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general revelation in His works. As spectacles will enable the purblind to read print, so Scripture will equip sinners to read 'the book of the creatures'. The illustration is Calvin's: 'As the aged or those with faulty vision, when any book, however fair, is set before them, perceive that something is written there, but can scarcely make out two consecutive words, but, when assisted by glasses, begin to read distinctly — so Scripture gathers together the impressions of Deity which previously lay confused in men's minds, dissipates the darkness and shows us the true God clearly' (*Inst.* I. vi. 1). Having known Him as Redeemer through His Word, we can then recognize Him and see His glory as Creator in His works — which to do is part of our Christian calling.

## THE PENAL VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT

By the REV. LEON MORRIS, Ph.D., M.Th., B.Sc.

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THERE is an eclectic air about much modern discussion of the atonement. Scholars are widely recognizing that there is truth in more than one theory of the atonement, and they are inclined to be humble and to be ready to learn from one another. Gustav Aulen, by reviving the ransom theory which had been dead for a thousand years, and stating it in a way which is acceptable to modern men, has shown that genuine insights are to be found in the most unlikely places. Vincent Taylor has done much the same by insisting that the truth about the atonement of Christ is to be found in the sacrifices of ancient Israel, and that the death of the Lord was a sacrifice in the fullest sense of the word. Yet in all this there is a strange reluctance to admit the place of penal views, and any substitutionary theory is apt to be looked at askance. It is difficult to see why this should be.

### THE NEW TESTAMENT

It is not because of any lack of Scriptural teaching, for there are many passages which point in this direction. Thus if we begin with our Lord there is impressive agreement today that He thought of His ministry in terms of the Suffering Servant of Is. liii. I do not think that any reputable scholar would deny this. But Is. liii clearly teaches substitution: 'the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed . . . the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.' It is quite in the spirit of this passage that Jesus said of Himself 'the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many' (Mk. x. 45). I do not see how it is possible to rid this saying of the thought that the Son of man dies in the place of sinners. (Note the term *lutron*, itself substitutionary and the substitutionary preposition *anti*, as well as the whole meaning of the verse.)

It is only some such idea as this which gives meaning to the agony in the garden. Lesser men than Jesus have often faced death calmly including many who owe their inspiration to Him. He was not lacking in courage as many incidents in His life amply demonstrate, but in Gethsemane He was in a perfect agony of spirit. Nothing surely can explain this but the realization of His identification with sinners as He bore the sins of men. It is only this that can give meaning to the cry of dereliction, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Mt. xxvii. 46). We must reject those explanations which see in this a mistake on the part of Jesus (how could He be mistaken in such a thing, be His human limitations what you will?),

or a cry of trust. These do not face the harshness of the words and must be dismissed as palliatives. The Scripture knows only of one thing that separates from God and that is sin. It was the fact that He was 'made sin' (2 Cor. v. 21) that elicited this terrible cry.

It is the same line of thought that enables Paul to say 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us' (Gal. iii. 13), where 'being made a curse' can hardly mean anything other than that He, the sinless One, took upon Himself the penalty that sinners by rights should have borne.

The whole concept of sin-bearing (Heb. ix. 28; 1 Pet. ii. 24) points us in the same direction. Many talk lightly about bearing sin as though it meant nothing more than that Christ in His lifetime, and especially in His death, endured the sufferings which men's sins inflicted upon Him. But there are several Old Testament passages which make it quite clear that the bearing of sin means the bearing of the penalty of sin. Thus Ezk. xviii. 20 tells us 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son', and much more could be quoted to the same effect.

Such a passage as Rom. iii. 21-26 is clearly substitutionary. There we have it insisted on that the atonement through the death of Christ shows God to be righteous. Apart from that, there was the danger that men might think the Father not to be just, for He did not visit upon sinners the severity of His wrath. But the cross shows Him to be just as well as merciful. It is very difficult to see what this means unless it is that Christ has borne our penalty so that God upholds the majesty of the divine law even in the process whereby guilty sinners are forgiven.

