

The Apostolic Testimony to Christ Crucified

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“THE direct dependence (of Christian doctrine) upon the Bible is nowhere more obvious than when the sources of the doctrine of reconciliation are being investigated : and the Bible speaks at this point with the utmost clarity and in accents that bring to the mind the language neither of the Greek schools of philosophy nor of the laboratories of modern science.” So wrote J. K. Mozley¹; and if his judgment is sound, as I take it to be, then the biblical basis of the doctrine of atonement is as important as its restatement in terms relevant to the life of the 20th century is difficult. What I shall attempt to do in a paper which obviously can cover only part of the ground is to examine the biblical evidence more particularly related to those issues which the modern mind finds difficult ; and we must then ask whether we are committed to them by the biblical revelation.

A preliminary question, however, which I believe to be of great importance, is the place where an investigation of the biblical position should begin. It might begin from the Old Testament as the necessary background for the understanding of the New, but here I would remind you of Vincent Taylor’s caveat.² “ We do not possess the key to the mind of Jesus when we know the relevant Old Testament concepts ; all we have gained is the right to approach the door. Such is His originality that it is never safe to assume that He simply appropriated whatever lay ready to hand. He takes over traditional ideas and makes them His own. If He is to speak at all they are necessary to Him, but almost always they are an embarrassment. They clothe His thoughts, but need to be sketched, patched and refashioned, because the life they hide is too strong.” And what is true of Jesus is true in lesser degree of His followers, and especially of great minds like St. Paul and St. John. To this we may add the difficulty that the priestly literature, the prophets and apocalyptic are separate—though not completely separate—strands of the Old Testament. All contributed something to the thought both of our Lord and of His apostles; but the discernment of the resulting balance of thought is a task of the greatest delicacy, and there is no concensus of judgment among critics or theologians. I shall, therefore, only refer to the Old Testament where New Testament exegesis compels me to do so.

But if we start from the New Testament, do we begin with the Gospels or the Epistles? The question, I believe, has never been more trenchantly, or better, put than by P. T. Forsyth.³ “ Could the doctrine of the Atonement, or of the Incarnation, be established . . . on the Synoptics alone, historically and critically searched? I do not

¹ *Expos. Times*, May, 1940.

² *Jesus and His Sacrifice*. Intro., p. 5.

³ *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ*, p. 142 ff.

think they could. . . . I am sure that the Church at least, which was founded on the apostles' atoning interpretation of the cross, could not live upon the Synoptics alone. It could not find itself in them. But perhaps these doctrines then are compatible with the Synoptics and latent there, if they are not palpable. Are they? Yes, some would say; No, would be said by others. I believe they are. And that is the real question. It is not whether the Synoptics would yield the doctrines, but whether the doctrines, and the doctrines alone, explain them."

I make no apology for forcing this issue upon you, for much modern writing upon the doctrine of the Atonement really supposes that you can put St. Paul out of court by appealing to the Gospels, and we ought seriously to ask whether this is a tenable position. Forsyth's own position, which I share, is worked out in the fifth and sixth lectures of *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ*, but its essence can be seen from a brief quotation. "It is very properly asked concerning the Synoptic Christ, Why did He not explain Himself? And the answer is that He did, as soon as the whole work was done, and the whole fact accomplished which had to be explained. He interpreted Himself in His apostles, in the New Testament. If Paul's view of Christ was but a guess, and can now be seen to be a wrong one, the revelation was left by Christ incomplete, and therewith the redemption. The great close, therefore, ends in bearing witness of itself, and coming to its own in man's soul. And this happened in the apostles. To close this great work is the work of the New Testament, as something formally, uniquely, integral to the revelation of Christ."¹ Is that saying more than admitting St. Paul's claim that his gospel, at the heart of which lies his understanding of the meaning of the cross, came to him neither from men nor through men, but by revelation of Jesus Christ? For myself, therefore, the New Testament must be treated as a unity: for me it is impossible to drive a wedge between the Gospels and the Epistles: and I suspect that the trend of recent Gospel criticism will fortify that conclusion.

THE WITNESS OF THE GOSPELS

Having said that, it is still, I believe, worth while to begin with the Gospels, because, at least in my judgment, they take us further along the road than is sometimes admitted. The most important single fact about the structure of the Gospels is the proportion of the Passion narrative to the whole. In St. Mark the narrative of Passion-week covers a third of the entire book, but the Gospel is dominated by the Passion from Caesarea Philippi onwards. The very structure of Mark viii. 31-x. 45 is built around the repeated prediction of the Passion, and its theme is discipleship to a suffering Messiah. The Gospel is, in fact, a Passion narrative with sufficient introduction to make it comprehensible. The same fundamental conclusion follows from the study of St. John. There too the whole Gospel is dominated by the Passion. It is the hour towards which the whole Gospel moves: towards which the restless $\sigma\upsilon\ \pi\omega$ forces the reader to come with something of the inevitableness of Greek tragedy. The Cross, for those

¹ Op. cit., p. 151.

who have eyes to see, is the place of understanding. Yet it must not be understood in splendid isolation. "The Gospel" in Denney's phrase, "is not the death of Jesus, but Jesus in His death," and the Passion did not begin at Calvary. There are sufficient indications in the Gospel to make this clear. A. B. Macaulay may well be right in thinking that our Lord's acceptance of the role of the suffering servant goes back at least to His baptism. It is explicit at Caesarea Philippi. "The Son of man must suffer"; and, as Vincent Taylor has shown, the series of Markan sayings (viii. 31, ix. 31, x. 33, x. 45) can be paralleled from St. Luke's own sources (xiii. 32, xii. 49, xvii. 25). At least from Caesarea Philippi onward the ministry of Jesus is an ever-deepening entering into the necessity of the Passion.

