

J. GLENN GOULD

THE
PRECIOUS
BLOOD
OF
CHRIST

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by
J. GLENN GOULD

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. . . ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ . . . (I Pet. 1:18-19).

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FOREWORD

The preaching of the Cross was central in the apostolic proclamation of the grace of God. Among the Corinthians, Paul was determined to know nothing "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). To them he had delivered "as of first importance" the tradition which he himself had received, "how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures . . ." (I Cor. 15:3). He could remind the Galatians that his preaching among them had been a vivid portrayal of the Crucifixion (Gal. 3:1). The earliest and most detailed gospel material clustered around the Passion narrative. This story constituted a kind of magnet which drew all the other narratives into our present four Gospels. If our twentieth century preaching is to have apostolic authority and force, it must set forth the Cross in all its rugged beauty.

The preaching of the Cross can alone save a theology of experience from sinking into the quicksand of subjectivism or lapsing into the idolatry of humanism. The gospel is first of all objective: it declares what GOD has done. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. . . . We love him, because he first loved us" (I John 4:10, 16, 19). To preach the Cross is therefore to keep the gospel *God-centered*. Thereby we safeguard the primacy and initiative of God in our redemption and evoke Christian faith and love. God can be truly known and loved only through the Cross. Thus to know and love God is to be saved not only from the dominion of sin but also from all self-glorying. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (I Cor. 1:30-31).

A new volume on the meaning of the atonement is therefore significant. Perhaps no man in the contempo-

rary Arminian-Wesleyan tradition is better equipped to interpret the Cross than Dr. J. Glenn Gould. For many years the voice of this preacher-theologian has been heard in pulpit, classroom, and lecture hall. His writings have also been influential. With abiding gratitude the writer remembers Dr. Gould's Sunday-by-Sunday preaching program which appeared throughout 1939 in the *Preacher's Magazine*.

Here is a scholarly, yet simple and direct, treatment of the atonement. The author shows an intimate acquaintance with the literature of the field, both ancient and modern, conservative and liberal. He knows the early fathers and with Aulén finds true scriptural insights in the ancient ransom theory. He quotes from Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, and Wesleyans, but always with discrimination and perception. He writes with the mature authority of experience.

Dr. Gould is convinced the atonement is a diamond of many facets. The Cross must be viewed from several stances. Each theory propounded in the history of Christian thought has some important scriptural truth within it. It is the author's aim to make each facet shine. No one theory, he believes, can ever embody the full Christian doctrine of the atonement. All are necessary to help us appreciate what our Lord's passion means to us, but all the theories together fall far short of the glory of the Cross. The atonement is a majestic fact which defies neat rational formulas. Yet see we must, and of the Cross it is true that—

*All the light of sacred story
Gathers 'round its head sublime.*

This book is well worth a careful reading with pen and the Scriptures at hand. Thoughtful laymen and discerning ministers alike will find herein food for mind and soul.

WILLIAM M. GREATHOUSE, *Dean of Religion*
Trevecca Nazarene College

PREFACE

It is with some measure of misgiving on the part of the author that this work is being published. It was prepared in the summer of 1947 and delivered as a series of lectures to preachers at the Indian Lake Campground in Michigan. Since then the lectures have been worked over a great deal, but even yet I am somewhat abashed at my temerity in offering them to the reading public.

These chapters do not claim to be a scholarly presentation of their great theme. Indeed, it would lie beyond my ability to make them so. However, they do flow from a lifelong interest in this vital theme of the atonement in Christ, and it is my fervent hope that they will do something to further the contemporary revival of concern for this basic Christian truth. They are intended for the journeyman preacher, and are certainly within easy reach of most laymen. My prayer is that God's blessing will attend their publication.

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J. GLENN GOULD

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CHAPTER ONE

A GOSPEL

OF REDEMPTION

I

The doctrine of atonement through the shedding of Jesus' blood is one phase of the larger doctrine of the Incarnation, by which the Christian Church has sought to understand and interpret the significance of the unique life of Jesus Christ. That Jesus was born, lived among men for one-third of a century, and was put to death by the Roman procurator of Judea in the first half of the first century A.D., no one of sober judgment would deny. The historicity of that life and the certainty of that death are beyond serious dispute.

"At the heart of the earliest formulated creed of Christendom stands the confession that he, Jesus Christ, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and thereby Christianity is tied to a particular historical event."¹ We are fully justified in assuming at the outset of our discussion, therefore, the fact of Jesus Christ as a historical Figure, the Fountainhead of the Christian Church.

For one who is content to accept this basic fact of Christianity and ask no questions as to the significance of the life Jesus lived and the death He died, no problems will ever arise to demand solutions. But it is difficult to imagine one whose mind is so sluggish that he is content

to drop the matter there. And when we begin to think about the personality of Jesus Christ and seek to discover what there was about Him and in Him that has given His life such lasting meaning, we encounter problems that we shall never be able completely to solve.

As the disciples of Jesus lived with Him as He moved about in Palestine and observed Him under the varied pressures to which He was subjected, they came to the conviction that He was a unique Personality. He was as thoroughly human as any one of His followers, yet He was far more. There was an indefinable quality about Him which Simon Peter could describe only by saying, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). That memorable confession of faith declared in so many words that, as far as this disciple was concerned, Jesus was the Messiah of Israel. Yet it said more; it declared Him to be the very Son of God.

This conviction of Christ's most outspoken disciple—a conviction it is fairly certain his associates shared with a greater or less degree of certainty—is corroborated by our Lord's own self-consciousness. There are unmistakable intimations of it in His attitude in the hour of His baptism, and in His conflict with temptation in the wilderness. His willingness to receive Peter's confession of faith at Caesarea Philippi and to commend it as the product of the Father's own revelation is evidence beyond question. Moreover, in the Fourth Gospel we find the Master making express claims concerning His identity, claims which reveal with amazing clarity His self-consciousness. To the woman of Samaria He declares himself to be the Messiah (John 4:25-26); and to the man born blind He asserts that He is no other than the Son of God (John 9:35-37). These few citations by no means exhaust the evidence. They are a mere sampling of an insight with which the New Testament abounds that Jesus was both the son of Mary and the Son of God;

that in His unique personality there was a union of God and man which, while identifying Him unmistakably with our race, yet left Him one with the Father—the God-Man.

This was a daring and far-reaching insight for the first Christian believers to grasp. They were Jewish monotheists, brought up from infancy on the impressive precept: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4). Yet so clearly convinced were they that having seen Jesus they had seen God, that the works He had accomplished among men were works that only God could perform, that they did not hesitate to give Jesus Christ a place beside the eternal God and indeed to identify Him in the most intimate possible fashion with the Father. The implications for Christian thought which were consequent upon the acceptance of such an understanding of Christ, the earliest believers were content to leave to others to formulate. They felt with deep and abiding conviction that Christ was God, and that through His death and triumph forgiveness of sin and new life from above had reached them. To know this was enough.

Christian thought was not able to leave the matter thus for very long, however. The earliest Christian preachers recognized, under the quickening and illumination of the Holy Spirit, that there was far more in the life and death of Jesus than met the eye at a glance. The Christ who had been slain in apparent weakness had been raised in power. The doubts which evidently afflicted the minds of His disciples in the dark hour of the Master's death had been utterly dissipated by His resurrection. All of them shared the spoken confession of Thomas concerning the risen Christ: "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). As they had seen in Jesus the union of God and man, so did they now see in the death and resurrection of Jesus a gospel of hope and salvation for the lost; a redemption which, beginning with Israel, they came eventually to see included the whole world. These were

assumptions that were beyond debate in the minds of the early missionaries of the Cross. They had no theory by which to explain the wonder of salvation through the dying, living Lord; but they had no misgivings as to the fact of that salvation. They seized upon every metaphor that lay conveniently to hand in order to give adequate expression to the wonder of it. Yet after every conceivable expression had been employed, it is evident that far more than could ever be put into words was centered in the cross of Christ. It was an idea too vast, too glorious, too yeasty, ever to be contained in the old wineskins of language.

As we approach the study of the terms which the Master employed to set forth the significance of His approaching death, we cannot afford to forget or overlook the importance of the Spirit's guidance. Dr. Dillstone reminds us most impressively that no answer can be given to the questions that center in the death and resurrection of Christ "save in the context of the Holy Spirit."² It was the faith of the apostolic Church that the unfolding meaning of our Lord's redemptive work was the product of the Spirit's inspiration. Indeed, we are justified in believing that every upsurge of vital interest in this most fundamental Christian truth results from the quickening of this same Spirit. One of the most hopeful tokens in the Christian thought of our day is found in the heightened interest in the true significance of the atonement; and this, in turn, is heartening evidence of the fact that the blessed Spirit of God is still at work in our world.

II

A half-century ago it was the prevailing theological fashion to charge St. Paul with responsibility for giving the Christian faith its peculiar redemptive emphasis. He was the culprit, it was commonly alleged, who trans-

formed the simple religion "of Jesus" into a complicated religion "about Jesus"; who succeeded in making Jesus the object of faith instead of merely the example of faith. The instability of the fashions in even so staid a field as theology is clearly illustrated by the fact that this theory of the Pauline origin of Christianity can claim very few, if any, true adherents today. It is true that, under the quickening and illumination of the Holy Spirit, St. Paul seized upon metaphors to set forth the meaning of the Cross which had never before been employed. Yet when the question is explored soberly it will be discovered that practically all of the characterizations which became explicit in St. Paul were actually implicit in our Lord's own teachings as to the meaning of His death.

It is no part of our present task to look into the question as to when in the life of Jesus He became certain of the fact that rejection and untimely death awaited Him. In the very nature of the case it is a question that belongs to the inner consciousness of our Lord, and that self-consciousness was never fully disclosed. It is clear, however, that there came a time in Christ's ministry when He began to lay emphasis upon His approaching death. Following the confession of faith made by Simon Peter at Caesarea Philippi, when we read that "from that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things . . . and be killed, and be raised again the third day," (Matt. 16:21) we seem to be standing at such a point of departure. And in facing the eventuality of a violent death Jesus is revealed even in the Synoptic Gospels as setting forth most significantly the *meaning* of that death. Perhaps the most forthright saying, recorded by both St. Mark and St. Matthew (Mark 10:45; Matt. 20:28), is this: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." There may be some, such as Dr. Hastings Rashdall, who

would dispose of this saying by questioning its genuineness and suggesting that it is "a doctrinally colored insertion" by some later hand.³ The bulk of reverent scholarship, however, holds this to be a true saying of Jesus. And such are the strength and significance of our Lord's language here that Principal Denney is fully justified in asserting that "we are able to say, with His authority behind us, that Christ's Passion entered into the work of redeeming men, of forgiving them, and of reconciling them to God."⁴ In these words the problem of the atonement has been set by the Lord Jesus himself.

The institution of the Lord's Supper is another impressive witness of Jesus' understanding of the atoning significance of His death. We have four separate accounts of the Master's interpretation of the significance of the cup. As St. Mark records it, "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many" (Mark 14: 24). St. Matthew's account makes the implied meaning of Mark slightly more explicit: "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26: 28). Luke's account makes Jesus' words more directly personal: "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22: 20). The fourth recording of Jesus' words is in St. Paul's first Corinthian letter and has the merit of being the earliest written account of the event. According to Paul: "This cup is the new testament in my blood" (I Cor. 11: 25). The most significant variation in these four records of Jesus' sacramental statement is in that of Matthew, with its emphasis upon the remission of sins. Yet from the days of Jeremiah, as Dr. L. W. Grensted reminds us,⁵ the new covenant had been related to the forgiveness of iniquity (Jer. 31: 31-34). There is no valid reason for not accepting the statement in its most comprehensive form—that in Matthew's Gospel. Whatever view of the atonement we may finally arrive at, we cannot escape the neces-

sity for taking into account this word which our Lord uttered at the institution of the sacramental Supper.

The Fourth Gospel adds its own unique witness to the redemptive consciousness of Jesus.⁶ Here the sacrifice of Jesus is seen to be a self-immolation, a voluntary giving up of His life as an offering for the life of the world. As early in the Gospel as the record of the conversation with Nicodemus the sacrificial principle is stated: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). The "Bread of Life" discourse, which proved so difficult a test for His followers, is a statement of the sacrificial principle without parallel for bluntness: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man," said Jesus, "and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6: 53). The words that follow later—"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"—while they make clear that the teaching is to be understood in spiritual rather than physical terms, in no wise diminished the redemptive significance of that memorable discourse.

In terms more easily understood, but no less decisive, the Master makes the same emphasis in His "Good Shepherd" discourse. The figure of the shepherd is one admirably suited to the character and ministry of Jesus. Moreover, it is a historic figure. The shepherd held an honored place in Israel and afforded an analogy rich in meaning. It was applied to Israel's deliverance from Egypt, as when the Psalmist sang: "Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (Ps. 77:20). The prophets resorted frequently to this analogy, pointing out the difference between faithless shepherds and those that were true.⁷ It was a figure which our Lord could hardly escape using, so well adapted to His purpose was it. He is the Good Shepherd, laying down His life for the sheep. It was in this connection

that Jesus stated so unequivocally the self-sacrificial aspect of His approaching death. He proposed to lay down His life and to take it again. "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself" (John 10:18).

The upper room discourse, followed by the high priestly prayer of Jesus, gives additional insight into our Lord's redemptive self-consciousness. Recall especially the prayer of intercession which Jesus prayed. A characteristic expression is this, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4), an expression which obviously anticipated His death and resurrection. A passage equally significant is this: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world" (John 17:6). And it requires no stretch of the imagination to see in the passage, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth," (John 17:19) an allusion to His devotion of himself to death on the Cross in order that the perfect will of God might be brought to pass in the lives of His disciples.

When we come to the Passion narratives, the Synoptic and Johannine streams meet and mingle in a perfect synthesis. Here the things particularly moving are the manner and spirit of Jesus' sufferings and death. Betrayed by one of His own followers; condemned by a Jewish clique on trumped-up charges before what would today be described as a "kangaroo court"; hounded to the Cross at the hands of the Roman occupation authorities without the remotest semblance of justice; forsaken by His trusted followers; comforted only by the tears of a few sorrowing friends who watched Him pass by on His way to the Cross; afflicted, even as He hung upon the Cross, by the sense that even the Father's gaze was averted from the awful scene—Jesus thus died, not angered or disillusioned or cynical or defiant, but meek, submissive, forgiving; knowing full well that His detractors and

executioners were only incidental to the drama of redemption in which He was the Central Figure, a place He held by the Father's appointment and His own choosing.

We have made no attempt to deal critically with these fleeting glimpses into the redemptive self-consciousness of Jesus. For the reverent Christian believer they afford dependable insights. They do not constitute a doctrine of atonement. Indeed, the most that one can say of them is that they supply the raw materials out of which a doctrine may be formulated. To attempt to understand the meaning of the death of Christ without giving central place to Jesus' own understanding of that death can yield no results worthy of attention or respect. It is true, Jesus' words in this connection are rich in metaphor. It is said of Arius, the Alexandrian presbyter, whose view of the relationship of Christ to God the Father was pronounced heretical at Nicaea, that his greatest weakness was his inability to understand the significance of a metaphor. Dr. H. Wheeler Robinson⁸ has pointed out most explicitly the dangers that confront the interpreter of metaphorical language. The term "ransom," for instance, which as we have seen carries the impressive sanction of our Lord, must serve to illustrate *some* element in the redeeming work of Christ which must be taken into account in formulating a doctrine. The fact that during the first thousand years of the Church the fathers frequently pressed its literal and detailed implications to preposterous extremes should not prompt the modern interpreter to omit it entirely from consideration. Our doctrine of atonement must make a place, therefore, for some aspect of the idea of ransom.