And what shall I say more? The time would fail me to tell of the implications of such terms as redemption and justification, of the blood, of propitiation, of sacrifice. There is much more in the Scripture that teaches that Christ stood in our place, that He bore what we should have borne, and it is very difficult to see what this means unless it is that He took our penalty. Like it or not, the penal view is securely grounded in the New Testament.

## MORAL VIEWS

But modern man does not find this kind of thinking congenial, and from the time of Abelard on, but especially during the last hundred years or so, there have been many who in one way or another have thought of the death of Christ as being effective only or mainly in the effect it produces in the believer. This is stated in various ways. Sometimes it is sheer exemplarist: Christ died to give us an example of the way we should behave when we are unjustly accused and ill-treated. Sometimes it is stressed that when we look on the cross we see how greatly God loves us, and we are moved to love Him in return. Nothing kindles love like love. Again it is urged that we should contemplate Calvary and see what sin did to the Son of God, not the sins of other people, but sin, the same principle that operates in us, and we are moved to repentance. There are other ways of putting such views, but common to them all is the thought that the cross moves us to the kind of action that God would have us take.

Now it is, of course, true that the cross does move us as nothing else does. The moral theory enshrines a profound truth and we all must accept it. Think again of what is perhaps the best known and best loved of all the hymns on the passion, 'When I survey the wondrous cross'. It expresses nothing but the moral view from first to last, but we all sing it with feeling. Such theories are only wrong when they assure us that the cross does nothing else but move us. It does move us, but it does more.

## A MODERN REACTION

In recent years there is evidence of a marked dissatisfaction with purely moral theories, and very few if any of the front rank theologians put forward such views nowadays. This does not mean that there is any unanimity, but it does mean that men are feeling for some theory which will be objective, and yet will not outrage the ideas of our day.

The idea that Christ is our Representative is not an easy one to get hold of, and it is not made any easier by virtue of the fact that there seem to be as many ways of putting it as there are exponents. But common to them all is the thought that Christ did not bear our penalty. That would be unjust. He suffered something quite different from the penalty of sin. But in His suffering He was not separate from sinners, but dying in their name, dying for their sake, dying in a way which avails for them. In the moral theories there is no connection between the dying Christ and sinners. He dies and that is one thing. We contemplate that death and respond and that is another. Representative theories seek to avoid this hiatus, and think of Christ dying expressly as our Representative.

Again I think it must be conceded that such theories are expressing an important truth. When Christ died, He did die as our Representative, and not as One quite separate from us and with nothing to do with us. There are Scriptures which give clear expression to the representative idea, as 2 Cor. v. 14, 'if one died for all, then were all dead'. The death of the Representative is reckoned as the death of those He represents.

## PENALTY

Yet when full allowance has been made for what such theories say we may take leave to doubt whether they can be held to be satisfactory. They do not square up with those Scriptures which we noted earlier, and which do indicate that Christ, when He died, took our place. The Bible statements on this point are far-reaching and should not be watered down. No theory can be accepted as true to the Bible which overlooks them. So it is that here and there theologians are to be found raising their voices in favour of some modification of the penal view.

This does not mean that we simply say 'Christ bore our penalty' and we have solved the problem. We have not. The atonement is vast and deep. There is nothing else quite like it, and thus no one way of describing it will be found sufficient. For example, when we speak of redemption we mean that there is the buying out of slavery to sin and the condemnation that is the wages of sin, while when we speak of propitiation we refer to the averting of the wrath of God. Neither of these includes the other, and both are necessary. So there are other aspects than the bearing of penalty, but the point that must be maintained is that no theory of atonement which overlooks this important aspect is ever going to be found satisfactory.

Nor does it mean that we cannot learn from criticism. One thing that is obvious is that sometimes earnest advocates of penal views have unwittingly managed to make the Father appear as a stern Judge, whose sentence is put away by the action of the loving Son. This is none the less deplorable because those who have produced this impression have done it from the best of motives. We must so state our view as to make it clear that the Father and the Son are at one in the process (cf. Rom. v. 8).

But when all is said and done the penal view is the most adequate of all the theories that have yet been put forward. It includes within it all the truth of the moral views and the representative views, and it goes on to add to this the great truth that our salvation is soundly based, and that God's moral law has not been ignored in the process of our salvation.