THE GODWARD ASPECT OF THE ATONEMENT.

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PART II.

HAVING sought to discover the mind of Christ upon the Atonement, we must now endeavour to frame a theory which, first and foremost, will be agreeable to His teaching, and which will also do justice to religious experience, and be in harmony with the deliverances of the thoroughly awakened and enlightened Christian conscience.

In order to avoid any misunderstanding, let it be stated at the outset that no thought of any division between the Father and the Son can be entertained for one single moment. The Father was not angry with His Son ; in Dante's words, " He ever gazeth on His Son with love which the One and the Other breathes eternally."

Archdeacon Storr has protested against the idea of anger in connection with God at all, as too anthropomorphic and personal in character, and would rather use the New Testament word " wrath." [1] Far more important than the terminology we use, is that we should be quite sure as to the particular meaning we attach to our words. Whether anger or wrath is used seems to us quite immaterial provided that no idea of personal caprice is associated with either term, and that to us, when either word is used, it should always signify the reaction of holy love in contact with sin. " There is nothing inexorable but love," as Carlyle once said, and God's attitude towards sin is not passive, but active hostility, because He is essential Love in all its perfectness and wholeness.

We now come across another phrase which demands even more our closest scrutiny, as in this case opinion is very far from being unanimous with regard to its true nature and character. We refer to the ideas underlying punishment. Our theory of the Atonement will be very much affected by our attitude towards punishment. In what sense, if any, can it be said that God punishes at all ? Archdeacon Storr would banish from our religious vocabulary altogether the idea of punishment.[2] This suggestion seems to us to contradict the plain teaching of Our Lord, not to speak of the New Testament as a whole. Christ prayed, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and St. Stephen, " Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." The heir in the parable of the wicked husbandmen is wrongfully cast out of the vineyard and is killed ; Christ immediately proceeds to ask the question, " What will the lord of the vineyard (that is, God) do ? He will

[1] *The Problem of the Cross* (London, S.C.M. 1924), pp. 78–80.
[2] *ibid.*, p. 81 ff.

come and destroy these husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others." If this is not punishment, it is difficult to see what other word can be used to take its place. The same applies to such parables as the unmerciful servant, the talents and the pounds.[1]

Doubtless most of us would shrink from uttering such a bald statement as that the Great War was brought on by God as a punishment for the widespread sin and unbelief of Europe. And yet we believe that this saying can in a certain sense be justified. Nations in their relations with each other had entirely ignored spiritual principles. Some even went so far as to endorse the cynical view expressed in those famous lines,

> "Conscience amiable in individuals,
> Childish weakness in a nation."

The result was that national egoism and self-assertion prevailed, with the inevitable consequence that when a conflict of strong national interests arose the appeal was made to force with all the horrors attendant upon it. This is only another way of saying that the world has been so constituted by God that when men and nations alike give rein to their egoistic impulses uncontrolled by any higher considerations, it follows as the night the day that destruction and death on a vast scale must sooner or later ensue. The wages of sin is death, and it is God who has ordained this result. The laws of the universe are the result of His direct personal activity, and embody His will and purpose.

Equally important for our purpose is it to examine the nature of punishment itself. If we consider it, as it is usually understood, three ideas are associated with it which for the sake of clearness may be distinguished but which all form part of an unbreakable threefold cord. Let us take as our example the case of a man who has broken the law of the land, and is undergoing his sentence of imprisonment, bearing in mind the inadequacy of all human analogies as applied to God. Why is the man punished? We reply, to protect society from a repetition of similar offences. Society must safeguard herself in order to prevent the particular individual from causing any further harm to the community, and also as a warning to others who might be tempted to commit a similar offence she incarcerates him within the four walls of a building, depriving him of freedom. This is the deterrent side of punishment.

Then there is the individual himself; he has lost his self-respect, and by his crime has injured himself; his will has become enfeebled in certain directions and his moral sense impaired. Applicable to him, as indeed to us all, are those terrifying words of the late Professor James:

> "Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its never so little scar. The drunken Rip van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, 'I won't count this time!' Well! he may not count it, and a kind Heaven may not count it; but it is being

[1] cf. St. John, v. 14.

counted none the less. Down among his nerve-cells and fibres the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict literalness, wiped out." [1]

Punishment, especially in its modern form, has more and more for its object a remedial purpose, so that at the end of the punishment the person undergoing it may be a better character than at its commencement. This second element in punishment is claiming an increased attention on the part of all social reformers, partly because the responsibility for the criminal's misdeeds do not lie entirely with himself, but also with his social conditions, for which society is responsible.