Moreover, we must give place in our doctrine for our Lord's clear consciousness of His sacrifice as a voluntary and purposive laying down of His life. We have emphasized the treachery, illegality, and brutality which attended the death of Christ to the point where we have

almost made Him a martyr rather than a Saviour. For Jesus, the Cross was an altar where He was offered up willingly in order that by His sacrifice the sins of men might be forgiven. There is no way to escape this aspect of our problem short of holding that Jesus lived, labored, and died under a gross illusion—a hypothesis that is utterly unthinkable.

III

When we come to the Acts of the Apostles and the apostolic Epistles, we find in more explicit form the teaching which was implicit in the words of our Lord. The first Christian sermon, that of St. Peter on the Day of Pentecost, and Peter's and John's remarks in defense of their healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, reveal a rudimentary theology of the atonement as it was understood before the inspired resources of St. Paul's great mind were brought to bear upon the problem. St. Peter, in his Pentecostal message, while not overlooking the fact that wicked hands crucified Jesus, nevertheless sees clearly that a divine purpose was wrought out through the Cross: Jesus was delivered to death "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). The healing of the lame man was accomplished "through faith in his [Christ's] name" (Acts 3:16). And in his defiance of the rulers, consequent upon that healing, Peter declared that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). There is no attempt here to define just *how* the work of Christ accomplishes the soul's salvation, but of the fact that there is such a connection there is not a moment's doubt.

It is clear, as one reads the New Testament, that only gradually did the whole truth of the significance of Christ's death dawn upon the earliest Christian preach-

ers. St. Paul's growing insight clearly illustrates this point. His first recorded sermon, preached at Antioch in Pisidia, after recounting to his Jewish audience the story of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, declares categorically that "through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39). In this early statement of his doctrine of salvation two notes are sounded which are elaborated greatly in his Epistles. One is the futility of the law as an agent of deliverance from sin, to be amplified in his Galatian letter; the other is the doctrine of justification through Christ, which forms the keynote of the Epistle to the Romans.

Coming to St. Paul's Epistles, we find in First Thesalonians his earliest writing; and here he asserts that "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him" (I Thess. 5:9-10). It is evident here that the difference between wrath and salvation is determined by the fact that Christ has died for us.

First Corinthians is an Epistle devoted largely to reproof and correction; yet the doctrine of atonement finds expression in it, even though indirectly. The apostle's declaration of purpose, "not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified," (I Cor. 2:2) certainly sounds an unequivocal note. His characterization of Christ as "our passover . . . sacrificed for us" (I Cor. 5:7) suggests that our Lord is the Antitype of the paschal lamb. The earliest account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, which appears in chapter eleven, we have already mentioned. In summarizing the gospel which he had received and was preaching, Paul declares its first specification to be that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3).

But we must hasten to a consideration of the leading metaphors under which St. Paul views the work of Christ. Among these, one of the most significant is that of atonement or reconciliation. Only once does the former term appear in the New Testament (Rom. 15:11), the usual translation being "reconciliation." Of the history of the idea of atonement we have no time to speak at length. It is sufficient to point out that it is one of the most familiar ideas in the ancient religion of Israel, appearing in the Old Testament both with and without sacrifice. This idea of reconciliation was one of the great concepts which seemed to satisfy the soul of St. Paul as adequate for setting forth the meaning of Christ's death. One of his great passages in this connection is found in II Cor. 5:14-21. Here he declares that Christ "died for all," placing all men under obligation to live for Him. So gloriously does this concept transfigure our Lord that He is no longer viewed as a man who can be remembered after the flesh, but is seen to be the world's transforming Saviour. God "hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ . . . God was in Christ," he continues, "reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." It is important to note the Father's initiative in this supreme act of reconciliation, and its effectiveness as a deliverance from sin to righteousness. On the strength of the wonder accomplished in the death of Christ we may go to men confidently with the plea, "Be ye reconciled to God."

Further thinking along this line is found in the fifth chapter of Romans. "If, when 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. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement [reconciliation]" (Rom. 5:10-11). Dr. John Miley points out that "this is the reconciliation of enemies, and, there-

fore, of persons under God's displeasure and judicial condemnation. The reconciliation is by the death of his Son. The assurance of salvation lies in the fact of such a reconciliation of enemies. The divine acceptance in favor comes after this reconciliation as its provisory ground. The death of Christ renders forgiveness consistent with the requirements of justice in moral administration."⁹

These passages make clear that reconciliation is two-fold. God must be reconciled to man quite as much as man must be reconciled to God. Indeed it is altogether likely that the divine reconciliation is by far the more important. The problem of estrangement from God is more than a problem subjective to the soul of man. It is an objective problem and one of cosmic proportions. And in the death and victory of Jesus that problem is met and solved. Such is Paul's inspired and inspiring grasp of the idea of the atonement of Christ.

A second idea present in the mind of Paul, as he applied himself to the problem presented by the death of Christ, is that of propitiation. In Rom. 3:25, in seeking to interpret the meaning of redemption, he asserts that Christ Jesus is One "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." The propitiation idea finds further support in the First Epistle of John (I John 2:2; 4:10). It is an important and fruitful concept and must be taken into account in any adequate doctrine of atonement. A propitiation, says J. Scott Lidgett, "is that by means of which those who are out of favor may be restored to favor, and therefore to normal relations, with him to whom it is presented, in consequence of the changed condition of mind it brings about, not in those who present it, but in him to whom it is presented. Those who offer a propitiation thereby express their desire to be at one with him to whom they offer it, and by means of it seek to turn his aversion from them

and his wrath towards them into favor."¹⁰ There is some sense in which our Lord by His death has rendered God propitious toward a race estranged by sin, and this idea must find place in any proper doctrine of the work of Christ.

A third figure of speech employed by the apostle is that of redemption in its varied forms. Here is a clear echo of Jesus' own words concerning His giving His life as a ransom. In the First Epistle to Timothy, Paul employs the very language of the Master, asserting that Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all" (I Tim. 2:6). We are dealing here, Dr. John Miley reminds us, with "the very terms which signify the ransom or price given for the liberation of a captive, the recovery of anything forfeited, or the satisfaction of penal obligation. So, for our deliverance from sin and death, and for the recovery of our forfeited spiritual life, Christ gives his life—himself—as the ransom."¹¹

The apostle conceives of the bondage from which we are to be delivered from various points of view. One curse from which we are to be freed is the curse of iniquity—sin. Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity" (Titus 2:14). Paul views sin as a vicious tyrant who holds men in captivity. But "we have redemption through his [Jesus'] blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph. 1:7). An even more uniquely Pauline point of view is seen in the apostle's attitude toward the law. The law stood for the way of legal righteousness, a way Paul had followed with all the eagerness of his soul, only to find it utterly futile. From one point of view the law of God is holy and righteous and good. But from another it becomes "the strength of sin." We have no time to study the element of paradox which controls the apostle's thought at this point. It is enough to recall that he viewed the function of the law as that of a schoolmaster whose duty was "to bring us

unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24). Now that Christ has come, to be under the "school-master" is to be in bondage. Thus the apostle sees in Christ a deliverance from the law. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," he cries to the Galatians (Gal. 3:13). And again, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4-5).

It is evident, further, that Paul views redemption through Christ as the sole ground of justification. Men are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). Justification, which is God's act in receiving sinful men as righteous, thus making possible their forgiveness and regeneration, is due to the sacrifice which our Lord has made for us, appropriated by faith.

A fourth idea which appears in St. Paul's writing, though occupying a relatively inconspicuous place, is that of moral influence. During the past century there has been an increasing tendency to interpret the death of Jesus as an exhibition of divine love designed to influence and persuade men to turn to God. It is an undeniable fact that this is indeed one result of the sufferings of Christ, though certainly not the only result. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Whatever else is contained in this statement, it does bring into sharp focus the moral influence exerted on the sinner by the death of Jesus, and this aspect of its meaning must find its place in any adequate theory of atonement.

The conflict into which our Lord entered at His passion and from which He emerged triumphantly, Paul sees to be a struggle of cosmic proportions. In Col. 2:15 he asserts of Christ that, "having spoiled principalities

and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2:15). It is a struggle which reached its climax in the Cross, but which even yet is in its aftermath; as when, in Eph. 6:12, the Christian is represented as wrestling, "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The struggle can have only one end, however. The end shall come when Christ "shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (I Cor. 15:24-25).

The concepts present in the thinking of St. Paul are echoed with varying overtones in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as well as in the Petrine and Johannine Epistles. Indeed, the apostolic preachers of the gospel were in complete agreement concerning the vast significance of the death and resurrection of Christ. They drew upon all available imagery in their efforts to set forth this significance, without attempting to systematize their thought. Christ meant to them all that their language is able to convey and much besides that language was incapable of capturing and holding. It is our further task to study the attempts of the Church over the centuries to bring forth the meanings which in the New Testament are only suggested, and finally to make our own attempt at formulating a doctrine of the atonement. We approach it humbly and in utter reliance upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit, whose responsibility it is to lead us into all truth.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RANSOM

THEORY

The century which followed the death of the last of the apostles was singularly lacking in church fathers who gave attention to theories of atonement. To post-apostolic Christian leaders, notes Oxenham, "it was not the atonement, but the incarnation, which was the centre of Christian faith as of Christian life . . . The Fathers see in [Christ's] death, not an isolated act, or even an isolated sacrifice, but the natural consummation of that one great act of self-devotion whose unbroken energy stretched from the conception to the cross."¹ There is a sense in which this comprehensive view of Christ's life and work is essentially sound. No clear doctrine of objective atonement can stand unless supported by an equally clear doctrine of incarnation. Reconciliation between God and sinful man could be effected only by One who was himself both God and man.

It was impossible, of course, for Christian thought to proceed during those early years without some consideration of the meaning of Christ's death, and in the Christian writings of the second century we find frequent allusions to that death and the beginnings of an interpretation of its significance. For instance, Clement of Rome,

in his *First Epistle*, finds in the cross of Christ chiefly an exhibition of the love of God. "Love unites us to God," says he. "By love all God's chosen have been made perfect. Without love nothing can please God. In love the Master took us to himself. Because of the love he had for us, Jesus Christ our Lord by the will of God gave his blood for us, and his flesh for our flesh, and his life for our lives."² So far as Clement enters into theory in this typical passage, he looks upon the atonement as an event designed to exert moral pressure upon the sinner to repent and turn to God.

The *Epistle to Diognetus*, only slightly later than Clement, likewise dwells on the moral influence which emanates from the cross of Christ. God sent His Son "with gentleness and meekness, . . . he sent him as man to men; he sent as seeking to save, as persuading, not compelling, for compulsion is not the way of God. He sent as one calling, not pursuing; he sent as one loving, not judging."³ While this Epistle recognizes the fact that God himself "gave His own Son as a ransom for us,"⁴ no attempt is made to elucidate the expression.

I

The first appearance of a serious attempt at a doctrine of atonement is found in the writings of Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons. Irenaeus was a native of Asia Minor, where Paul's earliest missionary work was carried on, and represents the Christian traditions which were dominant in that area. In his treatise *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus has this to say of the work of Christ: "And since the apostasy [i.e., kingdom of Satan] tyrannized over us unjustly, and, though we were by nature the property of the omnipotent God, alienated us contrary to nature, rendering us its own disciples, the word of God [i.e., Christ], powerful in all things, and not defective with regard to His own justice, did righteously turn against that apostasy and

redeem from it His own property, not by violent means, as the [apostasy] had obtained dominion over us at the beginning, when it insatiably snatched away what was not its own, but by means of persuasion, as became a God of counsel, who does not use violent means to obtain what He desires, so that neither should justice be infringed upon, nor the ancient handiwork of God go to destruction."⁵ The continuing influence of the sort of thinking found in the *Epistle to Diognetus* is evident in this passage, God's method being persuasion, not force. But there is a new note sounded which indicates that Christian thought was now beginning to seek a theology of the atonement. There is a recognition of the kingdom of Satan to which men are held in bondage. There is, moreover, the idea that God is deterred by His sense of justice from using Satan's methods in undoing Satan's work. Admittedly, this is not a ransom theory. But Irenaeus' thought marks the beginning of the transition to the full-fledged statement of that theory.

When we come to Origen, of Alexandria, who flourished during the first half of the third century, we find that the transition to the ransom theory is practically complete. Commenting on the significance of the idea of ransom, Origen says of Christ: "To whom gave He His life a ransom for many? It cannot have been to God. Was it not then to the Evil One? For he held us until the ransom for us, even the soul of Jesus, was paid to him, being deceived into thinking that he could be its Lord, and not seeing that he could not bear the torment of holding it."⁶

The idea of the payment of a ransom price to the devil, who had for so long been holding mankind captive, was one that appealed to the popular imagination. Men were terribly conscious of the power of the evil one and could easily accept the essential basis for the idea of ransom in a thralldom to sin which was universal. Until

recently the modern liberal temper has had little sympathy with this basic assumption, though among orthodox Christians belief in the terrible power of the evil one has never seriously wavered. Even among once liberal thinkers there is a pronounced trend today toward a belief in demonic powers which suggests at least a partial return to the traditional Christian point of view. Among the Christians of the early centuries, however, uncertainty at this point was unthinkable. The idea of universal bondage to Satan was a fact beyond argument. And with this fundamental question settled, the further idea of the ransom paid by our Lord seemed the only logical explanation of the phenomenon of redemption.

A further reason for the popularity of this view lay in its power of homiletical appeal. It was an easy and acceptable view to preach. It appealed to the love of the dramatic in man's soul. The idea of a ransom paid to Satan, or a bargain entered into between God and the devil with the soul of Jesus the redeeming consideration, was easily grasped by the humblest and most illiterate listener to the Christian message.

When it came to explain how all of this bargaining was accomplished, the early fathers resorted on the one hand to figures of speech that seem to us inexcusably grotesque, and on the other hand to sophisticated argument which reveals a remarkably high type of theological acumen.