It is impossible within the scope of this paper to examine in detail the sayings of Jesus concerning His passion: this, in any case, has been done exhaustively by Vincent Taylor. All I can do is to state the conclusions to which I have, myself, come. The Markan group of passages (viii. 31, ix. 31, x. 33) all concern the sufferings of the Son of Man, and with these we may take the saying about the cup and the baptism (Mark x. 38) and the ransom passage (Mark x. 45). As to the difficulty of the critical questions involved it is sufficient to point to Otto's contention that the references to death by crucifixion, to elders, chief priests and scribes, and to the resurrection, are community-product, prophecy *post eventum*. It may be agreed that Otto's further point, that the essential meaning remains unchanged, is just. Yet it is doubtful whether, while admitting the probability that the details of the prophecy have been made more distinct in the course of tradition, we need go all the way with him. If Jesus had in fact accepted the role of the suffering servant, then Isaiah liii. is sufficient basis for the conviction of faith that the end would be triumph and vindication, both of which must lie beyond the death which is implied by the simplest form to which the sayings can be critically reduced. The conclusions which ought to be drawn are, therefore, I believe, these. Jesus knew that He was going to His death and interpreted this death in the light of scripture ("How is it written of the Son of Man . . . ?") and almost certainly of second Isaiah. This death was a divine necessity ("the Son of Man must suffer") which He freely accepted (cf. Luke xvii. 25). With this certainty the title Son of Man is most intimately connected. He was to die in His vocation.

We can now proceed to take Mark x. 38 and x. 45 together. Of the former, taken in conjunction with the independent Luke xii. 50, it is, I think, a fair comment that the 'baptism' with which He is to be baptized points to a supreme accomplishment of our Lord's whole mission; but it is the reference to the 'cup' which is even more illuminating. The cup is usually said to be the cup of suffering, as so often in the Old Testament; but if the references are examined it will be found that with one possible exception all the Old Testament references (other than those where the meaning is a drinking vessel *simpliciter*, a symbol of drunkenness, or the cup of salvation or consolation) are concerned with suffering which is penal. See Ps. xi. 6, lxxv. 8, Is. li. 17-22, Jer. xxv. 15, 17, 28, li. 7, 12, Ez. xxiii. 31-33, Lam. iv. 21-22, Habakkuk ii. 16. This reference to suffering which is

not only the result of sin but the penalty of sin seems to me of the greatest significance, for it fits perfectly the suffering servant concept, and it alone explains the reference to the cup in Gethsemane, where it is the thought of drinking it which causes Jesus agony such that He prays that, if it be possible, God should remove it. The conclusion bears also on the interpretation of the ransom passage to which we must now come. "Even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (x. 45). It is clear from the context that our Lord interprets His death as a supreme act of service rendered for others. That is its minimum meaning. But secondly, it must refer to Isaiah liii., where in verses 11 and 12 the phrase "for many" repeatedly occurs. It is to be interpreted therefore in terms of that chapter as implying "bearing the griefs of others, the carrying of their sorrows, receiving the stroke of God, and the chastisement by which peace is won". In E. F. Scott's words, "He compresses into a single phrase the whole idea of the chapter".

This brings us to the word ransom. Its background here must be the Old Testament. It is used of the ransom of a slave, as the equivalent of the sacrifice of the first-born, and of the half shekel which every Israelite paid "as a ransom for his life unto the Lord" used for the service of the tabernacle, "that it may be a memorial for the children of Israel before the Lord, to make atonement for your souls". The minimum of meaning that can be attached therefore to this word is "means of deliverance or redemption". So far we could agree with Dr. Rawlinson: "The phrase sums up the thought of Isaiah liii and expresses the idea of a vicarious and voluntary giving of life, with the thought also that the sacrifice was in some way mysteriously necessitated by sin".¹

Otto goes further than this,² and Vincent Taylor³ agrees in taking the fundamental meaning from the Hebrew *Kopher*, used of covering or expiating sin. The word *λύτρον* must therefore include what the suffering servant did when he gave his life as a trespass offering. Here it must be maintained that whatever the original meaning of the Isaiah liii passage (and it is notoriously corrupt) what matters is what our Lord and His apostles read there; and they certainly would read of the servant's death as a trespass offering. Textual criticism is here irrelevant: for our purposes prophetic and priestly elements are conjoined in a passage which is crucial.

THE NARRATIVES OF THE LAST SUPPER

If now we pass to the narratives of the last supper—the stronghold in the Gospels of atonement doctrine, as Denney once described them—the critical problems are notoriously even more complicated. It can be held, though this is not my own position, that the shorter text of St. Luke represents the more original account, and Otto believes that even here xxii. 21-28 are an insertion. The words "This is my body" are then immediately followed by "I appoint unto you the Kingdom",

¹ *St. Mark*, p. 149.

² *Kingdom of God and Son of Man*, p. 256 ff.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 103.

a covenant reference being implicit in the use of *διαθεσθαι*. But the implications are soteriological as well as eschatological. There is a synthesis of the heavenly Son of Man and the suffering servant of Isaiah.¹ "Christ could bequeath to His disciples The Kingdom obtained on the ground of His own sanctification, because through the broken bread, which in their eating of it effectively represented the fact that He was broken, He as the servant of God caused them to participate in the holiness, the atoning power of His suffering. As thus expiated, as thus consecrated for the Kingdom, they were qualified for the testamentum." *Διαθήκη* implicit in *διαθεσθαι* combines the senses of final testament or will, and covenant. Its sense as covenant, so Otto holds, is derived from Isaiah (xlii. 6). "I will give thee for a covenant to the people" (so xlix. 8), where the servant is Himself God's covenant, and becomes through death the mediator of a covenant with the people of Jehovah (Isaiah liv. 10, lxi. 8). The death of Jesus is the means whereby the Kingdom comes, and it is the sharing in the death which is the means of entering into possession of the Kingdom.