But there is yet a third element in punishment involving retribution, and it is this third element which has a special bearing upon our view of the Atonement. This is the vindication of the law. Nothwithstanding that the law has been violated the principles embodied in it retain their validity.[2] The late Dr. Rashdall has subjected the theory of retribution in his great work on the *Theory of Good and Evil* to a very severe criticism, denying that it should have any place in punishment at all. His main contention may be stated in a few words. Granted that the criminal is reformed, and that consequently the particular offence will not be repeated, and that sufficient pain has been inflicted on the individual as to deter others from following his example, nothing more is required, since punishment has performed its perfect work. Unfortunately the persons against whom he has levelled his criticisms are Kant and Mr. Bradley, who in their theory of punishment have singled out the element of retribution to the exclusion of every other. As stated by Kant, this is very far from satisfying the moral consciousness in its best moments:

"Juridical punishment can never be administered merely as a means for promoting another's good, either with regard to the criminal himself or to civil society, but must in all cases be imposed only because the individual on whom it is inflicted has committed a crime. . . . The penal law is a categorical imperative; and woe to him who creeps through the serpent-windings of utilitarianism to discover some advantage that may discharge him from the justice of punishment, or even from the due measure of it."

A far better way of expressing the theory of retribution is to say that when the offender beholds the justice of his punishment, his higher nature recognises that the sentence he receives is the only one he is entitled to, and then it is that the punishment will

[1] *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. i, p. 127.

[2] Rashdall, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 421: "The substitutionary doctrine, or, indeed, any doctrine which regards the death of Christ as expiatory, implies at bottom the retributive theory of punishment." Cf. what Professor A. E. Taylor says in his *Gifford Lectures, The Faith of a Moralist*, Series I (Macmillan & Co., Ltd., London, 1931), p. 183: "The retributive character of punishment; a doctrine really indispensable to sound ethics." Cf. *The Theory of Morals*, by E. F. Carritt (Oxford University Press, 1928), p. 110: "To deny the retributive element in punishment is to deny any meaning to the words desert, merit, justice, and, I think, forgiveness."

begin to have a reforming effect upon him, so that he may even wish to suffer. Otherwise so long as he has no inkling of the justice of his punishment he may be deterred from committing the offence again for fear of the consequences, but his punishment is incomplete. Given a favourable opportunity he would only be too glad to repeat it. As Dr. Caird has stated it :

" For the highest educational result of punishment is to awake a consciousness, not simply that the crime gets or will get punishment, but that it is *worthy* of punishment. It is to make men fear the guilt, and not the penalty." [1]

Nor must the question be prejudged by the assertion that the retributive theory is a mere survival of bygone modes of thought such as the instinct of revenge.[2] But as Professor Taylor has said :

" Revenge is essentially a *personal* gratification to be enjoyed by a party who conceives himself to have been in some way aggrieved or damaged. It follows, therefore, that if punishment is mere vengeance, its proper measure is the material detriment, or the sentimental grievance felt by the party who has been damaged or affronted. If he feels no deep resentment, or is ready to compromise his resentment for some material or sentimental offset, there can be no reason why the revenge should be exacted. The detriment or affront is his own personal affair, with which no one but himself is deeply concerned. We have only to look at the way in which a society becomes more and more moralized, the development of a satisfactory system of penal law depends on the withdrawal of the initiative in bringing offences to punishment from the parties immediately concerned and the lodging of it with bodies representative of the community at large, as well as on the substitution of a reasonable and ' objective ' for a personal and arbitrary standard of penalties, to see that throughout the whole process retribution becomes more prominent and more certain in proportion as the feature of satisfaction for the desire of personal vengeance sinks into the background." [3]

The ideal example of the retributive theory of punishment is that of the Penitent Thief. When he and his associate in crime were enduring the punishment of crucifixion, their terrible sufferings would doubtless deter some of the spectators who might be tempted to embark on a similar course of action. But so far as the actual criminals were concerned, the punishment at first had no effect. The curses and execrations falling from their lips proclaimed that this was so. But it was when one of them beheld the patient suffering of the Christ in their midst that the agonising punishment began really to take effect ; hitherto to him it had been pain and nothing more.[4] Now the majesty of the moral law in all its glory began to be revealed to him in the form of the apparently helpless

[1] *The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*, vol. ii, p. 377.

[2] Cf. Rashdall, *op. cit.*, p. 422, and *The Theory of Good and Evil* ; vol. i, pp. 285, 291 ff.

[3] *op. cit.*, pp. 103, 184.

[4] Dr. Rashdall says that " the essence of punishment is the endurance of pain or some other evil." This ignores the difference between punishment as such and suffering, e.g. due to cancer or to rheumatoid arthritis.