Gregory of Nyssa, who was in his prime during the latter half of the fourth century, was perhaps the earliest writer of the former type. Gregory begins with the idea of essential divine justice. Since it was by man's voluntary choice that he came into bondage to Satan, the devil's claim to him is quite legitimate. Therefore, in effecting man's release from this slavery, "it was requisite that no arbitrary method of recovery, but the one consonant with justice should be devised by Him who in His good-

ness had undertaken our rescue."⁷ Satan never dreamed, of course, that divinity would ever be clothed with humanity. The flesh of our Lord was a veil which concealed His true identity and thus deceived the devil. "In order," says Gregory, "to secure that the ransom in our behalf might be easily accepted by him who requires it, the Deity was hidden under the veil of our nature, that so, as with ravenous fish, the hook of the Deity might be gulped down along with the bait of flesh."⁸ Gregory reconciles this deception with the idea of divine justice by invoking the law of retribution. Since Satan won his title to man in the first place by deception, in the justice of God he lost it by falling victim to deception.⁹

There are other metaphors equally grotesque. St. Augustine, for instance, likens the Cross to a mousetrap baited with the blood of Christ.¹⁰ This figure, which Dr. G. B. Stevens attributes to Peter Lombard,¹¹ is evidently only a quotation from Augustine. Gregory the Great, who lived nearly two centuries after Augustine, likens the deception of the devil to a snare for catching birds: "The Lord deceived him like a bird when in the Passion He displayed before him His only-begotten Son as bait, but hid the noose."¹²

The Latin fathers made a more serious effort to defend the essential justice of God's deception of the devil than did the Greek fathers. We have noted Gregory's defense of the idea by appeal to the law of retribution. The Latin mind, with its clearer sense of the majesty of law and order, would be expected to excel the Greek at this point. Augustine holds that Satan was self-deceived, deceived "by his own inordinate pride."¹³ Satan was so sure of himself and of his power over humanity that he felt himself "superior to the Lord Himself, inasmuch as the Lord in His sufferings yielded to him . . . so that He, being Himself put to death, although innocent, by the unjust one acting against us as if it were by just right,

might by a most just right overcome him, and so might lead captive the captivity wrought through sin, and free us from a captivity that was just on account of sin."¹⁴

"And how was he conquered?" continues Augustine. "Because when he found in Him nothing worthy of death, yet he slew Him. And certainly it is just, that we whom he held as debtors, should be dismissed free by believing in Him whom he slew without any debt. . . .

"And hence He proceeds to His passion, that He might pay for us debtors that which He Himself did not owe."¹⁵

II

For a thousand years of the Church's history the ransom theory was the leading interpretation of the meaning of Christ's death. Not until the appearance of the famous work by Anselm of Canterbury, entitled *Cur Deus Homo?*, was the supremacy of the ransom view seriously challenged. Yet even during this long period of ascendancy it was not unmixed with other views. We have noted already the fact that the earliest years of the post-apostolic period yielded a number of writers who emphasize the moral influence aspect of the atonement. This emphasis reappears in both Irenaeus and Augustine, as well as in men less famous than they. This view was to come to its earliest clear enunciation by Abelard in the twelfth century. Moreover, the satisfaction view, which was destined to receive its classic statement by Anselm, was anticipated by both Origen and Gregory the Great.¹⁶ Perfect consistency is a difficult thing to achieve in any age, and it is by no means strange that we should find little of it during this first Christian millennium.

It is equally true that the ransom theory did not disappear immediately with the publication of Anselm's work on the atonement. As Bishop Aulén has pointed out,¹⁷ the language of ransom persisted in the preaching, hymnody, and art of the Church, as well as in its liturgy.

Especially in the liturgy of the Easter festival did this historic concept of the atonement continue to live.

Aulén points out, further, that, whatever atonement views may have been entertained by other of the Protestant reformers, Luther certainly adhered to the ransom view.¹⁸ Indeed, he insists that Luther not only revived, but deepened, the significance of this point of view.¹⁹ Luther displayed a fondness for the grossest and most colorful symbols by which to set forth his view. A few passages quoted by Aulén are these: "He has delivered, purchased, and won me, a lost and doomed man, from all sins, from death and the devil's power."²⁰ Again, enlarging on our deliverance "from the devil, from death and all woe," he says, "Now, therefore, those tyrants and gaolers are all crushed, and in their place is come Jesus Christ, a Lord of Life, righteousness, all good and holiness, and He has snatched us poor lost men from the jaws of hell, won us, made us free, and brought us back to the Father's goodness and grace."²¹ A third passage, quoted by Aulén, recalls the vivid imagery of Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine. He pictures the devil swallowing Christ up, only to find that "this is to him as food which he cannot digest." In Luther's own words, "Christ sticks in his gills, and he must spue Him out again as the whale the prophet Jonah, and even as he chews Him the devil chokes himself and is slain, and is taken captive by Christ."²² Such is the robust, colorful thinking of the great Saxon reformer concerning Christ's victory.

The hymnody of the Protestant churches continues to echo this view. Luther's great hymn, "*Ein Feste Burg*," is a case in point. For instance,

*And let the prince of ill
Look grim as e'er he will,
He harms us not a whit.
For why? His doom is writ;
A word shall quickly slay him.*

Charles Wesley echoes this same idea in these lines:

*On earth th' usurpers reign,
Exert their baneful power;
O'er the poor fallen souls of men
They tyrannize their hour.*

*But shall believers fear?
But shall believers fly?
Or see the bloody Cross appear,
And all their powers defy?*

We could cite numbers of hymns and gospel songs in common use today, all of which belong in this category. And in our language of testimony we employ metaphors closely related to this idea of ransom. Even though there are few persons today who would profess allegiance to the idea of a bargain struck between God and the devil, our devotional speech will probably, as long as Christian testimony endures, employ figures of speech closely related to this idea.

III

Here then is a view of the atonement which certainly roots down into the language of the New Testament, its basic idea carrying the impressive authority of our Lord himself. We have noted some of the exaggerated statements of some of its proponents and have seen the extremes into which thoughtful men can be betrayed by a too thoroughgoing exposition of a metaphor. We must ask, however, if there is not a living core of truth in this theory which it is most essential that we preserve. Is there not a very real sense in which the ransom theory serves to dramatize the terrific conflict between the kingdoms of light and of darkness, a struggle which centers in the cross of Christ?

It is an undeniable fact that modern historians of dogma have made no attempt to conceal their disdain of

the ransom view. Its idea of an ethical dualism in which good and evil were engaged in a conflict of cosmic proportions has been repugnant to the modern liberal temper. The verbal excesses of its early proponents are perhaps repulsive. Such adjectives as "mythological," "hideous," "grotesque" have been applied to the theory. Some historians of doctrine take the view that for theories of atonement the first ten centuries of church history have nothing to offer.

It would be summary procedure, however, to dismiss the ransom theory without an honest attempt to understand its worth. This type of theory was the product of the ablest minds of the Early Church, among whom was St. Augustine. As Dr. Edwin Lewis reminds us: "The responsible thinkers of the Early Church were not a group of incompetents. They were a body of men keenly aware of the moral struggle. In their own experience they had known the need of deliverance and they had found Christ their deliverer. They knew how Christ and his work was described in the New Testament, and they described it in similar terms. They were not concerned so much about a final philosophical *rationale* as about an effective presentation. How can we best understand Jesus Christ? How can we help others best to understand him? These were their questions."²³

There is no denying the fact that they had the New Testament on their side. The Christian Scriptures frankly present the view to which we have referred as ethical dualism: that a moral conflict is on in the universe, with God and righteousness on one side and the devil and sin on the other; that man has been victimized by evil and God has attempted a rescue; that Jesus himself described the sacrifice He was about to make as the payment of a ransom. The Master did not say to whom the ransom was to be paid, and it was almost inevitable that the early Christian teachers would supply the lack, with results

which have had the effect in some instances of caricaturing the doctrine. But no one can be completely scriptural in his account of the atonement and omit this bit of New Testament language.

In recent years an attempt has been made by an eminent Swedish theologian to render belated justice to this earliest view of the atonement. In 1931 Gustaf Aulén, then professor of systematic theology in the University of Lund and now a bishop of the Lutheran church in Sweden, published his little book entitled *Christus Victor*. We have already made passing reference to this work. It remains to attempt a brief appraisal of its significance in the field of atonement theology.

It is Aulén's contention that historians of doctrine have been singularly unfair to the ideas implicit in the ransom metaphor; indeed, that in the main they have missed its meaning altogether. This is due, he feels, to the fact that the critical study of theology first arose during the rationalistic period of the eighteenth century and was more concerned with vindicating the more liberal views of the atonement against orthodox views, such as the penal satisfaction theory, than with evaluating fairly this earliest of Christian atonement theories. Yet Aulén contends that the ransom view is really the classic view, having held its place in Christian thought for a thousand years. Behind its facade of grotesque statement by its earliest proponents there lies a wealth of rich meaning still unexplored. Furthermore, it carries the authority of our Lord. A view which bears such credentials ought not to be dismissed with a gesture or, as has more often been the case, with a grimace.

The "classic" theory has for its central theme (in Aulén's words) "the idea of the Atonement as a Divine conflict and victory; Christ—Christus Victor—fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the 'tyrants' under which man is in bondage and suffer-

ing, and in Him God reconciles the world to Himself."²⁴ Here the cross of Christ is seen against a background of cosmic struggle between the Kingdom of righteousness and the kingdom of evil; a struggle which has raged for a long time, and which comes to a sharp focus in the death of Christ.

Aulén characterizes this view as "dramatic" and differentiates it clearly from both objective and subjective views. "The most marked difference," says he, "between the 'dramatic' type and the so-called 'objective' type lies in the fact that it represents the work of Atonement or reconciliation as from first to last a work of God Himself, a *continuous* Divine work; while according to the other view, the act of Atonement has indeed its origin in God's will, but is, in its carrying-out, an offering made to God by Christ as man and on man's behalf, and may therefore be called a *discontinuous* Divine work."²⁵ The "dramatic" view, furthermore, is clearly distinguished from all so-called "subjective" views which confine the significance of the atonement mainly to its power to impress men and overcome their opposition to God's will by moral influence.

Aulén traces the rise and progress of this "classic" view, beginning with Irenaeus and following through to Luther. His start is made with Irenaeus because he was the earliest of the fathers to deal at all thoroughly with the doctrine. Irenaeus faces the question: Why did Christ come down from heaven, become incarnate among men, and die on the Cross? and answers it thus: "That He might kill sin, deprive death of its power, and vivify man."²⁶ Irenaeus develops this thought at greater length in this quotation: "For if man, who had been created by God that he might live, after losing life, through being injured by the serpent that had corrupted him, should be utterly [and forever] abandoned to death, God would [in that case] have been conquered, and the wickedness

of the serpent would have prevailed over the will of God. But inasmuch as God is invincible and long-suffering, He did indeed show Himself to be long-suffering in the matter of the correction of man and the probation of all . . . ; and by means of the second man did He bind the strong man, and spoiled his goods, and abolished death, vivifying that man who had been in a state of death. For at the first Adam became a vessel in his [Satan's] possession, whom he did also hold under his power, that is, by bringing sin on him iniquitously, and under colour of immortality entailing death upon him. For, while promising that they should be as gods, which was in no way possible for him to be, he wrought death in them: wherefore he who had led man captive, was justly captured in his turn by God; but man, who had been led captive, was loosed from the bonds of condemnation."²⁷

Behind these quaint words of Irenaeus we get a glimpse of more than a personal bargain between God and the devil. We see rather a whole hierarchy of evil—Satan, sin, and death—all uniting to scourge and slay man, but in order to defeat the holy purposes of the living God. The whole undertaking of God in Christ—incarnation, life among men, death, and resurrection—is God's method of meeting the destroyer and overwhelming him. "In Irenaeus' thought," says Aulén, "the Incarnation is the necessary preliminary to the atoning work, because only God is able to overcome the powers which hold man in bondage, and man is helpless. The work of man's deliverance is accomplished by God Himself, in Christ. This is the nerve of the whole conception."²⁸

It should be remembered that the distinguishing element in this earliest theory, the element which leads Aulén to call it the "dramatic" view, is this emphasis upon the atonement, as throughout, the work of God on behalf of man, the work of Christ as the Divine Son of God, in-

deed a work He was able to accomplish only because of that relationship. Later views, especially the Anselmic view, regard the atonement as the work of Christ *as man rather than as God*. Dr. Sydney Cave states the distinction concisely in these words: "Grotesque as was often the expression of that 'Patristic' [i.e., the 'dramatic'] view, it did make clear that Christ's work was the work of God, and that God Himself was man's Saviour. In Anselm's theory it is man—in the God-man—who has to make satisfaction."²⁹

The "dramatic" view, Aulén points out, was the prevailing opinion in the Greek church from Irenaeus to John of Damascus. Even in the Latin church, where ideas of legal satisfaction were injected into the stream of thought from time to time by Tertullian, Cyprian, and others, the dominant conception continued to be the "dramatic" view, until displaced by Anselm's satisfaction theory. Admittedly, the theory as popularly preached left much to be desired. But as believed and taught by the careful thinkers of the Church, it is a theory still to be reckoned with and one which embodies truth which must find place in any adequate doctrine of the atonement. However easily the ransom theory could be tossed aside before Bishop Aulén published his monograph, it can no longer be ignored as a movement of thought which has no significance.

There are three factors, therefore, which are essential to an understanding of the ransom or "dramatic" theory of the atonement. Let us state them in brief summary. One is the ethical dualism which is the occasion of the conflict which comes to a head in the death of Christ. Sin is a fact, and a deadly serious one. However popular it may be today for the liberal spirit to take an optimistic view of sin, for the early Christian thinkers it was a consideration which called for more than a slap on the wrist. Sin was the work of a hierarchy of evil

presided over by Satan, and the human race was led captive by his power. Opposing the kingdom of darkness was the Kingdom of light, presided over by a holy God. Here was a moral and spiritual dualism, two cosmic forces locked in deadly combat. There is no understanding of the true significance of the cross of Christ except as it is seen as the crucial fact in this struggle.

A second factor essential to the "dramatic" theory is the principle of continuity. The work of redemption is God's work throughout, and not man's. It was conceived in the mind and heart of God. It was implemented by the Father's gift of His Son to become incarnate among men. And in dying to atone for man's sin the God-Man offered himself up as God and not as man. Says Luther, "By Himself to overcome the world's sin, death, the curse and God's wrath, this is not the work of any created being, but of almighty God. Therefore He who of Himself overcame these must actually in His nature be God. For against these so mighty powers, sin, death, and the curse, which of themselves have dominion in the world and in all creation, another and a higher power must appear, which can be none other than God. To destroy sin, to smite death, to take away the curse by Himself, to bestow righteousness, bring life to light, and give the blessing: to annihilate the former, and to create the latter: this is the work of God's omnipotence alone."³⁰

The third factor depends logically on the second. There is a necessary "double aspect" or "double-sidedness" in this "classic" or "dramatic" view of the atonement. As Aulén states it, "God is at once the author and the object of the reconciliation; He is reconciled in the act of reconciling the world to Himself."³¹

In Irenaeus this reconciliation is related to his doctrine of recapitulation, a doctrine which finds ample foundation in St. Paul's writings. It is based particularly on Eph. 1:10: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of

times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him." For Irenaeus this means ultimately that "by His obedience unto death the Word [*i.e.*, Christ] annulled the ancient disobedience committed at the tree."³² Our Lord's whole earthly career was a sacrifice which culminated in the Cross. His perfect life and triumphant death have undone forever the effects of sin and have wrought a perfect reconciliation with the Father. Thus God is not only the Author of reconciliation, but also the Object of it.

Whatever we may think about the ransom theory of the atonement, it is folly to attempt to ignore it. The idea of ransom, taken alone, is not able to convey the whole significance of the work of Christ; and it is altogether likely that Jesus never intended that it should. But there is something of great value to be gained by including in our doctrine of atonement the ransom idea. For the fact remains that, as St. Peter puts it, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Pet. 1:18-19).

CHAPTER THREE

ANSELM'S DOCTRINE

OF SATISFACTION


We have noted the fact that the earliest theory of atonement, the ransom theory, variously known among theologians as the "patristic," or "classic," or "dramatic" theory, held sway in the thinking of the Church for a thousand years—indeed, until the appearance of Anselm in the eleventh century. It is true, during this long period of time not all thinkers of the Church adhered to the theory in its primitive simplicity. There were many, such as Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine, in whose speculations can be seen suggestions of divergent views which were in time to be developed into completely formulated theories of atonement. It was not, however, until the appearance of Anselm's book entitled *Cur Deus Homo?* ("Why the God-Man?") that the idea of ransom ceased to be the leading metaphor by means of which men sought to express the significance of Christ's death.

