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THE  
WORD OF THE CROSS

THE 1938 LECTURES

delivered in the

FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, EDINBURGH

BY

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"Our Lord: An Affirmation of the Deity of Christ", "What is  
Christian Faith?" etc.*

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

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*Free Church College, Edinburgh.*

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TO

**JAMES McCONKEY ROBINSON,**

With his father's prayer that  
if God open his mouth in the  
Evangel, he will be true to  
the Word of the Cross.

## INTRODUCTION.

My friend, Dr. Robinson, is too good a Reformed theologian to believe in works of supererogation. In asking me, however, to write a few words of introduction to the admirable Lectures of this volume, he has done a thing that looks like an invitation to me to do such a superfluous work. The Lectures were delivered in the Free Church College in this city towards the close of the Winter Session 1937-38, and were listened to with the highest appreciation.

The teaching of the doctrine of the cross, and the defence of that doctrine with all its "offence," is a fitting thing at any time for a preacher of the Christian faith. And, if there is no time when it is not in place, it is especially timely that the exposition and defence of the mystery of reconciliation should be made when the cardinal doctrine of redemption by the blood of the slain Lamb meets with so much opposition. To preach the expiation of sin by the sacrifice of the cross is to open up that Gospel of which the apostles were not ashamed. The message that Paul delivered was the saving power of God to believers in his day. It is the power of God still to the Christian believer; and such it will be to the end. It is the doctrine according to godliness which, so far from making void, establishes the Law of God. It opens up the heart of eternal love as it tells that God has given His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. In doing this it sets before us the one way leading to hope for the man who has learned that he is indeed a sinner, and who seeks a solution for the enigma of how a just God can be seen to be just when He forgives sin and justifies the ungodly.

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## INTRODUCTION.

The doctrine of grace which reigns through righteousness to life everlasting is the theme of these Lectures. They set forth faithfully the truth of the apostolic message, and their writer strikes a clear Gospel note in his well-balanced statement of that teaching which is the heart's core of the good news from God.

JOHN MACLEOD.

Edinburgh, March 30, 1938.

## PREFACE.

ONE who comes from a younger country, culture and Church, particularly one who comes from one of the daughter Churches of Scottish Presbyterianism to the mother city of Edinburgh, is embarrassed by the greater age, prestige and position of the host city. And the recollection of the scholarship, eloquence and piety with which the Gospel has been proclaimed in the Presbyterian churches and colleges of Scotland heightens the sense of one's inadequacy. In this hallowed place, the privilege of hearing lectures is more appropriate than that of delivering them. Certainly, a sense of propriety would prevent the presumption of advocating here a message which originated with the speaker.

However, one is encouraged by remembering that he comes not as an initiator, but as a witness to a Gospel that is prior in time, higher in source, and holier in content than any human prestige. The lecturer comes as a believer to advocate the Word of the Cross as it is stated in the Holy Scriptures, as a student of Church history to remind the hearer and reader of the testimony of the Christian centuries in confirmation of the Word, and as a witness endeavouring to stand where the great Christian witnesses have stood and testify to Him who loved us and delivered Himself up for us. And in presenting the Word of the Cross one remembers that it was not a man of age, but a lad burned at the stake ere he became twenty-five, who established in Scotland personal "assurance of emancipation and peace through living faith in the atonement of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Professor MacEwan, cited A. Smellie, *The Reformation in its Literature*, p. 242.

## PREFACE.

As one who has been blessed by the expositions of the Gospel set forth by that noble young martyr and his Scottish successors, the lecturer counts it a privilege and an honour to bring back to his land another testimony to the Evangel for which Patrick Hamilton was burned four hundred and ten years ago.

Thanks are due to the Senatus of the Free Church College for the honour of presenting this series of Lectures, and particularly to the Rev. Professor Donald Maclean, D.D., editor of *The Evangelical Quarterly*, for recommending him for this lectureship; and to the Rev. Principal John Macleod, D.D., for his bountiful hospitality, for his helpful and valuable assistance in preparing the matter for presentation, and for his kind introduction to Mr. E. K. Simpson, M.A., for aid derived from his able article on reconciliation.

In America, the author is indebted to his mother, whose generosity made possible his stay abroad; to President J. McD. Richards, D.D., and the Board of Columbia Theological Seminary for this "Sabbatic" period for travel and study; to the Rev. Professor J. B. Green, D.D., for reading several of the lectures and offering valuable suggestions; to Mr. John Bratt, Fellow in Columbia, for making available to the writer, and through him to the reader, the excellent treatment of the atonement in Bavinck's Dutch work on Reformed Dogmatics.

WM. C. R.

**“For the Word of the Cross is to them that are perishing foolishness; but unto us which are being saved, it is the power of God.”—1 COR. i. 18 (R.V.).**

## THE CENTRALITY OF THE CROSS.

“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”—1 COR. ii. 2.

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.”—1 COR. xv. 3.

“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?”—GAL. iii. 1.

In the cross of Christ I glory,  
Towering o'er the wrecks of time,  
All the light of sacred story  
Gathers round its head sublime.

—*Sir John Bowring.*

“The cross is the pivot as well as the centre of New Testament thought. It is the exclusive mark of the Christian faith, . . . the keystone of the arch, the cornerstone of the temple of truth. That this is true is evident from the place the death of Christ occupies in the Scriptures, in the apostolic message, in the liturgies of the two sacraments as administered by all branches of the Church, and in the earliest as well as the latest hymnody.”—*S. M. Zwemer.*



## THE CENTRALITY OF THE CROSS.

THE cross of Christ is the acropolis of the Christian faith, the heart and core of our religion. The death of Christ was the first of the primary principles Paul preached (1 Cor. xv. 1—3); the portraying of Christ crucified was the burden of his apostolic labours (Gal. iii. 1); the fundamental topic of his preaching (1 Cor. ii. 2); yea, the Christian Gospel is “the Word of the Cross” (1 Cor. i. 18). Accordingly, Warfield finds that “the place given to the death of Christ in the several theories which have been framed of the nature of our Lord’s work, may not unfairly be taken as a test of their scripturalness”;<sup>1</sup> while men like James Denney have rightly warned us that the virus of Socinianism and Unitarianism begins here.

### i.—THE CROSS IN ECLIPSE.

However, that the cross has no such central place in the thinking which dominates much of the current preaching is admitted by those who are most conversant with it. Principal Cave finds modern writers who minimise the importance of Christ’s death, treat it as a mere illustration of God’s love of no special importance; and so empty the Biblical words of their meaning that Christianity becomes primarily a teaching, Christ an example, and His salvation the offering of a moral ideal.<sup>2</sup> President Coffin of Union Theological Seminary, N.Y., has expressed the matter thus: “It must be confessed that, in our day, and especially in those circles

<sup>1</sup> *Atonement*: New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopædia.

<sup>2</sup> Cave, Sydney, *The Doctrine of the Work of Christ*, pp. 287—9.

where Christianity is interpreted in terms of contemporary thought, the cross does not hold the central place in preaching."<sup>1</sup> The cross "is seldom preached as a redemptive act. Indeed, few of those who have accepted the current liberal theology devote many sermons to the cross of Christ. They feel themselves incapable of treating the theme." Coffin states that for these "liberal" thinkers the central place has been usurped either by the Incarnation, or by religious experience, or by the teaching or example of Christ. Professor Latourette of Yale declares that "many, even among the clergy, are seeking in social revolution a substitute for the religious convictions for which their communions officially stand, but to which they as individuals can no longer subscribe."<sup>2</sup>

*The Christian Century* confesses that "for more than a hundred years the Church has been engaged in the solemn business of forgetting its Gospel," of adulterating it with the wisdom of the world, and of blurring with ambiguity its unique testimony.<sup>3</sup>

In a concrete case, an eloquent preacher insisted that the Church was wrong in placing the emphasis upon the cross as the centre of Jesus' ministry. The cross was, he held, only the incidental reaction on the part of forces which Jesus had opposed in His teachings. The important thing in Jesus' ministry was His teaching, not His unavoidable death. This doctrine is more Socratic than Augustinian, more Platonic than Pauline. It savours more of the Racovian Catechism than of the Evangelical pulpit. By such preaching "the high priesthood of Christ is changed into a martyrdom, His

<sup>1</sup> Coffin, H. S., *The Meaning of the Cross*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Latourette, *Missions To-morrow*, p. 128.

<sup>3</sup> *The Christian Century*, Apr. 8, 1937, p. 967.

offering into an example, the Christian religion into a system of pedagogy, and the Church into a school."<sup>1</sup>

When the Reformation was lifting high the banner of the cross, Calvin twitted the Romanists with resigning to crucifixes of gold, silver, and brass the preaching of the Word of the Cross. But to-day Roman Catholics are retaliating with the charge that many Protestants have banished the cross from their pulpits as well as from other parts of their churches. Perhaps this is the fundamental reason why the religious and moral leadership which a generation ago was unquestionably in Protestant hands has been slipping from our fingers; why in America the National Vespers Radio Hour has steadily lost prestige to the Roman Catholic Hour.

In an effort to stem this drift, the General Assembly of the largest Presbyterian Church in the world thrice declared: "It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards that our Lord Jesus Christ offered up Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God."<sup>2</sup> Alas, the present efficacy of the Assembly's testimony has been curtailed by the Auburn Affirmation, in which some thirteen hundred ministers and elders of this Church repudiated this deliverance, even though it was phrased in the time-honoured words of the Shorter Catechism and of the Briefer Statement of that Church. The Auburn Affirmation that this doctrine of the atonement is neither essential nor necessary for ordination in the ministry has deflected the centre of thinking and preaching from the cross. And many a saintly mother, many a godly elder has worshipped with sorrowing heart and saddened soul. Could these pious spirits articulate their

<sup>1</sup> Bavinck, H., *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, III. 358.

<sup>2</sup> *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.*, 1910, 1916, 1923, p. 253.

sentiments, their thoughts would not be very different from the musing of the old Covenanter:

There's nae Gospel noo, lassie,  
 There's nae Covenant blood,  
 There's nae altar noo, lassie,  
 There's nae Lamb o' God.

There's nae Chalmers noo, lassie,  
 There's nae guid M'Cheyne  
 And the dear, dear cross they preached, lassie,  
 The dear, dear cross is gane.

Folks dinna want the cross, lassie,  
 They've cutten doon the tree,  
 And naebody believes in't,  
 But fules like you and me.

Is there an orthodox minister who can claim that he has always preached the Biblical faith in its Biblical proportions? Too often we allow some hobby, ecclesiastical interest, or current problem, to deflect our preaching away from the centre to the circumference. Indeed, the more one studies the wickedness of his own heart and its weakness in the face of the world's opposition to the cross, the more one realises that it is only by the grace of the Holy Spirit that we can present the cross in its Biblical meaning, and appeal to the living Lord Jesus Christ to call men to Himself through the Word of His Cross and Resurrection. Sometimes Bible-texts are used as mottoes for discussions which neglect *the* message of the Word. Sometimes we allow sociology to supersede the Gospel, in forgetfulness of the fact that the Lord uses the preaching of the blessed exchange of the cross, which shows that God is just even in justifying sinners to en throne justice in human affairs. At other times the language of Zion is exchanged for the jargon of psychology, oblivious to the fact that relief or release from guilt, the most poignant complex life ever poses, is only found when we forgive

ourselves on the same ground that God forgives us. The blood of Christ is the great psychotherapy for our sinful race; His cross is the only basis for a forgiveness adequate to moral personality.

Sometimes failure to preach the cross is blamed upon the fancied demands of youth. At a retreat held by the ministers of Carlisle Presbytery, a pastor from Lebanon told this incident: My son Jim, who was captain of the Princeton University basketball team, spent last summer at home. As he was starting back to school I told him that I did not want to lose my contact with young people, and asked him which of the sermons I had preached that summer appealed to him most, as a representative young man.

"Well, Dad," he replied, "I liked best your sermon, 'I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.'"

The appeal of the cross tore Africaner away from his fleshly lusts and pagan practices. No smaller incentive can save us from the lust of the flesh, the pride of the eyes, and the pride of life. Our age needs nothing so much as the sanctifying radiance that streams from Calvary. Christ's holy passion for us is the instrument in the Spirit's hand for the healing of our debased passions.

Education in America has been largely influenced by a prominent New York humanist, as in Germany it has been by a noted pagan. And we have not always examined with sufficient care the methodology initiated by such non-Christian thinking before incorporating sections of it into our Christian education. For example, a few years ago the Easter lesson for one of the younger age groups in the Sabbath school was occupied with the story of a little grub-worm, which finally climbed a lily-stalk, shed its water clothes, spread its

lacy butterfly wings, and flew into the beautiful beyond. Whether or not a pupil-centred curriculum is desirable in some secular disciplines, it takes only a little thought to realise that one can never merely "lead out" the great doctrines of Christianity from the native mind of a child since Christianity is both an historical and a supernaturally revealed religion. Calvinism stresses the necessity, uniqueness and sufficiency of the Word of God, and consequently opposes the effort to substitute nature stories for those that directly teach Christian truth. In education, as elsewhere, our task is not the omission, but "the confession of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> Those who imagine that death is beyond the knowledge of a young child forget that neither germs nor bombs respect infancy. On a recent visit to Jackson, Mississippi, a prominent Christian lady brought her three-year-old orphaned grandchild to speak to the minister. An aunt who was carefully rearing the child, asked her, "What did Jesus do?" The three-year-old replied, "Jesus died for our sins." Jonathan Edwards gives an interesting account of the way in which the Holy Spirit used her catechism for the saving conversion of Phoebe Bartlett when she was four years old; while William A. Hallock has recorded the saintly character which followed this youthful conversion.<sup>2</sup>

It is more fitting for Reformed teachers to ally themselves with the Calvinist Herman Bavinck and the God-centred curriculum, than with the humanist John Dewey and the child-centred curriculum.

For these and other reasons it is imperative that

<sup>1</sup> Frey, Arthur, *Der Kampf der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland*, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> Edwards, J., *Thoughts on the Revival of Religion*, pp. 85—93.  
Hallock, W. A., *The Life of J. Edwards*, p. 12.

men of faith affirm the centrality of the cross and urge the proclamation of a doctrine of the atonement of sufficient import to warrant the cross being taught to the babes in Christ as the first principles of the faith, and ever presented to the saints as the cardinal truth and vital centre of Christianity.

The cross is central in the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and in the life of the Church which He established and has sustained through the ages; it will be central in the thought of the Church of to-day only if we have an adequate doctrine of Him who was crucified, of what He did for us on the cross, of the motives or spirit which prompted His priestly propitiation.

#### ii.—THE CROSS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

We consider first, then, the centrality of the cross in the New Testament. All the New Testament writers were firmly persuaded that the cross was the heart of the Gospel. "All the light of sacred story gathers round its head sublime." "All of the first messengers of Christ bore the office that preaches the reconciliation."<sup>1</sup> "Compare the space given to the week of the Passion with the total extent of the Gospel records. Of his twenty-eight chapters, Matthew devotes seven to that last week, one-fourth of the whole. Of his sixteen chapters, Mark gives five, nearly one-third of all. Of his twenty-four chapters, Luke devotes four and a half, nearly one-fifth. Of his twenty-one chapters, John gives almost nine, nearly one-half. Here is a striking and significant fact: the fourfold account of Christ's life and work includes eighty-nine chapters. Of these, twenty-five, considerably more than one-fourth, are occupied with the Passion week."<sup>2</sup> Kagawa counts ten

<sup>1</sup> Heim, Karl, *Jesus der Weltvollender*, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Green, J. B., *Union Seminary Review*, XLI. 2.

references to His death in Jesus' own teachings as given in Mark alone, prior to that event; and concludes that the religion of Jesus is the religion of crucifixion, that is, of redemption.<sup>1</sup>

At His baptism, the voice from heaven identified Jesus with the Messianic Servant prophesied by Isaiah, while John the Baptist pointed Him out as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world (John i. 29, 36). In the temptation, therefore, Jesus refused other Messianic roles and even in His early ministry spoke of the tragic element in His vocation (Mark ii. 20; cf. Matt. v. 11). As soon as Peter had made his great confession, Jesus unfolded to the disciples the necessity for His death as the climax of His Messiahship. The repeated conversations concerning His decease (Luke ix. 31; Mark vii. 31—38, ix. 30—32, x. 35—45), and the use of the imperfect tenses (Mark ix. 30—32) indicating that He kept on talking on this theme, have led scholars to describe this period of our Lord's ministry as "the passion ministry of the North." On one occasion Jesus was rebuked by Peter (Mark viii. 32) for teaching His death, as later the disciples were unable to bear the word (John xvi. 12), and proved foolish and slow of heart to believe from the prophets the necessity of the suffering of the Christ (Luke xxiv. 25, 26). It is a reasonable inference that this unwillingness of the disciples to hear has much to do with the fact that Jesus is not more frequently reported as teaching the meaning of His death. Jesus "applied to the Messiah the descriptions of the sufferings of the servant of the Lord in Isaiah liii.,"<sup>2</sup> (Luke xxii. 37) and in connection

<sup>1</sup> Kagawa, *The Religion of Jesus*, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of St. Paul*, p. 59; Schmidt, K. L., *Le problème du christianisme primitif* in *Revue d'Histoire et de Phil. relig.*, jan. fév., 1938.



therewith taught its full substitutionary significance: "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life (or soul) a ransom instead of many" (Mark x. 45; Matt. xx. 28; cf. Isaiah liii. 10—12). In "one of the best authenticated passages in all history"<sup>1</sup> Jesus declared that the sacramental cup was His blood of the new covenant shed for many for the remission of sins (Mark xiv. 24; Matt. xxvi. 28). Thus it has been properly observed that the eucharist was the meal at which, *sub specie mortis Christi*, the New Covenant was established.<sup>2</sup>

In the Fourth Gospel Jesus describes Himself as the Good Shepherd who of His own accord giveth His life for the sheep (x. 11—18); who came to die that He and the Father might be glorified, and all men drawn unto Himself (xii. 23—32); who laid down His life for His friends (xv. 13), and went away that the Comforter might come (xvi. 7). In dying Jesus prayed that the Father might forgive His murderers and declared that He had finished the great work committed to Him.

In the one chapter in which the Third Gospel summarises the post-resurrection teaching, the death of Christ is referred to thrice as the burden of Jesus' teaching (Luke xxiv. 6—8, 26, 46). Thus at least twice during the Forty Days Jesus traced out for the disciples the Old Testament prophecies concerning His death. To the Gospel of the Forty Days belongs the collection of Old Testament passages on this subject which underlies the preaching of Acts and is referred to in 1 Cor. xv. 3. The collection certainly included Isaiah liii., which Philip used, as had his Master before him (Acts viii. 30—35).

With the Pentecostal coming of the Spirit there fol-

<sup>1</sup> Moffatt, James, *Grace in the New Testament*, pp. 80—81.