Christ. At the sight of His Divine patience the thief confesses that his punishment is a vindication of that law. "Dost thou not fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation? and we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." Forthwith his punishment begins to have a remedial effect. He placed himself under the most powerful operative influence for good that existed in the world. He placed his poor maimed life into the hands of the Christ. Could he now have been let free, he would have been a reformed character. It might be contended that it was not the punishment as such which worked in him the sense of retribution; that this was caused entirely by seeing the blamelessness of Christ in contrast to the blameworthiness of himself and the other. This contention is true judged from a purely human standpoint, but the penitent thief's place on the Cross beside Our Lord contributed to his being led to see the utter contrast between himself and his Saviour. Hence it follows that in the case of the penitent thief punishment did fulfil the highest function it was intended, not by the Romans, but by the verdict of conscience, to perform. So that it cannot be said in this case that vindicating the moral law, asserting its majesty, is a hackneyed phrase.

Up to now we have been discussing the subject of punishment mainly from the point of view of criminal procedure and our notions of justice and punishment, but can we apply our theory of punishment, and in particular its retributive element, to Almighty God?

It may be taken for granted that the Cross of Christ has been the most powerful agency for good the world has ever seen. Sinful men and women in countless numbers have been transformed as they have come under the power of the crucified and living Lord. God came Himself in the person of His Eternal Son. The Incarnation, which is another name for God the Son living under our human conditions, to save mankind by refusing to save Himself, giving His body to be broken for us upon the Cross that we might break with sin, is not "a mere episode" in the life and being of God, "it is a revealing episode." The whole range of Christ's earthly life, including the shedding of His most precious blood, "is the measure of that love which has throbbed in the Divine heart from all eternity," to quote Dr. Temple's words.

The Cross is the great magnet drawing man, not against his will, but with the full desire of his heart and soul, to God. No man can be made good against his will. To reach his will an appeal must be made to his better nature, and power working from within must make him strong to do what he knows to be right. This is what the love of God has effected in the case of countless lives. Those conscious of their estrangement from God have been reconciled, and made to live at peace with God, by the constraining power of the Sacrifice of Christ and His love and the indwelling Spirit. All this may be admitted, but, it will be urged, without our believing in any sense that there is a retributive element in

the Cross of Christ corresponding in the least to our theory of punishment.

Let us again quote Archdeacon Storr, who first states the retributive view in a very fair way.

"The heinousness of the offence must be brought home to the offender by clothing the punishment in the robes of retribution, no wreaking of vengeance, but only the emphasising of the majesty of an impersonal moral order."

He then proceeds to contrast this as follows, and we wish to state what he says in his own words in order to face this objection quite fairly.

"But this is, surely, just where the theory fails in its application to God. For God is not impersonal, but intensely personal, and His relations with men are those of a Father with His children. Can the divine love be thought of as wanting to exact retribution?" [1]

At the outset let us freely and unreservedly make the admission that in our opinion an impersonal order is a contradiction in terms. Morality cannot be considered apart from personal life. A stone, a tree, a machine, a planet, the law of relativity cannot have attributed to them except in a very loose manner what we mean when we use in an ethical sense the terms good and evil. Each of these instances is non-moral. Only of a being who is a self-conscious, self-determining personality can we say that he is the subject of moral duties and claims. If, then, the distinction between right and wrong is something more than a man-made theory and convention, not just simply the product of human experience, it must be grounded in the structure of reality, which in turn is the expression of absolute will, purpose and love.

Alongside of this we would place another statement of the writer who has just been quoted—namely, that "morality is not an arbitrary expression of the Divine will but a necessary expression of the Divine character." [2] Of the Cross we may also say, "it was not an arbitrary expression of the Divine will but a necessary expression of the Divine character." The moral order of the universe, imperfectly as we understand it, is a revelation also of the being and character of God. What is highest and best in ourselves we may postulate as being real intimations of the Divine. Morality involves the principle of limitation. Even the great Medieval Scholastics, to whom such attributes as unity, infinity and perfection are fundamental in their conception of God, would consider that He cannot make a false proposition true, or make virtue vice, or annihilate Himself. This does not really contradict the Divine omnipotence when rightly understood, since God's Almighty power can only be construed in accordance with His absolute perfection. The sum and substance of the whole matter is that God can only act in accordance with the laws of His own being.

When the further step is made—and it is with relief that we turn

[1] *op. cit.*, p. 85. [2] *ibid.*, p. 82.

our eyes away from considering what God is "in Himself," a subject far too dazzling for mortal eyes for long to behold, and endeavour to know Him as He reveals Himself in the universe around us, His dealings with mankind, and His life within the human soul—we are confronted with His love in all its depth and majesty.

