doctrine, and the ascension and pentecost are also

allowed to play their full part in theology, the establishment of the Church will be seen to be one of the central achievements of the Christ-event. On a purely historical level this is clearly the case - the Church began with Jesus' ministry and that of his disciples. We have examined and criticised the opinions of Bultmann and Tillich on the relation between subject and object. We have attempted to emphasise the reality of the resurrection alongside the reality of the Cross. We must recognise that the ascension poses difficulties, not historical, but scientific, of an even more serious nature than the resurrection. Whereas arguments based on the whereabouts of the molecules of Jesus' body are facile as an attempt to discount the resurrection, the ascension into a heaven which is not 'up there' must be understood symbolically or parabolically.

However, the first task of Christianity is not to 'explain' the reality of the Christ-event to scientific thinking, but to proclaim the reality of the Gospel of reconciliation which is shared by all those who are 'in Christ'; those who have been baptised into his Body, who partake of his body and blood in the thanksgiving and sacrifice of communion, who seek his will in the Word, and who are guided by his Holy Spirit.

We have dealt mainly with the 'subjective' element of the atonement and have found that its meaningfulness was derived from its relation to the objective 'Christ-event' mediated in the faith of the Church and that the significance of the event includes the establishment of the Church as the medium through which atonement ordinarily becomes effective.

Recent studies of the images of 'sacrifice', 'ransom' and 'Christus Victor' confirm these conclusions. The sacrificial figure was distorted by the mediaeval idea of the Mass, and Anselm's rationalisation placed the emphasis on individuality. Reformation reaction against the institutionalisation of the Church propagated the emphasis on personal religion. Modern rationalisations of substitution result in illustrations which reduce it to a psychological level, and exemplarist theology flourishes at the popular level. But studies such as those of

Yerks¹ and the article on ἱλαστήριον in Kittel's Theological Lexicon of the New Testament show the communal aspect of the sacrificial rites of Israel from which the New Testament images are drawn. The aspect of community in the Church is thus re-emphasised.

In a similar fashion the picture of Christ's conquest needs to be rescued from the rationalisations of the scriptural imagery as found, for example, in Origen. A reinterpretation of the scriptural references to principalities and powers in terms of the communal and social pressures which bind the individual is found in Tillich's conception of Freedom and Destiny, and in Caird's lectures on 'Principalities and Powers'. Aulén favours the Christus Victor idea as a description of the atonement. In Christus Victor he emphasises the imagery of the Christus Victor scheme as opposed to the rationalisation of sacrifice and substitution. His concept of temporary dualism is enlightening but what he describes in Christus Victor is virtually a three-sided contest. God, Satan, and man are involved. Ironically man is least involved and atonement seems to be a metaphysical war between God and Satan, with man as an almost inanimate prize. In The Faith of the Christian Church, Aulén seems to recognise that the temporary dualism is between God and man; more especially man in community (cf. Tillich's concept of demonic, also estrangement). The victory is achieved by the establishment of a new community in which the dualism is overcome. Tillich has referred to the community as the New Being. We prefer to relate it more closely to the Church. The Church continues the fight in which Christ was victorious. It is the victory of Christ which makes her confident of her ultimate success despite the apparent enormity of the odds in confronting the world, and in the fifth column which has riddled the historic Church. It is this fifth column which prompts us to try to conceive the Church as an eschatological ekklesia. The conception itself is acceptable but we cannot divorce it from the Church in the world, for it is here that the battle must be continually joined.

1 R.K. Yerks, Sacrifice in Greek and Roman Religions and in Judaism

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