Anselm was an Italian, born in Piedmont, and educated in the newly founded monastery of Bec in Normandy. He became a monk in 1060, prior in 1063, and abbot of the monastery from 1078 to 1093. During these years he was known as a man of piety and devotion as well as a philosopher of distinction and a teacher of rare

ability. In 1093 Anselm was appointed to the vacant see of Canterbury in England, a post which he accepted most unwillingly and practically on his own terms. But Anselm's chief fame does not rest upon his record as a great saint, a great teacher, or a great ecclesiastic. It rests rather upon his theory of atonement propounded in *Cur Deus Homo?* Here was a theory which was destined to become the pattern of atonement thought for the Roman Catholic church on the one hand, and the Calvinistic branch of the Protestant church on the other. While the views of Anselm were not accepted by either of these groups without far-reaching modifications, it remains true that the foundations for both Catholic and Calvinistic Protestant thought on the question of the work of Christ are to be found in Anselm.

I

Anselm's discussion of the incarnation of the Son of God and the significance of His death upon the Cross is cast in the Socratic form of questions and answers. The dialogue is carried on between the master and his pupil, Boso, the pupil raising the questions and the master supplying the answers. The book is a heavy, labored discussion, after the order of medieval treatises, devoting considerable space to a discussion of the relation of reason and faith and seeking to exhibit the reasonableness of the virgin birth of our Lord, the utter ruin of the race in sin, and the necessity of the death of Christ if man's debt is to be paid.

The basic idea in Anselm's view is to be found in his definition of sin. Sin is failure to render to God what is His due. That due is complete obedience to God's will. He "who does not render to God this honor, which is His due," says Anselm, "takes away from God what is His own, and dishonors God, and this is to sin . . . Everyone who sins ought to render back again to God the honor he

has taken away, and this is the satisfaction which every sinner ought to make to God."¹ This idea of affronted honor, which is so essential to Anselm's view of the nature of sin, is consistent with modes of thought which prevailed in the age of chivalry, as Dr. G. B. Stevens points out, just as the idea of a ransom paid to the devil was a metaphor easily understood in an earlier age of brigandage.²

Boso raises the questions as to why God could not forgive the sins of men out of His great compassion and upon the grounds of their sincere repentance. The answer of Anselm points out that the reparation God must have must not only atone for the obedience of which He has been deprived, but also must compensate for the offense to His honor. Moreover, the satisfaction which God demands must be proportionate to the guilt. It is not enough that men should become contrite, should show mercy and loving-kindness toward their fellow men, and perform other deeds that are properly called good. All of these works are due to God anyway and possess no merit that can be applied on the debt due to previous failures to give God His due. It is evident, therefore, that man is utterly powerless to make atonement for his own sins. Indeed, if satisfaction is made, God himself must make it; for He alone is able. It is here that the necessity for the Incarnation arises. As Dr. Stevens puts it: "Man owes the debt; God alone *can pay* it. If, therefore, it is to be paid at all, God must become man." It is a debt so vast that, "unless there be someone to pay to God in compensation for the sin of man something greater than everything that exists except God,"³ the obligation can never be met. Only God could meet so crushing an obligation, and He does it in the God-Man, Christ Jesus. Moreover, the very essence of God's deed of atonement is to be found in the death of the God-Man.

Now that death was not owed to God, since our Lord was sinless. God could not in justice require the life of

His Son, nor was there any necessity under which Christ acted in yielding himself to the Cross. His death was accomplished by His own choice; His life was a gift to the honor of God, laid down willingly by the Lord Jesus himself. And since He needed no reward for such complete devotion, seeing that He already possessed all things, the benefit which He deserved is transferred to man, who needs it so sorely. It is not to Satan that the price of the ransom is paid, as the cruder forms of the ransom theory had for centuries insisted; on the contrary, Jesus' life is laid down as a gift to God, by which the affront offered to God's honor by a sinning race is atoned for, and in view of which it becomes possible for God to forgive sin. Thus "the atonement is an act of homage to God of such transcendent value as to outweigh the sins of mankind and to make it right and proper for God to forgive them."⁴

It must be recognized that Anselm's theory rests upon the idea of satisfaction as it was coming to be understood in the medieval Church. There is no doubt that ideas derived from feudalism helped to condition the thought of Anselm. The notion of God's outraged honor is entirely consistent, as we have observed, with ideals of chivalry in the days when knighthood was in flower. Moreover, ancient Germanic law recognized that the value of individual life varied according to the status of the individual, the life of a feudal lord being worth far more than the life of one of his serfs. It seems likely, however, that Anselm's thought was influenced more by the Church's growing practice of penance than by these secular factors. In the earlier centuries those who had lapsed from devotion to Christ and had fallen away from the Church could be readmitted only after clear evidence of heart contrition, public confession, and the practice of good works. Later private confession to a priest was substituted for public confession, and penance was prescribed, frequently on a purely commercial basis. Dr. Sydney

Cave calls our attention to an ingenious device by which, in the tenth century, a rich man was able to accomplish a seven years' fast in three days, by the simple expedient of getting eight hundred and fifty men to fast three days each in his stead.⁵ In such fashion was penance completely commercialized. In keeping with this tendency, the atonement theory of Anselm is deeply tinctured with commercialism. In some respects atonement and forgiveness become merely a process of bookkeeping.

One of the most significant changes of emphasis accomplished by the promulgation of Anselm's view is its emphasis upon the atonement as the work of man rather than the work of God. The older ransom view, despite its crudity, did look upon the atonement as a price paid by God himself to ransom man from the thralldom of the devil. According to Anselm it was man who paid the price—in the person of the God-Man, to be sure; the God-Man was able to make atonement because of His manward relations.

The basic weakness in Anselm's thought is to be found in his definition of sin. To regard sin as fundamentally a failure to give God what is due Him is to miss in large measure the sinfulness of sin. The enslaving, debasing power of sin in human life, the moral and spiritual destitution of the sinner, the cosmic struggle between righteousness and unrighteousness—all of this is scarcely glimpsed by the author of the satisfaction theory. So much of Christ's merit will cancel out so much of human sin—such a system is mathematically neat but grossly inadequate. It is noteworthy that it was this most inadequate feature of Anselmic thought which figured most conspicuously in later Catholic atonement theory. From this point of view, therefore, Anselm's contribution to Christian thought may be held to be of doubtful value.

II

The influence of Anselm's work registered itself almost immediately, at least negatively, in the speculations of Christian thinkers. Peter Lombard, who lived in the eleventh century, was almost the last to conceive of Christ's death as a ransom paid to the devil. Frequently the two points of view were mingled as though the writer was not aware of the conflict between them. Hugo of St. Victor, for instance, uses these terms: "The cure [of our sinful estate] is to be seen in this that the devil laid his hand on Him who was free from sin, in whom he found nothing of his own. And so he rightly lost those whom he seemed to hold by some sort of right, through their faith in Him who by His death became the cause of salvation to all that obey Him. For He suffered not for Himself, but for us."⁶ Here is evidence of transition from one view to the other, involving inconsistencies of which the author appears to be unconscious. Hugo is typical of many of the scholastic theologians who were dominant during this period of the Church's history.

The greatest of the so-called schoolmen was St. Thomas Aquinas, the most authoritative of Roman Catholic theologians and the father of the Thomist philosophy, to which the Roman church adheres today. In the area of atonement theory Aquinas follows Anselm in the main, though at numerous points he has modified Anselm to suit his own purposes. For instance, Aquinas will not agree that the Incarnation was absolutely necessary, a point on which Anselm was adamant. Aquinas admits that salvation by incarnation is undoubtedly the best plan God could devise, though he insists there were, in all probability, numerous other schemes God could have employed.

On one essential point, however, Aquinas is in perfect agreement with Anselm: "The satisfaction of Christ is pronounced to be not only a sufficient, but a

'superabundant' satisfaction for the sins of the world."⁷

In the hands of Aquinas the idea of satisfaction led to the doctrine of indulgences, a teaching which fully deserves Dr. Rashdall's characterization as reaching "the lowest depth of unspirituality or . . . religious commercialism."⁸ It is based on this type of reasoning: Sin, even though forgiven, demands a satisfaction on the part of the sinner in terms of either personal suffering or good works. "Temporal" penalties such as these may be assessed by the church as penance, or may consist of the pains of purgatory; and all except the saints and a very few other fortunate persons are liable. On the other hand, the merits of Christ are more than sufficient for man's redemption, constituting a reserve of merits which are able to compensate for these temporal penalties. Moreover, the saints, by works of supererogation, have increased this reservoir of merit. The pope or bishop claimed the power to draw on this "treasury of merit" to the credit of anyone who would meet his terms. The time came, as every student of church history knows, when an indulgence such as this could be arranged in exchange for cash on the barrelhead; only the cash had to be sufficient. Here was a development which it is likely neither Anselm nor Thomas Aquinas really anticipated. It reveals the horrible abuses that can be practiced in the name of Christ provided church leaders sufficiently mendacious may be found.

III

The doctrinal teachings of the Roman church were not hardened into final form until the decade between 1545 and 1555, during which time the Council of Trent was in session. This council was the direct result of the Protestant Reformation and may be considered a part of the Counter Reformation with which Rome sought to answer the strictures of her Protestant critics. However

liberal may have been the early temper of the council, at its close it was in the hands of the ultra-Roman party, supported by the growing strength and fanaticism of the Jesuit order. The decrees of this council, commonly known as the *Tridentine Decrees*, crystallized the teachings of Rome into their final form, and few Roman Catholic theologians have had the courage to move far from these officially approved principles.

It is true, the question of the atonement was not a major issue at the Council of Trent. The real issue was the nature of justification, a doctrine which the Protestant reformers had made central in their preaching. The reformers held tenaciously to the doctrine of Aquinas concerning the "superabundant worth" or, as they preferred to call it, the "sole sufficiency" of the satisfaction provided by our Lord in His death, and saw clearly enough that the medieval doctrine of merits proposed, in effect, to add something more to this "sole sufficiency." The *Tridentine Decrees* were thus formulated in answer to the Protestant critics of the Church and derive their form from this fact.

Typical of the doctrinal formulations arrived at in the Council of Trent are these: "The Synod furthermore declares, that in adults the beginning of the said justification is to be derived from the prevenient grace of God, through Jesus Christ, that is to say, from His vocation, whereby, without any merits existing on their parts, they are called; that so they, who by sins were alienated from God, may be disposed, through His quickening and assisting grace, to convert themselves to their own justification, by freely assenting to and co-operating with the said grace: in such sort that, while God teaches the heart of man by the illumination of the Holy Ghost, neither is man himself utterly passive while receiving that inspiration, forasmuch as he is also able to reject it; yet he is not able, by his own free will, without the grace of God, to move himself into justice in His sight."⁹

Again: "This disposition or preparation is followed by justification, which is not remission of sins merely, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man, through the voluntary reception of the grace and of the gifts whereby man, before unjust, becomes just, before an enemy, becomes a friend, that so he may be an heir according to hope of life everlasting. Of this justification the causes are these: the final cause is the glory of God and of Jesus Christ, and life everlasting; the efficient cause is a merciful God, who washes and sanctifies freely, signing and anointing man with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance; the meritorious cause is His most beloved only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who, when we were enemies, for the exceeding charity wherewith He loved us, won justification for us by His most holy Passion on the wood of the cross, and made satisfaction for us unto God the Father; the instrumental cause is the sacrament of Baptism, which is the sacrament of faith, without which no man was ever justified; lastly, the sole formal cause is the justice of God, not that whereby He Himself is just, but that whereby He maketh us just, that, namely, with which we, being endowed by Him, are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and we are not only reputed, but are truly called, and are, just, receiving justice within us, each one according to his own measure, which the Holy Ghost distributes to every one as He wills, and according to each one's proper disposition and co-operation."¹⁰

There are numerous indications in these statements that the Council of Trent was smarting under Protestant criticism. It is not by faith alone that men are justified; for, said the council, "faith, unless hope and love be added thereto, neither unites man perfectly with Christ nor makes him a living member of His body."¹¹ Indeed, love becomes even more essential than faith, since love is the response which man makes to the love of God revealed in Christ's passion.

Moreover, justification is more than a forensic term and a judicial experience, a declaration that the sinner is righteous and accepted of God, as the reformers held; it is inclusive, rather, of sanctification, at least in the sense that it actually *makes* righteous instead of merely *pronouncing* righteous. Dr. Shedd criticizes the Tridentine position by asserting that its "theory implies, logically, that sin is not guilt, but only disease and pollution."¹² It would be a fairer criticism to say that the Tridentine theory holds that sin is both guilt on the one hand and disease and pollution on the other. At any rate, as Dr. Grensted points out, "Its language is richer and fuller than that of the Reformers, in so far as the latter thought only of the Godward side of the Atonement, and ignored its direct influence on the heart of man."¹³ The Catholic theologians introduced an element of mysticism into their ethic of holiness which was sadly lacking from the thought of the reformers. Indeed the divorce between holiness and grace did not end, in Protestant theology, until the appearance of Wesley, of whom Dr. G. C. Cell makes the observation: "The Wesleyan reconstruction of the Christian ethic of life is an original and unique synthesis of the Protestant ethic of grace with the Catholic ethic of holiness."¹⁴

Despite all that can be said for the Tridentine formulations with respect to the doctrine of justification and the satisfaction achieved by the death of Christ on which justification rests, we must admit that the heavy hand of Rome guided the council and wrought out the result. While there is much to be said for the idea of infused, or imparted, righteousness, as the Council of Trent set it forth, it cannot be denied that the Roman church has drawn from it conclusions that are totally unwarranted, finding in it justification for such a doctrine of human merit based on good works as Aquinas in his most Catholic moments would not have approved. So far as

practice was concerned, the Roman Catholic church was essentially unchanged by its Counter Reformation. The Jesuit order saw to that.

IV

It was inevitable that the Protestant reformers would come to grips with the question of the atonement. The Reformation began, in its public phase at least, with Luther's indignation over the sale of indulgences—a form of paganism which was the direct outgrowth of the inadequate understanding of the work of Christ which prevailed in the Roman church. To take issue with the effect was bound, for a man of Luther's forthright temperament, to lead directly to the cause.

But Luther's own inner experience led him with equal directness to the question of the meaning of Christ's cross. Taught by his parents to fear rather than love God, Luther undertook the study of law, but terrified by his fear of God's judgments, entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt in 1505. Monastic life brought him no peace, however. "In the cloister we had enough to eat and drink," he said in after years, "yet were we suffering and tortured in heart and conscience, and suffering of soul is greatest of all. Often I was terrified at the name of Jesus, and when I looked upon Him on the Cross, so it seemed to me as lightning, and when His name was named, so had I rather had heard of the Devil, and I thought how long I must do good works before Christ would be to me friendly and gracious. In the cloister I thought not of woman, gold or good, but my heart trembled and struggled how God would be gracious to me."¹⁵

Luther found peace for his soul only as there broke into his consciousness a clear understanding of the meaning of justification by simple faith in Jesus Christ, wholly without merit, of which he possessed none, and good works, of which he was totally devoid. Once clear in such

an experience, one could not escape a view of the atonement which found sole sufficiency in the work which Christ had done on the Cross. It is not strange, therefore, that one of Luther's early concerns had to do with this doctrine.