Very rightly we must be very jealous of any theory of the Atonement which is inconsistent with God's Fatherly love, and indeed, nobody who knows anything at all of the history of the doctrine, or how the Atonement is even yet taught by certain religious bodies, will contend that the warning is not still needed. Nevertheless, such a change has come over popular thought, that even a greater need exists to-day to scrutinise the meaning of God's love. Our danger is to interpret God's love in such a way as to deprive it of all moral content. The humanitarian feelings of the age—and we cannot rate them at too high a value—are very sensitive to the call of suffering and intolerant of cruelty, but even so they suffer from the defect of their virtues; not only do they often degenerate into pure sentimentality, but also obliterate moral distinctions altogether, or if that is an exaggeration, deem them of little account. Justice and righteousness have their claims.

The Holy God has nothing in common with sin. He cannot treat sin as if it were of small account. As He views it He cannot suffer its presence; therefore if sinful man is to be brought into the closest contact with Him, how can that be possible, for "who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isa. xxxiii. 14). God's holiness may be compared unto a furnace which sinners approach at their peril. "Our God is a consuming fire." Forgiveness is very real and very thorough, but how can the past be undone? The offender may be truly repentant and turn to a new life, but the evil deed has been done, and nothing can alter the fact that it has been done. The revelation of Christ, by deepening our sense of guilt, only heightens the difficulty. In one sense the gulf between the Holy God and guilty man is made immeasurably wider. This incidentally comes out in the parable of the merciless servant (St. Matt. xviii. 23–35). If we forgive our fellowmen it is as though a man forgives his debtor a hundred pence, or about £4, some insignificant sum, but when this is placed side by side with the cost of the Divine forgiveness the latter is compared to ten thousand talents, nearly £4,500,000 in our money. The quantitative comparison must not be pressed too far—indeed, the difference is so vast that we are lifted into another region altogether, away from debtor and creditor; we are transferred to the kingdom of grace. The observation has often been made that the modern man does not bother about his sins, so continually has it been made that with many the statement has been taken for granted, and were it true we should reply "so much the worse for him," but social evils, sins which lower a man in his own eyes, are very much his concern. What, however, we are not facing to-day as we ought to do, is the problem of guilt. It is a strange fact that in the index

to the late Dr. Rashdall's great work on the idea of the Atonement in Christian Theology, should anyone wish to find how that great and profound thinker has handled the burning question of guilt, he will look in vain; the word does not occur, nor is it to be found in the first chapter, which is concerned with Our Lord's teaching on forgiveness. Now it is perfectly true that none of us have a right to depreciate God's gift of reason, but the fact of sin is the most baffling problem we have to face, and along with it the misuse of our moral freedom.[1] To the thoroughly awakened conscience the plea of ignorance and external influences is of no avail whatsoever. Its possessor must in the last resort confess: "I have sinned in thought, word and deed, by my fault, by my own fault, by my own most grievous thought. Why did we sin against Him Who is perfect love is beyond our comprehension, but none the less it is a fact which points its self-accusing finger against us, and which in the last resort no philosopher can explain."

Thus does our guilt strike us, and if our eyes are open to spiritual realities we know that as moral beings we are responsible, and have not only fallen short of God's requirements of us, but have actively resisted and rebelled against His Holy Love. Forgiveness, then, must bridge the gulf between us and Him. "He will forgive our iniquity, and our sin will He remember no more" (Jer. xxxi. 34, cf. Heb. viii. 12, x. 17).

We believe that it is not true to experience to dwell only on our sense of alienation from God, that were indeed to regard the whole question from a far too anthropocentric point of view, but the very fact of our feeling of guilt bears witness to the truth that we have incurred His displeasure, and for that reason our hearts condemn us. It is quite the smallest part of His displeasure which manifests itself in the suffering and pain which our sins have justly brought upon us in comparison with the result that He should have with-

[1] We make no pretension to a full understanding of the Barthian Theology, but its assertion that it is a corrective Theology, even more "a critical footnote to be put under all theological and ecclesiastical activity," is justified. Of this E. Brunner's constant insistence on man's guilt in his book *Der Mittler* is an excellent example. "We are not merely far from God, our life is not only unlike God's, God must not only overcome a distance in order to come unto us. It is not merely the different mode of being, the finitude, that separates us from God. That would be something merely negative: something we lacked. Rather it is something *between* us and God, a block in the way, which we cannot push aside. It is sin, rather, the guilt of sin. For guilt is that about sin by which it belongs unalterably to the past, and as this unalterable fatally determines every present. In guilt the past—the 'not-again-to-make-good' of sin—is installed as a factor in the reckoning of every present. Therefore we first grasp our life as totality when we see it together in this dark shadow of guilt. The consciousness of guilt is the break through of seriousness. This guilt . . . is wholly personal, the perverted attitude to God, therefore something utterly infinite, as the soul, as the relation to God itself" (pp. 399, 400, cf. pp. 98–128).