If, however, we accept the 1 Corinthians account and compare it with St. Mark the conclusions follow more directly. St. Mark xiv. 24 has "This is my blood of the covenant which is being shed for many", which St. Matthew glosses "unto remission of sins". 1 Corinthians xi. 25: "This is the new covenant in my blood". In either case "covenant blood" is sacrificial blood and must be concerned with sin, but most scholars consider the Markan phrase the more original. The words "which is being shed for many" carry us back again to Isaiah liii: and covenant may be similarly derived from the servant passages. Yet Isaiah liii does not explicitly speak of blood: the death is for sin and it is a sin-offering. What Isaiah liii does, in fact, is to point us back beyond itself, and my own conviction is that we cannot rightly eliminate a consideration of the sacrificial system in seeking the origin of the phrase "blood of the covenant".

St. Matthew's gloss shows that for him the blood of the sin-offering is in view, or rather the blood to which the sin-offering pointed forward. If this is accepted I would only add that obscure though the rationale of the Old Testament sacrifice is, I am still not satisfied that the thought of substitution can be excluded from it. Leviticus xvii. 11 is the only really relevant text: "The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life". Here the blood is the life, but the life has to be given in death. Now it is clear that there is no possibility that the sins of the offerer were thought of as transferred to the blood, for the blood was holy and only as such could be offered to God. The generally accepted interpretation is that the purity of the victim represents the holiness which the offerer would give to God if he could, and this is the meaning of the symbolic act of laying the hand on the head of the victim. Sacrifice is therefore a symbol of repentance, its cost expressive of the sincerity of the offerer, and the death is but the preliminary to the offering to Jehovah.

¹ Op. cit., p. 291.

of the blood, that is the life still considered as existent and active. Here Hicks, Vincent Taylor, Herbert, and we may add Westcott, are in impressive agreement. The result is to cover, blot out, or wipe away sin. But Lods does not agree. His explanation is that "the life of the sinner is threatened by the holiness of God: he must give as an equivalent blood, that is a soul, a life. There is a ransom, a propitiation, a death, by proxy".¹ He is not wholly satisfied with this explanation since sacrifice did not atone for sin done with a high hand, and he adds that the idea of substitution was therefore not the only one involved. I cannot help believing that essentially Lods is right. This view of sacrifice alone makes sense of the provision of the death penalty for grave sin; and it makes the death of the victim not merely the preliminary to the offering of the blood, but the essential symbol of God's judgment upon sin and the mercifully provided substitute for the death of the sinner. It remains true that the ritual purity of the victim represents the only kind of life which God can accept; and that the two ideas of a substitute death and the offering of a pure life are separate ideas. But that does not mean that they cannot be held together. I believe that both are essential to a true understanding of Old Testament sacrifice; and in the New Testament, even in the Epistle to the Hebrews, blood primarily means life given in death.

I believe, then, that there is a case for holding that the thought of sacrificial death is implicit in the narrative of the Upper Room. The reference as it stands in St. Mark may be primarily to the covenant of Sinai in Exodus xxiv, and some would restrict the Pauline reference to the New Covenant of Jeremiah. Given the variant readings it is impossible to be dogmatic as to what was in our Lord's mind. When, however, we pass from the Synoptic Gospels either to St. John or the Epistles the issue is not in doubt. But before we leave the Gospels two further phrases demand attention. The first is τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν, which I personally take to be the authentic words of our Lord. In the passage Exodus xxx. 12 f., to which reference has already been made, the "ransom" which the Israelite gave for his life was to be used as a μνημόσυνον before God to make atonement. It has been held, and recently by Jeremias, that ἀνάμνησις is to be understood in this Godward sense. My own reading of the LXX would distinguish the predominantly manward reference of ἀνάμνησις as sufficiently clearly marked to demand a transformation of the thought of Exodus xxx. Jesus it is whose life is given in death as a λύτρον. And of that death He appoints a memorial, but significantly an ἀνάμνησις. Men no longer pay a ransom for their lives and set it before God: the servant's death provides what they owe and stands amongst them in ἀνάμνησις, their perpetual assurance that their standing with God is secure.

The last Markan passage to be considered, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me" (Mark xv. 34) was early found difficult as its absence from St. Luke and St. John and its modification in Codex Bezae and some Old Latin MSS. shows. It is all the more

¹ *The Religion of Israel*, p. 295.

certain that it is genuine, and the fact that in St. Mark it is the one word from the Cross is deeply significant. It cannot be a final utterance of despair : its presence in a Christian Gospel which includes the Resurrection makes such an interpretation impossible. Despite great names, including those of R. H. Lightfoot and Hoskyns, it is difficult to believe that it would stand alone if our Lord was reciting the 23rd Psalm as a comfort to His soul. I personally believe Vincent Taylor to be right when he says¹, " It does not seem to me that there can be true progress in a worthy doctrine of atonement until we recognize in the saying the accents of desolation and ask what is implied ". His own conclusion is² : " The suffering is not punishment inflicted by God, and is penal only in so far as it is a sharing in the sense of desolation and loss which sin brings in its train when it is seen and felt for what it is. . . . When these direct implications of the saying are accepted it is legitimate and necessary to relate them to the fact that Jesus interpreted His death as a suffering for the many, as sacrificial, and as standing in the closest relation to human need. If these conclusions are valid it appears to be an inescapable inference that Jesus so closely identified Himself with sinners, and experienced the horrors of sin to such a degree, that for a time the closeness of His communion with the Father was broken, so that His face was obscured and He seemed to be forsaken by Him ".