Hand in hand with this view of divine grace, which found particular expression in the experience of justification by faith, Luther held a view of the sinfulness of sin far more adequate than any found in the Roman church of his day. For him sin was by no means merely a dishonor done to God by which the Almighty was deprived of that which was His due. Luther went back to Augustine, rather than to Anselm, for his view of sin. Sin is a deadly contagion conducive only to death. Commenting on Isa. 64:6, he cries out, "If our righteousness is unclean and a stench in God's nostrils, what will unrighteousness be?"¹⁶ Moreover, he reacts with the utmost violence against the medieval view of the Fall as man's loss of a primitive holiness which after all was only God's "superadded gift" in the first place, its loss leaving man with his native goodness not too seriously impaired. Rather, he held that man is utterly undone and hopelessly depraved, his very will so vitiated by sin that he is powerless to lift a finger in his own behalf. Such a view of sin called for a mightily adequate Saviour; and Luther's view of that Saviour, though perhaps not entirely self-consistent, is nevertheless vastly superior to the commercial type of view which prevailed in the Roman church.

In the strictest sense Luther was not a theologian. He was pre-eminently a preacher, a fact which helps to account for the extreme and at times violent forms of expression he so often uses. He rarely attempts an exact statement of any doctrinal position, content to employ metaphor and epigram as they occur to him and in no wise disturbed by the inconsistencies which inevitably

appear in his thought. He was, moreover, a man of violent emotions and strong antipathies. Both his virtues and his vices were cast in heroic mold. But, though not himself a theologian, "he supplied the principles upon which the other Reformers built."¹⁷

An example of Luther's graphic thinking regarding the atonement is illustrated by this passage from his *Table-Talk*: "I beheld once a wolf tearing sheep. When the wolf comes into a sheep-fold, he eats not any until he has killed all, and then he begins to eat, thinking to devour all. Even so it is also with the devil; I have now, thinks he, taken hold on Christ, and in time I will also snap his disciples. But the devil's folly is that he sees not he has to do with the Son of God; he knows not that in the end it will be his bane. It will come to that pass, that the devil must be afraid of a child in the cradle; for when he but hears the name Jesus, uttered in true faith, then he cannot stay. The devil would rather run through the fire than stay where Christ is; therefore, it is justly said: The seed of the woman shall crush the serpent's head. I believe, indeed, he has so crushed his head, that he can neither abide to hear or see Christ Jesus. I often delight myself with that similitude in Job, of an angle-hook that fisherman cast into the water, putting on the hook a little worm; then comes the fish and snatches at the worm, and gets therewith the hook in his jaws, and the fisher pulls him out of the water; God has cast into the world his only Son, as the angle, and upon the hook has put Christ's humanity, as the worm; then comes the devil and snaps at the [man] Christ, and devours him and therewith he bites the iron hook, that is, the godhead of Christ, which chokes him, and all his power thereby is thrown to the ground. This is called *sapientia divina*, divine wisdom."¹⁸ Here is a passage full of dramatic interest; yet in it Luther uses the very imagery employed by Gregory of Nyssa nearly a thousand years before. On the strength of this and other passages of similar type,

Bishop Aulén¹⁹ is clearly justified in his contention that Luther recovered for the Church the ransom theory.

The great reformer's utter disregard of consistency appears, however, when beside the passage just quoted is placed this excerpt from one of his sermons: "Because an eternal, unchangeable sentence of condemnation has passed upon sin—for God cannot and will not regard sin with favor, but his wrath abides upon it eternally and irrevocably—redemption was not possible without a ransom of such precious worth as to atone for sin, to assume the guilt, pay the price of wrath, and thus abolish sin.

"This no creature was able to do. There was no remedy except for God's only Son to step into our distress and himself become man, to take upon himself the load of awful and eternal wrath and make his own body and blood a sacrifice for the sin. And so he did, out of the immeasurably great mercy and love towards us, giving himself up and bearing the sentence of unending wrath and death.

"So infinitely precious to God is this sacrifice and atonement of his only begotten Son who is one with him in divinity and majesty, that God is reconciled thereby and receives into grace and forgiveness of sins all who believe in this Son. Only by believing may we enjoy the precious atonement of Christ, the forgiveness obtained for us out of profound, inexpressible love. We have nothing to boast of for ourselves, but must ever joyfully thank and praise him who at such priceless cost redeemed us condemned and lost sinners."²⁰

Here is a passage which recalls Anselm in that Luther regards Christ as man rendering satisfaction for the sins of our race. It is Augustinian in its view of the sinfulness of sin. It is typically Lutheran in its emphasis upon justification by faith alone. It anticipates the penal satisfaction theory which is associated with the movement of

Christian thought known as Calvinism. Luther's thinking obviously marks the transition from medieval atonement speculations to those of the so-called Reformed theology. To that theology as expressed in Calvinism and to Calvinism's leading opponent—Arminianism—we shall now turn.

CHAPTER FOUR

CALVINISM AND

ITS ANTITHESES

The penal satisfaction theory of the atonement, which is identified chiefly with the name of Calvin, did not spring full-grown from the brain of the great Genevan reformer. There are to be found throughout the medieval period from Augustine onward anticipations of this view which came to classic expression in the writings of Calvin. Its main ingredients had existed for centuries in solution and it remained for Calvin to bring about their precipitation. The first edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* was published while its author was still in his middle twenties and exhibits no such masterful grasp of this and other basic truths as is conspicuous in the last edition. That first edition has little to say of "predestination" and says of the work of Christ that He "by the merit of His death paid our debts due to God's righteousness, and placated His wrath, redeeming us from the curse and death to which we were liable, bearing the punishment of our sins in His body, so that He might free us from it. . . . All these things," he continues, "are offered to us by God, and given in Christ our Lord, namely, free forgiveness of sins, peace and reconciliation with God, gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, if with certain faith

we embrace and receive these things.”¹ This statement of the work of Christ discloses little of the forthrightness of his later work and reveals the fact that numerous sharp distinctions remained yet to be made before Calvinism in the truest sense would be born. With Anselm, Calvin considers our sins as debts to be paid, though they are debts to God’s righteousness rather than to His outraged honor. The idea of placating God’s wrath sounds very much like Luther. Moreover the idea of substitution—the pure Saviour for the defiled and guilty sinner—is clearly present. The later editions of the *Institutes* present Calvin’s opinion in far more elaborate form and it is to this source we must look for definitive statement of the Calvinistic doctrine of atonement.

I

Calvin’s theory of atonement and that of his followers is called the penal satisfaction theory. It owes much to Anselm, though at many important points it has modified the Anselmic teaching so profoundly as to make its view most distinctive. This theory holds that, through His shameful death on the Cross, Christ has given satisfaction to God for the sins of men, thereby placating God and rendering Him propitious toward a lost and sinning race.

The uniqueness of this view turns about the meaning attached to the term “satisfaction.” As Dr. Charles Hodge points out in his monumental *Systematic Theology*: “There are . . . two kinds of satisfaction, which as they differ essentially in their nature and effects, should not be confounded. The one is pecuniary or commercial; the other penal or forensic. When a debtor pays the demand of his creditor in full, he satisfies his claims, and is entirely free from any further demands. In this case the thing paid is the precise sum due, neither more nor less. It is a simple matter of commutative justice; a *quid pro quo*; so much for so much. There can be no condescension,

mercy, or grace on the part of a creditor receiving the payment of a debt. It matters not to him by whom the debt is paid, whether by the debtor himself, or by some one in his stead; because the claim of the creditor is simply upon the amount due and not upon the person of the debtor. In the case of crimes the matter is different. The demand is then upon the offender. He himself is amenable to justice. Substitution in human courts is out of the question. The essential point in matters of crime is not the nature of the penalty, but who shall suffer. The soul that sins, it shall die. And the penalty need not be, and very rarely is, of the nature of the injury inflicted. All that is required is that it should be a just equivalent. For an assault, it may be a fine; for theft, imprisonment; for treason, banishment, or death. In case a substitute is provided to bear the penalty in the place of the criminal, it would be to the offender a matter of pure grace, enhanced in proportion to the dignity of the substitute, and the greatness of the evil from which the criminal is delivered."²

By this sort of distinction the *penal* satisfaction view is differentiated from the *commercial* satisfaction of Anselm. Christ's satisfaction was penal and forensic, not simply the payment of so much for so much. What this view asserts "when it says that Christ satisfied divine justice for the sins of men, is that what He did and suffered was a real adequate compensation for the penalty remitted and the benefits conferred. His sufferings and death were adequate to accomplish all the ends designed by the punishment of the sins of men. He satisfied justice. He rendered it consistent with the justice of God that the sinner should be justified. He did not suffer either in kind or degree what sinners would have suffered. In value, his sufferings infinitely transcended theirs. The death of an eminently good man would outweigh the annihilation of a universe of insects. So the humiliation, sufferings, and death of the eternal Son of God immeasur-

ably transcended in worth and power the penalty which a world of sinners would have endured."³

Calvin makes very clear his view that the Saviour could have accomplished this satisfaction only by the death on the Cross, with all of its shame and its attendant curse. "To supersede our condemnation," writes he, "it was not sufficient for him to suffer any kind of death; but, to accomplish our redemption, that kind of death was to be chosen, by which, both sustaining our condemnation and atoning for our sins, he might deliver us from both. Had he been assassinated by robbers, or murdered in a popular tumult, in such a death there would have been no appearance of satisfaction. But when he is placed as a criminal before the tribunal,—when he is accused and overpowered by the testimony of witnesses, and by the mouth of the judge is condemned to die,—we understand from these circumstances, that he sustained the character of a malefactor . . . Thus we shall behold Christ sustaining the character of a sinner and malefactor, while from the lustre of his innocence it will at the same time evidently appear, that he was loaded with the guilt of others, but had none of his own. He suffered, then, under Pontius Pilate, after having been condemned as a criminal by the solemn sentence of the governor; yet not in such a manner, but that he was at the same time pronounced to be righteous, by the declaration of the same judge, that he found in him no cause of accusation. This is our absolution, that the guilt, which made us obnoxious to punishment, is transferred to the person of the Son of God."⁴

But Calvin carries a step further the idea of satisfaction through the vicarious sufferings of Christ by pointing out the peculiar curse that rested on the Cross. "The cross was accursed," says he, "not only in the opinion of men, but by the decree of the Divine law. Therefore, when Christ is lifted up upon it, he renders himself ob-

noxious to the curse. And this was necessary to be done, that by this transfer we might be delivered from every curse which awaited us, on account of our iniquities."⁵

Thus does the great Genevan make very clear what he believes to be the penal character of the sufferings endured by our Lord and the fact that He bore them for us sinners. He does not shrink from going all the way in following out the implications of this teaching. "If Christ had merely died a corporeal death, no end would have been accomplished by it; it was requisite, also that he should feel the severity of the Divine vengeance, in order to appease the wrath of God, and satisfy his justice. Hence it was necessary for him to contend with the powers of hell and the horror of eternal death." He speaks further of "that invisible and incomprehensible vengeance which he suffered from the hand of God; in order to assure us that not only the body of Christ was given as the price of our redemption, but that there was another greater and more excellent ransom since he suffered in his soul the dreadful torments of a person condemned and irretrievably lost."⁶

To see the full significance of Calvin's doctrine of the atonement, we must understand its extent as well as its nature. He inherited from Augustine, along with Luther, the doctrine of election, stating it in these words: "In conformity . . . to the clear doctrine of the Scriptures, we assert, that by an eternal and immutable counsel, God has once for all determined, both whom he would admit to salvation, and whom he would condemn to destruction. We affirm that this counsel, as far as concerns the elect, is founded on his gratuitous mercy, totally irrespective of human merit; but that to those whom he devotes to condemnation, the gate of life is closed by a just and irreprehensible, but incomprehensible, judgment. In the elect, we consider calling as an evidence of election, and justification as another token of its manifestation, till they

arrive in glory, which constitutes its completion. As God seals his elect by vocation and justification, so by excluding the reprobate from the knowledge of his name and the sanctification of his Spirit, he affords an indication of the judgment that awaits them."⁷

To one who has not grown up in Calvinism and become schooled to its rigorous modes of thought, this seems like a monstrous teaching. It is questionable, indeed, that it is "in conformity to the clear doctrine of the Scriptures." Luther never ventured so far as to say that the divine decrees included a decree of reprobation, passing over in silence the fate of those who were not included in the decree of salvation. But Calvin went all the way in his statement of the doctrine.

It is perfectly consistent with the doctrine of election, furthermore, that Calvin should hold a monergistic view of the attainment of salvation; i.e., that it is entirely the work of God's Spirit and involves at no point human co-operation. The mind and will of man are so hopelessly corrupt and enslaved by sin that co-operation with the Spirit of God becomes utterly impossible. "Let us hold this, then," says he, "as an undoubted truth, which no opposition can ever shake—that the mind of man is so completely alienated from the righteousness of God, that it conceives, desires, and undertakes every thing that is impious, perverse, base, impure, and flagitious; that his heart is so thoroughly infected by the poison of sin, that it cannot produce anything but what is corrupt; and that if at any time men do anything apparently good, yet the mind always remains involved in hypocrisy and fallacious obliquity, and the heart enslaved by its inward perverseness."⁸

Thus, according to Calvin and the Reformed theology, some men are born to be eternally saved, while others are born to be eternally damned; and which is to be one's fate is determined by the inscrutable decree of God. As

a matter of fact, the penal satisfaction theory of the atonement, when followed through to its logical ultimate, forces one either to a theory of universalism on the one hand or a doctrine of predestination on the other. The penal satisfaction theory holds that Christ has satisfied perfectly, by His death on the Cross, the demands imposed upon sinning men by a righteous God. Since, therefore, the punishment for sin has been fully borne by the Lord Jesus as the sinner's Substitute, "then the sinner is unconditionally free from it, for both the sinner and the Substitute cannot be justly punished for the same offence."⁹ Since for the Calvinist universalism is unthinkable, he is compelled to limit sharply the extent of the atonement to the elect. The blood of Christ avails for them, and for no others. To the objection that such a view charges God with the gravest injustice and that it is not consonant with the idea of God's mercy, the Calvinist would reply that since the penalty of sin is universal death, the fact that God chooses to save even a few from this terrible fate is certain proof that He is indeed merciful. For the thoughtful mind the question cannot be allowed to rest there, however. Indeed, as we shall see, there were many Protestant Christian thinkers in Calvin's time and later who were not content to rest the case there, but pressed for an answer more consistent with the whole tenor of New Testament truth.

II

The thinking of Calvin has had a potent influence in many circles within Protestantism, chiefly because of the systematic pattern over which his work was drawn. It was the theology of the great Reformed church in its many phases; it shaped the Christian thinking of the founding fathers of New England and held its place against all contenders until the rise of the so-called American liberal theology. Perhaps its most recent seri-

ous proponents were Dr. William G. T. Shedd, who held the chair of systematic theology in Union Theological Seminary in New York during the late years of the nineteenth century, and Dr. Charles Hodge, who held a corresponding position at Princeton slightly earlier in that century.