<sup>2</sup> Kattenbusch as given by Brunner, *The Mediator*, p. 545.

lowed a Copernican revolution in the disciples' thinking according to which the Word of the Cross that they had previously rejected became the focus of their lives, their thought, and their preaching, as is clearly seen in Paul (Gal. ii. 20, 21, ii. 1; 1 Cor. i., ii. 2; 1 Tim. ii. 6, 7); in First Peter (i. 19; ii. 21—24; iii. 18; iv. 1, 13); in Hebrews; in First John; and in Revelation. In that great vision of the Church in heaven, our Lord is designated the Lamb some thirty times. As the Lamb that has been slain, He stands in the midst of the throne of God receiving the adoration of all creation and the gratitude of the redeemed. The Apocalypse describes the Redeemer as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, thus making the cross the foundation upon which the just Jehovah hath granted our race a history, and His people salvation.

In 1 Corinthians xv. 3 Paul lists the death of Christ for our sins as the first of the principles which he taught and equally as the first thing which had been taught him.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the cross was central to the primitive Christian community prior even to Paul's conversion. Judging by the place given to the cross in the Gospels, in the 'oral Gospel,' as recorded in Acts (i. 3; ii. 36; iii. 18, 26; iv. 10, 27; v. 28; vii. 51—54; viii. 35; x. 40; xiii. 28, 29; xvii. 13, 31; xxv. 19; xxvi. 22, 23) and this passage in Paul, we are justified in declaring that the cross was the primary element in the earliest Christian proclamation. Harnack has certainly not overstated the matter when he says that "many teachers, like Paul, presented the cross of Christ as the content of Christianity"; and that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" was not simply Pauline,

<sup>1</sup> "There is good ground for believing, with Edward Meyer, that St. Paul is here quoting the baptismal creed of the Damascus Church" [which he received at his own baptism].—Principal W. Robinson, *The Expository Times*, Jan. 1938, p. 168.

but common to Christianity in general.”<sup>1</sup> Bavinck concludes that “in the preaching of the apostles the cross of Christ is the focal point, the source of all the benefits of salvation”;<sup>2</sup> while R. Seeberg finds that “the whole New Testament sets forth the saving significance of the death of Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

### iii.—THE CROSS IN CHURCH HISTORY.

When we come to study the history of the Christian faith, we find that the cross has maintained its centrality in all branches of the Church, in spite of efforts made by sundry human philosophies to supplant it. The tendency of neo-Platonism was to deflect Greek Christianity toward a mystical eternalisation or deification of man; the deflection of the mediæval Church was toward the Aristotelian hierarchial principle; in the modern age, Humanism, the Enlightenment, and Kant have magnified the sufficiency of man. But with every departure from the preaching of the cross there has resulted such a decadence in the life, love, loyalty and faith of the Church, that Christians have ever returned with new insistence upon the centrality of “that green hill without the city wall where the dear Lord was crucified, who died to save us all.”

#### The Early Church.

The faith of the early Church is indicated by the Apostles' Creed and the writings and the worship of the Fathers. The point of view of the most ancient Christian symbol is that Christ was born to die and enter into His glory. Every event in the life of Jesus after His birth is either passed over or else concentrated in His death. But the Creed does not pass over His death,

<sup>1</sup> Harnach, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, I. 96; 88, n. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, III. 356.

<sup>3</sup> Seeberg, R., *Evangelium Quadraginta Dierum*.

rather it devotes three statements in its scant twelve articles to that fact. With mighty blows the Creed thrice rings the changes on the cross: *suffered . . . crucified . . . dead.*<sup>1</sup> Thus the cross condenses all the meaning of Christ's life and mission.

The Apostolic Fathers commend the Church which "rejoices in the Passion of our Lord,"<sup>2</sup> and bid us "fix our gaze on the blood of Christ, and know that it is precious to His Father, because it was poured out for our salvation."<sup>3</sup> "On account of the love which He had for us did our Lord Jesus Christ, by the will of God, give His blood for us, His flesh for our flesh, His life for our lives."<sup>4</sup>

Polycarp alludes to his Christian predecessors "who loved not the present world, but Him who died for us, and was raised again by God for us," and exhorts his readers to "hold stedfastly to Him who is our hope and the earnest of our righteousness, who is Jesus Christ, who bore our sins in His own body on the tree; who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, but suffered all for us that we might live through Him."<sup>5</sup> The Letter of the Church of Smyrna referring to his heroic martyrdom, comments thus: "Not considering that neither will it be possible for us ever to forsake Christ, who suffered for the salvation of the saved of the whole world, or to worship any other" (xvii.).

In the light of such testimony Smeaton concluded that: "From the first, the doctrine of the atonement by the death of God's Son was a central article never

<sup>1</sup> Referring to this section of the Creed, Hilary writes: "The cross, death and hell are our life."

<sup>2</sup> Ignatius to the Church in Philadelphia.

<sup>3</sup> I. Clement, VII. 4.

<sup>4</sup> I. Clement, XLIX. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Polycarp, *Letter to the Philippians*, viii., ix.

impugned. The whole worship was based upon it. The first Christians, as is well known, commemorated the Lord's death in the Holy Supper every Lord's Day; and from the peculiar theory which made the worship culminate in the Supper, the atonement was constantly before the mind of the worshippers. This gave colour to primitive theology. The atoning death was central and fundamental. This accounts for the fact that the atonement never was a subject of discussion among the early Christians, and consequently never came within those currents or controversies which gave precise symbolical expression to other topics. The doctrine was so fully recognised that heresy durst not assail it."<sup>1</sup>

The faith which the cross nourished in the hearts of the ante-Nicene Christians is eloquently presented in the *Epistle to Diognetus*: "O the excellence of the kindness and the love of God! He did not hate us nor reject us, nor remember us for evil, but was longsuffering, endured us, Himself in pity bore our sins, Himself gave His own Son as ransom for us, the holy for the wicked, the innocent for the guilty, the just for the unjust, the incorruptible for the corruptible, the immortal for the mortal. For what else could cover our sins but His righteousness? In whom was it possible for us, in our wickedness and impiety, to be justified except in the Son of God alone? O the sweet exchange, O the marvellous work, O the unexpected kindnesses, that the wickedness of the many should be covered in the righteous One, and the righteousness of One should justify many wicked! Having convinced us, then, of the disability of our nature to attain life in time past, and now having shown the Saviour who is able to save even the disabled natures; it was His will for both

<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, George, *The Apostles' Doctrine of the Atonement*, p. 480.

reasons that we should believe on His goodness and regard Him as nourisher, father, teacher, counsellor, physician, mind, light, honour, glory, strength and life, and to have no care for clothing and food."

After recording other representations of Christ's work, Bavinck concludes: "Finally from the beginning this thought is also in the foreground, that God hath offered Christ in His sufferings and death for us and in our place, in order to obtain for us reconciliation, forgiveness, sanctification, and entire salvation. Very clear do we find this thought already in the *Letter to Diognetus* (ix.); *I. Clement* (vii.); *Barnabas* (v.—vii.)."<sup>1</sup>

In his presentation of Christ as the victorious Redeemer, Irenæus says that by transgressing God's commandment "we became His enemies. And therefore in the last times the Lord has restored us into friendship through His Incarnation, having become the Mediator between God and men; indeed, propitiating for us the Father, against whom we had sinned, and cancelling our disobedience by His own obedience; conferring upon us the gift of communion with, and subjection to, our Maker." "The Lord having ransomed us by His own blood, and given His soul for our souls, and His own flesh for *ἀντί* our flesh."<sup>2</sup> Tertullian teaches that "the death of Christ is the whole weight and fruit of Christianity."<sup>3</sup>

The moral heroism of these early preachers of the cross has been too little appreciated. Indeed, theirs was a courage which falls short only of that which carried their Lord to the cross. To the Greeks who worshipped beauty they preached One who had no form nor comeliness, who was marred more than any man, so that

<sup>1</sup> *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, III. 315.

<sup>2</sup> Irenæus, *Against Heresies*, V. xvii. 1; v. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Against Marcion*, iii. 8.

when we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him (Isa. liii.). To Stoics who demanded one with such control and apathy as evidences no emotion, they preached "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." To Jews who demanded miraculous signs in the heavens above and in the earth beneath, they preached the sign of a curse, for Moses had said, "Cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree" (Gal. iii. 13). Cicero declared that the cross ought to be for ever absent not only from the back, but even from the mind of a Roman. And yet so mightily did the Holy Spirit honour that which was foolishness to the Greek and a stumbling-block to the Jew, that in less than three centuries the cross had conquered the Empire.

#### The Testimony of the Post-Nicene Fathers.

Athanasius presented the cross as "the sum of our faith"<sup>1</sup> and the satisfaction of the divine veracity. Eusebius of Cæsarea, the scholar of the ancient Church, held that "the law of Christianity is the holy cross of Christ," that the Lamb of God offered Himself a penal substitute for our sins. Chrysostom teaches that "Christ saved us from death by delivering Himself to death"; "We were under sin and punishment; He by suffering punishment did away with sin and punishment. He was punished on the cross." Cyril adds, "We have paid in Christ Himself the penalties of the sins with which we are charged." "Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, has redeemed us, by laying down His life (soul) for us, offering Himself to the Father as a sacrifice without blemish, giving His blood in exchange for the life of all, for He was worth more than the world."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cited by Franks, R. S., *A History of the Doctrine of the Work of Christ*, I. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Cited by Grensted, L. W., *The Atonement in History and in Life*, p. 191.

Augustine says: "All my hope is in the death of my Lord. His death is my merit, my refuge, my salvation, my life, and my resurrection . . . the certainty of our whole confidence consists in the blood of Christ." According to Gregory the Great, "an adequate penalty must be paid for every sin." Hence, "the Redeemer is represented as the sacrifice offered to God in satisfaction for the sins of man. The sinless One paid the penalty of the sinner, so that at once the law of God's justice was vindicated, and the sinner was released from the penalty that was his due."<sup>1</sup> John of Damascus summarises: "The whole activity and wonder-working of Christ is most great and divine and wonderful; but His precious cross is the most wonderful of all. For by nothing else was death destroyed, the sin of our first parents atoned for, hell despoiled, resurrection bestowed, power given us to disdain things present and death itself, the restoration of original blessedness accomplished, the gates of paradise opened, our nature seated at the right hand of God, we made children of God and heirs of heaven—but through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. For through the cross have all things been set right."<sup>2</sup>

At the base of the teaching of the Fathers we find "a fundamental principle, a truth of faith deeply rooted in the Christian conscience—that salvation has come to us by the cross of the Son of God. For them all the death of Jesus Christ is something else than an example; it has had outside ourselves, according to the divine plan, a real and mysterious operation, it possesses an objective and distinctive value. Two general facts express this supernatural efficacy—the Saviour's

<sup>1</sup> Dudden, F. H., *Gregory the Great*, II. 341, citing *Mor.* ix. 46; xvii. 46; iii. 27; *Hom. in Ev.* 33, par. 8.

<sup>2</sup> John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa*, iv. 11.



death appeases for us the divine wrath; and it is a penalty, the penalty of our sins, voluntarily undergone by the Lord in our place."<sup>1</sup>

### The Cross in the Mediæval Church.

The Church of the Middle Ages had its Anselm, whose *Cur Deus Homo?* with its exalted conception of God, its serious view of the infinite demerit of sin, and the absolute necessity for a vicarious satisfaction, was pronounced by Denney "the greatest and truest book on the atonement that has ever been written."<sup>2</sup> Peter Lombard, the Master of the Sentences, reminds the mediæval ecclesiastic of "the penalty paid by Christ, who absolves us." Hugo of St. Victor teaches that Christ expiates the guilt of man by His death, "that one such man, who was guilty of no punishment, assumed the punishment for men."<sup>3</sup> Thomas Aquinas avers that "it is a convenient mode of satisfying for another when anyone subjects himself to the punishment which another merited," and that "the obligation of punishment is lifted by the exhibition of a sufficient satisfaction." Thus, "according to Thomas, the satisfaction wrought by the suffering of Christ is the proper ground for the release of the obligation of punishment."<sup>4</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, sometimes designated the oracle of Western Europe, writes: "Three principal things I perceive in this work of our salvation: the pattern of humility in which God emptied Himself; the measure of love, which He stretched even unto death, and that the death of the cross; the mystery of redemption, in which He

<sup>1</sup> Rivière, *Le Dogma de la Redemption*, quoted by H. Smith, *The Atonement in History and in Life*, pp. 196-7.

<sup>2</sup> Denney, J., *The Atonement and the Modern Mind*, p. 116.

<sup>3</sup> Cited by Seeberg, R., *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, III, 1930, p. 245.

<sup>4</sup> Cited by Seeberg, *ibid.* p. 437.

underwent the death which He bore. The two former of these without the last are like a picture on the void."<sup>1</sup> In the later Middle Ages many mystics adopted the motto of John Gerson, "Spes mea crux Christi."<sup>2</sup> John Wyclif reasoned: "It is to speak lightly to say that God might of His mere power forgive this sin, without the atonement which was made for it, since the justice of God would not suffer this, which requires that every trespass be punished either in earth or hell. God may not accept a person to forgive him his sin without an atonement, else He must give free licence to sin, both in angels and men; and then were sin no more sin, and our God were no God." "Except He keep His righteousness, . . . how may He judge the world."<sup>3</sup> Following Anselm, the mediæval Church taught dying men that their hope was to place the death of Christ between themselves and their sins, between themselves and the wrath of God, between themselves and the punishment they deserved.

That the unreformed Church of Western Christendom has scholars to-day who cling to the cross is shown in these weighty words of Karl Adam: "Christianity is nothing else than the Gospel of our redemption by the cross of Christ, by the death of Jesus for our salvation, by Christ's expiatory blood."<sup>4</sup>

If one turns to the Orthodox Church which is rising from the ashes of Russian persecution, Arseniev writes: "His death is and remains fundamental and decisive: 'Ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come.' 'This is My body which is given for you.' 'This is My blood

<sup>1</sup> Cited by Franks, *ibid.* p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> Gerson, John: Schaff, P., *A History of the Christian Church*, VII., p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> Vaughan, Robert, *John de Wycliffe*, pp. 394-5.

<sup>4</sup> Adam, Karl, *The Son of God*, p. 277.

of the New Covenant which is shed for many'—that is decisive for the Oriental Church. His death, His sacrifice on the cross, is contacted as a heart-shaking, ever-present, ever-living reality. The whole Christian philosophy of salvation is concentrated here as in a focus."<sup>1</sup>

#### The Cross in Protestantism.

That this thought is not less precious to the heart of the Reformed may be conveniently seen in the words of John Knox in the Scots' Confession, in the works of William S. Plumer, one of the most influential of the American Presbyterian theologians, in the recent writings of President J. O. Buswell, junior.

In the very nature of the case the cross must have and does have for the Protestant Reformation a more central place and import than in the Roman or Oriental Churches. The implication of justification by faith alone is that the whole and sufficient work for our forgiveness and justification was completed on the cross. Faith alone is sufficient only because Christ's atoning work for us is sufficient. In His active and passive work which culminated at Calvary, Christ became the end of the law for the justification of the believer. When He died crying, "It is finished," the work of objective soteriology was accomplished. He was delivered for our offences, and raised for our justification; so that everyone who is led to trust in the satisfaction and merit of that death is forgiven and accepted as righteous. Hence, Luther insisted that present Christian theology is a theology of the cross, rather than a theology of glory; and that there is enough of the revelation of God in the cross of Christ to last a man all his days. "Therefore this text—*He bore our sins*—must be understood particularly thor-

<sup>1</sup> Arseniev, N., *We Beheld His Glory*, pp. 131-2.

oughly, as the foundation upon which stands the whole of the New Testament or the Gospel, as that which alone distinguishes us and our religion from all other religions. For Christians alone believe this text. Therefore, whosoever believes this article of faith is secure against all errors, and the Holy Ghost is necessarily for him."

In accord with these words of the father of the Reformation, Emil Brunner writes: "The whole struggle of the Reformation for the *sola fide*, the *soli deo gloria*, was simply the struggle for the right interpretation of the cross. He who understands the cross aright . . . understands the Bible, understands Jesus Christ." "All Christ says and does should ultimately be understood *sub specie crucis*, if it is to be understood at all—or it will not be understood. . . . The cross is the total expression of the life of Jesus." "Justification means this miracle: that Christ takes our place, and we take His. Here the objective vicarious offering has become a process of exchange. . . . Justification cannot be separated from the objective atonement, from the expiatory sacrifice of the Mediator."<sup>1</sup>

Zwingli tells us how Thomas Wyttenbach taught him that the death of Christ was the sole price of the remission of sins, and that faith is the key which unlocks to the soul the treasury of remission.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, a British scholar, who personally differs widely from the Reformation, rightly recognises that Luther presented the death of Christ as the sole and adequate penalty for our sins, and that "the Reformers agree in accepting the penal view of the cross as being the sole and

<sup>1</sup> Brunner, Emil, *The Mediator*, pp. 435, 510, 524.  
<sup>2</sup> Lindsay, *A History of the Reformation*, II. 27.

sufficient cause of reconciliation between God and man."<sup>1</sup> Sin deserves punishment, but our whole punishment has been transferred to Christ. Hence one is entirely free from its penalty apart from priestly absolution or good works if by grace he has been enabled to receive the atonement. Or, to return to Luther, Christ assumed our guilt in order to confer His blessing upon us. Thus, whereas Modernism does not rest on Calvary, and Romanism has only one foot there (the other resting on ecclesiastical works and penances), the Protestant Reformation stands with both feet, all its weight, resting upon the cross.

From the Reformation onward the cross has been the heart of evangelical preaching, and it is a misnomer to call any other preaching evangelical. The Protestant faith began in Scotland with Patrick Hamilton's declaration: "Christ is our Saviour. Christ died for us. Christ bare our sins upon His back. Christ bought us with His blood. Christ washed us with His blood. . . . Christ was the price that was given for us and for our sins." Knox adds that "He was wounded and plagued for our transgressions; He being the clean and innocent Lamb of God, was damned in the presence of an earthly judge, that we might be absolved before the tribunal of God."<sup>2</sup> The saintly McCheyne insisted: "Live within sight of Calvary, and you will live within sight of glory." Turretin writes that the cross is, at the same time, the altar of the Priest, in which He offers Himself in sacrifice to God, the school of the Prophet, in which He teaches us the mystery of our salvation, and the trophy of the King, in which He triumphs over principalities and powers.<sup>3</sup> In the words

<sup>1</sup> Brook, V. J. K., *Atonement in History and in Life*, pp. 214, 235.

<sup>2</sup> Knox, John, *The Scots' Confession of 1560*.

<sup>3</sup> Locus xiv., quaest v. 13.

of John Owen, representative Puritanism found in the death of Christ the death of death. The evangelical movement in Scotland a century ago centred in the cross, Candlish going so far as to say that John Mac-laurin's *Glorying in the Cross of Christ* was the greatest sermon ever preached.