That is so reverently and carefully said that I hesitate to add to it. I say only this. If sacrifice in the Old Testament could not avail the sensitive conscience, must not its perfection be wrought by one who, in the sympathetic self-identification of love, stood with men, and did so because that for Him was the full acceptance of the will of the Father, the perfection of His self-offering to the Father. Here at least, in Denney's phrase, " we are in contact with something out of proportion to all that men could do to Jesus " ; and, we may add, in the unfathomable depths of what the love of God incarnate could do for men.

THE PAULINE EPISTLES

From the Synoptic Gospels I pass straight to St. Paul, on this subject the deepest thinker of the New Testament, and I propose to do no more than consider key passages and add some general comments. I begin with Romans iii. 25, as set in its context of the first three chapters, which are essential to its understanding.

St. Paul's main thesis is given us in Rom. i. 16-17. The Gospel is " the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth : for therein is revealed a righteousness of God, from faith to faith ". But his second datum is immediately stated : " The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men " ; and the section i. 18-iii. 20 can be summarized as the sway of the wrath of God in God's universe with law as the divinely constituted instrument of retribution and condemnation. That this is Paul's meaning may be seen from an analysis of his use of the term, " the wrath ", or " the wrath of God ". Elsewhere in the New Testament

¹ Op. cit., p. 163.

² Op. cit., pp. 161, 162.

the phrase is either an Old Testament quotation or is used eschatologically. The only exception is John iii. 36, "the wrath of God abideth on him", which is a true parallel to St. Paul's use. St. Paul has his own eschatological references (Romans v. 9, Ephesians v. 6, Colossians iii. 6), but his main use of the term is to denote God's reaction against sin. So Romans i. 18, ii. 5-8, iv. 15, ix. 22, Ephesians ii. 3. In one passage explicitly (Romans iv. 15), though elsewhere by implication, wrath, and law as its instrument, are brought together. "The law worketh wrath."

This fundamental Pauline insight into the problem of reconciliation has to be taken seriously. What he says is that one aspect of the righteousness of God as it faces men in their sin is "wrath", judgment, condemnation (Romans v. 16). God does not, because He cannot, pass over sin, though in His mercy He may appear to have done so. That the Gentile world lies under God's wrath is shown by its moral depravity. The responsibility is man's but the divine reaction is conceived personally: "God gave them up" (thrice repeated Rom. i. 24, 26, 29) to a life which knows that the judgment of God is that they are worthy of death, but goes on still in wickedness. The very fact that sinful men can apparently go on sinning with impunity lays God open to the charge of ἀνοχή—not just forbearance, long suffering, but as Dr. Kirk insists, indifference. The Jew, however, possesses in the law an organ of judgment (ii. 12), knows the judgment of God to be a terrible reality and knows that there comes the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. So then in iii. 5 God visiteth with wrath because He is righteous. Throughout this argument as almost everywhere in his letters St. Paul's concern is with the moral law, but the fact that in iii. 25 he goes on to use language which is sacrificial is sufficient, I suggest, to show that he recognized in the ritual law the same essential principle, that sinful man is barred from access to a holy God except by means of rites which bear witness to his guilt.

Moreover, throughout this argument, the righteousness of God is, so to speak, envisaged in two aspects. Primarily it is His saving activity as seen in the Gospel; and to this, his primary thesis, St. Paul returns in Romans iii. 21, where this righteousness is manifested apart from the law; that is in a new unique way, in Christ, for until then the régime of law was universal. But, secondarily yet really, the righteousness of God with law as its instrument judges sin and condemns sinners. When therefore we come to the crucial verses 25, 26, "to declare His righteousness, that He might Himself be just and justifier", we cannot lose sight of this distinction and, like some modern commentators, take righteousness to mean simply God's saving activity (as so often in Second Isaiah). It is an attribute of God, a quality possessed by Him which both deals with sin and brings salvation. If this is accepted, then the phrase διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν will mean "the passing over" of the sins of former generations, and not "with a view to the (prospective) forgiveness of former sins".

So far, then, God's action in Christ is to vindicate His character from the charge of slackness or indifference, and at the same time in

a new way, apart from law, to deal with men in their sins. This he does by setting forth Christ in His blood, ἱλαστήριον. The rendering "mercy seat"—the propitiatory of the Holy of Holies—is rendered unlikely by the absence of the article. I take it as a masculine participle agreeing with ὁὐ—a means of expiation, choosing 'expiation' rather than 'propitiation' in view of C. H. Dodd's investigation of the meaning of ἱλασκεσθαι and its derivatives. The fact that St. Paul almost goes out of his way to add ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι means that the sacrificial sense of the word ἱλαστήριον or of the divine action in setting Christ forth, is perspicuously clear. I cannot but believe that this is a conscious parallel to Leviticus xvii. 10-12: "I have given you the blood upon the altar . . . to make atonement": and this divine action is the demonstration of the righteousness of God which thus deals with sin and opens the way to justification. I reach the conclusion that the modern view represented by Anderson Scott cannot be held.