Dr. Shedd accepts Calvinism with practically all of its implications. "An atonement for sin, of one kind or the other," says he, "if not personal then vicarious, is necessary, not optional. The transgressor must either die himself, or someone must die for him. This arises from the nature of that divine attribute to which atonement is a correlate. Retributive justice . . . is necessary in its operation. The claim of the law upon the transgressor for punishment is absolute and indefeasible. The eternal Judge may or may not exercise mercy, but he must exercise justice. He can neither waive the claims of the law in part, nor abolish them altogether. The only possible mode, consequently, of delivering a creature who is obnoxious to the demands of retributive justice, is to satisfy them for him."¹⁰

Having established the fact of God's ability to substitute the innocent for the guilty in the exacting of just recompense for sin, and that He has actually placed His only Son in our stead, Dr. Shedd argues for the infinite sufficiency of that satisfaction along lines that are as mathematical in their way as anything Thomas Aquinas might have proposed. "Finite numbers, small or great," says he, "are of no consequence when the value of Christ's oblation is under consideration. One sinner needs the whole infinite Christ and his whole infinite sacrifice, because of the infinite guilt of his sin. And a million of sinners need the same sacrifice, and no more. The guilt of one man in relation to God is infinite; and the infinite sacrifice of Christ cancels it. The guilt of a million of men is infinite—not, however, because a million is a larger

number than one, but because of the relation of sin to God—and the one infinite sacrifice of Christ cancels it . . . An infinite satisfaction meets and cancels infinite guilt, whether there be one man or millions.”¹¹ The mathematical result of such reasoning is aptly stated by Dr. Stevens thus: “Infinite Person plus finite time is held to be greater than finite person plus infinite time.”¹²

As against the alleged injustice of God’s requiring further punishment for sin on the part of the finally impenitent, Dr. Shedd argues with similar ingenuity that “the alleged excess in the case is like the addition of a finite number to infinity, which is no increase.”¹³ You simply cannot add to infinity. Consequently, though by divine decree most of our race be excluded from mercy and punished for sin forever, God’s justice has still received no increase of satisfaction thereby, at least mathematically, than that offered by the sacrifice of Christ.

As has been intimated above, reasoning of this sort rests upon a view of God’s nature which discriminates sharply between justice and mercy or love. God *may* be merciful, but He *must* be just. Justice belongs to God’s essence, it is held, while love belongs to His will. Dr. A. H. Strong, the eminent Baptist theologian, has drawn this same discrimination between holiness and love, the former being essential, the latter optional. Dr. Strong faces this dualism and its possible resolution in a most moving passage: “Triumphant holiness, submissive love—are these, then, in conflict with each other? Is there duality, instead of harmony, in the nature of God? Ah, there would be, but for one fact—the fact of the Cross. The first and worst tendency of sin is its tendency to bring discord into the being of God by setting holiness at war with love, and love at war with holiness. And since both these attributes are exercised toward sinners of the human race, the otherwise inevitable antagonism between them is removed only by the atoning death of

the God-Man. Their opposing claims do not impair the divine blessedness, because the reconciliation exists in the eternal counsels of God; Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."¹⁴

In fairness it must be said that in raising these issues these later Calvinists are less in accord with Calvin than with the thinking of the Protestant scholastic extremists who followed in his train. However, these quotations are fair to the trend of Calvinistic thought in its more recent formulations.

III

As we have suggested already, despite the wide acceptance won by Calvin's views and their great influence, not all were willing to accept them. The first serious opposition to Calvinism in the Protestant Christian world appeared in Holland, which had become a center of theological learning second only to Switzerland. Its mouthpiece was James Arminius. This man was a mature, cultured scholar and a member of the faculty at the University of Leyden. For years he had accepted Calvinism in its entirety. But when assigned the task of defending some of its more extreme emphases, he entered upon an investigation of the whole fabric of Calvinistic teaching, which led him at length to question many of its major points. The real conflict between Arminianism and Calvinism did not occur until after the death of James Arminius in 1609. He left behind him, however, a complete formulation of his theological views and a group of able followers to carry on the fight for truth as he understood it.

The creed of the early Arminians, as embodied in their *Remonstrance* presented in 1618 to the Synod of Dort, took issue with Calvinism on five points. The *first* declares for conditional election rather than the unconditional view. The *second* asserts the universality of the

atonement, while recognizing that it becomes effectual only through faith. The *third* acknowledges that man can exercise saving faith only as he is enabled by the Holy Spirit. The *fourth* recognizes that, while at every stage of the way of salvation grace is most essential, it is by no means irresistible. The *fifth* raises serious doubts concerning the Calvinistic doctrine of the final perseverance of all believers.

It is apparent at once that none of these issues bears directly on the character of the atonement, though the second has to do with its extent, which the Arminians held to be unlimited by any decree of divine election or reprobation. It was inevitable, however, that views so divergent from the dominant Calvinism must produce a rethinking of the doctrine of the atonement; and this came about with the work of Hugo Grotius, eminent Dutch jurist and theologian.

Grotius' work was intended to be a defense of the accepted Protestant faith in the atonement against the Socinians, who were the seventeenth century version of the Unitarian movement. But actually Grotius, in the course of his discussion of the atonement, arrived at conclusions which would have vexed the righteous soul of John Calvin. Socinianism had delivered a withering attack on the satisfaction theory as based on a conception of man's relation to God as that of a debtor to a creditor. In reply Grotius discards the debtor-creditor idea, and substitutes for it the idea that God is a Ruler and man is His subject. The chief concern of God, therefore, is the preservation of order in the moral universe. The death of Christ is a satisfaction made "to the dignity of the law, the honor of the Law-giver, and the protection of the universe . . . The sufferings of Christ are to be regarded, not as the exact equivalent of our punishment, but only in the sense that the dignity of the government was thereby upheld and vindicated as effectively as it

would have been, if we had received the punishment we deserved."¹⁵ The governmental theory thus drops the language of the courts and substitutes the language of sovereignty. Whatever its inadequacies may be, it is a theory that moves on a higher plane than that suggested by the commercialized imagery of the penal satisfaction theory. Richard Watson adopted a modified form of the governmental view in his *Theological Institutes* and handed this view on to later men who followed in his train, such as Wakefield and Luther Lee. More recently Dr. John Miley, in his *The Atonement in Christ*, has adhered to a still further modified version of the governmental theory. Moreover, the New England theology from the days of Jonathan Edwards on has espoused the governmental point of view. It is a theory that possesses many advantages. Indeed it is inadequate in what it omits rather than what it includes. No theory of atonement can be fully satisfactory that overlooks the governmental idea.

IV

It might seem, from the array of Methodist theologians who adhere to the governmental theory of the atonement, that John Wesley must himself have adopted this view. But there is no evidence that he ever did. Dr. W. R. Cannon observes the rather odd fact that "there is in all of Wesley's writings no single work on the atonement, and there is no reason whatever for us to believe that he had any clear, well-thought-out theory of the meaning of Christ's death. He seems only to have repeated the fact that the work of Christ, taken as a whole and including both his life and death, stands as the objective ground for the forgiveness of sins."¹⁶ Again, Cannon says, "Wesley's position is Anselmic—that sin, as a violation of God's honor, deserves infinite punishment—and he goes all the way with Calvin in his insistence that God's wrath must be expressed against sin and his vindictive judgment satisfied."¹⁷

The reason for this singular silence on Wesley's part is to be explained by the fact that he was not a systematic theologian any more than Luther was. Wesley was an evangelist and gave his most earnest thought to the doctrines of grace by which men were brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ. The main outlines of his thinking were Arminian, but it was a liberated and vitalized Arminianism that he espoused. Repudiating the idea of unconditional election, Wesley preached the doctrine of prevenient grace, that grace is ministered in some degree to every man who lives. It does not necessarily flow into saving grace, as Calvinism would insist, but may be resisted and finally thwarted. Yet for everyone who will respond to God's prevenient grace and co-operate with it, there are pardon and the assurance of salvation. Perhaps there is a basic inconsistency between Wesley's hazily defined doctrine of the atonement and his clearly stated doctrine of prevenient grace. The conflict would not have worried him for a moment; for he knew the doctrine of grace was true and yielded a rich fruitage, and whatever could finally be said of the cross of Christ must be of such a nature as to make possible this miracle of grace free to all through Christ.

In fairness to Wesley at this point it should be noted that, while the language of his atonement teaching is Anselmic, he actually rejected one element of the theory of Anselm which its author made central. That was its element of rationalism. Anselm undertook to set up a reasoned account of the necessity of atonement based purely on logic and embodying mathematical precision. His theory was intended "to satisfy, by reason alone, not only Jews but even pagans."¹⁸ This Wesley rejected categorically. Wesley knew full well, what everyone of us must learn, that however formally correct a doctrine may be, it must be quickened by the living touch of Christ if it is not to be a dead, inert thing. As Dr. G. C. Cell has pointed out: "The atonement in Anselm's monograph

carries no reference to the work and witness of the Holy Spirit in the collective experience of the church or in the individual experience of its believing members. There are references to the Holy Spirit, but never with experiential connotations. The fact is that [in Anselm] the atonement has not been defined in terms of Christian experience."¹⁹ Wesley qualifies as an expert in the realm of experience rather than theory and was content that the matter should rest there.

We have sketched in hasty and inadequate outline the place that the idea of satisfaction has held in the theories of atonement proposed by Christian thinkers over the centuries. Anselm regarded the atonement as satisfaction for the dishonor done God by the sins of men. Calvin and his followers regarded the death of Christ as the vicarious bearing of the full penalty of our sins by the God-Man. Grotius and those who share his views held the sufferings of Christ to be essential to the upholding of God's moral government. In all of these views the idea of satisfaction is uppermost. Indeed, in any adequate theory of atonement the concept of satisfaction must be present to some extent. However men may have erred in pressing too far the idea of satisfaction with its imagery of courts and government, we owe them a debt of thanks for insisting upon the tragic consequences of sin as an offense against the holiness and justice of God and the necessity for real satisfaction if ever God and man are to be reconciled.

CHAPTER FIVE

MORAL

INFLUENCE THEORIES

It is obvious to all careful students of the history of the doctrine of the work of Christ that our discussion has been able to deal only with the main currents that have flowed strongly during the Christian centuries. The amount of labor expended in this area of theology has been so prodigious, the number of individual thinkers so great, and the points of view so varied, that time and ability alike forbid our undertaking an exhaustive treatment of the theme. Our task would be woefully incomplete, however, without some attention paid to a point of view which has become articulate again and again during the centuries and has enriched in its own way the whole body of atonement discussion. This is the point of view which finds the greatest significance in the moral influence exerted by the death of Christ over the hearts, consciences, and wills of men. Frequently theories of this type are called subjective as distinct from objective theories; that is, they emphasize the reconciliation accomplished in the Cross as a reconciliation of man to God rather than of God toward man.

There is no escaping the fact that the New Testament writers lay stress on this phase of the atonement along

with other phases. When Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," (John 15:13) the implication was inescapable that from one point of view this is precisely what He would do in going to the Cross. St. Paul's word likewise makes this emphasis, though other emphases are also present: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Again, the apostle concludes his great testimony with the words, "[He] loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Moreover we read: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (I John 4:9). From the very earliest period of Christian thought there have been many earnest thinkers for whom these and other similar passages have said all that they felt to be essential to an understanding of the Cross. For them the idea of ransom, satisfaction, propitiation, and reconciliation have had little meaning when compared with the view that the cross of Christ was a spectacle of divine love designed to break the hearts and move the souls of sinning men to repentance and faith.

I

The earliest theologian to embody views of this sort in an organized system of Christian thought was Abelard, a man slightly younger than Anselm and for a time a student under Anselm's instruction. Like his famous teacher, Abelard faced the question raised by Anselm—"Why did God become man?"—and arrived at a far different answer. The greatest boon conferred on our race, says Abelard, is "that the Wisdom of God by assuming the flesh of the Virgin illuminated us by His light, and showed forth to us His love. How great that love for us was, He showed in this that He laid down for us the life

He had assumed. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.' On account of the love He had for us, He took flesh that He might rescue us from the yoke of sin."¹

Abelard is not entirely consistent in his statement of his position. He is forthright in his attack on the idea that Christ's death is a ransom paid to the devil. Occasionally he echoes the language of those who viewed the atonement in terms of merit. But as a rule he lays his emphasis with a fair degree of uniformity on the Cross as a supreme example of love. Commenting on Rom. 4:25, "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," he says: "In two ways He is said to have died for our faults: first because ours were the faults on account of which He died and we committed the sin of which He bore the punishment; secondly, that by dying He might take away our sins, this is, the punishment of sins, introducing us into Paradise at the price of His own death, and, by the exhibition of such grace, because as He says, 'No one has greater love,' might draw our minds away from the will to sin and incline them to the fullest love of himself."² It is the concluding emphasis in this passage that is the most typical of Abelard.

The positive value of this emphasis of Abelard is undeniable. No idea of atonement is complete that either denies or fails to emphasize the revelation of holy love which is implicit in the Cross. The weakness in such a view as that of Abelard lies in what is omitted rather than what is included. As Dr. Cell puts it: "Abelard described the saving significance of the Redeemer's death so beautifully, so impressively, and yet withal so exclusively in terms of its moral effects and experiential fruits as to insinuate and nourish a perpetual doubt whether after all is said and done God himself had any need of it or any necessary part in it."³

II

It so happened that the next movement in theology to lay emphasis on the moral influence theory was the Socinian, so named from its founder, Faustus Socinus. Socinianism is denounced by the Roman Catholic church as the natural fruit of the Protestant Reformation. Actually, however, it belongs to the rationalism of the Renaissance rather than to the Reformation. The two points at which the Socinians attacked the orthodox faith were the doctrine of the Trinity and the satisfaction theory of the atonement. On the former issue the Socinians were Unitarians, the forerunners of modern Unitarianism in a far more real sense than was Arianism. On the latter issue they are subjectivists, holding to the moral influence view of the purpose and meaning of Christ's death.

It is particularly against the Calvinistic view of the atonement as a satisfaction rendered by Christ to the righteousness and justice of God that Socinus unlimbers his heavy artillery. Says he: "The common and, as you would say, orthodox view is that Jesus Christ is our Saviour, because He made full satisfaction for our sins to the divine justice through which we sinners deserved to be condemned, and this satisfaction is through faith imputed by the gift of God to us who believe. But I hold, and think it to be the orthodox view, that Jesus Christ is our Saviour because He announced to us the way of eternal salvation, confirmed, and in His own person, both by the example of His life and by rising from the dead, clearly showed eternal life and will give that eternal life to us who have faith in Him. And I affirm that He did not make satisfaction for our sins to the divine justice . . . nor was there any need that He should make satisfaction."⁴

There was a fundamental inconsistency in the Socinian view of Christ which introduced a weak link into the chain of his argument. He held that Christ was born

of the Virgin, lived a holy life, and was undoubtedly God's ambassador to men in a unique sense. Furthermore, he held that Christ had been raised from the dead, and should be worshiped, not indeed as the first cause of salvation, but as a second cause.⁵ At this point he fell into the fallacy that helped to prove the undoing of Arius at the Council of Nicaea: that to worship a Christ so conceived would be to worship one who was less than God, which would be idolatry. The whole system of Socinian thought is marked by "the conjunction . . . of rationalism and an extreme supernaturalism."⁶ Modern Unitarianism has rendered its system more self-consistent by eliminating entirely the supernatural element in favor of an avowed humanism.