The Moravian revival with its magnificent missionary emphasis began with the contemplation of the thorn-crowned head, and never forsook the wounds of Christ. Augustus Montague Toplady and Charles Wesley vie with one another in seeing which can make the cross more central in their great hymns, *Rock of ages* and *Jesu, lover of my soul*. In my own communion, Dabney, Thornwell, Plumer, Palmer, Stuart Robinson, Strickler, and Baker have ploughed the cross deep into our hearts and lives. The position of the last named is well seen in his letters to his son, a young minister: "My son, whilst others make a parade of learning, and boast of their knowledge of German literature, be it your praise that in scriptural language, and with simplicity and power, you preach Christ and Him crucified, as the world's last and only hope." "Remember, my son, this saying of your father, that the sermon that does not distinctly present Christ in the beauty and glory of His mediatorial character, is no better than a cloud without water, a casket without a jewel, a shadow without the substance, or the body without the soul. You ask why my preaching is so much blessed. If it will throw any light upon the subject, I will tell you that my plan is incessantly to preach Christ and Him crucified."<sup>1</sup> When the Group movement has learned to place the cross in the focal centre of its testimony, that is, the cross on which Christ accepted not only the wrath of

<sup>1</sup> Cited by Wells, J. M., *Southern Presbyterian Worthies*, p. 99.

the world,<sup>1</sup> but as well the wrath of God,<sup>2</sup> it will present in reality "the Gospel of the First Century Fellowship."

As the first rays of the morning presaged the near approach of the XXth century one of the outstanding scholars and statesmen of this and of the last century heralded the new day with the declaration that "history is not so much an aphoristic spectacle of cruel passions as a coherent process with the cross as its centre."<sup>3</sup> The present century has produced able and scholarly defenders of the central import of the cross of our blessed Lord, J. Denney, P. T. Forsyth, A. Whyte, D. Lamont, E. K. Simpson, H. Bavinck, A. T. Robertson, A. H. Strong, B. B. Warfield, J. Gresham Machen, S. M. Zwemer, C. E. Macartney, W. Elert, K. L. Schmidt, K. Heim, K. Adam, K. Schilder and, not least, Louis Berkhof. Introducing a series of sermons on the cross by Professor Heim, Professor J. Schmidt rightly insists that "the strength of Christianity is in the cross."<sup>4</sup> Heim declares that he can be helped only by the imputed righteousness of Christ (*aliena justitia Christi*) of which Luther speaks, and further magnifies the cross by endorsing these words of Pamdita Ramabai: "I looked upon the holy Son of God, who was lifted up on the cross, and who there suffered death in my stead, that I might be freed from the bondage of sin and the fear of death, and might receive life. O what love to me, the lost sinner, this inexpressible love of the Father, who gave His only-begotten Son to die for me! I did not deserve such love, but just for that reason He showed it to me."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Russell, A. J., *For Sinners Only*, pp. 57-8; 227-8.

<sup>2</sup> *The Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly*, a. 49.

<sup>3</sup> Kuyper, A., *Calvinism*, 1931 edition, p. 192.

<sup>4</sup> Schmidt, J., in Preface to Heim, K., *The Gospel of the Cross*.

<sup>5</sup> Ramabai, Pamdita, quoted by Heim, K., *The Church and the Problems of the Day*, pp. 92-3.

Read Thurneysen's *Significance of the Reformation*, Brunner's *Mediator*, and Barth's *Credo*, and you see that the theology of crisis is becoming more and more the theology of the cross. Even certain Auburn Affirmationists realise that the cross ought to be central since "it has provoked and kept alive theology," and "has been the fountain-head of heroic devotion."<sup>1</sup>

In view of the central place of the cross in the New Testament, in view of the way in which the cross has kept its place or returned to its saving centre in the life of the Christian Church, it were, indeed, an audacious man who would set himself against the consensus of the apostles, the fathers, the martyrs, the Reformers, the true evangelicals—the Church of the ages—and maintain that this verdict of the primitive community and Christian centuries is wrong. The writer is entirely convinced that the faith of the ages is right in the fundamental place which it gives to the cross.

#### iv.—THE MAGNITUDES OF THE CROSS.

And we can keep the cross in its rightful place only by preaching and teaching a doctrine of the crucifixion which is adequate to place the cross in the forefront, among the first principles, of our Christian education, and great enough to keep it in the centre of our thought. Puny concepts of the Redeemer and His work will not do. Only a great Gospel can and will keep the cross at the centre.

As one reviews the history of Christian thinking he finds that men have dwelt on three great magnitudes of the cross: who the Crucified was; what He did; and how He did it.

The fathers were amazed at the wonder of the Person

<sup>1</sup> Coffin, N. S., *The Meaning of the Cross*.

Buttrick, G. A., *Christian Fact and Modern Doubt*, pp. 232, 234, 236, 239, 240, 242, 253.



of the Redeemer. By the revelation which the Lord Jesus Christ made of Himself, as attested in the great confession of primitive Christianity and in the greater confession of Christ Himself,<sup>1</sup> they were brought to the astounding fact that it was God Himself who undertook this awful task for us. And, though it shook the Mediterranean world to its foundations, that ancient Church insisted that the Saviour was not in the first place a creature, but the eternal Creator. In His Person, Christ our Lord is eternal, the Divine Being, one essence with the Father. His is that Being which is uncreated, self-existent, absolute. And in His eternal love—which is as ultimate as His infinite majesty—God, the Word, assumed also our human nature for us men and for our salvation. Thus, when Christ in His human nature died for sinners, infinite merit—the merit of the Creator—was measured with infinite demerit—the infinite demerit of sin. And thus also having arisen from the dead and ascended up where He was before the Incarnation, He continues, as God our Saviour, to reveal to us the will of God for our salvation. This great truth that the world crucified the Lord of glory has never been lost, but is one of the presuppositions of Anselm, of the Reformers, and of the great hymns and chants of the Church. It appears, for example, in such lines as the following:

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
 Save in the death of Christ my God.  
 All the vain things that charm me most,  
 I sacrifice them to His blood.

and,

Well might the sun in darkness hide,  
 And shut his glories in,  
 When God, the mighty Maker died  
 For man, the creature's sin.

<sup>1</sup> cf. The Greater Confession, in the author's *Our Lord, an Affirmation of the Deity of Christ*.

Greek Christendom lifted its eyes to the heights to contemplate the glory of the Saviour, and the beholding of His glory who was crucified for us is a proper task that has engaged Christians through the centuries.

However, the Church, especially from Anselm through the Reformation, added to this heart-moving truth the further study of what Jesus did on the cross. The necessity of the expiatory cross is seen in the very character of God as holy and just, and in the awful nature of sin as the transgression of the law. The essential nature or character of God requires that He punish sin. True justice is only satisfied when justice is done. Only the cross of Christ, our penal substitute, shows God to be just when He justifies the sinner who believeth in Jesus. The cross is not a compromise, but a substitution; not a cancellation, but a satisfaction; not a wiping off, but a wiping out in blood and agony and death.

Paul presents Christ as our legal substitute who satisfied the precepts of the law by His obedience and endured its penalty in His death (Rom. v. 12—21; Col. ii. 14); who gave Himself a substitutionary ransom (1 Tim. ii. 6), being made sin (2 Cor. v. 21), and a curse (Gal. iii. 13) for His people, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him and receive the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Through the death of Christ, God reconciled us unto Himself, that is, God changed the status or relationship of enmity that existed between the holy God and sinners to one of peace by imputing our trespasses unto Him (Rom. v. 6—11; 2 Cor. v. 18—21). Thus Christ's death as our penal substitute vindicates God's justice in forgiving sinners, and sets Christ forth as the mercy-seat where alone can sin be forgiven (Rom. iii. 21—26). Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul has expounded in its

fuller implications the doctrine of Jesus, of John the Baptist, of Isaiah, and of the Old Testament sacrificial system. This great Bible doctrine is that guilt has been expiated in an act of worship. As the high priest, Jesus offered Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice by bearing the penalty we deserve.

And just this thought of Jesus as our high priest, which looms so large in the Epistle to the Hebrews, points to the third great magnitude in the cross, that is, the spirit or motives which prompted our Saviour to make His great sacrifice. We are saved by the will of a priest, the most noble and sublime spirit which actuates the heart. In Gethsemane we see the Saviour's will bowing to the will of His Father, that the Father might be glorified and men saved. In this spirit of the priest we see the two great principles of all virtue, love for God and love for men.

But that we may not assume that the loftiest contemplation of the way in which Jesus died in the least militates against the full appreciation of the work which He did on Calvary and the infinite worth of the Mediator, let me call to your attention the combination which our James Henley Thornwell made of these three great doctrines which, correctly apprehended, set forth the magnitude and pre-eminent centrality of Calvary. Realise who suffered there, what His suffering accomplished, how, or in what a spirit of love and worship He suffered, and you can again never place the cross on the periphery, you must keep it at the centre. It is, perhaps, appropriate in any case that I refer you to this classic statement in the sermon which Thornwell preached to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., in the First Presbyterian Church of New York. Using John x. 17, 18, as his text, he spoke of "the sacrifice of Christ as the type and model of

mission effort." The doctrinal part of this great message clusters about the thought of Christ's work as a priestly act, an office of devotion. "Jesus appears as a worshipper of God, burning with zeal for the divine glory and compassion for the souls of men." But the very contemplation of this spirit of worship gilds the terrors of Calvary and makes us absolutely certain that there was no undue severity, no suspicion of injustice in that act of worship whereby Christ offered Himself to cover our sins. "The strongest argument to me for the necessity of the atonement is that Jesus died in the spirit of devotion. When I consider His soul as a pious offering, and then reflect that He celebrates the grace and condescension of God in accepting the gift; when I consider the extent and severity of His sufferings, and then remember that all were endured to express to the universe His sense of the divine holiness, I ask no more; I am satisfied that it must be—that without the shedding of blood there could be no remission. So intense was His conviction that His death was indispensable to the righteous pardon of the guilty that He seems to have coveted the cross, and to have been straitened for His baptism of blood. He could not brook the thought that men should be saved at the peril of the divine glory. . . . Our finite minds are incapable of conceiving the extent to which the principle of holiness, the principle of supreme regard for the character of God, energised within Him when He made His soul an offering for sin; and when I figure to myself the scene, and undertake to penetrate into the workings and emotions of the Saviour's heart, I am irresistibly impressed with the conviction that nothing short of the divine nature could have been the dwelling place of such zeal. I see not so much an admiration of the holiness of God as the energies of that holiness

itself. I see the Father reflected in the Son. The piety of the Priest flows from a fountain of inexhaustible fullness." "Here His Deity appears in full-orbed radiance as Deity in action. Nowhere else can the Son be seen in all the intensity of His glory."<sup>1</sup>

#### The Coronation of the Lamb.

Lo, heaven's doors lift up, revealing in the midst of the throne and of the four living beings, and in the midst of the elders of the Church, the coronation of the Lamb. The throne whose sceptre ruleth in the army of heaven and among the children of men is the throne of God and of the Lamb. The King of kings and Lord of lords wears a garment dipped in blood. Sin is such an awful deflection from the path of rectitude, such a heinous transgression of the law of God, that nothing less than a cross that springs from the source and centre of the cosmic energies of the universe was sufficient to rescue sinners from its eternal destruction.

The sooner our lands of boasted freedom replace the cross in the centre, the sooner will they begin to attune themselves to the will of God, and the sooner will revival supplant depression in the churches, righteousness overtake crises and collapses in morals. We cannot expect heaven's blessing when we forget the cross, remove it from the focus of faith, or deny His holy efficacy its revealed meaning. God has placed the Lamb in the midst of His throne and given to the cross a significance that keeps it central. For nowhere else are the heights of divine glory, the depths of divine compassion, the harmonious justification of all of God's virtues, and the honouring of His name so manifest as in the holy death of Christ.

<sup>1</sup> *Thornwell's Collected Writings, II.*, 411-449.

## THE ENIGMA OF CALVARY.

“ Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and the elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God.”—MATTHEW xxvii. 41—43.

“ In Thy light shall we see light.”—PSALM xxxvi. 9.

“ The atonement is to be seen in its own light.”—*McLeod Campbell*.

“ Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.”  
—1 COR. xv. 3.

“ If there be one predominant thought in the volume, it is just this, that ‘the last great crisis of the sacred life’ is unintelligible, and (in the scriptural meaning of the word) invincibly *scandalous*, except in the light of ‘the interpreting idea’ which the Holy Spirit jealously insists upon and provides in Scripture. In this light ‘*sacrifice, satisfaction, substitution,*’ instead of appearing as so many discrete and separable doctrines, are seen blended into one great divine achievement, in what is not the mere ‘passion,’ but the glorious and unapproachable priestly action of the suffering Messiah, offering Himself to God in the room of sinful men, a sacrifice of sweet-smelling savour, in expiation of sin, unto the satisfaction of divine justice and the reconciliation of sinful men to God, the Judge of all, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of all who believe unto the saving of the soul.”—Condensed from Hugh Martin, *The Shadow of Calvary*.

## THE ENIGMA OF CALVARY.

AMONG those who recognise that the cross ought to have an important place in our preaching, many hold that one should simply state the facts of the cross without presenting any interpretation of these facts. In other words, there is a call for the portrayal of the bare facts of the cross. Let us picture the cross to the hearts of men and allow it to do its own work. This attitude is somewhat better than the omission of the cross or its relegation to the periphery of our message. But it is the result of confused thinking and issues in a confusion worse confounded. A superficial view may welcome a preaching of the facts of the cross as a refuge from an apparent clash of interpretations; a deeper consideration finds the Biblical interpretation of the cross the only refuge from the riddle engendered by the effort to take the naked facts apart from their Biblical meaning.

### THE FACTUAL ATTITUDE.

The current call for the simple facts of the cross comes, in part, from an extreme realism which seeks to isolate every fact from the context in which rational ideation has placed it. This temper is a rather natural reaction of tough-minded realists to an ideology which accepted every generalisation as a sacred and unalterable law. Scientific conclusions have been changing with such rapidity that a German scholar has somewhat cynically remarked, "A truth of science is a mistake of to-day." Thus men have begun seriously to question all the "cement" with which our text-books bind the phenomena of nature together. In the political field the ideologies of nations and economical orders are catapulting one against the other with repercussions

that are shaking the planet. Small wonder, then, that realism should be welcomed as a possible *modus vivendi*, a refuge from the wars projected by the dreams of visionary ideologists.

And yet neither science nor politics can be built with the mere *disjecta membra* of disparate phenomena. Our realism must be a rational realism; or better, because both things and their relations have been truly pre-interpreted by God, they may be truly re-interpreted by man. In so far as we think God's thoughts after Him our thinking will be both real and rational. Ideas need not be mere moonshine, castles in the air, the baseless fabric of a dream; they may correspond to reality and not to mere fantasy. A science is a unified discourse concerning a specified field of knowledge. This very unity requires a rational ordering. Deny interpretations; insist on bare facts; and your atomism destroys the very possibility of any science. There have been wrong ideologies, unreal deductions, untrue *a priori*s; but, as W. Durant writes, "Our modern danger is precisely the opposite; inductive data fall upon us from all sides like the lava of Vesuvius; we suffocate with unco-ordinated facts; our minds are overwhelmed with sciences breeding and multiplying into specialistic chaos for want of synthetic thought and a unifying philosophy." Van Dusen observes: "There is no fact without its meaning, no value which does not come to us imbedded in a fact."<sup>1</sup>

Or as our Calvinistic scholar, Valentine Hepp, acutely puts it: "Whoever places himself on the viewpoint of the *Voraussetzunglosigkeit* of the natural sciences, must choose between illusion and despair. He must move with his thoughts into an unreal, and that means untrue,

<sup>1</sup> Van Dusen, H. P., *The Plain Man Seeks for God*, p. 75]



world, or he must dare to face all reality but doubt all truth." As a matter of practice, science is continually using hypotheses, theories and principles, none of which can be demonstrated by observation. "There is no such thing as observation without thought." Induction is not possible without deduction. "The fundamental idea of the inductive method, namely, that one can climb from the particular case to the general, presupposes such conceptions as these: the general exists, the particular exists, there is a connection between the general and the particular, and out of all this the genuinely deductive conclusion is reached: therefore, we must be able to reach the general through the particular."<sup>1</sup>

The law or principle of causation is basal cement for the whole scientific structure; but, as Hume, A. E. Taylor, Whitehead and Lamont admit, causation can never be demonstrated. Natural science is based on principles of epistemology and of nature which are revealed by God and must be accepted by man. The very unitary concept of science is only rational when it rests on the conception of one Creator, one plan, and one far-off divine event toward which the multiformity of data is moving. Moreover, "all science rests on the assumption that reality is not co-extensive with the phenomena, but contains a kernel of divine wisdom, being the realisation of the decree of God. In so far the truth is bound to reality, and finds its criterion and correspondence with reality. . . . Reality is an instrument to enable us to find the truth; reality is intended to become truth in our knowledge and experience." "But the truth transcends the empirical reality." "Reality, therefore, does not offer us in the truth a mere

<sup>1</sup> Hepp, V., *Calvinism and the Philosophy of Nature*, pp. 82, 73, 77.

copy of itself, so that the world, as pragmatism objects, would be duplicated. In the truth, reality rises to a higher mode of existence."<sup>1</sup>

There seems, then, no reason to bring this protest against interpretation from the scientific or political world into the consideration of the cross. Science, politics, philosophy, are all built and must be built not merely with facts, but with the meaning which men place upon those facts. There are true ideas as well as false ideas. And true or false, we cannot and do not dispense with ideas which integrate our facts and give purpose to our lives. Our so-called laws of nature must constantly be corrected by the factual order and course which God has ordained for nature. And likewise, our interpretations of the cross must constantly be measured by God's interpretation thereof; but this is a very different thing from denying the propriety of interpreting the cross.

#### MYSTERY AND REVELATION.

Another cause of confusion is a misunderstanding of the relation of mystery and revelation. Revelation implies mystery, something needing to be unveiled, something that has not been previously revealed; but revelation itself is disclosure. And the revelation of the infinite God implies that there is much which is not yet disclosed; yea, much that can never be disclosed to creatures. However, the Calvinist, in distinction from modern irrationalists, distinguishes between the truth which is revealed and that which is hidden. In his influential book, *Das Heilige*, Otto held that the divine is apprehended in a unique non-rational manner as "the numinous," the *mysterium tremendum*, and that this revelation is necessarily broken up by rationalisation.

<sup>1</sup> Bavinck, H., *The Philosophy of Revelation*, pp. 81-82.