This then is the main statement of the theme on which the whole Roman Epistle rests and to it the apostle refers back again and again. Romans v. 9, "We are justified by His blood, and therefore shall be saved from wrath through Him". In v. 10 we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, and that when we were enemies. In Romans viii. 3, God sending His own Son as a sin offering (περὶ ἁμαρτίας.) It is clear that the heart of this gracious activity of God is the ἀπολύτρωσις which is effected by this setting forth of Christ; and implicit in St. Paul's thought, though not explicit, is the conviction that God is here doing what He had to do to maintain His righteousness. He in Christ, within human nature, is bearing sin's penalty in death.

But if this is not explicit in Romans it surely is in 2 Corinthians v. 14-21. Here the interpretation of our Lord's death in terms of love is explicit. "The love of Christ constraineth us" (v. 14). "All things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ" (v. 18). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses" (v. 19). Reconciliation, καταλλαγὴ, is a work accomplished, and it was from first to last God's work. But it is *here* an act, not a process: not, as in modern English, a personal transformation of relationship, but a change in a total situation which God effects. But how does He accomplish it? Paul says two things.

1. Christ died ὑπὲρ πάντων, and that means that all should live unto Him: but this, St. Paul is careful to interject, is only possible because His death on behalf of all was the equivalent of the death of all. That Christ's death should have this significance is only possible if on the one hand He is in a real sense the head of a new humanity, so that men are organically one with Him, and if that headship consists in the fact that His act on behalf of men does really effect the necessary change in men's relation to God—it produces the καταλλαγὴ. But secondly, as though he had not made his meaning sufficiently clear, St. Paul adds even more daringly in v. 21, "He who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in

Him". Implicit here is the connexion of death and sin. Christ took man's place in the divine economy, though He personally was sinless : He stood under the judgment of God on human sin. St. Paul does not say He was punished by God, though Rashdall comments, " There are only a few passages which necessarily suggest the idea of substituted punishment or substituted sacrifice : but there they are, and St. Paul's argument is unintelligible without them ". Rashdall is, I think, wrong, and wrong because quite unconsciously he thinks of Christ primarily from the side of His manhood, whereas for St. Paul even though His work is done virtually as man *ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπου μορφήν δούλου λαβών*, it is nevertheless the work of the divine Son, and therefore God's work in Him. But what St. Paul does say is not to be explained away. And we need only add that the phrase " made curse " in Galatians iii. 13 shows that this line of thought lies not at the periphery of his thinking but at its heart.

The conclusion to which I come is that in the final analysis sacrificial and juridical categories of thought are for St. Paul so closely united as to be essentially one. If, as I believe is demonstrable, the concept of Christ's work as the fulfilment of sacrifice was part of His thinking, He has in view the whole Old Testament revelation, the law both in its moral and ritual aspects. The God who gave Israel both the commandment and the blood upon the altar is the God who sets forth Christ *ἱλαστήριον* in His blood, and the God who made the sinless to be sin for us. That He does this is of grace transcending law, of love transcending *ὄργη*. We cannot avoid saying that Christ's is both a sacrificial and penal death by accepting which Christ acknowledges the holiness of God in perfect obedience and accepts that judgment of God upon sinful humanity which the law imposed and to which the divine provision of sacrifice bore witness.

Such a doctrine cannot be stated except in paradox. It is not, of course, St. Paul's whole doctrine of atonement. Its completion must be sought in what he says about victory over cosmic forces of evil and cosmic reconciliation, notably in Colossians ii. 14-15. Here it is the divine victory over the powers of evil of apocalyptic, which St. Paul equates with Christ's victory at Calvary to be consummated at His parousia. This same concept is to be found in the Gospels, in our Lord's conflict with Satan, in His exorcism of demons, in the reference to the powers of darkness in Luke xxii. 53. We meet it again in the Johannine literature, the Gospel, First Epistle and in the Revelation. It was a necessary element in any Gospel for the ancient world, but are we to call it a doctrine of atonement? Only if it can be brought into relation with men and with sin. Is there, then, any link between the doctrine we have examined in Romans and Corinthians and this later doctrine of Colossians and Ephesians? I believe there is. Difficult as it is to follow his thought, Paul undoubtedly sees a link between law in one of its aspects and the powers of evil. There is a hint in Galatians iii. 19, where the law is said to be ordained by angels. The idea is worked out much further in Colossians ii. 13-23. Here Paul is clearly dealing with man in his sin (v. 13, " You being dead through your trespasses and sins ") as well as with man in servitude to the

spiritual powers of darkness. Then in the crucial verses 14-15 he combines the overthrow of the principalities and powers with "the blotting out of the bond written in ordinances which was against us, and hath taken it out of the way (perfect tense), nailing it to His cross". Now in the earlier epistles, it is law that brings the sense of sin, that makes men guilty before God, which presents man with an internal antimony, which reduces him to the despair of Romans vii. With that Christ deals by being born under the law, becoming one with man, *ἰλαστήριον*, made sin, made curse. But law can now be seen to be also the instrument of the powers of evil: it is part of their curse: freedom from them means freedom from it.

This does not solve all the difficulties. If we are logical we shall have to admit what Paul never says that the angels, principalities and powers are themselves the instruments of the *ἔργα θεοῦ*, exercising a permissive function in the divine economy. Would Paul have gone so far? But it is only in some such way that we can fully harmonize all that Paul has to say about the Cross with its essential paradox, that God provides the sacrifice for man, accepts the penalty of His own law, overcomes the assaults of powers active by His own permission.

All this has been concerned with Christ's work done in solitary greatness in His incarnate life. I need not add, but it is perhaps wise to add, that justice can only be done to St. Paul if to all this we add his teaching on the resurrection, and even more important on justification and life in the Spirit and in the Church. The work done by Christ in the flesh which He alone could do has to become effective in us by His Spirit through the response of faith, in justification and sanctification. Even in Romans iii. 25 the words "through faith" are vital; and the phrase *ἐν Χριστῷ* is perhaps the real centre of his thinking, as of his experience. "If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. v. 10).