We have followed Mr. R. B. Hoyle's translation (*The Teaching of Karl Barth*, p. 176), except we have always translated "Die Schuld" guilt and not as he has done sometimes sin (Die Sünde) and sometimes guilt.

drawn His Presence from us, that the loving intercourse between God and ourselves has been interfered with and broken, and that He can no longer trust us. To those whose souls are athirst for the living God, who can faintly re-echo the Psalmist's words, "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, there is none on earth I desire in comparison with Thee," what they need to know is, not whether they have the sense of forgiveness, but how God views them. The Atonement wrought by God the Father in the person of His Son and witnessed to in our hearts by the Holy Spirit is creative. It is a creative forgiveness, transcendent in its nature, and mysterious in its effects. None of us can explain it, not only because it is beyond our comprehension, but also because we are not good enough.[1] Men find difficulty in believing in miracles, but the greatest miracle of all is the forgiveness of sin. That to the awakened conscience is the hardest clause in the creed to believe. The wonder of wonders is that in the Cross the Holy God has stooped down to us in all our helplessness and misery and lifted us up into the closest union and fellowship with Himself. To know that in spite of our sin God loves us and holds communion with us, and in the Person of His Son has brought us into an abiding fellowship with Himself, that is the core of forgiveness; whether suffering may be our lot because of our past is quite a secondary matter. Our best selves may expect and even welcome the chastening of the Lord provided that we do not fall out of His hands.

Hard words have been said about those who hold the doctrine of substitution, and in some of its forms it is quite impossible to defend it, but that God in Christ did something on our behalf which we could never have done for ourselves is the grateful confession of adoring multitudes throughout the ages. In our experience, and we can only speak of those we know, even the upholders of the somewhat extreme doctrine of substitution have been some of the most strenuous Christians it has been our privilege to meet; they have ever been ready to take up their cross and spend and be spent in their Master's service.

Although we cannot explain the Divine Forgiveness, yet it is on the Cross that we behold the agelong struggle between God and sin, and the power of darkness brought to a successful issue; and great as the divisions are which separate Christendom into rival camps, and the interests of truth prevent us from minimising them, still this is the conviction which underlies the Christian Church as a whole, and is the mainspring of her life and activity. Great as is the mystery of Divine Forgiveness, that does not preclude us from endeavouring to dwell upon certain aspects of it even though, as we have already said, it will for ever elude our understanding. At least this may be said—that the Divine Forgiveness does not imply the condonation of sin. In the Cross there is revealed the judgment of sin.

[1] Cf. H. R. Mackintosh, *The Christian Experience of Forgiveness* (Nisbet & Co., London, 1927), chap. iii.

The world was prepared for the coming of Christ, and the particular century in which He was born and the land where He dwelt were foreordained according to the Divine plan. Throughout His earthly life the Lord ever sought His Father's glory. In every situation which confronted Him He sought not His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. This He did regardless of consequences. Quite early in His ministry there were distinct murmurs of opposition, and as time went on they increased in volume, but still He pursued the way appointed to Him of the Father, until at length the storm broke. Those whose animosity He awakened were each of them free agents, they were willing actors in the events in which they took part. The people who cried out "Crucify Him, crucify Him," the Priests and Pharisees who hounded them on, Pilate the Governor, all of them of their own accord took an active part in bringing about the Saviour's death. Goodness always awakens opposition. Hence it is not surprising that perfect Love and Holiness Incarnate should call forth all that is evil in man, and that there should be arrayed against the Son of Man all the powers of darkness. They would gather round Him and endeavour to do their worst (cf. Col. ii. 13–15). The expression of their hatred and malice took the dramatic and most degrading form of Crucifixion, to which the Saviour submitted in perfect surrender to His Father. The opposition of another age might have taken another form, e.g. imprisonment, indifference or an ordinary death, outwardly less terrible, and therefore less discernible for those who have eyes to see. That is partly why the first century A.D. was chosen and not another.

The Saviour faced the worst rather than refuse to drink of the cup presented to Him by the Father. His identification with us sinners was complete even to the extent of submitting to the veiling of His Father's Presence. Hitherto He had never been alone, because the Father was with Him. Deserted by His friends, misunderstood by His enemies, betrayed by His disciple, yet He ever enjoyed uninterrupted converse with His Father, but when the supreme hour arrived that last and highest consolation was to be denied Him. And this the Father's love ordained and the Son endured for the sake of us men and our salvation. Thus do we behold the heinousness of sin and the greatness of the Divine Love which went to the utmost length to remove it.

Dr. Garvie asks:

"Is the inexorable reaction of God against sin in death a necessity of the very perfection of God? Is it so inexorable that in bringing to men the forgiveness of God, the Son of Man could not, and would not even if He could, escape the reaction? Was it a necessity for love itself to share with, as well as for, man that reaction to its very consummation in death, and death apprehended as divine judgment?"