The reasoning of certain of the British scientists, such as Alexander's *Space, Time and Deity*, has also led a British representative of the theology of crisis to despair of the use of reason in the things of God. Dr. Camfield holds that such studies show that God is in supreme and absolute contradiction, in rational discontinuity to the world. With reference to the point under consideration, he teaches that, "A transcendental bond unites the forgiven sinner with the deed which is the source of his salvation, the death of Christ; no rational bond, since between death and life, sin and holiness, there are no rational bonds. No rational explanation of the atonement is possible. Rationally it must remain a mystery."<sup>1</sup>

In a study of the paradoxes made five years ago, Dr. Klaas Schilder maintained that the deadline lay differently for Calvin and for the theology of crisis. Calvin distinguishes between what God has revealed and what He has hidden. He makes two quantitatively separated provinces of knowledge. Into one part man is forbidden to enquire; into the other he may enquire. Calvin condemned the speculations of Scholasticism and the mysticism of "Dionysius" as efforts to investigate matters which God had not revealed. God is in part hidden; but also in part revealed. The hidden things of God are not necessary for salvation. Christ came to increase the province of knowledge and to expiate sin. These things of Christ which are necessary to salvation are applied to the elect by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, truth is foolishness only to the unregenerated man, the man 'of flesh; and it is "hybrid" not to receive and be content with revelation which God gives.

On the other hand, Schilder understood Barth to

<sup>1</sup> Camfield, F. W., *Revelation and the Holy Spirit*, pp. 73, 173-182.

teach that the God hidden is as such the God revealed; that revelation is revealing by a riddle, a veiling of the Word of God so that both parts of knowledge are logically an absurdity; that there is no having or possessing of the things of God; that all His things are *ganz-andere*, and that everything is in the end suppressed by Him; that any enquiry into the things of God is "hybrid."<sup>1</sup>

Barth's approach to and consequently his formulation of theology is different from our classical Calvinism, but since Schilder wrote he has shed at least some light on the difficulties earlier attributed to him. In general, he has indicated that the paradoxes, having been the occasion of all manner of confusion, will be used less frequently, and against anti-intellectualism has insisted upon knowledge as a necessary ingredient of faith.<sup>2</sup> By not having or possessing, he means not mastering or controlling God or taking Him into our service; in the obedience of faith, in the service of God we do know. Indeed, God gives a certainty of knowledge and of salvation. His purpose in identifying revelation and hiddenness in God's revelation is to maintain that it is God Himself—not a mere piece of God—who speaks to men; and to guard against a nominalism which assumes a more ultimate nature of God than the plenitude and the simplicity, the Triunity and the Unity, in which He has revealed Himself. Coming to the matter in hand, in the second half of the first volume of the *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, Barth asserts that the death of Christ gets its significance from the fact that here, as elsewhere, the Lord Jesus Christ is the subject, the Name in which everything has its existence and attestation (pp. 12, 16, 17). In the same volume he expressly

<sup>1</sup> Schilder, Klaas, *Zur Begriffsgeschichte des 'Paradoxen'*.

<sup>2</sup> Barth, K., *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, pp. 189, 262.

repudiates the distinction between historical and super-historical which he made in the first edition of the same book.<sup>1</sup> Instead he writes, "Revelation is not a predicate of history, but history is a predicate of revelation" (p. 64). In order to understand revelation one must approach it from the standpoint of revelation, while one cannot begin with history, and by underlining it arrive at revelation. This means that the importance of any event in history—such, for example, as the cross of Christ—has such significance as revelation ascribes to it. While a Platonic approach may regard the cross as irrelevant; the revelational, Biblical approach shows it to be essential.

Barth further asserts that the function of the resurrection is to make the Passion of Christ transparent and intelligible, that thereby the Passion is enlightened, brought to expression and made a real "Word of the Cross" (pp. 120—123). Compared with the earlier statements that the death of Christ was the "Nay" of man's religion which prepared the way for the "Yea" of God in the resurrection, the doctrine of the atonement set forth in the volume *Credo* largely under the influence of the Heidelberg Catechism and that given in these pages of the *Dogmatics*<sup>2</sup> indicates an increasing definite-

<sup>1</sup> In an address delivered at Bale during the autumn of 1937 Bultman maintained that since only the super-historical was significant, therefore it made no difference whether or not Jesus ever lived or died. However, Barth and K. L. Schmidt vigorously controverted this position.

<sup>2</sup> "The New Testament answer to the problem of suffering . . . runs: that One hath died for all . . . In that at Golgotha sin is committed directly against God and that in the very same place God Himself bears the punishment of sin . . . The knowledge of Jesus Christ 'who gave Himself up for our transgressions and was raised for our justification' (Rom. iv. 25) also (Rom. v. 12) . . . The Passion of Christ . . . as the realisation of the covenant between God and man, as the action of God, as reconciliation. The Passion . . . is full of grace and truth . . . Because He is the Lamb of God that bore victoriously and bore away the sins of the world, therefore and not otherwise has God included all under unbelief."

ness of content and clarity of apprehension of this "great centre of the New Testament witness."

We need to magnify the transcendent majesty of God, without forgetting the gracious accommodation of the Incarnation by which He reveals Himself to us; we need Ecclesiastes v. 2 and equally Romans x. 8.

The first Moderator, and perhaps the greatest figure, in the Southern Presbyterian Church, B. M. Palmer, Jr., offered a valuable distinction between revelation and inspiration in that he related the former to the Second and the latter to the Third Person in the Trinity. Palmer held that in inspiring Scripture the Holy Spirit accommodated the revelation of eternal truth to human thoughts and human words. Hence, we have the right, nay, we have the duty of pressing our enquiries as to the meaning of the cross as far as the inspired Word goes. We are not honouring God when we insist on ignorance where He gives information. We have no right to be agnostic where He has revealed knowledge. Speaking with reference to the doctrine of predestination, Calvin said that we have no right to press our enquiries further than Scripture, and no right to refuse to press them as far as Scripture. If we neglect a meaning which God has seen fit to reveal we are making ourselves wiser than the Holy Spirit, and charging Him with folly in making the revelation which we refuse to receive.

Thornwell applies the same reasoning to the meaning of the cross. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; and where He has drawn a veil over the operations of His hand, it is presumption in us to pry into His secrets or speculate with confidence on the mysteries He has not thought fit to reveal. But it is neither piety nor modesty—it is unbelief, however speciously disguised—which makes darkness where God has given

light; mystery where all things are plain. To say that we are left in ignorance as to the method by which the mediation of Christ achieves the salvation of a sinner, is to contradict all those passages of Scripture which directly teach, as well as indirectly imply, that the wisdom of God is conspicuously displayed in the scheme of redemption, and in which it is the duty of the saints to admire it."<sup>1</sup> Bavinck shows that "Word and fact in God's revelation proceed together; Christ is priest, but also prophet; He has Himself in His Word interpreted His death, and the Christian theology is bound to that interpretation."<sup>2</sup>

Of course, the secret of assurance is in not letting the things we do not know destroy our confidence in the things we do know. There are times when the humble believer properly takes refuge in the certainty of the blessing he has received, whether or not he can answer all the objections of scoffers (John ix. 25).

There will be mystery enough left after we have gone into the interpretation of the atonement as far as the inspired book leads us. The very fact that Christ is so often portrayed as the Lamb, the slain Lamb in the midst of the throne, in that book which tells us most about heaven, indicates that there are new or deeper meanings of the cross that we shall learn in heaven. And we are glad to admit, or rather to proclaim, that the deepest meaning of the work of God for our salvation—a work which angels desire to look into—is reserved for the infinite Creator, the Holy Trinity. We have no notion then that we can sink our plummet line to the depth of the cross. When Calvin came to problems concerning reprobation which were beyond him, he

<sup>1</sup> Thornwell, II. 72.

<sup>2</sup> Bavinck, *ibid.*, p. 360.

described them as unreachèd depths of the cross. Bernard of Clairvaux, that great opponent of Abelard, speaks of the mystery of redemption. There are mysteries in our redemption, depths of the cross, heights to His priestly propitiation that we can never measure. But let us not refuse to receive all the meaning of the cross which is revealed because there are undisclosed mysteries reserved for heavenly eyes and for the infinite mind of God.

“CONFLICTING THEORIES.”

Another reason commonly given for insisting on the bare facts of the cross apart from its interpretation, is the current impression that there is no unanimity among Christians as to what is the Biblical doctrine of the atonement. This impression is largely a misapprehension. It rests partly on the fact that Paul and those who have followed him used a variety of representations to set forth the meaning of the cross. Dr. G. Vos listed some four such Pauline representations, viz., reconciliation, legal substitution (a forensic procedure), ransom or redemption, propitiatory sacrifice. To this list might be added the representation of the head suffering for the members, and (from Hebrews) the priesthood of Christ. But these several forms of presenting the truth do not indicate conflicting interpretations. They simply afford a number of facets which show the saving light in more of its wondrous beauty.

Denney objected to describing the Biblical doctrine of the atonement as a theory, as though it rested on no better foundation and had no more claim to the allegiance of Christian men than one among many man-made theories. In the *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopædia*, Warfield points out that the Biblical doctrine of the sacrifice of Christ as a satisfaction of divine justice



is the established Church doctrine which has been incorporated in the credal declarations of all branches of the Church—Greek, Latin, Lutheran, and Reformed.<sup>1</sup> As has already been indicated, Rivière and H. Smith both insist that for the Latin and Greek Fathers the Saviour's death appeases for us the divine wrath by being a penalty, the penalty of our sins, voluntarily undergone by the Lord in our place;<sup>2</sup> and that V. J. K. Brook arrives at a similar conclusion concerning the teaching of the Reformers.<sup>3</sup> The great revivings of God's grace have always been times when there was an earnest preaching of the vicarious substitutionary atonement. This was true of the Moravian and the Methodist movements, the Great Awakening led by Edwards in America, as well as the Great Revival and others that followed. On a fully substitutionary atonement Wesley was as clear as Toplady, Edwards, the Tennants and Whitefield; while Finney and Moody are nearer right here than on many other points.

Some of the testimony already adduced that there is a commonly recognised and accepted Biblical interpretation of the cross has come from men who do not personally accept that testimony. Even more specific testimony from such men is available. Dr. Rashdall, a British 'liberal,' specifically shows that Paul taught a doctrine of penal substitution which he derived from Isaiah liii.<sup>4</sup> German 'liberal' scholars, such as Pflleiderer and Holtzmann, have made similar admissions thus, "How Christ has redeemed those who are under the law in order that we may obtain the adoption of sons (Gal. iv. 5) Paul has explained to us in Gal. iii.

<sup>1</sup> *Atonement* in N.S.H.E., I., 355b.

<sup>2</sup> Grensted, *The Atonement in History and Life*, p. 197.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>4</sup> Rashdall, *The Idea of Atonement*.

13. . . . In dying the death on the cross, death which the law designated expressly as the death of criminals, He has given to the law the due expiation which the law demanded of the sinner. And because the sin was not His sin but ours, He has paid that expiation in our stead, and thereby He has redeemed us from the curse of the law which hung over us. The words *ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν* do not signify indeed anything else than in our interest; but with the context they receive the more precise sense: in our place, as our representative, who by His life of suffering has retrieved, has expiated the death which we have merited by our sins. . . . So the death was the price of redemption or the ransom by the substitutive payment of which Christ has delivered us from the penalty of sin." The modern Ritschlian theology, "according to which there is no need for any expiation because God is only love," . . . "is not only a formal distortion of the doctrine of Paul, it is an absolute contradiction."

Paul "continues a line which was already traced in the religious consciousness of the primitive community," and speaks of "expiation" and "of substitutive death." Both the element of justice and the element of love—the subjective and the objective—constantly mingle in Paul. "The subjective and moral explanation of the work of redemption is not placed either above or below the objective and judicial conception. From the beginning to the end the two conceptions are parallel and ever intertwine."<sup>1</sup> With these and other passages before him Bavinek concludes, "An unbiased reading of the Holy Scripture always finds again in it the Church doctrine of substitutionary expiation."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pfeiderer, Otto, *Der Paulismus*, 1890, 2nd ed., pp. 135, 136, 142, 143, 159; Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der neutestamentlichen Theologie*, 1896, II., 97, 100, 117, 313 f; I., 68.

<sup>2</sup> Bavinek, *ibid.*, p. 360 citing Wegscheider *Instit. Theol.* § 136 in addition to references above.

These quotations show that scholars who have no objection to admitting their own difference with the Apostle Paul recognise that he taught the doctrine of a real substituted penalty whereby divine justice was satisfied and sinners forgiven. Conservative exegesis has maintained the same position with a wealth of true scholarship, as the writings of Turretin, Owen, the Hodges, Dabney, Shedd, Strong, Symington, Candlish, Smeaton, Bavinck, Warfield, Machen and Berkhof amply show. Except for the fact that there is at times a misplaced mystery element, the writings and preaching of certain of the crisis theologians indicate a similar conclusion.

Men who seek to turn aside the full force of the orthodox doctrine often tacitly admit that the doctrine they are denying is the plain teaching of the Scriptures. For example, Jonathan Edwards junior, in advocating the New England form of the governmental theory of the atonement admits that the language of the Bible in its plain or literal sense teaches actual penal substitution and satisfaction; but insists that such statements "must" be interpreted metaphorically. H. R. Mackintosh, in his study of *The Experience of Forgiveness*, is unwilling to say that his Ritschlian modification has the support of the historico-grammatical exegesis of Paul, but seeks to avoid the call for such an interpretation by professing to give us Paul "in the light of a thoroughly Christianised religious experience."

Or to take a still more current example, Principal Sydney Cave speaks in the highest terms of Dr. Rashdall's "learned, brilliant book," but refuses to accept the account of Paul's doctrine when coldly dissected by Rashdall's critical understanding.<sup>1</sup> Instead, Dr. Cave

<sup>1</sup> Cave, S., *The Doctrine of the Work of Christ*, p. 290 with note citing Rashdall, *The Idea of Atonement*, p. 98.

insists on distinguishing in Paul's doctrine of the atonement between "form and content" (p. 295). He admits that Paul used the phrase "the wrath of God" to denote the principle of divine retribution (p. 52), and that Paul used legal terms, but insists that "Paul's meaning is not legal" (p. 62).<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere he tells us that "what matters is not the way Paul interprets the evils that oppress men" (p. 56); and in seeking to turn aside the natural force of Galatians iii. 6—14, he states that "converts are often slow in outgrowing their pre-Christian views of God, and St. Paul himself, in the heat of argument, at times makes statements that are incongruous with his full conception of the Christian Gospel" (p. 59). We prefer to take Paul's words at their face value rather than Principal Cave's Ritschlian, psychological re-interpretation of them. Nor are we ready to admit that the religious experience of modern scholars is more thoroughly Christianised than was that of the Apostle, the vessel chosen of the Lord to bear His Name before the Gentiles (Acts ix. 15).

Moreover, the Bible was written for babes in Christ as well as for the more acute intellects. "The people of God are a plain people."<sup>2</sup> Hence, "One is driven to feel that the authentic Word of God to-day, as more than once in the history of Christendom, is better heard by simple, unlearned folk than by the great and

<sup>1</sup> In complete antithesis to this minimistic treatment of the legal element in Paul's theology Professor G. Schrenk, of Zurich, insists that the approach to the understanding of *δικαιοσύνη* in Paul must be by way of legal righteousness, that the message of justification is integral to the Apostle's original experience of the Evangel, and that his whole theology roots in the clarification of the question of the law. It is further set forth that in God's justifying activity—definitively in the cross of Christ where the act of expiation occurred—God vindicates His righteousness (Rom. iii. 25; Gal. iii. 13; 2 Cor. v. 21; Rom. viii. 3).—*Theologischen Handwörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, herausgeg. von Gerhard Kittel, II., 204-207.

<sup>2</sup> John Duncan.

learned.”<sup>1</sup> The semi-Arians were at one time so anxious to show that they held a high Christology that the common people who heard them missed their fine distinctions and were converted to the orthodox faith. The common man who reads Mackintosh’s *Experience of Forgiveness* or Moffatt’s *Grace in the New Testament* is likely to understand such books against the background of the evident meaning of Scripture and draw the orthodox doctrine from them; and the same may have been true of every-day members of the First Presbyterian Church in New York as they heard Fosdick’s sermon on *The Forgiveness of Sins*. A critical reader realises that these statements do not fully maintain the orthodox doctrine; but the very fact that men who use Scriptural phraseology can be so easily misunderstood as maintaining the orthodox doctrine, is a certain indication that the Scripture does teach the orthodox faith. The Holy Spirit did not so write the Word that only a few subtle scholars might decode its meaning. The plain man’s understanding of the blood of the cross is the true interpretation of the Bible. There is a Church or catholic doctrine of the atonement, a consensus of the Christian people as to the meaning of the Word of the Cross. Unquestionably there are many theories of the atonement, but they cannot all with equal right be regarded as the Biblical doctrine.

#### THE CONCRETE APPLICATION.

We have so far dealt with the general principles used by those who demand the bare facts of the cross apart from the Biblical interpretation thereof. We hope that our consideration of these principles has to some extent cleared the atmosphere and prepared the way for

<sup>1</sup> Lamont, op. cit., p. 293-4.

serious thinking. We have not cherished the thought, however, that this general discussion would effectually answer the demand for the bare facts of the cross. Rather we desire to meet this call by concretely facing it with a statement of the naked facts. Let us, for the sake of argument, accede for the moment to this clamant call and state the bare facts of Calvary. What do we have when we present the phenomena apart from the Biblical meaning? It would seem reasonable to accept the interpretation from the same primary documents of the Christian origins which give the phenomena, but if we insist on tearing the facts apart from the matrix of meaning in which they lie embedded, what do we get?

The elemental events occurred at Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha. Analyse the story indicated by these names apart from the meaning which we are accustomed to associate with them, and the foundation of Christianity becomes a meaningless riddle. Gethsemane is the place where Jesus of Nazareth offered up strong cryings and tears unto Him who was able to save Him from death. It is the place where the disciples failed to keep tryst with their Master and fell asleep; the place where the one whom they called lord and teacher shrank from the ordeal of His death and prayed that the cup might pass from Him; prayed so poignantly that He sweat as it were great drops of blood. "He did not approach death joyously, but was agitated, afflicted, sad, in anguish in regard to death, and in heavy conflict with it so that His sweat became as drops of blood."<sup>1</sup> Is there anything in this mere recital of facts to hallow the olive grove in Gethsemane? If we compare this record with that of Socrates philosophically discussing the cup of hemlock, concerned

<sup>1</sup> Bavinck, III., 356.

to die with the least show of emotion, ostensibly weighing nothing heavier than a cock which he owes to a friend, what is there to warrant Christendom's unanimous conviction that this is holy ground? Is there not rather a danger that reviving paganism may have the better of the comparison? Or if we compare Gethsemane, *as a bare fact*, with Paul's facing of his own death as given in Philippians or Second Timothy, or with Ignatius of Antioch's plea to the Roman Church not to hinder his martyrdom, shall we Protestants not have to revise our attitude and give at least as much glory to the martyrdoms of the saints as to the cryings and tears of Gethsemane?

Or further, if one go to Gabbatha and follow Christ through the judgment, the facts are that both the Jewish and the Roman trials were mere travesties. The condemnation of Jesus was the greatest miscarriage of justice that this world has ever known. Stop there, and the poet's line must end:

Truth for ever on the scaffold,  
Wrong for ever on the throne.