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

From St. Paul I pass to Hebrews, and I shall try to be succinct. There are, I believe, at least three different strands in the thought of the Epistle. There is first what Aulen calls the classic doctrine in ii. 9-18. There is secondly a carefully worked out doctrine of covenant which is important and may be summarized as follows. Christ is the true high-priest, and His priesthood is double-sided: He represents in His own person both God to man and man to God. But He is also the victim over whose death the covenant between God and man is for ever made. In the covenant of Sinai God and man met over the blood of a victim. The initiative is God's, but on man's side there is promised but unfulfilled obedience. The fact that obedience is always imperfect leads to the extension of the blood-ritual to the whole sacrificial system which rests on the primary covenant. In the new covenant God and man meet in the person of Jesus the Son of God. The initiative is still God's, whose will and whose grace lie behind the whole incarnate life of Jesus; but Jesus as man now gives perfect obedience (a real achievement) of which death is itself the consummation. So the conditions of

covenant are perfectly fulfilled, and by the act of dying, an irreversible act (ix. 27), that covenant is sealed. It can never be repeated in time, and it is valid in eternity : and being perfect there is no need for its extension into any sacrificial system. Once it was complete Christ sat down and remains seated at the right hand of the throne of God. He remains our high priest, but upon the throne (viii. 1) ; there is a true unity between Him and us, for both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one. He had made us the people of God by His covenant sacrifice ; and because we remain imperfect, in fact though not in consecration, He ever liveth to make intercession for us. " For such an high priest became us who is holy, harmless, undefiled . . . who needeth not daily to offer up sacrifices : for this He did once for all when he offered up himself " (vii. 26, 27). This I am convinced is the heart of Hebrews. What remains undefined, and should be the logical completion of the doctrine, is the mode of our unity with our Lord : an expression of the thought that the consecrator and the consecrated are one.

If we could leave the thought of Hebrews there it would be comparatively simple, and would give us a limited doctrine of atonement in terms of covenant sacrifice. But there is a third intertwined strand, that of the sin offering and the ritual of the day of atonement. These we must now consider. First we notice that the significant rite of the scapegoat is omitted. I say significant, because it seems to me that the retention in the developed sacrificial system of this primitive rite bears witness to a felt defect in rites for expiating sin, namely that in the last analysis they are symbolic, comparable, we might say, to prophetic symbolism. The scapegoat did bear sin, though it must be admitted that the later Judaism probably interpreted this as symbolism also. It is therefore of great importance that the writer to the Hebrews does *not* apply the analogy of the scapegoat to our Lord, though in ix. 18 he does speak of Christ bearing the sins of many. His thought moves wholly within what may be called the sacrificial system proper, with offering for sin ; and he takes the ritual of the day of atonement in particular because it concerned the sins of the whole people and was the function of the high priest. He is, moreover, primarily concerned with the finality of Christ's sacrifice and he can make this point doubly secure by adding to covenant sacrifice, itself final, the contrast of Christ's one and sufficient entry into the heavenlies with the repeated entry of the high priest into the Holy of Holies. But this is not the whole truth. The high priest under the old covenant entered with sacrificial blood, and of this Christ's self-offering in eternal spirit is the fulfilment. Now clearly for the writer, this too, is an offering for sin (*εις τὸ ἰλάσασθαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας*, ii. 17). Christ's blood is cleansing blood and it does what Old Testament sacrifices could never do : it really puts away sin, really purifies, purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. But how? Nowhere does the writer tell us. Presumably he must have had some rationale of sacrifice, but if so he never discloses it. That is why this strand of the Epistle is so disappointing. Vincent Taylor points to the following facts : the meagre teaching of the writer

on the love of God ; his failure to make use of the idea of justification ; the fact that he is concerned with sin rather than with sinners (as shown by his neglect of the suffering servant prophecies), the fact that the cultus taught nothing about sin-bearing, except the scapegoat which he will not use ; and, lastly, his most costly omission, the absence of teaching on faith-union, sacramental communion and mystical suffering with Christ. Therefore he cannot tell us how the one great sacrifice avails for sinners. He can only say that it does.

Put side by side with that Hastings Rashdall: "Wherever the writer attempts anything like an explanation of the way in which Christ's blood has a redeeming or saving effect he immediately becomes quite ethical, rational and spiritual." "So far as his thought is articulate there is no effect which he attributes to the death of Christ which may not perfectly well be understood of a subjective influence exerted upon the believer by the revelation of God contained in the teaching, character and personality of Christ. In the revelation which had these spiritual effects the example of perfect obedience pushed to the point of self-sacrificing death held a prominent place."¹

But for one phrase I should be forced to agree. In ix. 28 the writer does say, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many". Sin bearing is included in the writer's thought, and the phrase "for many" links it with Isaiah liii. If apart from this Hebrews does not help us to state a sacrificial doctrine of atonement unless we construct our own rationale of sacrifice and import it into the book, it is all the more important to insist that there is a truth which the writer is trying to state, and that truth is *not* a subjective theory of atonement but the belief that Christ's death did take away sin and that only *His* death could do so.

To this it is only just to add that the writer brings his own sacrificial argument to a conclusion in x. 5-10 by quoting the prophetic denunciation of sacrifice from Psalm xl. 5-10. "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me : in burnt offering and sacrifice for sin Thou hast no pleasure ; Then said I, Lo I come to do Thy will, O God." And he draws the conclusion (v. 10) : "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all". The emphasis on the offering of the body, the doing of the divine will, is, I think, a sign that the writer recognizes that there is more to be said than he has succeeded in saying, that there are other points of departure for a doctrine of atonement than those which he has chosen to explore. To recognize this is to do justice to the writer and to the fundamental truth that there is no "straight-line" doctrine of atonement.