Dr. Garvie unhesitatingly answers in the affirmative, though he adds:

"It is impossible to offer any logical demonstration; all that we can do

is to confess an ultimate moral intuition which it would be as perilous to challenge as the authority of conscience itself." [1]

We may then say that the Godward aspect of the Atonement includes just that retributive element without which no forgiveness would be possible or worth having. From the moralist point of view Professor A. E. Taylor maintains that

"a God who lets us off . . . would be a God who despised us, and with whom we could have no vivifying relations. . . . Thus the Christian paradox that God is at once the supremely just, and also the great forgiver of iniquities, so far from creating an ethical difficulty, is exactly what we should expect to find in a religion which has one of its roots in the ethical conviction of the absoluteness of moral values." [2]

By an inner necessity, God, being what He is, before accepting fallen mankind into fellowship with Himself, cannot overlook the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Even in our case our own sense of justice can be violated, and not from any feeling of vindictiveness needs to be satisfied, though the analogy between human and Divine Forgiveness may be pressed too far. In our case, however much we have been wronged, we are sinners standing in dire need of pardon; not so the Holy God. With far more reason must His own Holiness be vindicated. He thus makes an act of self-reparatory holiness eternal in its nature and character, which manifests itself in time and is shown forth in the supreme sacrifice of Himself in the Person of His Son. In the giving of His only Begotten Son He makes the sacrifice at infinite cost to Himself. The violated moral order, in other words the world in opposition to the Divine Will, is rectified, but it is a Divine act throughout and is dictated by perfect love. The Incarnation is the supreme gift of the Father to mankind, which finds its consummation in the Cross. We are going to venture, however, to pursue the thought of the Divine necessity which led to the Cross somewhat further, even though we must admit that we are treading on very debatable ground, and what will be said will be only of a very tentative character.

It has been very forcibly argued that had there been no fall of man the Incarnation would have taken place, only it would not have involved any suffering, and the Lord's earthly life would have been without the shadow of the Cross. In the thirteenth century it was one of the recognised questions of the schools as to whether the Incarnation would have taken place had not Adam sinned. Some years ago Dorner in Germany and our own great Bishop Westcott in England brought the subject again to the front, and the latter in his essay on the Gospel of Creation strongly advocated the view that the Incarnation was in essence independent of the Fall.

Now we reject this view, and in its place would urge that creation and redemption form one organic whole. This seems to have real scriptural support. In the book of the Revelation the Seer speaks

[1] *The Christian Doctrine of the Godhead*, pp. 179, 180.
[2] *op. cit.*, pp. 189–191.

of "the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. xiii. 8), words which indicate that creation and redemption formed part of the eternal counsels of God (cf. 1 St. Peter i. 10). This appears also to be a legitimate inference from our Lord's teaching concerning the last day when He addresses those placed on the right hand, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (St. Matt. xxv. 34). The same thought underlies St. Paul's opening words in the epistle to the Ephesians: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ; even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i. 3, 4). There is to our minds one insuperable objection to Dr. Westcott's theory, and that is, it assumes that in the creation of the world of finite spirits the Eternal God did not know that sin would make its appearance, that the Fall was a surprise, and consequently that redemption was an afterthought to meet a contingency which had not at first been contemplated.[1] In any case what might have happened and yet did not happen is a very insecure basis on which to erect any Christian doctrine; as it is, we only know Christ as the Redeemer. Surely God in creating His world knew that sin would arise and that He must redeem man from it.

Why God allowed evil to exist is a very great mystery. That He was the direct author of it is an impossible thought to a Christian, he can only exclaim, *μὴ γένοιτο*, God forbid. So far as our own very limited vision enables us to see, part of His purpose in creating the world was that He should have the service of free spirits, capable of loving Him not of necessity, but of choice, and that together with the gift of freedom there came with it the dread possibility of refusing to serve and love Him. Love which is forced love is a contradiction in terms, it is not love. And if this life is "the vale of soul-making," we do not see how it could be otherwise than that man should be exposed to temptation, with the possibility of either overcoming or yielding to it.

On the other hand, God was the indirect author of evil—that is to say, He created the conditions which made it both possible and probable for sin to arise. With very deep reverence it may be said that God is responsible for the sin of the world and its continuance, though His responsibility is absolutely different to our own.[2] What we plead for is that the act of self-reparatory holiness wrought by God on the Cross vindicates His responsibility for the world He has made and is ever making, though when we look at

[1] Cf. *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*, by Dr. H. R. Mackintosh. (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1912), p. 442.

[2] We are glad to find that such a deep thinker and truly Christian believer as the late Dr. Fairbairn says: "We ought not to shrink from affirming what we have called the responsibility of God; we do not think, if we may reverently so speak, that He Himself would deny it; certainly it is an idea that lies at the root of the New Testament, and especially of its doctrine touching redemption and grace."—*The Philosophy of the Christian Religion* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1902), p. 133.

it, it is His love and self-sacrifice which stand forth most clearly in our minds. Many of us who are weighed down at times by the sin and suffering of the world find unspeakable comfort in the Cross, for it is here that the Creator manifests Himself as the Redeemer, and we know that He bears the whole burden of the mystery of existence, with its evil and sorrow, upon His heart.