The Biblical passages which set forth the idea of atonement Socinus classified into four categories. Those which speak of redemption through Christ's blood or the gift of His life as a ransom are called purely metaphorical. Those which assert that Christ died for our sins are construed to mean only that His death was necessary to win us away from the practice of sin. Those which declare that He bore our sins are said to mean only that He thus moved us to abandon them. Those which present the idea of Christ's death as a sacrifice are declared to have no relation whatever to any possible expiation, since expiation is not at all necessary. Rather, they are asserted to mean that Christ through His priestly office is doing everything possible to communicate God's forgiveness to men, a forgiveness God yearns to give and which requires no objective reconciliation in order to be. Thus neatly—indeed, altogether too neatly—did Socinus dispose of the New Testament teachings on the atonement. The whole structure of his thought rests upon a gratuitous assumption that sin at the worst is only a minor peccadillo, a misunderstanding between God and man which can be cleared up readily enough by an expression of regret and repentance on the part of man. Accepting this principle

at the outset, all the contrary evidence is so construed as to support it.⁷ It is a decidedly cavalier procedure to apply to considerations as grave as those which center in the cross of Christ.

The idea of moral influence as a key to the understanding of the atonement is a vastly different thing in the hands of Socinus from what it was as presented by Abelard. Abelard would have said that the *chief* appeal of the Cross is its demonstration of the love of God, whereas Socinus would have said that that is its *only* appeal. The difference between the two is most significant.

III

The first really serious proposal of the moral influence theory of the atonement in American theology appears in the writings of Horace Bushnell, who is called the father of American liberalism. Bushnell's liberalism was fertilized by his reading of Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection*. Thus at second hand he came into touch with the rationalism of German theology.⁸

Bushnell was a prolific writer, and the work in which is set forth most clearly his understanding of the atonement is entitled *The Vicarious Sacrifice*. He takes issue with the age-old orthodoxy of Anselm and Calvin by denying that Christ "endured the penalty of our sins or suffered as a penal example."⁹ God needed no sacrifice of His Son to render Him propitious toward men, argues Bushnell, but was able and willing to forgive sinners if Jesus had never died on the Cross. On the contrary, he urges that "the atoning work of God in Christ was to be seen in the vicarious suffering that is inherent in all true love, so that atonement is a part of every Christian's duty, and operates yesterday, today and forever."¹⁰

There are many passages which might be quoted to set forth Bushnell's point of view. Perhaps this, from *The Vicarious Sacrifice*, is as representative as any: "Here

then we have the true law of interpretation, when the vicarious relation of Christ to our sins comes into view. It does not mean that He takes them literally upon Him, as some of the old theologians and a very few moderns appear to believe; it does not mean that He took their ill desert upon Him by some mysterious act of imputation, or had their punishment transferred to His Person. A sickness might possibly be transferred but a sin cannot by any rational possibility. It does not mean that He literally came into the hell of our retributive evils under sin, and satisfied, by His own sufferings, the violated justice of God; for that kind of penal suffering would satisfy nothing but the very worst injustice. No, but the bearing of our sins does mean, that Christ bore them on His feeling, became inserted into their bad lot by His sympathy as a friend, yielded up Himself and His life, even to an effort of restoring mercy; in a word, that He bore our sins in just the same sense that He bore our sicknesses. Understand that love itself is an essentially vicarious principle, and the solution is no longer difficult."¹¹

At first thought one is led to conclude that with Bushnell, as with Socinus, there must underlie his teaching a weakened conception of the sinfulness of sin. Yet Bushnell strove mightily to maintain a stalwart view of the sanctity of God's law and the heinousness of sin. In his volume entitled *God in Christ*, he asserts: "It is not Christianity, as I view it, to go forth and declare that God is so good, so lenient, such a fatherly Being, that he forgives freely. No; God is better than that—so good, so fatherly, that he will not only remit sins, but will so maintain the sanctity of his law as to make us feel them. The let-go system, the overlooking, accommodating, smoothing method of mere leniency, is a virtual surrender of all exactness, order, and law. The law is made void, nothing stands firm. God is a willow, bending to the breath of mortals. There is no throne left, no authority, nothing

to move the conscience—therefore really no goodness.”¹² The depth of Bushnell’s concern at this point finds further expression in these words: “It is even a fundamental condition, as regards moral effect on our character, that, while courage and hope are given us, we should be made, at the same time, to feel the intensest possible sense of the sanctity of the law, and the inflexible righteousness of God. What we need, in this view, is some new expression of God which, taken as addressed to us, will keep alive the impression in us, that God suffers no laxity. In a word, we must be made to feel, in the very article of forgiveness, when it is offered, the essential and eternal sanctity of God’s law—his own immovable adherence to it, as the only basis of order and well-being in the universe.”¹³

No one can hear these words from Dr. Bushnell without feeling the terrible earnestness of them. In the light of this view of the sinfulness of sin one would expect a doctrine of atonement which says more than merely that Christ “bore our sins in just the same sense that He bore our sicknesses.” Certainly sickness bears to “the essential and eternal sanctity of God’s law” no such relation as sin bears. We cannot escape the conviction that Bushnell is not in revolt against the necessity for a reconciliation between God and man so much as against the theories by which that reconciliation is explained. In discarding the theories he has virtually discarded the awful truth with which they deal. He has “thrown out the baby with the bath.”

IV

Among the liberal theologians who have appeared on the American scene during the last one hundred years, none has been more spiritually sensitive than Bushnell. Many who would profess to be liberals have been tragically lacking in the keen sensitivity that made Bushnell

such a winsome soul. Yet all alike have held to the moral influence theory of the atonement. It has been the favorite view of rationalistic Christian scholarship and has been presented in varied form and with varying emphases. Perhaps the scholar who has followed through most rigorously along liberal lines and has accepted with the least concern the ultimate implications of the liberal view of the Christian faith is Hastings Rashdall, eminent British philosopher and theologian. In his book entitled *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology* he has subjected the supernaturalism of the New Testament to a withering analysis and ended with repudiating almost every concept which historic Christianity would hold to be fundamental. At his hands St. Paul's doctrine of the atonement is "coldly dissected by the critical understanding." And of Paul's doctrine of expiation or substitution, as a death of Christ, the Just One, for the unjust, he asserts that it "is an idea which can be reconciled neither with the demands of the moral consciousness as interpreted by the modern intellect, nor with the plain teaching of St. Paul's Master and ours."¹⁴ Of the substitutionary view of atonement, which is a necessary element in the thought of Augustine, Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, and the later Reformed theology, Rashdall assumes, "without much formal argument, that it is a view which, when once its nature is thoroughly appreciated, neither reason nor conscience can accept."¹⁵

Rashdall quotes with approval the doctrine of atonement set forth in the twelfth century by Peter Lombard: "So great a pledge of love having been given us, we are both moved and kindled to love God who did such great things for us; and by this we are justified, that is, being loosed from our sins we are made just. The death of Christ therefore justifies us, inasmuch as through it charity is stirred up in our hearts."¹⁶ He would translate the Church's early creed, "There is none other name given among men by which we may be saved," in this, to him,

more satisfactory form: "There is none other ideal given among men by which we may be saved except the moral ideal which Christ taught by His words, and illustrated by His life and death of love; and there is none other help so great in the attainment of that ideal as the belief in God as He has been supremely revealed in Him who so taught and lived and died." Rashdall comes thus to this conclusion: that, "so understood, the self-sacrificing life which was consummated by the death upon the Cross has indeed power to take away the sins of the whole world."¹⁷

One senses in this none of the moral earnestness, the vivid feeling of the sinfulness of sin, which was so marked a characteristic of Bushnell's thought. Rashdall is a moral philosopher sitting in an ivory tower of respectability and knowing nothing of what is meant by such an expression as "the sins of the whole world." He rather blithely rejects the gospel as Paul preached it; but, as Dr. Oman points out, as Paul held it, "at least the result was a gospel for sinners, whereas Dr. Rashdall does not go very far beyond a morality which is still entangled with the old Pharisaic demand for an equivalence of merit and reward which any doctrine of atonement that means anything must deny to be the final method of the Gospel."¹⁸

However far apart Bushnell and Rashdall may seem to be, essentially they stand together in their interpretation of Christ's death. Bushnell was an American theologian living in the middle and later years of the nineteenth century. Rashdall was a British philosopher and theologian who enunciated his opinions on the atonement in 1915. Moreover, there is a wide gulf between the two men at the point of spiritual sensitivity. Yet they both adhere to the moral influence view of the atonement. Indeed, Rashdall's view is the logical fruit, while Bushnell's thinking is the root. It is likely that Horace Bushnell

would have been deeply pained by so crass a form of liberalism as that set forth by Hastings Rashdall. But actually when one has started on the road Bushnell marked out, there is no logical stopping place until he has arrived at the rationalism of Rashdall.

Of course, the subjective, moral influence theory is not necessarily false. As we have pointed out, there is a subjective element in the work of Christ. The Cross has exerted and does now exert a powerful influence for righteousness in the life of every man who gets a clear glimpse of Calvary. As a demonstration of divine love it is overwhelming. St. Paul saw this clearly enough. The fallacy in moral influence theories lies in their tendency to make the subjective element in the atonement the *only* element, and to deny that it had any objective effect upon the relations between a holy God and a sinning world. No final theory of atonement can be true which omits this subjective element. Such an omission the theory of Anselm came dangerously near to making. Both subjective and objective elements are essential to a complete understanding of the work of Christ.

V

At the present time the trend is away from theories of a purely subjective type and toward a renewed appreciation for the point of view represented by other historic theories. This appears to be part of a renewed interest in this central Christian truth of the significance of the death of Christ. It is part of a larger movement which is being heralded as the "collapse of liberalism" in theology. When Professor John Bennett, himself an erstwhile liberal, can say, as he did in 1933, that "the most important fact about contemporary American theology is the disintegration of liberalism";¹⁹ when Professor W. M. Horton, again an erstwhile liberal, can say of the liberal forces, "Now their morale has cracked, re-

bellion and desertion are rife within their ranks, and the greater part of their forces are ready to 'flee when no man pursueth'";²⁰ when evidence of a kindred sort appears on every hand—it is hardly possible longer to doubt that modernism has been weighed in the balances and found wanting.

These quotations were dated before the recent war. And if the liberals were in retreat then, they are today in complete rout. The depths of human depravity revealed by the war, the horrors of Warsaw, Rotterdam, Buchenwald, and Hiroshima, to name only a few of the symbols of shame that haunt our memories, revealed the presence in the world and in unregenerate humanity of a demonism the very idea of which was utterly foreign to the cheerful moral optimism of the typical liberal. Indeed, the events of the past fifteen years have given us a new view of the stark sinfulness of sin and have revealed clearly enough the ancient truths asserted by our Christian faith: that sin is a cosmic problem, that God has been fighting it from before the foundation of the world, and that the struggle came to its crisis in the cross of Christ. Moral influence there was, of course; but if that is all that can be said about the meaning of Christ's death, what we call atonement would be only the mildest sort of palliative in the presence of a moral disease loathsome beyond all power of description. It is the realization of these truths that has put all of the liberals on the anxious seat and has brought many of them forward for prayers. This is not to say that the onetime liberals are now accepting traditional Christianity with all of its implications. There is still a strange mingling of iron and clay in the thinking of many of them. But it can be said with truth that the most acute phase of the modernist attempt completely to rethink our Christian faith is past and that the mood of realism now prevails among those once standing at the extreme left of theological thought.

One of the most striking of the forces that have contributed to this collapse of liberalism is the appearance in Europe of the dialectical movement, known also as the "theology of crisis" or "Barthianism." It began during the first world war, arising out of the ashes of Ritschlian liberalism to become the most dominant theological force in Europe today. Its home is Switzerland, and its high priest is Karl Barth. An even more articulate proponent of this point of view is Emil Brunner. He is a more careful scholar than Barth, as well as a far more prolific writer, and he has the advantage of having most of his books translated into English. Brunner's writings may be said, therefore, to be the port of entry for the crisis theology into American thought.

In his book *The Mediator*, Brunner has considered at length and in masterful fashion the work of Christ. He reaffirms, with all the conviction of a Calvin, his faith in the absolute sovereignty of God. "But," says he, "the sovereignty of God means the Holiness of God, the fact that God is God. The cross is the only place where the loving, forgiving, merciful God is revealed in such a way that we perceive that His Holiness and His Love are equally infinite."²¹

He recognizes, moreover, that the wrath of God is a factor so serious as to be "a life-and-death reality." Says he: "If the wrath of God is a misunderstanding, the Atonement is merely a subjective process; it simply means the clearing up of a misunderstanding; this certainly leaves us in the dark as to how far it would really matter if this misunderstanding were not cleared up. At any rate, it seems fairly obvious that we need not expect it to lead to any very serious consequences. If, however, the Atonement is an actual fact, then both the Divine Love and the state of sin must be taken seriously."²²

Brunner does not hesitate to cast his theory of atonement in the language of the traditional Reformed theology,

conceiving of the Cross as "the expiatory final sacrifice of the Son of God." He declares that Christ is God, "the One who comes, the One who comes to us in reality: who comes in the likeness of sinful flesh, the One who Himself pays the price, Himself bears the penalty, Himself overcomes all that separates us from Him—*really* overcomes it, does not merely declare that it does not exist."²³

Thus does the trend become unmistakably clear toward a view of atonement that is more in accord with the New Testament and historic Christianity. It is one of the heartening signs of the times.

We have yet to gather up and summarize the implications of our discussion and seek to formulate a doctrine of atonement which will take into account all of the essential aspects of this truth. To that task we turn next.

CHAPTER SIX

TOWARD A DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT

We have been considering the development of the Church's thought concerning the true significance of what happened at Calvary, and have noted, though admittedly in sketchy fashion, varied approaches taken by the minds of Christian thinkers toward this central phenomenon of our faith. We have surveyed the crude analogies upon which the early Christian fathers drew for an understanding of the mystery of redemption; have examined to some extent the metaphors based upon notions of honor, justice, and sovereignty as these exist in human relations; and have noted the attempts on the part of modern liberalism to divest the Cross of all its meaning save that which can be stated in terms of moral influence. We have before us now the task of formulating a doctrine of atonement which will seek to do justice to all that the New Testament teaches concerning the death of Christ and all that the Church has learned from blessed experience to be a part of our Lord's sacrifice of himself.

At the outset we must recognize that no one simple and forthright statement can ever do justice to the manifold meaning of the great truth of redemption. It will require the use and understanding of metaphors drawn

from a number of the varied relationships that exist among men. We must recognize, moreover, that when we have said everything that it is possible to say concerning this sublime truth, the vastness of its significance will have largely eluded us. No human formula can ever capture completely the wonder and magnitude of the thing God has done for our sinning race when in Christ He reconciled the world unto himself.

The method we propose to follow is what Dr. F. W. Dillistone has called the method of "imaginative comparison." It is founded upon the basic assumption "that man was created in the image of God and that the relationships between God and His creatures may therefore be spoken of in terms taken from the personal intercourse between man and man."¹ This is the method Jesus used in all of His parabolic utterance, seeking to illustrate the ways of God in dealing with men by citing the ways of men in dealing with their fellow men. This means that no one human analogy will prove sufficient to set forth adequately the wonder of redemption. It means, furthermore, that we must not press too far any one analogy, however useful within limits it may prove to be. We shall see that every metaphor used in the New Testament has its contribution to make to our understanding of the scheme of redemption. Any adequate doctrinal formulation must be to some extent a composite of all these insights.