I come back to my own conclusions : first that the investigation of the relation of Christ's death to the moral law is the necessary complement of the approach by way of the sacrificial system ; and secondly that within the sacrificial system the thought of the New Testament writers at their deepest level demands an emphasis on the significance of death and its connexion with judgment, if we are to attain a doctrine of atonement which meets all the needs of the guilty conscience.

¹ *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology*, p. 157.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 160.

THE JOHANNINE LITERATURE

I come now to St. John. There is a difference of emphasis in the 1st Epistle and the Gospel. In the Epistle the language of propitiation or expiation is used. The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin (i. 7). God sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (iv. 10), and not for our sin only but also for the whole world (i. 21). So in iii. 5: He was manifested to take away sins. This is sacrificial language, but its meaning is assumed and not explained. When we come to the Gospel it is best to begin not with detailed phrases but with more generalized investigation.

The recurrent "not yet" and the "hour" towards which it moves we have already noted. The Cross is the necessary end of the ministry ("the Son of Man must be lifted up"); and, as in the Synoptics, because Scripture, the record of the purpose of God, must be fulfilled. Moreover Jesus moves to His Passion with a sovereign freedom. St. John wishes to make it clear that Jesus was not just brought to His death by a combination of outward circumstances; these may, in fact, be neglected without essential loss. His foes cannot take Him unless He surrenders. He lays down His life because He has power to lay it down, and He does so because the cup is given Him by His Father. Christ's work is essentially God's work done for men. For St. John, Christ the Son is the gift of the Father to the world. The Cross exposes the heart of God, and that heart is love. In the Incarnate life, but supremely in the death of the Son of God, the eternal love of God, of the Father for the Son, is seen also as His love for the world. And its essence is self-giving to the uttermost. Indeed, within the limits of the Incarnation the Father is said to love the Son because He lays down His life. The same essential line of thought may be traced in a study of the words "glory" and "glorify": for glory is the revelation of the essential nature of God's being; and it is in the Cross that Jesus glorifies God. But at the same time it is true that God glorifies the Son that He might be Himself glorified. God's part in the Atonement is therefore affirmed. What is done is done in His power and by His delegated authority (xvii. 2), and therefore what takes place is not really humiliation but triumph and exaltation. The victorious *τετέλεσται* means that Christ reigns from the tree.

This is the main line of thought in the Gospel, but there are two other strands. There is first the thought of victory over evil, which in the Gospel is represented by two words, the devil and the world, to which perhaps we should add darkness. Throughout the Gospel runs a dualism, though not, of course, an ultimate dualism. Behind all that the writer says about sin, stands the devil, the prince of this world (xii. 31, xiv. 30, xvi. 11). The Passion is the hour of supreme conflict, but also of judgment. There is little here that goes beyond the implications of the Synoptics and much less than is to be found in St. Paul. What is distinctively Johannine is the way in which the world is thought of as not only destitute of spiritual resources but as in radical opposition to the mission of the Son. St. Paul can speak of men as "enemies", but St. John sees the enmity extending to the whole

cosmos. Christ is not of the world : He comes into it and overcomes it. It is a divine salvation which has broken in through Christ. St. John does not say *how* it works. What he does do is to give the most comprehensive expression in the New Testament to the conviction that the radical distinction between Jesus and the disciple is between the Saviour and the saved : and that the saved are wholly dependent on what the Saviour has done for them.

The second subsidiary strand is the sacrificial. The first witness borne to Jesus is that of John the baptist : " Behold the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world ". Every conceivable suggestion has been made about its meaning. Dodd, the horned ram of apocalypse; Hoskyns, the lamb of the daily burnt offering ; Vincent Taylor, the lamb of Isaiah liii. But the verb is significantly changed from *φέρειν* to *αἶρειν*—taking away the sin of the world. The truth is that we cannot tie St. John down to any one sacrificial type. Ryder-Smith¹ makes a strong case for the view that the Old Testament language of the servant has been worked into the warp and woof of the Gospel. He points out that in the Septuagint the last servant song begins, " Behold my servant shall understand, he shall be lifted up and glorified exceedingly ". So in the second song : " Thou art my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified ". " Glorify " and " lifting up the Son of Man " are typical of the Gospel (iii. 14, viii. 28, xii. 32). A further sacrificial element, though it stands a little apart, is the reference to the Passion lamb at the Crucifixion. But perhaps most significant of all is the language of John xvii where Jesus consecrates Himself to sacrifice (for almost all the Old Testament uses of *ἀγιάζειν* are sacrificial). It is used of the altar of sacrifice, of the furniture of the tabernacle, of the vestments for the day of Atonement, of the ritually perfect sacrificial beast. Indeed, C. H. Dodd has shown that *ἀγιάζειν* and *ἐξιλάσασθαι* are alternate renderings of the Hebrew verb " to make atonement ". Jesus therefore consecrates Himself as the sacrificial victim in order that, in dependence upon what He does, His disciples may be veritably consecrated. This is the meaning of the rite of the Upper Room. All that was said earlier about the sacrificial significance of the words of institution is therefore carried over into St. John : and the language of St. John vi completes his doctrine ; for by Word and Sacrament, by eating His flesh and drinking His blood, men share Christ's sanctification ; and it is this sanctification of the disciples which is St. John's ultimate concern. A separate line of thought which cannot be developed here is the work of the Spirit taking the things of Christ and showing them unto us, dwelling with us as Paraclete, in whose coming Christ comes. But again, as in the Epistle so in the Gospel, St. John does not explicitly tell us how Christ's sacrifice avails for sin.