The judge, Pilate, expressly declared that he found no cause of death in Jesus, that He was an innocent man; and yet he condemned Him to be scourged and crucified. Pilate knew that for envy the Jews had condemned Jesus, and he only yielded to their clamour because of political fear that they would accuse him before Cæsar if he freed Jesus contrary to their wishes. He vacillated, tried to get them to choose Jesus as the one to be freed, and finally confessed afresh his own guilt and Jesus' innocency by washing his hands of the blood of the innocent victim. The envy of the Jews, the buffoonery of Herod, and the cowardice of Pilate crucified Jesus. But is there any uplifting truth in such tragic phenomena?

Take the third step on the *via dolorosa*. What do you find at Golgotha? Some of these facts are the cruelty of the mob, the callousness of the soldiers who gamble for His tunic, the hatred and scorn of the leaders expressed in their mockery, the sorrow of a mother, a dying man's cry for the forgiveness of His executioners, a thief's prayer for mercy, and that awful cry of dereliction which breaks from the parched lips of the Crucified: "My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Dying, forsaken by the rabble, forsaken by the disciples, mocked by the leaders of the Church, yea, forsaken by God, . . . these are the inexplicable facts of that which occurred on that hill shaped like a skull.

Forsyth says: "I see supreme goodness and supreme suffering at Calvary." Yea, on the cross of Christ supreme goodness was put to supreme suffering. This planet has never witnessed a goodness comparable to His; and there has been no agony that has equalled His. But do you not see that the further we go with the recital of bare fact the more baffling the riddle becomes? The darkness deepens. And the tragic thing is that we are thinking beings. We do not always think correctly, but we insist on thinking. Recite these data apart from God's interpretation thereof, and your hearer will insist on placing his own interpretation on these facts and using his interpretation thereof for the understanding of all facts. The rationalists and idealists are right when they say that we do not know anything until we know it in relation to all the facts, and that conversely everything we know shapes our whole world-and-life view.

If supreme goodness were put to supreme suffering, then one man will infer that the universe is cold and heartless, and neither our virtue nor our sufferings have



any meaning. Another will conclude that the universe is on the side of injustice and of wickedness; that Satan is in the saddle. One will go Epicurean, declaring that the gods are too busy with the affairs of Olympus to be concerned with our petty details on this planet. Or in more modern parlance, the universe pictured by modern astronomy is so vast that God takes no account of the things here, so let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. Dabney has pointed out that this line of inquiry necessarily leads either to Epicureanism or to atheism. If supreme goodness were put to supreme suffering; if righteousness in its noblest character were condemned at Gabbatha and crucified at Golgotha, is it conceivable that there is a supreme being whose true name is coined from the attribute good? Is it not more reasonable to say that the universe is a plaything of chance, a fortuitous concourse of atoms, a devil's dance of electrons, an agitation of ether waves expressing itself in changing rhombs and angles? Writing from this point of view, President Mackay says that "the cross is the summation of the combined forces of nationalism, religion and economic interest," and that "the contemplation of the cross by a spectator who surveys it" from this viewpoint "can lead only to absolute scepticism about man and God."<sup>1</sup>

#### THE FACT OF GOD.

Half a century ago Thomas Huxley delighted a London audience with an after-dinner speech in which he graphically portrayed the advances of science, the new array of facts she was presenting, and concluded with the declaration that that nation which sticks closest to the facts would dominate the future. In that gathering

<sup>1</sup> Mackay, J. A., *The Journal of Religion*, XVII., p. 6.

of the British intelligentsia there was one member of parliament, Edward Miall, with enough presence of mind to modify the conclusion of the noted evolutionist. He agreed that that nation which sticks closest to the facts would dominate the future, that is, to all the facts; but significantly added, "the greatest fact is God." God is the absolute and supreme fact which gives meaning to all other facts. No fact is understood in its true significance or essential meaning until it is understood in its relation to God. The essence of every fact of history is that it has been created and upheld by God and has a specific place and meaning in His plan. Until we relate any fact to God and His plan we do not truly or adequately know that fact. "In Thy light shall we see light" (Ps. xxxvi. 9).

Forsyth did not stop with saying, "At the cross I see supreme goodness and supreme suffering." He went on to add, "But if there be a God, supreme goodness is His goodness and supreme suffering is His suffering." Accept the fact of a sovereign God, and supreme goodness could only be put to supreme suffering for a supreme meaning or purpose.

Admit a God, that Cause uncaused,  
All other wonders cease.

Take God's interpretation of the cross and you have this stupendous fact in its essential meaning. That is, only by taking the cross in the light of God's interpretation does it become the truth that God meant it to be for Himself, for the universe, and for us. And when we take the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ that way it is no longer an enigma turning all life and being into chaos. Nay, the cross with the light of God shining in it is the key to history, to life, and to God.

There were pains in Gethsemane which never touched the heart of Stephen. The proto-martyr's face could

shine like an angel's because the face of the Christ had been seared with the anguish of Stephen's guilt, and yours, and mine. God was with Ian Hus and Patrick Hamilton as the flames destroyed their bodies; because for their sins—and ours—He did forsake Christ on the cross and made His soul an offering for sin. The meaning which God gave the cross, and which primitive Christianity received and proclaimed, is that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." He was condemned by an earthly judge, that we might be absolved by the heavenly. His soul travailed in agony that ours might rejoice in forgiveness. He was wounded for our transgressions. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He wore a crown of thorns that we might wear a crown of righteousness. He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Oh, the blessed exchange!

But as Calvin properly adds: "We must not conceive that He submitted to a curse which overwhelmed Him, but on the contrary that by sustaining it, He depressed, broke, and destroyed all its power. Wherefore faith apprehends an absolution in the condemnation of Christ, and a benediction in His curse. It is not without reason therefore that Paul magnificently proclaims the triumph, which Christ gained for Himself on the cross; as though the cross, which was full of ignominy, had been converted into a triumphal chariot."<sup>1</sup>

Being made sin for us (II Cor. v. 21), He drew from death its sting and robbed the grave of its victory (I Cor. xv. 54—57). Through death He brought to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. ii. 14), and thus triumphed over principalities and powers in the cross (Col. ii. 15). As mediator, He

<sup>1</sup> *Institutes*, II., xvi., vi.

broke the power of sin, Satan and the grave, thereby glorifying the infinite majesty equally with the eternal love of God. The place which history hath given the cross is the concrete manifestation that God is sovereign even when the forces of death and hell seem most potent.

There was purpose in all His suffering. The purpose that God might be seen glorious in His majesty and in His virtues, eminently glorious in all His attributes, in His justice and in His grace, and that men might be saved. Here at the cross where Jesus took our place and bore our punishment, God is just and at the same time the justifier of the sinner who is led to trust in Jesus as his sin-bearer. There was a supreme purpose—the most glorious expression of infinite wisdom—in putting supreme goodness to supreme suffering. There is a supreme purpose and a heart-melting, soul-saving, God-glorifying Gospel in the cross as God interprets Calvary.

As you receive the atonement—God's interpretation of the cross for the salvation of your soul—and as you drink in its forgiving grace, you will also receive in it the solution of the riddle of the universe. God's interpretation of the cross is the salvation of your mind at the same time that it saves your soul. When you see that this darkest spot in history is really the brightest spot, that all this shame and pain and suffering was for a purpose worthy of God, then other tragedies can await His purpose and meaning. This is something of what the older divines meant when they said that the hill of Calvary is the hill of comfort; that the house of consolation is built of the wood of the cross. God had a worth-while purpose in putting supreme goodness to supreme suffering. What if the good suffer to-day while the wicked prosper? May I not walk by faith in Him

who withheld not His only Son, who hath made the blackness of Calvary to be light, whose interpretation makes the darkness of that spot to illumine His own character, history, the universe, sin and suffering. Thus,

Through all the depths of sin and loss,  
Drops the plummet of the cross ;  
Never yet abyss was found  
Deeper than the cross could sound.

There was darkness over all the land from the sixth to the ninth hour. There is darkness over Golgotha and over history and over God when we insist on trying to separate facts from their place in God's plan, when we try to tear Calvary from the setting in which God's Word places it. But when the light of God illumines the cross there is forgiveness for the sinner, there is faith to sing,

Nearer my God to Thee, nearer to Thee,  
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me.

Beware how you brush aside the meaning which God hath given to the cross of Christ as merely one of the theories of the atonement. The Biblical doctrine of the atonement is the solution, the only solution of the otherwise insoluble riddle of Calvary. We need not only the fact of the holy rood, but its interpretation in the Holy Bible as well. We need the blood in the light of the Book.

## RECONCILED BY HIS DEATH.

“When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.”—ROM. v. 10.

“That He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.”—EPH. ii. 16.

“Now hath He reconciled (you) in the body of His flesh through death.”—COL. i. 21, 22.

“All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, . . . for He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”—2 COR. v. 18, 21.

“Since Christ through His sacrifice has fully satisfied God’s justice, He has objectively changed the relation between God and man, and through it also all other relationships of mankind—toward sin, death, Satan and the world.”  
—*H. Bavinck.*

## RECONCILED BY HIS DEATH.

RECONCILIATION is one of the favourite Scriptural representations of the work of Christ for us. This term was drawn from common experiences of estrangement, alienation, war, separation and consequent renewal of friendship, communion, peace and fellowship to clarify the meaning of objective soteriology. And through the ages the Gospel that God was in Christ reconciling a world unto Himself, has been the peace of pious hearts.

### I. RITSCHLIAN RECONCILIATION.

However, in the last two generations certain "liberal" views of reconciliation have obscured this Biblical truth perhaps more than any other representation of the cross. The popular "liberal" position has so saturated the minds of students and ministers that it is difficult to teach the Biblical doctrine. Ritschl has been so repeatedly presented that he has supplanted Paul. It seems best, therefore, to recognise this fact and to meet it by carrying the war into Africa.

The answer to the "liberal" interpretation of the doctrine of reconciliation is not easy because of the half-truths which it embodies and because of the technique of its polemics. First, the "liberal" caricatures the conservative doctrine; then, he sets up what is apparently the natural and only alternative to such a view. He asks us either to accept the pagan idea of an atonement by which man changes God, or else agree that reconciliation is a purely subjective change in man, wholly a matter of human psychology. In answering him one has to avoid the Scylla of his caricature as well as the Charybdis of his construction, that is, one must refuse both horns of his dilemma, and insist on a

third alternative. And this is the difficult task of persuading men to be discriminating, whereas many are satisfied with the plausible.

Perhaps one can disturb the confidence with which the "liberal" or Ritschlian doctrine of the atonement is presented as the Biblical doctrine by quotations from recognised scholars who personally occupy very varied theological positions. Otto Pfeleiderer, German advocate of a non-miraculous Christianity, says that the modern Ritschlian theology, "according to which there is no need for any expiation because God is only love," "is not only a formal distortion of the doctrine of Paul, it is an absolute contradiction."<sup>1</sup> Daniel Lamont, of Edinburgh, insists that "Ritschlianism is a travesty of the Christian Gospel."<sup>2</sup> Brunner declares that Ritschl's ideas "do not represent what the Bible means by reconciliation," but that "the meaning of reconciliation is here misinterpreted."<sup>3</sup> Dörner describes the Ritschlian doctrine of the atonement as "a form of ethical Docetism."<sup>4</sup> James Orr held that Ritschlianism was the product of a phase of reflection far removed from the simplicity of the early Apostolic Gospel, a theology which stressed the life of Christ and the impression of His historical image rather than the Gospel of His Death, Resurrection, and Return which founded and spread the primitive Church.<sup>5</sup> Its errors seemed so evident to Bavinck that he affirmed: "Its untenableness is now doubted by scarcely anyone."<sup>6</sup>

In view of these serious indictments of Ritschlianism

<sup>1</sup> *Der Paulismus*, 1890, 2nd ed., pp. 135, 142, 143, 159.

<sup>2</sup> *Christ and the World of Thought*, p. 213.

<sup>3</sup> *The Mediator*, p. 439.

<sup>4</sup> *Christliche Glaubenslehre*, II., 595.

<sup>5</sup> Orr, James, *The Ritschlian Theology*.

<sup>6</sup> Bavinck, *ibid.*, p. 360.



by recognised scholars, is it too much to ask for a reconsideration of the Biblical doctrine of reconciliation? We bespeak a thoughtful consideration of the contrast between the conservative and the "liberal" doctrines of reconciliation, and thereafter an examination of the Biblical doctrine.

The essence of the interpretation found in A. Ritschl's *Justification and Reconciliation*, as well as the host of "liberal" works based thereon, is that reconciliation, justification and regeneration are wholly matters of human subjective experience, that these are all swallowed up in conversion, and appear at most as distinctions in this subjective merger. Thereby the justice of God is denied as an attribute of no value to man; and consequently every legal relationship between God and man is dismissed, and the Protestant symbols purged of their "dualism." According to the Westminster catechisms and our understanding of Paul, reconciliation was accomplished by the death of Christ satisfying divine justice in our stead; according to Ritschlianism reconciliation is only the changing of our minds from distrust of God to trust; according to the former reconciliation is a change of status or relationship to the justice of God wrought by the making of Him who knew no sin to be sin for us and our justification by His blood; according to the latter it is a purely subjective change in our thinking; according to the former it was an act done in the past (Paul uses past tenses) whereby sinners were changed from the footing of enmity to that of peace by the death of Christ; according to the latter it means a change in disposition toward God here and now; according to the former it is wrought by Christ's death for us; according to the latter it is Christ's or the Spirit's present work in us; according to the former it is first objective; according

to the latter it is wholly subjective; according to the former the justice of God requires the reconciliation which the love of God makes; according to the latter there is no justice in God, and love proclaims that God freely forgives without any expiation; according to the former the death of Christ is a penal substitution removing the awful guilt of sin; according to the latter it is a prophetic proclamation that there is no such thing as guilt, that sin does not hinder fellowship with God, and that even guilt-consciousness ought not to cumber the minds of men.

In the "liberal" conception of God there is no justice needing satisfaction; indeed, since "love is God," there is forgiveness whether or not Christ died. And Christ only died to assure us that God is forgiving love. However, when one has reduced the death of Christ to that of a mere martyr or a lover of truth, he is apt to find himself in an uncomfortable position in the face of the current recrudescence of paganism. If the death of Jesus and the death of Socrates stand upon the same level, may not the pagan have the better of the story? If it were only a philosopher's cup from which Christ shrank in Gethsemane, why not rather the calm and stoical self-control with which Socrates drank the hemlock? A reviving paganism will surely renew the taunts of Porphyry and Celsus: "When He prayed that this cup might pass away from Him, that were a death unworthy not only of a Son of God, but a death that a philosopher would disdain." "Through a miserable death He concluded a contemptible life."

And it is an arresting fact that where men are meeting this pagan revival they are coming to more adequate conceptions of the cup of Christ. Professor Karl Heim is calling attention to the place which the New Testament gives to the work of Christ in saving us from

the wrath of God (Rom. v. 9; I Thess. i. 10; Eph. ii. 3; John iii. 36; Rev. xv. 7). This scholar compares the atonement to the suffering engendered as two trains crash in head-on collision. When they find God in the form of a servant, the rage of Satan and the wrath of man break out in open rebellion, crucifying Christ. And at the same time the holy wrath of God is discharged upon this Satanic rebellion. But Christ throws Himself into the cleft of suffering and takes upon Himself the wrath of God. "In the hour of His being forsaken by God on the cross, Christ has taken on Himself the punishment of hell."<sup>1</sup>

In similar fashion Professor Karl Barth comments on Romans i. 18: "It is the suffering of Jesus Christ utterly and alone which is the revelation of the wrath of God revealed from heaven." He has taken upon Himself everything which man's rebellion against Him has made inevitable—suffering and death, but also perdition and hell. His own bearing of man's sin, guilt and punishment is the atonement. "The Son of God in reality and not only in appearance has come under the judgment of God more deeply and really than any man whatsoever." "What is our punishment? It is the infinite agony which it cost God Himself to take our place in the man Jesus Christ in order that we might not have to suffer."<sup>2</sup>

Remove the reality of divine wrath, deny the satisfaction of divine justice, empty the cup of Gethsemane and the dereliction of Golgotha of any direct Godward reference, and Calvary becomes a mere *passion-play*, with paganism superseding Christianity in the real business of life.

<sup>1</sup> Heim, Karl, *Jesus der Weltvollender*, pp. 115, 117.

<sup>2</sup> Barth, K., *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*, pp. 53, 72, 83, 84, 86.

## II. THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION.

The apprehension of the Biblical doctrine of reconciliation is dependent upon the proper understanding of the great factors involved in this gracious work, and of their mutual relations. According to the Word, these factors are God, the author of the reconciling process; the world, the object of reconciliation; and Christ, that is, Christ in His atoning death, as Mediator, agent or instrument of reconciliation.

## i.—THE AUTHOR OF THE RECONCILING PROCESS.

Reconciliation describes the soteriological process as being a work of God. "With great clarity God appears as the subject of the work of reconciliation—the boundary against paganism is sharp and clear."<sup>1</sup> Paul opens his classic passage on this theme with the great affirmation: "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ" (II Cor. v. 18). If we rigidly begin where the apostle does we may avoid the caricature which is so often presented as the conservative view. Here also God is the great first cause. Everywhere He is the active subject whose work changes the whole situation, status or relationship of man with his Maker. God wrought the reconciliation. This emphasis accords with the recovery of the conception of the transcendent God. The reverberation of Kierkegaard, Barth and Brunner, make it easier to remind men today that although we owe obedience to God as our Creator, nevertheless the distance between Him and His sinful creatures is such that we could never have any fruition of Him as our blessedness and reward except by way of condescension on His part which God hath been pleased to express by way of a covenant.

<sup>1</sup> Althaus, Paul, *Das Kreuz Christi*, p. 5.

This Biblical conception of reconciliation is contrary to the doctrine of reconciliation taught by the Wieman-Meland school of "realistic" theism. These realists construe God as the principle of concretion, the integrating process in the universe, the structural integration of values, as growth in meaning and value, as the growing good in our progressive mutuality and unity, the weaver of the web of human and divine solidarity. In this scheme "God and man form a cosmic Gestalt, the integrity of which is dependent upon their mutual adjustment." And hence the very process of promoting unity, community, mutuality, concretion—the growing good of unifying or *reconciling* human groups and ideas—is God. Thus by reconciling his fellows, by merging human groups, by compromising rival ideologies with ambiguous phrases,<sup>1</sup> man contributes to God's growing goodness. Verily, this is man reconciling God with a vengeance! And thus the "realistic theism" of to-day is the contradiction of the real theism of the Bible, and the reconciliation of the former the complete inversion of the latter. The former sounds its "Salute to Man," and reminds God of how proud He ought to be of men;<sup>2</sup> the latter sings, "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name."