I

We have noted the fact that one of the few sayings of Christ which can be construed as an interpretation of the coming Cross is His word recorded in Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Here Jesus employed a metaphor which presents at least one aspect of the meaning of His death. As it turned out,

it was a metaphor which caught the imagination of the early preachers of the Church, resulting in the ransom theory of the atonement. So far as the preposterous features of this theory are concerned, they are the product of the human imagination's attempts to form a doctrine out of one ingredient. If Christ has ransomed men, they must have been in bondage. But to whom? And this price that Jesus paid, to whom did He pay it? If to Satan, how did He escape Satan's clutches? Such questions lead directly to the wild excess of riot which we see in the extreme phases of the ransom idea.

The answer to such excesses is not to be found in the complete repudiation of the underlying idea. We must be intelligent enough to shear away the accretions which have gathered about the concept of ransom and get at the essential truth which Jesus saw was there. Life is made up of tensions. We become conscious of them as early as our adolescent years and they remain with us until our disordered lives are integrated around some worthy core, viz., the will of God. "However the tension may be caused," says Dr. Dillistone, "it remains a fact that man is always struggling to live, struggling either with the soil, or with new conditions of life, or with the forces which control production and distribution, or with his fellow men, and with himself."² And the most tragic phase of this struggle, that which underlies every other phase, is the struggle of human selfishness against the will of God. This is the very essence of sin: man's determination to have his own way in defiance of God's way. And this is bondage of the most degrading sort. Chains, taskmasters, scourgings, slavery in body and soul—these only faintly suggest the bondage that sin imposes on mankind today. Is there no ransom from this so galling servitude?

God's Word, even before the coming of Jesus, shows the way by which a Redeemer may come to an enslaved

people. Moses, for example, came from the presence of God to take his place with a people physically enslaved. He identified himself so completely with them that he could be accepted as their leader. And at the crucial moment he led them out to freedom. Similarly, Jesus has identified himself with our race. Leaving aside all discussion of the question how this identification was brought about, it remains that this identification is complete. He is perfectly one with us, our guilt and shame alone excepted.

It is this conception which St. Paul is setting forth in the so-called "kenosis passage" in Phil. 2:5-11. The eternal Son of God "emptied himself," not of His fundamental nature or His eternal form, but of "the conditions under which life is lived." He took the form of a slave; that is, "the kind of a slave that a man is." The contrast between the preincarnate and the incarnate states "is not the contrast between being the Son of God and being a man: the contrast is between life according to the divine fashion or style and life according to the human fashion or style."³ Identified thus with us, He became our Leader, "the captain of our salvation," "the author and finisher of our faith." In some glorious sense, "on the battlefield of Calvary He engaged the tyrannous powers which enslaved men; He went into battle trusting in the promises of God, rejoicing in the joy that was set before Him, and despising the cross with all its shame."⁴ Nevertheless it was a terrible hour and it seemed that the power of darkness had won the day; for our Champion lay dead. But on the Easter morning "Christus Victor" triumphed over even death itself, and opened the gates of freedom and life to a race now ransomed and redeemed. This is the inescapable meaning of the idea of ransom as it interprets the death of Christ.

II

The idea of sin as an enslavement from which we require to be ransomed presents only one aspect of the problem of sin and our deliverance from it. For sin is equally a defiance of and rebellion against God's moral and spiritual order which cannot be lightly tossed aside with an indulgent "Tut, tut!" on the part of the Father. We have defied God's authority and rejected His will; we have ignored His laws and decried His rightful sovereignty over us. Every man has basic duties toward God and his fellow man. Indeed, many of his duties toward God are indirect and are performed toward his fellow man. The two commandments of the Christian order are the commandments to love God and one's neighbor. They must be performed together, and to neglect either is to sin against God.

It was this concept of a responsibility which man owes to God which was so essential an element in the thought of Anselm. Living in a day of chivalry, it was easy for him to conceive of man's rebellion as an affront to the honor of God. His putting of it was formal and artificial, admittedly; yet the issue with which he was dealing is an awfully real thing. It is easy enough for Dr. Rashdall to argue "that God forgives the truly penitent freely and without any other condition than that of true penitence,"⁵ basing his assertion on the parable of the prodigal son. If our New Testament consisted only of this parable, there would be point to his argument. But there is more to it than that. There is Paul's insight that "he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21); this and scores of other passages record the earliest faith of the Christian Church. Sin is a thing that must be met and dealt with if God is to "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

Archbishop Temple has laid emphasis upon a few points which must be borne in mind in seeking to discover the relationship of Christ's death to the fact of human sin, considerations which have commonly been overlooked by theorists of redemption. Two of these points are especially important. First, "no doctrine can be Christian which starts from a conception of God as moved by any motive alien from holy love."⁶ The medieval notion that, while God might be loving, He must be righteous, set up a distinction which had utterly vicious implications. It is from God's love that the plan of redemption proceeds, not from His wrath.

Dr. Temple's second point is equally important: "Forgiveness does not consist of remission of penalty . . . When a child who has done wrong says to his father, 'Please forgive me,' he does not only mean, 'Don't punish me'; he also means, 'Please let us be to each other as if I had not done it.'"⁷ To conceive of the broken relationship between God and man in formal and abstract terms, with God standing impersonally as the Avenger of the majesty of the broken law, is to miss the point. It is a personal relationship which has been interrupted by our sin, a relationship which God yearns to see restored.

But sin is a real barrier to the restoration of that fellowship, and as long as men continue in their sins a real antagonism exists between them and God. It is hardly correct to say that, while God loves the sinner, He hates his sin. It is quite impossible for such a neat distinction between the sinner and his sin to be effected. Sin is the wrong direction of the sinner's will, and that will is part of the sinner's self. God loves the sinner as a person whose salvation is too precious a thing to be expressed by any of the standards of value known among men. But He hates the drive of the sinner's misdirected will and fights against it. Just as it could be said of God that He became Israel's Enemy and fought against them,

so does He withstand the wicked purposes of the sinner's life. And His hatred and opposition are the surest token of His love.

Sin thus becomes a barrier between God and man too great for man ever to sweep aside. Moreover, we are involved in this moral disorder not only as distinct individuals but as members of a race. Each of us has his own sin to cope with, but each of us has his part in this racial sin which has erected an all but hopeless obstacle between our guilty race and God's outraged will.

It is just at this point of community responsibility that the wonder of Christ's incarnation enters. "What the Christian Gospel affirms," says Dr. Dillstone, "is that out of a pure act of His own good will and grace, God in Christ identified Himself with humanity so completely that He was able to make reparation on its behalf."⁸ His identity with us was so complete that, though himself guiltless, He shared the shame and the blame of human sin. Just as the children of a dishonest parent must feel the shame of that parent's guilt, just as the wife of a drunken husband must endure a living death through no fault of hers, so does Christ come under our shame. But we must remember that the One who thus identifies himself with us and suffers with us is God. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." And by thus bearing our stripes, He has made possible our healing. It is not simply remission of penalty that is ours in Christ, but forgiveness of sin and restoration to the fellowship with God which sin had interrupted. This much at least, though probably far more than this, is the meaning of propitiation and reconciliation through the shed blood of Christ.

III

In Rev. 13:8 there is an expression concerning the Lamb of God which cannot fail to amaze the thoughtful reader with its implications. It is that passage where the inspired narrator speaks of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." It seems almost like a glimpse back into a far-distant eternity and stirs within us an eagerness to know just what it means. We have related the slain Lamb so exclusively to the fixed point in human history called Calvary that we are hardly prepared for the eternal timelessness suggested by Rev. 13:8. What can this expression signify?

The meaning is this—and for my mind there is no escaping it—that God has been a redeeming and suffering God from the beginning even until now. Even amid the original perfection of His handiwork and its crowning achievement, man, God was facing a contingency which was inevitable: that by fashioning man in His own image and investing him with free moral agency, He had created an order of self-conscious, moral intelligence capable of defying its Creator. If and when that potential became actual, there could be no reconciliation and recovery apart from suffering. "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," therefore, is God's pledge that, at any cost of anguish and pain to himself, a door of hope would be opened to sinning man.

The intrusion of sin into the Father's handiwork presented Him with a challenge which His holy love was prepared from the first to meet. The struggle between the power of God and the power of Satan and sin was on in all its fury, a struggle so vast as to be cosmic in its extent, and it came to its supreme crisis in the cross of Jesus Christ. The Incarnation, which culminated in the death of Jesus, was not the beginning or the end of this struggle, but was only that part of the conflict visible in time and on the stage of human history.

It is a principle which God has placed at the very heart of the universe that life can be renewed only through the sacrifice of life. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Creation can come about only through suffering. Even God is not exempt from the operation of His own ordained principle. He has been struggling against evil from the very foundation of the world, fighting against it, seeking to dissuade men from it, and endeavoring by the anguish it has brought to His heart to neutralize its influence and effects. If a mother suffers inexpressible pain because of the sins of a wayward son, it is not too much to say that the heart of God is broken by the sins of a wayward world.

From the early days of Christian doctrine it has been orthodox to frown on the so-called "Patipassian heresy"; and, indeed, as originally held it did represent a serious departure from the teachings of the New Testament, by identifying the Son with the Father and holding that therefore it was the Father who suffered on the Cross. But the New Testament has its own doctrine of the suffering of the Father which regards Him as sharing in His heart the shame and agony which were heaped upon His darling Son. Dr. A. M. Fairbairn declares that "theology has no falser idea than that of the impassibility [i.e., the inability to suffer] of God. If He is capable of sorrow, He is capable of suffering; and were He without the capacity for either, He would be without any feeling of the evil of sin or the misery of man."⁹

The point here is that the cross of Christ is not to be regarded as an isolated event, or a new approach on God's part toward a solution of the problem of sin. It is not after failure in previous attempts to meet the problem that He finally brought himself to make the supreme sacrifice of His Son. Rather, the Cross is the crowning event in the whole process of redemptive suffering. As Dr. H.

Wheeler Robinson has expressed it: "Here [in the death of Christ], in one specific though supreme instance, we see God suffering in time as He suffers through our sin in eternity. His holiness could not conceivably have entered our world without suffering. But it was by no means inevitable that the suffering should have been borne as this was borne. The bearing of it was grace, which is love in action."¹⁰ Here at Calvary, says Robinson, "Christ does in time what God is always doing in eternity."¹¹

For those who respond to Christ's love by repentance, obedience, and faith there is granted a privilege—and a hallowed one it is—of sharing in this suffering and thus having a part in making articulate to our generation the meaning of redemptive love. This is the significance we must attach to Paul's breath-catching words in Phil. 1: 29: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." Dr. J. H. Jowett puts the principle in these memorable terms: "The gospel of a broken heart demands the ministry of bleeding hearts . . . As soon as we cease to bleed we cease to bless."¹²

Thus we see the principle of creative and redemptive suffering as the burden of the world's sin breaks the heart of God, an eternal heartbreak that became evident in time with the brokenhearted sacrifice which our Lord made at Calvary. And it is a principle in which we can have a part as we take our stand at the side of the Master to bear on our hearts according to our measure the burden which wrung from Him the last full measure of devotion.

IV

Our thought of the Cross would be incomplete if the subjective effects of the death of Jesus were omitted. Not only was the death of Christ a ransom from the slavery that held men fast; not only was it an effort to meet and

satisfy the demands of a moral order which sin threatened with chaos; not only was it a revelation of the creative and redemptive suffering which sin has caused God from the beginning until now; it was equally the most convincing demonstration of God's holy love for a world of sinners and the most eloquent and persuasive of all possible appeals to sinning men to forsake their own ways and return unto the God of mercy and grace.

As we have sought to make clear, the moral influence idea as applied to the atonement is not wrong; it is simply inadequate when taken alone. Christ was a Preacher of repentance and faith, of hope and salvation; and the most winsome, overwhelming appeal He ever made was the appeal of His dying form upon the Cross. "God commendeth his love toward us," says St. Paul, by giving His Son to die for us. The verb "commend" has undergone a change of meaning since the translators selected it for this passage in Rom. 5:8. The Revised Standard Version comes nearer the apostle's meaning with this rendering: "But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." At the foot of the cross of Jesus we may well write the letters, "Q.E.D.," with which we used to conclude our demonstrations of geometrical propositions. For in the cross of Christ is proof of the most convincing kind that God loves our sinning race and has done something about it in the gift of His Son.

Along with the difference which the death of Christ made in the relations which man and God sustain to each other there stands this fact: that the spectacle of the Cross exerts a profound influence over the wayward, stubborn hearts of men. In the presence of what our Lord did for us we are moved to shame for our sinfulness, and are influenced to give up lives of selfishness and willfulness and seek the mercy and grace of God through Christ. In our preaching on the crucifixion of Christ we are apt

to stress this aspect of the meaning of Calvary to the neglect of the objective aspects. And that is not surprising. Our emphasis upon the moral influence which emanates from the Cross goes astray only when we fail to see in the death of Jesus the deeper significance which the event has in the mind of God. When we have succeeded in mingling these various points of view in proportions, we will have a doctrine of redemption as nearly adequate as the human mind can produce.

V

Christian preaching, in its efforts to set forth the redemptive aspects of our Christian faith, has made much of the blood of Jesus. It is well that we have done so, despite the studied attitude of aversion toward such imagery on the part of the so-called liberal Christianity. The figure is one sanctified by Jewish precedents, derived from such events as Israel's last night in Egypt and from the later institutions of Hebrew worship. The blood of Jesus has meaning as a hallowed Christian symbol because it represents more effectively than any other symbol could the outpoured life of the Son of God. May God grant that we shall never lose out of our faith the glorious fact of atonement through Christ's blood. In the New Testament we encounter expressions such as these: "We have redemption through his blood" (Eph. 1:7); "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:9); "Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12); "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). These and many similar passages set forth the precious meaning which the early Christian community found in the shed blood of Jesus. But it always means the pouring forth or offering up of the life of our Lord. The Blood is thus

a most proper and fitting symbol for the atonement which our Saviour wrought for us by His death and resurrection.

It is probable that nowhere in Christian literature has the glorious truth of the finished work of Christ been set forth with a greater wealth of imagery and poignance of appeal than in the poetry of Charles Wesley. We need cite only one example:

*O Love divine! what hast Thou done?
The incarnate God hath died for me!
The Father's coeternal Son
Bore all my sins upon the tree;
The immortal God for me hath died!
My Lord, my Love is crucified.*

*Behold Him, all ye that pass by,
The bleeding Prince of life and peace!
Come, sinners, see your Maker die,
And say, "Was ever grief like His?"
Come, feel with me His blood applied!
My Lord, my Love is crucified;*

*Is crucified for me and you,
To bring us rebels back to God.
Believe, believe the record true:
Ye all are bought with Jesus' blood;
Pardon for all flows from His side.
My Lord, my Love is crucified.*

*Then let us sit beneath His cross,
And gladly catch the healing stream,
All things for Him account but loss,
And give up all our hearts to Him;
Of nothing think or speak beside:
My Lord, My Love is crucified.*

In this typically Wesleyan hymn the poet has levied against all of the varied imagery of atonement theology

to illuminate his theme, from the ransom theory to the moral influence appeal. Likewise the preaching of the Church has drawn with equal freedom on the entire range of metaphor found in the New Testament and without any awareness of essential conflict between these several metaphors. Indeed, after we have said everything that it is possible to say of the meaning of the death of Christ, we have succeeded in capturing not one-tenth of the wonder of the Cross. Here is the central truth of the plan of salvation, and in the power that there is in Jesus' blood lies the hope of the world.

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