I add one last consideration—St. John's use of the Son of Man. All commentators are agreed that Son of Man in St. John emphasizes our Lord's humanity. It is used, as we have seen, of the Passion. It means that throughout His life, but especially in His death, Jesus was one with man, and for this reason is the proper judge of men

¹ *Bible Doctrine of Salvation*, p. 300.

(v. 27). He lives the life that sinners live, yet without sinning. He must also die man's death, even though sinless. This is the point of John iii. 14. For the serpents in the story in Numbers represent the death that came upon Israel as the result of its sin : they may even be said to stand for the judgment of God. There is, however, a passage in Wisdom xvi. 5-14 which speaks of the brazen serpent as a symbol of salvation. It is possible that St. John has the Wisdom passage in mind—a commentary on Numbers that combines under the serpent symbol the ideas of " judgment, death and salvation ", and he says in effect that what is there symbolic is actual in Jesus. In Him death is salvation. The Son of Man saves mankind with which he is one by enduring man's death. Ryder-Smith has an illuminating comment : " It would be quite possible to paraphrase the thought of the Johannine sentence in words that follow the form of St. Paul's words in 2 Corinthians v : ' Him who was life God made to be death on our behalf that we might have eternal life in Him.' "

A S U M M I N G U P

All that has been so far attempted is an investigation of the Biblical basis of a doctrine of atonement and the conclusion to which we seem driven is that there is no one doctrine but a series of approaches radiating inward towards a centre which nevertheless lies beyond clear vision, for as J. A. Smith says on Isaiah vi, " Where God's holiness and the sin of man meet the place is filled with smoke ". It may, however, be useful if, in conclusion, the main lines of approach are indicated.

1. There is a basic conviction shared by all the writers of the New Testament that Atonement is God's work : it springs from His love, it is His work in Christ.

2. A further widespread conviction is that it is a victory over evil (taken over from apocalyptic), either devil or world, or evil spirits or principalities and powers. The question is (i) how is this related to sin in man, the guilty conscience, and to man's internal problem ? (ii) How is it related to the Pauline thought of the reconciliation of all things in heaven and earth ? I suggest that Paul's connexion of these powers with the law and the effect of the law on " the flesh " and the conscience is part of the answer, but is never worked out. What do we do if we have ceased to believe in evil external to man ? But the doctrine as it stands witnesses to the conviction that Christ's work has cosmic and corporate, and not merely individual, effect.

3. The language of sacrifice is almost universal. In addition to St. Paul, Hebrews and St. John, we could quote Acts, 1 Peter and notably the Apocalypse. There is an offering—doing God's will perfectly, the perfection of obedience, the achievement of all that man would give to God if he could, of all that God looked for in man. But how does it deal with sin ? Must we not ask more particularly the significance of the death of the victim, the acceptance, the bearing of God's judgment, a solidarity with man in a sympathetic identification in love which, because it is perfect, means " paying the full cost " ? If this is so, how do we respond ? In faith, in communion, in a mystical

communion which makes us the *ἱεράτευμα* as well as the living sacrifice to God.

4. There is a juridical language—made sin, made curse : God as just and justifier : the relation of Christ's work to the moral law and to God as the holy and righteous : accepting God's full reaction in judgment and love upon a world which Christ voluntarily entered, with which *under the law* He identified Himself. This is Paul at his deepest ; but may it not be also our Lord's understanding of Isaiah liii, the heart of His experience at Calvary ?

Atonement and Contemporary Thought

BY THE REV. A. J. DREWETT, M.A., B.Sc.

WE begin by quoting from two contemporary theologians their considered opinion of modern man's attitude to his sins, and consequently of his need for any doctrine of atonement at all. Reinhold Niebuhr, in his Gifford Lectures published in 1939, says, "Our introductory analysis of modern views of human nature has established the complacent conscience of modern man as the one unifying force amidst a wide variety of anthropological conceptions". A little later on he says, "The typical modern is naturally not inclined to take dubious religious myths seriously, since he finds no relation between the *ethos* which informs them and his own sense of security and complacency. The sense of guilt expressed in them is to him a mere vestigial remnant of primitive fears of higher powers, from which he is happily emancipated. The sense of sin is, in the phrase of a particular vapid modern social scientist 'a psychopathic aspect of adolescent mentality'". (*The Nature and Destiny of Man*, vol. 1, p. 100.) Our second quotation is from Prof. D. M. Baillie's *God was in Christ* (1948). "There is a modern inability to understand the sense of sin and especially the meaning and the need of divine forgiveness. 'Why,' many a seriously minded man will ask, consciously or unconsciously, 'should I brood over my sins and the need of having them forgiven? No one can "atone" for my misdeeds except myself, and I can do it only by leaving them behind, making any possible reparation to any whom I may have wronged, and then forgetting the past and going blithely on to better things. Therefore I will not trouble about my sins and their forgiveness'."

This latter attitude would seem to be the solution offered in the *Cocktail Party*, Mr. T. S. Eliot's recent play. A young woman falls in love with a married man, and although the affair does not go very far, she is left with a sense of guilt which causes her unhappiness. She consults a psychotherapist who, after listening to her story and her desire for forgiveness, suggests two courses. The first is the one that would be taken by the majority in her position. By becoming a conscientious wife and mother she can do enough good to balance the evil. The second way is possible only to the few. It consists in joining an Order and becoming a missionary. She will thus be