Christianity which represents God as initiating the changing process is likewise differentiated from the old

<sup>1</sup> Meland, B. E., offers a common faith which reconciles or glosses over with ambiguity the difference between his "realistic theism" and the transcendent God of the Barthians (*Christendom*, 1937, pp. 388, *sqq.*). Half a century ago R. L. Dabney warned us of the dangers of such movements, thus: "The Protestant world will soon be educated to set inordinate store by what God makes least account—formal union—at the expense of what He regards as of supreme value—doctrinal fidelity" (Johnson, *Life and Letters of R. L. Dabney*, p. 382).

<sup>2</sup> *Salute to Man*, published to be used as a prayer in Senior and Young People's Programme for May 2, 1937, in *Journal of Religious Education*, April, 1937, pp. 31-32.

pagan religions which represent man as doing something to make amends to conciliate God, to propitiate His anger, to merit His favour. These ethnic religions rightly recognise that sin has alienated man from God, and that something must be done to remove this estrangement. But whereas magic and most religions hold that man must take the initiative and accomplish the reconciling process, the Bible insists that the initiative is with God. A religion that declares man needs to be covered from the wrath of his Maker has not probed deeply enough man's desperate plight. The half has not been told. Man must make expiation for his sins, but he cannot. Only God can. "Reconciliation must be His work, otherwise we are undone." "The throne of the One and only Potentate can never be scaled by creaturely titans, be their crests ever so towering."<sup>1</sup> All things are of God, reconciliation as truly as creation. God is as definitely the cause of our redemption as He is of our being. Herein is Christianity "the antipodes of all cults of human elaboration."<sup>1</sup>

The Christian Gospel and the Apostles' Creed consist fundamentally in the acts of God by which He did what He alone can do—made reconciliation. There He did for us what we could not do for ourselves and what we cannot do without.

" God giveth no man quarter,  
 Yet God a means hath found,  
 Though faith and hope have vanished,  
 And even love grows dim.  
 A means whereby His banished  
 Be not expelled from Him."

The background of God's reconciling work is His justice; the foreground is His love. And only when the

<sup>1</sup> Simpson, E. K., "The Doctrine of Reconciliation," in *The Evangelical Quarterly*, VIII., 4.

divine justice makes the background resplendent in the beauty of holiness will the foreground of Calvary glow in the white radiance of a great love. His justice required the reconciliation; His love wrought it. And the one attribute is as significant to the whole process as the other. Reconciliation was not a change in God, but a change wrought by God. God was precisely as loving and equally as just before the reconciliation as after it. The caricature that God was only a being of wrath and severity until the blood of Christ removed His alienation and changed Him into a loving Father is untrue both to Scripture and to the orthodox faith. Indeed, it is a relic of Marcionism which distinguished two gods—an Old Testament God of severity, and a New Testament God of mercy. Tertullian long since answered Marcion thus: "The Creator was from the beginning both good and just."<sup>1</sup>

Of course, some people apprehend one attribute in God before they do another. Luther was first impressed by the *justitia Dei* which wrought terror to his soul. Later, as he learned to contemplate the wounds of Christ, he saw the sweetness and love and mercy of God, and warned men of the danger of contemplating God apart from His revelation in Christ. God did not become love because Christ died; but because He was love already, therefore He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (I John iv. 10). "God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8). "God will not redeem the reputation of one of His attributes at the expense of another;" rather one divine attribute (mercy) moves God to satisfy the requirements of another divine attribute (justice). But "one cannot tear asunder the attributes of God. The love and the justice of God find

<sup>1</sup> *Versus Marcion*, ii., 12.

their unity in the cross of Christ, and so one must always see the attributes of God as a unity."<sup>1</sup> God was neither more just before Christ died, nor more loving thereafter. Lamont has rightly said that the Christian revelation spurns the idea of such a change in God.<sup>2</sup> But both the extent of His love and the unalterable nature of His justice were more manifest in His reconciling work than in His works of creation or providence.

Spurgeon insists: "Jesus Christ did not die to make God loving, but He died because God was loving."<sup>3</sup>

'Twas not to make Jehovah's love  
Toward His people flame,  
That Jesus from the throne above  
A suffering man became.

'Twas not the death which He endured,  
Nor all the pangs He bore,  
That God's eternal love procured,  
For God was love before.

And that Spurgeon is in accord with the great Christian consensus is shown by the following lines which Turretin, the Aristotle of Reformed theologians, quotes approvingly from Thomas Aquinas, prince of the scholastics: "Non dicimur reconciliari quasi deus de novo amare inciperet, nam aeterno amore dilexit, sed quia per hanc reconciliationem sublata est omnis odii causa" (III. xlix. 4).

In the XXth century, Sundar Singh adds: "Gold, silver, diamonds were hidden in the earth long before anyone knew of their existence. So the fathomless mine of the divine love existed long before Jesus, the incarnate love, revealed to the world the 'unsearchable riches' of the divine reality."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hommes, M. J., in *De L' Election Eternelle de Dieu*, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Lamont, *Christ and the World of Thought*, p. 213.

<sup>3</sup> Spurgeon, *Sermons*, Series IV., p. 211.

<sup>4</sup> Heiler, *The Gospel of Sadu Sundar Singh*, p. 157,



The work of reconciliation, then, did not change God's fundamental character or disposition; it did but reveal His matchless character in an altered relation. It takes only a little thought to realise that One who is just and holy and good will take a different attitude toward those who are laden with guilt and those who are properly absolved from all guilt. In that reiterated declaration of His grace and mercy which sounds from Sinai there also rings the solemn warning that He will by no means clear the guilty (Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7). The righteous indignation of a just God toward guilty sinners is a different relation from that which the same God sustains to those whom He has justly forgiven. Or to turn to the other pole which is so significant in this process, the love of God does not deny or obliterate God's justice. The Most High is just in all His ways and gracious in all His acts. Thus reconciliation "is no change in the being of God, but only in the relation in which He stands towards His creatures."<sup>1</sup>

The twin foci for the great ellipse of reconciliation are always the divine justice and the divine love. And unless both factors are adequately presented we shall never see righteousness and peace, justice and mercy, kiss each other (Ps. lxxxv. 10). Augustine offers an enlightening distinction, "God loves what He has made in us, but hates what we have made of ourselves;" and Calvin repeats the Augustinian paradox that in a wonderful and divine manner God both hated and loved us at the same time.<sup>2</sup> Side by side in the plenitude of the divine being there co-exists both wrath and compassion, impulse to punish and desire to pardon. Pearson shows that "there is no incongruity in this, that a

<sup>1</sup> Bavinck, III., 382.

<sup>2</sup> *Institutes*, II., XVI., ii. IV., similarly, Turretin, *de Satisf.*, 86; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theol.*, III. qu. 49, art. 4.

father should be offended with his son (as a sinner) whom he loveth (as a son), and offended with him (in the one relation) at the very time that he loveth him (in the other relation). Notwithstanding, therefore, that God loved men whom He *created*, yet He was offended with them when they *sinned*, and gave His Son to suffer for their sin in their stead, that through the Son's suffering He might be reconciled to them."<sup>1</sup>

The impulse to punish is carried out upon the sinner's substitute, and that substitute is the judge and punisher Himself; hence, in a holy and just way the will to pardon has free course to save. "It is divine justice that demands satisfaction, and it is divine compassion that makes satisfaction."<sup>2</sup> We appeared before God's justice as enemies; but nevertheless even while we were enemies His wonderful love acted to meet and satisfy the demands of justice, and so to place man on a different, a reconciled footing. Guilt, the obligation to punish sin, provides the objective necessity that God treats man as an enemy until His eternal love has effectuated a change in that objective relationship. Thomas Erskine finds the story of King Zaleucis of the Locrians illuminating. In order to stamp out immorality the king passed a law that everyone guilty of a certain offence should have both eyes put out. Among the first offenders was his own son. If he were only a father he could forgive and forget: if he were only a king he could inflict and forget. He was a father and loved his son; he was a king and must do justice. Zaleucis solved the problem by having one of his son's eyes and one of his own eyes put out. Ever after the eyeless socket in the king's face testified to every observer both greatness of the father's love, and the

<sup>1</sup> Pearson, *An Exposition of the Creed*.

<sup>2</sup> Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, II., 399, 401.

sacredness of the king's law and justice.<sup>1</sup> Of course, the analogy is not perfect. God, in the person of the Son, took our whole penalty and the stigmata of His passion attest to the universe His love and His justice.

Dr. J. R. Mackay reasons: "Not only is sin against God, but it belongs to the perfection of God's nature that no sin should go unpunished . . . in a certain sense, it makes the unavoidable wrath of God against sin all the more terrible when it is realised to be the unavoidable wrath of a being who is naturally infinitely loving in His nature."<sup>2</sup>

Or, as Werner Elert of Erlangen has expressed it: "Through this appeasement of His wrath, accomplished in the death of Christ and confirmed in Christ's resurrection, the will to forgive took the place of the will to recompense, and He Himself offered men His hand in token of reconciliation. 'Reconciling the world unto Himself' (II Cor. v. 19), He put an end to the conflict. By the blood of Christ peace is made between man and God (Col. i. 20)."<sup>3</sup>

Motivated by the greatness of His intense love, the holy God acts in such a way that sin is punished, justice is done, and the sinner is justly forgiven. God does not forfeit His justice, nor attain a love He did not previously have. His eternal love actively changes the situation, so that those who once were guilty are now justified. And with that change of condition there coincides a change of relationship to the just God. The same divine justice which condemns the guilty, receives those who have been given "the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Phil. iii. 9). According to the

<sup>1</sup> Erskine, Thomas, *Internal Evidences* cited Linton, *A Lawyer and the Bible*, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> *Conscience and the Atonement*, P.T. R., IX., 618.

<sup>3</sup> Elert, W., *An Outline of Christian Doctrine*, p. 57.

Apostolic Gospel the death of Christ altered fundamentally and objectively our relation with God. But this tremendous reconciliation was a change of relationship to God; not a change in His character. And to return to the point where we began, it was a change wrought by God Himself. By God's own act we who were at variance with Him, who occupied the position of alienation, whose unholy opposition to Him had called forth His holy opposition toward us, are placed in a new relationship, are brought nigh unto Him, received into His favour, enjoy peace with our Maker. Friendly relations take the place of unfriendly relations. "Reconciliation is the Lord's own handiwork,"<sup>1</sup> not our subjective turn to Him. The whole thing springs from God, outside the scope of our subjectivity. The gate of reaccess to God opens from within.

#### ii.—THE OBJECT OF RECONCILIATION.

As definitely as God is the subject, the author of this peace-making process, so the world is the object of reconciliation. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (I Cor. v. 19).

In two cases the Apostle Paul uses a highly compound verb which etymologically means to reconcile back again, to bring back to a former state of harmony. This points to the fact that the world which needed reconciliation was not the world as originally made. God did not reconcile a world which was in the same state as He made it. The world, as He made it, He pronounced good. It needed no reconciliation. Indeed, it enjoyed the favour and fellowship of its Maker. In the primitive world God walked with man in the garden of peace and plenty and purity. There was no estrange-

<sup>1</sup> Simpson, E. K., *loc. cit.*

ment then between God and man. In immediacy of fellowship the Creator revealed to man His will, and man walked in glad and obedient subjection to the Lord.

However, an act of man breached this blessed harmony. By his own act of disobedience to God's revealed will man forfeited peace and fellowship with God. Sin alienated man from God. Genesis iii. graphically portrays the double change which took place. The first change recorded is a change in man. Such a sense of guilt and shame filled his breast that he sought to cover himself with fig-leaves and to avoid the eye of his holy Maker. Smitten by sin, man fled and hid himself from the presence of God amid the trees of the garden. But the change in man was not the only change. Man not only sought to evade the presence of God; God drove out the man and placed the cherubim and a flaming sword to keep man from returning to Him in whose presence there is fulness of life. Thus we have a double change, a change of man's disposition toward God and a change of his relationship with God; and a double opposition, man's guilty opposition to God and God's holy opposition to man. A state of enmity has replaced the garden of peace. War has been declared. Man is driven from the face of his Maker. First man disobeyed and hid from God, then God placed a veto against man's returning should he so desire.

In this condition no peace can ensue upon a mere change in man. Even should man desire to return he would not be received. Sin is not merely an illusion; guilt is not just an error in human thinking; the righteous indignation of God is not a mere figment of human imagination; "that God possesses and exercises penal justice is a central idea of the faith of the Bible."<sup>1</sup> And

<sup>1</sup> Brunner, *The Mediator*, p. 466-7, n. 1.

even while we are saying this, let us remind ourselves again that we are not teaching a "structural change" in God. We are saying that the eternal justice of the holy God places the transgressor in a different footing or relationship to Himself from the obedient son. The same kind of a god, yea, the same God who took pleasure in the fellowship of His loyal sons casts out His rebellious creatures. Here are lines in which a king meets the appeal of a lady charged with heinous misdemeanours:

"I were no man if I could look on beauty  
Distressed without some pity; but no king,  
If any superficial gloss or feature  
Could move me to decline the course of justice."

Shall the judge of all the earth be less righteous than this royal justiciar?

Calvin says that a preacher ought to be much in the third of Genesis, the third of John, and the third of Romans. The last mentioned chapter will receive special consideration in the next chapter. Here we wish to collate the third of John with the third of Genesis. By common consent the former is the chapter that presents the Golden Text of the Bible that sounds the glorious vibrant chord of divine love which is the theme of God's good news. Does this love chapter deny the necessity of any change objective to man, and preach a "liberal" gospel that the only alienation is in the mind of man? Read the record for yourself. When Nicodemus recognised that Jesus was a teacher come from God, the Saviour proceeded to tell him not merely general truths, Platonic ideas, but the things which were necessary to bring man back to God. And Jesus told him not only one thing, but two things, or two kinds of things, earthly and heavenly (iii. 12). Jesus distinctly set before this ruler of Israel two

different needs which must be met in different ways. The first need dealt with in John iii. is the same as the first change noted in Genesis iii. There man changed, here man must be changed. This need for a change in man is to be met not immediately by the Son, but by the Spirit; and it is not an expiation or a reconciliation, but a regeneration. On the other hand, the need which deals with the heavenly or objective things is the mission not of the Spirit, but of the Son; it is not to be a re-birth wrought in man, but a cross endured for man. As Moses lifted up a brazen serpent, type and image of the fiery serpents; so, God's gift, the Son of man, came down from heaven that He might be lifted up and made sin for sinners, that those who believe might escape the judgment due to them for sin. John iii. presents God in His great work of love as effecting the two changes, both of which are indispensable if men are again to enjoy God's fellowship. It is a perversion of the great love chapter of the Bible to deny the necessity for either of these changes. And the effort to amalgamate the two indispensable needs by using the word with which the Bible describes the second change and giving it the content which the Bible gives the former is certainly a confusion of the doctrine of that great teacher who came from God.

The "world," then, is the object of the reconciling work of God, not the world as God made it, but the world as sin marred God's workmanship. Our sin called forth God's wrath. The world which is the object of God's reconciling work is not a quantitative, but a qualitative term. The thought is not that the work of reconciliation is sufficient for the whole world, though, of course, its infinite worth is sufficient and more than sufficient. The world which was reconciled is collated with the flesh and the devil as those temptations which

allure us away from God. It was this wicked, vicious, debased, blackened, guilty, polluted, hell-deserving world that God reconciled. A world dead in trespasses and sins awaiting and deserving only the wrath of its Maker sorely needed two changes—a change of heart and a change of relation. All things are of God, who so loved this wicked world that He who changes not made both the changes. Or, as Lamont puts it: “Christ has recreated the universe for man. He has effected a cosmic change in it for men of faith. . . . Every relation in the universe may be altered without any alteration in the final dimension. . . . A change in the relation *I-Absolute* changes the universe for me without changing the Absolute. And this is the change which Jesus Christ has wrought. . . . The early Christians knew themselves to be reconciled to God the Father, the reconciliation was secured for them by the atoning work of the Son, and it was mediated to them as an experience by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>1</sup> This great change of status or relationship towards God’s holy justice, a change wrought by the lifting up of Christ in the sinner’s stead, is what the Bible designates reconciliation.

The older evangelists used to illustrate the work of salvation by two chairs. First the chairs are placed facing one another. Man as God made him enjoyed peace and blessed communion with his Maker. Man turned himself away from God; then because of sin God turned His face away from man, put man away from His favour. The chairs are reversed and stand back to back. Two changes are needed to bring them again into accord. The change in heavenly things, a change of status or relationship, a change objective to man is called reconciliation. The change in earthly

<sup>1</sup> Lamont, D., *Christ and the World of Thought*, pp. 211, 212, 221.



things, in man's heart and disposition so that he will receive the atonement, believe on the uplifted Christ, is called regeneration. God is the active subject in making both the changes needed. He turns one chair around by the gift of His only-begotten Son to die for us men and for our salvation. He turns the other chair around by the gift of the Holy Spirit to quicken our sin-deadened hearts. God's great love at immeasurable cost accomplishes the changes that bring us back to Himself. Man's sin was the cause of alienation; God's love was the efficient cause of reconciliation.

### iii.—THE ACT OF RECONCILIATION.

Paul repeatedly asserts that the work of reconciliation was accomplished through Christ, in Christ, through His death, through the cross, or in the body of His flesh through death. Luther describes Christ as the reconciler. We repeat, then, that the reconciling work was done through Christ, rather than through the Holy Spirit. This truth seems better recognised to-day than in the recent past. Barth heads the large section of his *Doctrine of the Word of God* which deals with the saving work of the Second Person of the Trinity, *the Reconciler*; Werner Elert describes the substitutionary death of Christ as *The Act of Reconciliation*.<sup>1</sup> Brunner's *The Mediator* has focussed a similar truth; while E. K. Simpson has, perhaps, brought the matter even closer home with his crisp Anglo-Saxon description of Christ as the sole *At-one-Maker*.

While there is difference of opinion as to how widely the term reconciliation should be applied, there is at least a strong recognition that it has primary reference of Christ's work for us. According to Büchsel *καταλλάσσω* has its first reference to an objective change

<sup>1</sup> Elert, W., *An Outline of Christian Doctrine*, chapter VII.

paralleling justification, a change brought about by the death of Christ as the substitution which makes expiation for us.<sup>1</sup> Cremer finds that "it is the establishment of a relation to God, in which we have Him no more against us, not the establishment of an attitude in which we are no more against Him," "the establishment of the relation of peace through the lifting of the demands of the law" by means of the expiation of Christ.<sup>2</sup> Kahler held that it was "the removal of the obstruction to communion on God's side by the historical fact of expiatory redemption."<sup>3</sup> W. Vischer says that reconciliation signifies substitution, that "God has done His work of reconciliation in Jesus Christ once, but also once for all time."<sup>4</sup> K. L. Schmidt teaches that it is not subjective, but objective and eschatological. According to the plan of his dogmatics, Barth will treat what is generally regarded as soteriology under the heading of reconciliation, and with Schmidt he recognises also the eschatological character of reconciliation. However, this plan gives central place to "the objective fact of the divine reconciliation in the Person and in the work of the divine-human Mediator, Jesus Christ"; and speaks of subjective soteriology as "the subjective application of the reconciliation to men through the presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit in the area of the Church."<sup>5</sup>

In identifying reconciliation with the work of the Second Person of the Trinity, Paul is saying that it is God's great objective work for us. More than that, he

<sup>1</sup> *Theol. Handwörterbuch z. N.T.*, Kittel, I., 255-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Biblisch-Theol. Wörterbuch*, pp. 129-132.