We must now touch upon the Godward aspect of the Atonement in so far as it attributes suffering to the Godhead, which has been designated as the modern reaction against the doctrine of impassibility. Previous to the nineteenth century the tradition in Christian Theology has been almost unbroken that all suffering, and even the potentiality of suffering, should be excluded from the Divine nature. Whilst we are not of those who wish to bow down to modern thought and make an idol of it, and whilst we consider that " the last word " is not necessarily " the truest word," yet if what has been written in this article is on more or less sound lines, our sympathies are strongly in favour of the Divine Passibility. In this respect modern theology is in distinct advance of the old. Doubtless exaggerated statements have been made upon the subject of Divine suffering, but, then, the same objection can be brought against every belief of the Christian faith which has engaged the attention of man. The reason why the belief in the Impassibility of God was universal amongst Theologians till within modern times, is that the Christian doctrine of God was based on the Platonic-Aristotelean philosophy which reached its most systematic expression in the Scholastic theology of the thirteenth century, and is still living and effective in the Roman Catholic Church. Its determining ideas, as we have already noted, are those of infinity, unity, simplicity, perfection.[1] These metaphysical attributes are taken as giving us the nature of God " in Himself." If these are rigorously pressed to their logical conclusion, they seem difficult to reconcile with the Gospel account of God, that He is angry with sin, that He loves the world and the souls He has made. It follows, then, that we are debarred from applying such phrases as " the awful cost it meant to God to redeem us from sin," or even that sin in any sense whatsoever grieves Him. Thus the Cross loses its appeal. What are we to understand by the words " God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son," unless by them we are intended to see the tremendous length God our Father went to redeem His world, the phrase " His *only* Begotten Son " revealing the infinite sacrifice of God.

We are in the presence of a profound mystery, and anyone who has read Canon Mozley's most valuable book on the *Impassibility of God*,[2] and, especially, tries to consider the six necessary questions with which he closes his essay, cannot but speak with very great hesitation. To us the Danish thinker, Bishop Martensen, gives the best solution of it, and even then " solution " is hardly the

[1] Cf. *God in Christian Thought and Experience*, by Dr. W. R. Matthews (London, Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1930), chap. v.

[2] Published by the S.P.C.K.

right word to express what transcends our reason. The Eternal God has a twofold life. As distinct from the world, in His Divine Transcendence He lives a life of perfect blessedness, the eternal peace of love in all its joy and perfection. In certain moods we dwell upon this, and adore Him as the source of all true joy, being Himself joy, " unplumbed, unplumbable, with not one drop of evil within it." We shall be sustained by it, and we shall look forward to realise it far more in the world beyond than is possible for us here on earth, as it will form part of our eternal blessedness to adore Him who was, and is, and is to come. With this life there is another Life, as lived in and with His Creation, God submitting to the conditions of finitude, where He allows His power to be limited and thwarted by the sinful wills of men. And thus we come to regard Him as the Divine Sufferer, ever by His Holy Spirit striving with man, wounded, and set at naught, but through it all ever victorious and triumphant. It seems to us that we must hold both facts together, God's infinite bliss and happiness, and God's infinite sorrow, believing that the latter will contribute to His ultimate glory when all things shall have been put under His feet, and God will be all in all.

We have tried to state what we believe to be the Godward aspect of the Atonement, and in so doing none are more conscious than we are how imperfectly we have expressed our belief, and how inadequate are our thoughts, but we do believe that such terms as ransom, substitution and punishment cannot be eliminated from the concept of God which Our Lord embodies and reveals.

It remains for us to mention a book written by a Swedish Theologian, Dr. Aulén, and which has been translated into English, called *Christus Victor*,[1] wherein is given an historical study of three main types of the Atonement, and we do this as in our attitude towards them it will enable us to clarify our position.

The three types are as follows: the Latin type, the subjective type, and what Dr. Aulén calls, and which he himself seems to favour, the classic type.

The first appears fully developed in Anselm's famous work *Cur Deus Homo*, an epoch-making book, in which the older and more " physical " idea of salvation is replaced by a teaching of a deliverance from the guilt of sin; and above all, the " objective " character of the Atonement is taught, according to which God is the object of Christ's atoning work, and is reconciled through the satisfaction made to His justice, the satisfaction being offered by Christ as the sinless Man on behalf of sinful mankind. The sacrifice of Christ as Man is of infinite worth because of the perfect union of His humanity with His Divine nature, and thus rendered Him capable of discharging the infinite debt which sinful mankind owed to God.