<sup>3</sup> Kähler, M., *Zur Lehre von der Versöhnung*, pp. 267-271.

<sup>4</sup> Vischer, W., *Das Christenzeugnis des Altens Testaments*, I., 265-7.

<sup>5</sup> Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, I., 2. pp. 104, 987.

is indicating that it is a work done for us in the days of Christ's own earthly ministry. "The Biblical reconciliation constitutes an accomplished fact. An hour entitled the 'fulness of time' struck when the Eternal Priest 'offered one sacrifice for sins for ever' (Heb. x. 12)."<sup>1</sup>

The fact that the reconciliation is a *fait accompli* is abundantly evident in the past tenses of the verbs which Paul uses in his classical passages on reconciliation. The reconciliation was accomplished in Christ and it was accomplished in the past. In Colossians i. 22, Ephesians ii. 16, and Romans v. 10, Paul uses aorist tenses. In II Corinthians v. 18 the Apostle uses aorist participles and an imperfect indicative. Normally, an aorist speaks of a definite single act in past time, a finished transaction. "God did reconcile us unto Himself through Christ" just as truly and as definitely as "He did give to us the ministry of reconciliation." The reconciling act was as definitely a distinct act as was the commission to Paul to preach reconciliation; and the sentence indicates that the reconciling act took place prior to the commission to Paul to preach this Gospel. According to the exegesis of this verse reconciliation was a definite act which preceded Paul's commission, that is, which occurred prior to A.D. 35.

But Paul is even more explicit as to the time and place of reconciliation. In Romans v. he asserts that we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son. The whole of this section, verses 6—11, will repay careful study. Paul uses various parallels to set forth a tremendous *a fortiori* argument. He shows that when we were opposite to what God wanted and expected He did the greater thing for us; now that we are on a different footing, how much more will He do lesser

<sup>1</sup> Simpson, E. K., *ibid.*, p. 371.

things for us. We were weak, that is, ungodly, that is, sinners, that is, enemies; and yet while we were in that state Christ died for us, i.e., we were justified by His blood, reconciled to God through His death. In other words, "reconciled by His death" strictly parallels "justified by His blood" and "Christ died for the ungodly." The sense is that while we were in the unfavourable relation of enmity God put forth the energies of His love in the death of Christ, so that the requirements of His justice were met by that death, and we received the changed status, the favourable relation of being justified by His blood. Similarly, the Apostle testifies elsewhere that Christ reconciled both Jew and Gentile to God "by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. ii. 16); and again that He "made peace through the blood of His cross" and "reconciled (us) in the body of His flesh through death" (Col. i. 20, 22). Thus our reconciliation rests squarely on the death of Christ, and is applied by His risen living presence through His Word and by the grace of His Spirit.

Moreover, Paul defines the way in which the death of Christ effects the reconciliation still more precisely. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself," by "not imputing their trespasses unto them," and this is further expounded by the declaration: "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. v. 19, 21). These statements as well as the close parallelism between "reconciled by His death" and "justified by His blood" in Romans v. show that the reconciliation is accomplished by the blessed exchange which the Lord Christ made with sinners. As guilty sinners, we appeared before God as enemies; His justice was armed for our destruction. But even while we were enemies God's love wrought a way

whereby our trespasses should not be reckoned to us. That way was this: Christ who had no sin of His own was made sin for us, took our place, received the penal wrath which we deserved, reconciled us by dying on the cross in our stead, so that we are justified by His blood. "In Jesus Christ, God Himself steps into the place of sinful man, while sinful man is for his part translated into the place of God. . . . This exchange is the reconciliation."<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to observe the way in which Paul collates and equates reconciliation with the cross and with a substitutionary ransom. In an earlier chapter we have seen that Paul summarises the Gospel as the Word of the Cross (I Cor. i. 18). In II Corinthians v. 19 he summarises the same Gospel as "the word of reconciliation." In I Timothy his apostolic commission is the testimony that Christ Jesus gave Himself a substitutionary ransom (ii. 5, 6); in II Corinthians he has been given "the ministry of reconciliation" (v. 18). If things that are equal to the same thing are equal to each other, then "the word of reconciliation" is "the Word of the Cross," and "the ministry of reconciliation" is the ministry of testifying that Jesus Christ is a substitutionary ransom. And this is the Gospel.

Holding Paul's Gospel, we beseech men that they "receive not the grace of God in vain" (II Cor. vi. 1). In behalf of Christ, we invite sinners to enter upon the new footing of peace which His substitutionary cross hath wrought. "As though God did beseech you through us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (II Cor. v. 20), and enter upon the peace purchased at such tremendous cost. We remind you that we cannot give Christ back the blood He shed to make our peace, we cannot in the least measure ease

<sup>1</sup> Barth, K., *The Christian Apprehension of Revelation*.

the agony He endured. The only way in which we can appreciate the reconciliation wrought by His death is to appropriate it. God was justly angry with the wicked, but in love for the sinner Christ—God incarnate—was made sin in the sinner's stead, died a ransom in our place, reconciled us by that death and justified us by His blood. Peace has been wrought by God, accomplished by the substitutionary death of Christ. "Let the sinner believe firmly in the atonement of Jesus, and he can look to heaven without horror or dismay, for he sees there an approving Father and a smiling God. No sins oppress his soul, for he wears the robe of Christ's obedience and stands out in the light of day a just man. The great cause of his hatred to God is removed, the doors of his love are effectually unbarred, and what the law with all its threats and penalties could not do, is gloriously accomplished by the cross of Christ. His spirit of stern rebellion and stubborn defiance is effectually subdued when he sees his God bending from the Mount of Crucifixion with outstretched arms and a smiling face. He may stand out against all the threats and terrors of an incensed Deity, he may defy his Maker when He frowns in wrath or uplifts the sword of eternal vengeance, but he cannot resist that supreme love of God which spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for His enemies. The sinner may hate an angry God; he cannot but love a reconciled Father. Here is the magic of the cross."<sup>1</sup>

This 'truth is graphically illustrated in Cowper's account of his own conversion: "The happy moment was now arrived which was to shake off my fetters. I flung myself into a chair near the window, and seeing a Bible there ventured once more to apply to it for comfort and instruction. The first verse I saw was

<sup>1</sup> Thornwell, ii. 379.

Romans iii. 25: 'Whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood.' Immediately I received strength to believe, and the full beams of the sun of righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement that Christ had made. I saw my pardon sealed in His blood. I saw all the fulness and completeness of His righteousness for me. In a moment I believed and received the atonement."

For the drawing and the holding power of the cross are that here the seemingly opposite interests of justice and mercy in the salvation of sinners are reconciled. "Here shines spotless justice, incomprehensible wisdom, and infinite love all at once. None of them darkens or eclipses the other; every one of them gives a lustre to the rest. They mingle their beams, and shine with united eternal splendour; the just Judge, the merciful Father, and the wise Governor. No other object gives such a display of all these perfections; yea, all the objects we know give not such a display of any one of them. Nowhere does justice appear so awful, mercy so amiable, or wisdom so profound."<sup>1</sup> "Exact justice and rich love come to a point in the Word of the Cross. They met and shone forth on the cross of Calvary when the just died for the unjust."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Maclaurin, J., *Glorying in the Cross of Christ*.

<sup>2</sup> Macleod, Principal J., *The Burden of the Evangel—the Word of the Cross*.

## THE SOLE FOUNDATION FOR A JUST FORGIVENESS.

“ Shall not the judge of all the earth do right ? ”—*Abraham*.

“ Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness, . . . to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness : that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”—ROM. iii. 24—26.

“ Die he, or justice must, unless for him  
Some other able, and as willing, pay  
The rigid satisfaction, death for death.”—*Milton*.

“ The human conscience is the mirror and index of the divine attribute of justice.”—*Shedd*.

“ Himself without guilt, He took over our punishment in order thus to pay our debt and to end our punishment.”  
—Augustine, *Faust. Man.*, xiv. 4.



## THE SOLE FOUNDATION FOR A JUST FORGIVENESS.

### i.—THE GOSPEL OF A JUST FORGIVENESS.

WHEN one reads Romans iii. in the original, he finds that the justice of God is the theme of this chapter. Our English obscures the force of this emphasis by using a variety of terms to translate the root-word which Paul repeats and reiterates until it becomes almost stylistically tiresome. Justice or judgment is the subject of this whole chapter. In the first part God is set forth as eminently just in everything that He says, in every judgment which He pronounces; while conversely all men are unjust in their own actions and in the arrogance which leads them to pass judgment on their Maker. "By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in His sight" (Rom. iii. 20).

In the last part of the chapter the emphasis does not shift. The pre-eminent thing is still the justice of God. God is just. Every part of God's revelation testifies to His justice. The law and the prophets not only show that no flesh can be justified by the works of the law, they as well point to a just justification which is to come from God for believers. The real objective in Romans iii. is the vindication of the justice of God in all His dealings with the human race, and in carrying out the same the Apostle demonstrates the righteous forgiveness of the believing sinner. Paul repeats this phrase, "the vindication of His justice," in order to allow a double emphasis to fall upon it. He follows the reiteration by the express statement that God's justice is to be vindicated, first in order that He

may be just, and secondly, in order that He may justify him that believeth in Jesus (verse 26).

These facts are highly significant for several reasons. Romans is Paul's *magnum opus*, the great epistle which he wrote to a church which he had never visited, an epistle not designed to supplement his field preaching, but to set forth the whole plan of salvation. Chapter iii. is the crux of the whole work; verses 24 through 26 weave together three of the Apostle's representations of the objective work of Christ, viz., redemption, propitiatory sacrifice and legal representation, so that one form clarifies and buttresses the other and makes the meaning inescapable. Therefore Biblical scholars have signalised this section as the acropolis of the Christian faith. And here arching the citadel of our faith is the eternal justice of God. Both undergirding and towering above the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins sounds the unchanging truth that justice and righteousness are the foundation of His throne (Ps. xvii. 2; Heb. i. 9).

The Apostle insists that God is as truly just when He forgives those who believe in Jesus as He is when He judges the world. And this paradox so far from being softened is sharpened in the following chapters. In Romans iv. Paul asserts that God justifies the ungodly. In chapter v. he declares that Christ died for the ungodly, so that these ungodly sinners are justified by His blood. By the justifying act of One, many condemned sinners were justified. A justice which declares ungodly sinners just is the paradox of the Epistle to the Romans. This is such a sharp anomaly, such a tremendous antinomy that unrelieved it establishes a contradiction at the heart of our religion.

At the Congress of Religions held at the Ist Chicago Exposition, a Jewish thinker, Rabbi Wise, declared that

wherever righteousness and forgiveness coexist there must be atonement. Warfield says: "There is a moral paradox in the forgiveness of sins which cannot be solved apart from the exhibition of an actual expiation." Thornwell recognised that a just and holy God "can no more fail to punish sin than He can lie." Justice is only vindicated when justice is done; therefore pardon without penalty is the abrogation of justice. However, the Epistle to the Romans preaches a forgiveness that enthrones righteousness, not one which dethrones it. How, then, does the Apostle relieve the awful paradox?

The anomaly is not left unrelieved. "The Bible knows nothing of the remission of sins arbitrarily; that is, without a ground or reason. Penal suffering in Scripture is released, or not inflicted upon the guilty, because it has been endured by a substitute. If penalty were remitted by sovereignty merely, without any judicial ground or reason whatever; if it were inflicted neither upon the sinner nor upon his substitute; this would be the abolition of penalty, not the remission of it."<sup>1</sup> According to the Scripture forgiveness is obtained in a way that leaves untarnished the glory of divine justice. God sets justice to the plummet line at the very moment when He forgives a sinner; for Christ has taken our place and borne our penalty. He is set forth publicly, manifest to the world as the propitiation, in order that the universe may know that God is just even when He justifies the ungodly. The Biblical bond between the justice of God and the forgiveness of the sinner is the cross of Christ. Therefore New Testament forgiveness is not a compromise with sin, but a substitution; not the cancellation of debt, but its satisfaction;

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, II., 392.

not a mere wiping off of the slate, but a wiping out in blood, agony and death. Because, as our Larger Catechism has it, the curse or the weight of divine wrath, that is, the severity of the punishment which we deserved fell on Christ our substitute, therefore justice was done. And because justice is done even in this way of forgiveness, therefore justice is vindicated. "That God might be just and truthful in forgiving sinners, Jesus kept the law for us, and then, innocent, served the law still more by dying under the law's curse to endure the law's ineluctable outcome for human sin."<sup>1</sup> Here "indeed the righteousness of God is not proved in the fact that sinners are punished for their trespasses; but that He provides for reconciliation in the blood of Christ, in order that God in the forgiving of sins could first be just to Himself, and then could justify the believers."<sup>2</sup> Thus the cross of Christ writes across the forgiveness of sins these words: "God is just." The righteousness of God is manifest when a sinner is pardoned for Christ's sake. Therefore pre-eminently it is written of Jesus, of His spotless life, of His death which justifies God in justifying sinners: "Thou hast loved justice and hated lawlessness, therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." Yea, the God of truth hath spoken thus to the Son: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre [the sceptre of a righteous and impartial government is the sceptre of Thy kingdom<sup>3</sup>]" (Ps. xlv. 6).

Or if one wishes to go behind the Epistles to the Gospels, there is the heart-rending prayer that if the cup may not pass away, "not My will, but Thine be

<sup>1</sup> Rivière, W. T.

<sup>2</sup> Bavinck, *ibid.*, p. 340.

<sup>3</sup> Translation suggested by Thayer, *Lexicon of the N. T.*

done." When Jesus came to Gethsemane He prayed that if there were some other way it might be found, but even in that case there was no other way.

"The justice of God is exceedingly glorified in this work. God is so strictly and immutably just, that He would not spare His beloved Son when He took upon Him the guilt of men's sins, and was substituted in the room of sinners. He would not abate Him the least mite of that debt which justice demanded. Justice should take place, though it cost His infinitely dear Son His precious blood; and His enduring such extraordinary reproach, and pain, and death in its most dreadful form."<sup>1</sup> "'Tis by no breath, turn of the eye, or wave of the hand that life joins issue with death."

The beloved Son became the Lamb of God laden with our curse, and justice was done on that hill without the city wall. Would you know that justice is sovereign, because justice is the will, the expressed character of the Almighty, then walk again through the olive trees of Gethsemane, beholding a bleeding back in Gabbatha, and a crushed heart in a crucified body on Golgotha's hill. Righteousness was published there.

There guilt was transferred and expiated. The subjective realisation of desert or demerit is distinguishable from the objective obligation to reward or to punishment. Barzillai could not transfer his praiseworthiness to Chimham, but he did transfer to him the reward which David offered. If a relative or friend go my bond, and I default and flee, the blame is mine, but the debt is his. Christ who knew no sin had no blame or remorse for His own deeds; but was made sin for us, received our curse, was delivered for our offences. A plan which did not involve the enduring of our punish-

<sup>1</sup> *Edwards' Works*, IV., 140.

ment, even if it could have provided complete and perfect obedience for the future, would not have justified God for the passing over of sins done aforetime in His forbearance. And when it is remembered that there are both pre- and post-baptismal sins and pre- and post-conversion sins, only this redemption by penal substitution can justify the holy God saving sinners which He had elected. "The cross alone 'declares His righteousness in the remission of sins'"<sup>1</sup>

Justice is a moral attribute, quality, or virtue of the divine being, by which God righteously rules the universe, distributing rewards and punishments according to merit and guilt. And according to the Word, the obligation to punish guilt was not removed even when the object thereof was the Saviour who had voluntarily undertaken the load of others' guilt. Thus, God is just even when He justifies a sinner; for, though man hath sinned, God hath suffered.<sup>2</sup> Here at the focus of our Bible, the heart of our faith, God declares Himself just and truthful and righteous. At the cross, as the vials of divine wrath were emptied upon God incarnate, the suffering which sin deserves was inflicted upon the sinner's substitute, and justice was satisfied. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him who was His own fellow, that with His stripes we might be healed. Thereby all our penalty was met and paid, an infinite obligation with an infinite price. And thus when Christ rose for our justification, and was exalted to heaven as our representative, justice was vindicated and righteousness exalted.

The best of pagan thought (Plato) said that even

<sup>1</sup> Maclaurin, J., *Glorying in the Cross*.

<sup>2</sup> "Although God is rightly said to suffer, yet the Godhead suffered not: God suffered in the flesh, not with the flesh."—Wollebius, *Compendium I.*, 18, vi.

God cannot forgive great sins, for He ought not; the Bible shows how God is just even as He forgives the chief of sinners. "Hinduism and Buddhism are based on the belief in the inevitableness of retribution,"<sup>1</sup> in the Christian creed the forgiveness of sins is confessed only after and because it has first been said that God became man for us men and for our salvation, and because in that nature which He assumed He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified and died for us. "Forgiveness and expiation are bound together in the Scriptures, so that expiation alone opens the way for forgiveness" (Lev. iv. 3; Rom. iii.; Heb. ix. 22).<sup>2</sup> John Duncan concluded, "Every sin will be adequately punished; but, blessed be God, not every *sinner*."<sup>3</sup> For,

The Eternal Life, His life down laid,  
Such was the wondrous plan;  
And God, the blessed God, was made  
A curse for cursed man.

## ii.—THIS GOSPEL AND THE MODERN MIND.

When it is objected that this Gospel is not acceptable to the modern mind, one remembers that before the birth of the modern mind the fundamental objections to the atonement were formulated by Abelard and Socinus, if not by the Greek dialecticians of Paul's day; and also, that the authority of reason was a characteristic of the pre-War rather than of the post-War theology. In our thinking we had so developed the habit of accommodating revelation to reason that many of us had forgotten that this was an irrational inversion by which the greater was judged by the lesser, the infinite circumscribed by the limited, the truth of the Holy

<sup>1</sup> Cave, S., *The Doctrine of the Work of Christ*, p. 281.

<sup>2</sup> Bavinck, III., 348.

<sup>3</sup> Stuart, Moody, *Recollections of Duncan*, p. 220.