The second is associated with Abelard, and is commonly contrasted with the first as the " subjective " doctrine of the Atonement. Stress is laid almost entirely on the moral effects which the sacrifice

[1] Translated by A. G. Hebert and published by the S.P.C.K., 1931.

of Christ has made on mankind; the change which has taken place is in man and not in God's attitude towards him. Christ has taught us to think of God as a Father Who will forgive men their sins, if and in proportion as they have repented of them, and what greater incentive to repentance can be derived than the contemplation of Christ's life of sacrifice and service culminating in the Cross!

The last, the classic type, is the idea of the Atonement as a Divine conflict and victory; Christ—*Christus Victor*—fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, and in Him God reconciles the world to Himself. The background of the idea is dualistic, the word dualistic being used not in a metaphysical sense, but solely with an ethical meaning, the world as opposed to the Divine will. God is pictured as in Christ carrying through a victorious conflict against the powers of evil which are hostile to His will. A change is brought about by the Atonement in the relation between God and the world, and a change also in God's own attitude. Dr. Aulén is most emphatic that the work of reconciliation is from first to last a work of God Himself, a continuous Divine work, and He would claim that this classic type best represents the teaching of the New Testament, and is really what underlies the teaching of St. Irenæus and the Fathers generally, and is in all its essentials upheld by Martin Luther.

We gladly confess that we are very much impressed by Dr. Aulén's exposition and by his insistence upon the necessity of the "classic" type claiming our attention alongside of the other two. We would, however, venture to assert that the theory adopted in this article endeavours to do justice to the positive side of all three types, and possesses therefore the merit of inclusiveness, and declines to over-simplify the problem.

With Dr. Aulén we wholeheartedly agree that the Atonement was the work of God Himself, a continuous Divine work, from first to last the work of God Himself. The Atonement was demanded by the Son, Who carried it out as absolutely as by the Father. Both were of one mind in this necessity.

The Death of Christ must also not be viewed as an isolated act, but as a summing up of what went before; in other words, it must not be detached from the Incarnation. All through His earthly life Christ was the Redeemer, but His redemptive activity reached its completion upon the Cross. Without His earthly ministry we should not know the worth of Him Who made the Sacrifice nor the character and will of the Father Whom He revealed. The Cross is not only the Crown and completion of the Saviour's life work, but also an epitome of what He was and is. Nor do we desire to divorce the Cross from the Resurrection and Ascension and the coming of His Blessed Spirit. Being freed from earthly limitations, His saving Death is rendered available for all mankind.

Again the so-called subjective view is ours; Christ for us and Christ in us are inseparably united. He Who died on our behalf

is by our acceptance of Him ever working within us, and bringing forth the fruits of our redemption.

But we believe that behind St. Irenæus's view and that of the ancient Fathers as well as Martin Luther, and most of all in the New Testament, however crudely in some cases it was expressed, there lay the conviction that an inner Divine necessity actuated the Atonement. Death is the inexorable fruit of sin; this had to be made manifest to men and angels. God had to vindicate His inevitable law—namely, that sin always involves death. He underwent that vindication to proclaim His own just law. Thus was sin judged, and at the same time it was an act of self-reparatory holiness actuated throughout by His love for us men and for our salvation.

ON SECOND THOUGHTS. Henry Bett. *The Epworth Press.* 2s.

A bundle of twelve short essays on religious subjects, marked by "sanctified common sense," and wide reading; this latter is evidenced by the number of quotations, as for instance in the six pages of the essay on Extremes, nine different authors are cited. The thoughts expressed are not very deep, and sometimes confused; e.g. the writer has little use for Authority, but urges that we must learn the lessons of History; again, Emotion is necessary to religion, but Sentimentality is dangerous.

For a Christian, there is one serious omission; Professor Bett does not once mention the Person or Work of the Holy Spirit; he seems to regard the Church of Christ as an agglomeration of human organisations rather than a divine organism. Therefore in Essay V, on Unity, he is suspicious of union (perhaps he means uniformity), and desires "unity of spirit," which is not the same as "endeavouring to maintain the unity of the Spirit" as a given state.

In treating of Symbols, only words, not actions or persons or places, seem to be considered as having symbolic value; it seems as if the subjects had not been fully thought out, and we must look forward to his "Third Thoughts," if such should come, as showing a fuller grasp of the religion of the Incarnation.

PATERNOSTER TALES. By Vera E. Walker. *London: S.P.C.K.* 1s.

Stories based on the Lord's Prayer. Most of them take us back to the times of the Saints, including St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Cyprian of Carthage, St. Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, St. Chrysostom of Constantinople, and others. At the end will be found a note to Teachers and Story-tellers—to help to trace the sources of the Stories.