One perverted by the errors of a sinful imagination and the majesty of the Almighty obscured by the shadow of puny man.<sup>1</sup> However, the challenge to this mode of thinking has reached such a wide front to-day that even Modernism, on occasion, confesses that liberal "churchmanship has proceeded upon the assumption that the Church's contribution to human life must be made in terms of the prevalent philosophies which have no relation to the Christian faith," and consequently that the modernistic Church has been adulterating the Gospel and surrendering its treasures in order to compromise with "ideologies which have no affinity with the Christian faith."<sup>2</sup>

Before capitulating to the demands that we change the God-given Gospel to conform to the modern mind, it is at least incumbent upon us to consider the question of the proper perspective and relation between human reason and divine revelation. Revealed truth has not always been treated as though it were on trial at the bar of human reason. The ablest Christian thinkers have first sought a rational relation between God's thinking and man's thinking before undertaking to deal with alleged differences in the content of the two. Professor W. P. Paterson warns us that "humanising experiments" upon a divine religion are apt to be "pathological."<sup>3</sup> Bavinck borrows this striking word from Hamann, "Speculative rationalism forgot that God is a genius who does not ask whether we find His word rational or irrational;" and then adds, "Precisely because Christianity rests on revelation, it has a content which, while not in conflict with reason, yet

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Schaefer, E., *Theozentrische Theologie*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Christian Century*, 1937, pp. 967, 1064.

<sup>3</sup> Paterson, *The Rule of Faith*, p. 408.



greatly transcends reason; even a divine reason which appears to the world as foolishness."<sup>1</sup>

By defining faith as knowledge revealed, Calvin destroyed the Thomist separation between faith and knowledge, and so brought man back to the Augustinian doctrine of God as the judge of all knowledge. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ, in whom and unto whom all things visible and invisible were created, and in whom all things hold together (Col. ii. 3; i. 16, 17). He is the light that lighteth every man (John i. 9), with Him is the fountain of life, and in His light we see light (Ps. xxxvi. 9, 10). That is, the author of our being is as well the light of the understanding. God is the presupposition of knowledge, and true reasoning consists in thinking after Him the thoughts which God hath revealed. Epistemologically also, man lives out of the Father-hand of God. This is the foundation of that Augustinian-Reformed doctrine of human knowledge which, in opposition to Kantianism, holds that the principles by which we are capable of knowing anything have their proper termination in God. The universals are not merely subjective *a priori*s, but come to us from the Triune God, the "maker of all things visible and invisible."<sup>2</sup> On this basis the laws of thought are the laws of things, and there is a correlation between the internal and the external by virtue of which man is capable of knowing something about the world in which he lives.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bavinck, H., *The Philosophy of Revelation*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> So Thornwell, J. H., *Collected Writings*; Flint, Robt., *Theism*, pp. 272-275; De Moor, Leonard, *Revelation, Evangelical Quarterly*, 9, 4, 365; Augustine as given by Warfield, *Studies in Augustine and Tertullian*: Hepp, V., *Calvinism and the Philosophy of Nature*.

<sup>3</sup> Kuyper, A., *Calvinism*; Bavinck, H., *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, 1928, I., 253, "The 'logos' in the items of created nature corresponds with the 'logos' in man and makes science possible."

The Scriptures testify to a generous revelation of God in nature (Ps. xix.; Isa. xl. 26; Acts xiv. 17; xvii. 23—28; Rom. i. 19—22; ii. 14, 15), and similarly the Westminster Standards recognise the light of nature (C. of F. i. 1; x. 4; xxi. 1; L.C. 60). They further regard man made in God's image as inexcusable for not worshipping the Creator. But they also testify that, due to the blinding effects of sin, man does not glorify his Maker until the republication of God's glory in the Redeemer (Heb. i. 1, *sqq.*) and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit bring him back to God.

Calvin holds that "in order to enjoy the light of true religion, we ought to begin with the doctrine of heaven; and that no one can have the least knowledge of true and sound doctrine, without having been a disciple of Scripture" (*Institutes*, I. vi. 2). In the same paragraph Calvin distinguishes between the peculiar doctrine of faith and repentance which proposes Christ as the Mediator and the doctrine of God as the Creator and Governor. Concerning this latter, Calvin writes: "Every man should seriously apply himself to a consideration of the works of God, being placed in this very splendid theatre to be a spectator of them." This general revelation, republished in special revelation, provides a sphere in which the God-given laws of thought and conscience test alleged and confirm the true special revelation. Thornwell expressly limited this negative jurisdiction of reason to those matters of general revelation which come within the sphere of natural knowledge and allowed to reason only a positive verdict in the matters of special revelation which are above reason. In Romans Paul holds the unregenerated responsible for rejecting those religious teachings which plainly contradict the revelation of God in nature. Similarly, the orthodox in opposition to the Socinians

affirmed that the light of nature reveals to man the existence and the natural attributes, including the perfect justice of God. Turretin holds that the dictates of conscience and the consent of the people confirm the testimony of Scripture as to the justice of God.<sup>1</sup>

The second part of Thornwell's distinction accords with the current neo-Calvinist emphasis. It is obviously improper for human reason to condemn that which transcends its comprehension. Isaiah informs us that God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts, as the heavens are higher than the earth (Isa. lv. 9; cf. xl. 13, 14); and Paul assures us that in the matters of the cross even "the foolishness of God is wiser than men" (I Cor. i. 25). When men asserted that it was absurd to believe in a crucified and risen Saviour, Tertullian replied that the school of heaven was the paradox of the school of earth. Augustine reasoned that it was rational to expect and to accept a special divine revelation because man is finite, immature and sinful. Paul, Augustine and the Reformers hold that "the reason of the divine justice is too high to be measured by a human standard or its immensity comprehended by the littleness of the human mind."<sup>2</sup> Hendry adds: "This protest against the accommodation of faith with reason is of the essence of Protestantism. It is one of the principal ingredients of the theology of Luther, and it is being renewed at the present time along a wide front."<sup>3</sup> Brunner points out that the believer's solution of this problem "has never been that revelation had its place within the bounds of reason, but that reason had its place within the bounds of revelation; because it is

<sup>1</sup> Macgregor, James, *A Vindication of Natural Philosophy*, citing F. Spanheim, Stapfer, et. al.; Turretin, *Locus III.*, Q. xix., S. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Institutes*, III., xxiii. 4, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Hendry, G. S., *God, the Creator*, p. 6.

just from the standpoint of faith that the claim, but indeed also the limit, of reason could be understood.”<sup>1</sup> In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. ii. 3). All knowledge rests on the divine initiative. Some wisdom is given in general revelation to reason; but the saving knowledge of God is given only in a special revelation to faith. It is consequently illogical to make human reason the greater circle and seek to crowd the thinking of God into so tiny a limit. “In the apprehension of revelation we do not take the knowledge of God and fit Him into the body of our thought; rather God takes knowledge of us, and we ‘acknowledge’ that we are fitted into His thought.”<sup>2</sup> The truth of the Gospel is not proved true at the bar of reason, but by the fact that it shines in its own light—the light of God—and illumines everything that it touches. To permit unassisted reason to condemn truths that are beyond reason is just as irrational as to permit persons that are colour-blind to deny the fact of colour, or observers who look only from the outside to deny the beauty of a cathedral window. To faith which is an intuition awakened by the Holy Spirit the truths of the Gospel authenticate themselves as divine by their own light. “In fact, as when the eye looks at the sun there are activities of the organ towards the object of vision, and yet the light is not from the eye, but from the sun; so in apprehending the validity of the Bible’s credentials, the light is from the revelation, not from the mind.”<sup>3</sup> Or otherwise expressed, faith, which in this aspect is “only reason enlightened and rectified by grace,”<sup>4</sup> beholds the symmetry, sublimity,

<sup>1</sup> Brunner, E., *The Philosophy of Religion*, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Hendry, *ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>3</sup> Dabney, R. L., *Systematic and Polemic Theology*, 1890, p. 143.

<sup>4</sup> Thornwell, I., 52.

correspondence and significance of the plan of salvation, and recognises that the architect of this temple of truth can be none other than God, that its moral efficacy, its spiritual objectives, its ennobling aspirations and its saving power, can only come from Him.

Thus it is improper for our reason to set up "eternal truths," and in comparison therewith to deny the universal or essential validity of the cross on the ground that it is only an historical event. Man himself is only a temporal creature. He is wholly indebted to God for any and every eternal truth which he has. The principles by which we are capable of knowing anything have their foundation in the bosom of God. But the Holy One of Israel, the just governor of the universe, never revealed forgiveness as a general truth. Forgiveness cannot be a general truth as long as God be a righteous God. "Forgiveness inferred from the idea of God, forgiveness as something necessarily connected with the idea of God, is nothing short of the well-known blasphemy of Voltaire: *Dieu pardonnera, c'est son métier*. This takes all seriousness from guilt. If, however, forgiveness cannot be regarded as a matter of necessity—and only what is necessary is certain in thought—it must really be *given* if there is to be any forgiveness at all, imparted in a contingent and non-rational manner. In other words, it must be revealed." Thus, "in distinction from all other forms of religion the Christian religion is faith in the one Mediator. . . . For faith in the Mediator—in the event which took place once for all, a revealed atonement—is the Christian religion itself."<sup>1</sup> It is proper, then, for sinners to receive the Christian Gospel of the forgiveness of sins as a revelation, a given deposit of truth, in which is contained the way by which this forgiveness

<sup>1</sup> Brunner, *The Philosophy of Religion*, p. 73; *The Mediator*, p. 40.

is obtained; or if one is unwilling to do that, then, to reject forgiveness at the same time as he rejects the expiation on which according to the Gospel it depends.

But at this point reason has never been willing to be consistently rational. "Socinians and their spiritual associates have very seriously disputed the necessity of expiation. Their arguments reduce themselves to this that justice and grace, expiation and forgiveness, and then further law and gospel, Old Testament and New Testament, creation and recreation, etc., are in conflict with one another and preclude each other. . . . This entire conflict is false, and in Christian theology has always been thrown out as Marcionism."<sup>1</sup> As early as the *Institutes* men were opposing grace to the merits of Christ, but Calvin insisted on the maxim that between two things, of which one succeeds or is subordinate to the other, there can be no opposition. "There is no reason therefore why the justification of men should not be gratuitous from the mere mercy of God, and why at the same time the merit of Christ should not intervene, which is subservient to the mercy of God." Not to each other, "but to our works are directly and equally opposed the gratuitous favour of God and the obedience of Christ, each in its respective place."<sup>2</sup>

A somewhat different type of objection is to be found in Principal Cave's recent volume,<sup>3</sup> through which there runs a continual stream of protest against the doctrine of penal substitution. This distinguished writer suggests numerous weaknesses in the writings of certain of the defenders of this general viewpoint. Most of these objections only prove the limitation and shortcoming of particular theologians, they only show that the doc-

<sup>1</sup> Bavinck, *ibid.*, pp. 345, 357.

<sup>2</sup> *Institutes* II., xvii. i.

<sup>3</sup> Cave, S., *The Doctrine of the Work of Christ*, 1937.

trine has been inadequately presented, not that the doctrine is self-contradictory or contradictory to other known truth or to reason. For example, Dr. Cave asserts that Anselm, who developed the doctrine of vicarious satisfaction, started at a distance from Christ on the basis of general reason, but Barth gives a very different interpretation of the reasoning in *Cur Deus Homo?*<sup>1</sup>; and surely Luther and Calvin, who gave the satisfaction doctrine its Protestant form, placed themselves squarely and explicitly upon Christ's special revelation.

Dr. Cave approves Schleiermacher's attack upon the doctrine for arbitrarily and artificially separating between Christ's active and passive obedience; but Wollébius, H. Bavinck and Dr. G. Vos carefully show that this is a distinction, not a separation, since both the active and the passive obedience are coterminous with Christ's life, and both reach their culmination in the cross. "His actions were sufferings, and His sufferings were actions." Similarly, Bavinck shows that the three offices of Christ are to be distinguished, but that the acts of His ministry cannot be atomistically divided between them."<sup>2</sup> Cave likewise approves Schleiermacher's criticism that this doctrine fails to do justice to the efficacy of Christ's saving person, His living presence; and yet the former had just shown how fully Calvin had safeguarded this part of the Mediator's work; the Westminster catechisms do likewise; and, in a volume published in 1935, the writer carefully maintained this emphasis.<sup>3</sup> Kähler, Bavinck, and Charles Hodge *inter alios* are careful to state that the first blessing of Christ's atonement is fellowship with

<sup>1</sup> *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, I., 2, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Bavinck, *ibid.*, pp. 337, 350, 361.

<sup>3</sup> Robinson, W. C., *The Certainties of the Gospel*.

Himself.<sup>1</sup> The whole working out of the intercessory work of Christ in Hebrews leads to the same conclusion.

The further objection that there are some statements of this doctrine which fail adequately to present the love of God is no doubt true. But why judge a doctrine by its poorer advocates? Augustine, Bernard, Aquinas and Luther held this doctrine, and the history of Christian thought affords no nobler preaching of the love of God than was done by these men. Again, men are never tired of hurling the charge of a mere legal relationship to God against the advocates of this doctrine. At least we Calvinists have a right to plead our own theology in reply. According to Calvinism, no saved sinner can ever be in a merely legal relationship to God. The faith which unites one to the Saviour is always the work of the Holy Spirit; and thus His vital regenerating work must ever precede the legal justification. One who is justified has already been vitally linked to Christ. And, of course, those of us who hold this faith admit that we have not adequately gathered up into our several presentations all the elements of truth in other doctrines. But we maintain that this is our limitation, not an essential weakness in the truth we advocate. For example, many advocates of the view we present do not give as much space or emphasis to the triumphal aspect of Christ's work as Principal Cave does; but we have not observed any elements of this view which he retains that cannot be fitted into the doctrine we advocate, and certainly Gregory the Great goes far beyond Principal Cave both in his doctrine of penal substitution and of a triumphant ransom from Satan.

<sup>1</sup> Cave, *ibid.*, pp. 240-241 citing Kahler, *Die Wissenschaft der Christlichen Lehre*, 1905; Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, 1898, III., 313; Hodge, *Systematic Theology*.



However, the ultimate reply to the charge that this Gospel is not acceptable to our age is that neither was it acceptable to the first century. In Athens the ambassador of the skies was rejected by the dialecticians of the schools. When Paul proclaimed the Gospel of the cross the Jews demanded a portentous sign, and the Greeks with their subtle disputations rejected such suffering as disgraceful if not immoral. We have no more right to exaggerate the offence of the cross than we have to avoid that offence. But there is no reason to expect a better reception for the full Gospel of the cross to-day than that which was accorded Paul. If our statement of the cross is pronounced foolishness to the world, may that not be only an indication that we are preaching Paul's Gospel?

If we turn to the Reformers, Luther writes: "Christ is punished on our account; that is something reason can never follow;"<sup>1</sup> and Calvin adds, "the preaching of the cross is not agreeable to human reason."<sup>2</sup> And Brunner says: "The harsh thought of the Bible—and of the New Testament!—that God, because He is God, can punish man, and indeed, must destroy all that infringes His sovereignty, is an impossible idea for the modern mind." But "so long as we continue to reject the scriptural ideas of divine holiness, of divine wrath, and of divine righteousness in punishment, the process of decay within the Christian Church will continue."<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the frank recognition that only by the grace of the Holy Spirit is the preacher given courage to proclaim the full Word of the Cross or the hearer given openness of mind to receive it, will bless the preacher with humility and the convert with an assurance that

<sup>1</sup> *Weimar Ausgabe*, xxv., p. 329, Sermon on Is. liii.

<sup>2</sup> *Institutes*, II., vi. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Brunner, E., *The Mediator*, p. 468.

his faith stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. For "it is the will of God that the Word of the Cross should be the rod of His power."<sup>1</sup> Yea, such thinking may cause the Reformed theme to sound again through our churches—*gloria Deo soli*.

We stand for this Gospel on the same ground that Paul, Luther and Calvin stood for the Gospel, namely, the conviction that it is God's revealed will. But according to this revelation, "the Word of the Cross" is "the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24), that is, God's will expresses His infinite wisdom. Thus, the doctrine of the cross given in God's positive revelation is not contrary to the highest and truest wisdom; rather, with Kuyper, we may accept "the foolishness of the cross as the highest and only wisdom."<sup>2</sup> Our wisdom consists in recognising that the author of our being is as well the light of our understanding, and consequently in thinking His thought after Him. Since complete coherence is in God rather than in man, we properly walk by faith, not by sight.

### iii.—LIFE'S CONFIRMATION OF GOSPEL PREMISES.

Accordingly, when we start with the meaning which God hath given to the cross we expect to find, and we profess to have found, reasons in God's general revelation to buttress or support the doctrine of divine justice drawn from special revelation. In other words, while ours is not an easy Gospel to preach, it is an essential Gospel; essential to true wisdom; essential to the needs of the sinner; essential to the ethical demands of righteousness; and hence, essential to real religion, to law, to the good of the body politic, to moral and social welfare. This Gospel offers the only forgiveness adequate

<sup>1</sup> Macleod, J., *The Monthly Record*, April, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> Kuyper's Valedictory Sermon on leaving Beesd.

to moral personality, divine or human, social or individual.

In a variety of ways general revelation adds its testimony that justice is a fundamental attribute of deity. Zwemer finds a sense of justice and an obligation to make expiation in primitive religion. To note an Arabian example: a child falls from the top of a building; parents snatch up the nearest lamb available, whether or not it is theirs, kill it, and wrap its skin over the limp form of their child, that the life of the animal may atone for the life of the child.<sup>1</sup> Some mode of covering sin, or propitiating the divine being or beings, whether by magic, by libations, by human or by animal sacrifices, or by votive offerings, is evident the world around. Accordingly, Thornwell observes that "it is a principle of all religions that no sin is unconditionally punished." Plato said that sin and penalty go through the world with their heads tied together. Another Greek originated the aphorism, "The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine." Referring to such statements, Shedd remarks: "When the thoughtful pagan looked up into the pure heavens above him, or into the deep recesses within him, he had no doubt that the infinite One is just, and a punisher of evil doings, because he *must* be such. Hence he trembled; and hence he offered a propitiatory sacrifice." "The exercise of justice can be demonstrated upon *a priori* grounds."<sup>2</sup> "Whatever else God may be, or may not be, He must be just."<sup>3</sup> In other words, justice is a limiting or conditioning attribute. However other attributes may incline the Most High to act, they will not move Him to act unjustly.

Experiences of varied kinds support this position.

<sup>1</sup> Zwemer, *Lectures on The Origin of Religion*.

<sup>2</sup> Shedd, *Discourses and Essays*, pp. 292-3.

Life is not all sweetness and light. It bristles with stark, grim realities which cannot be avoided. Suffering, pain, separation, frustration, sorrow exist. And if God be the One to whom everything in ourselves and in our environment testifies, He is not just a kindly grandfather, a sickly sentimentalist lacking austerity or justice. Karl Heim states that the preaching of God who was only an indulgent father accounts for the estrangement from Christianity of many of his countrymen. Or, as one of these fellow-countrymen phrased it, "The kind, good old divinity is dead—he fell in the war like many others." "The divinity our pastor talked about lies amid the typhus-corpses."<sup>1</sup> Violate the laws of nature and there are inevitable penalties. Perhaps a motto from the dental chair will illustrate this as well as a series of depositions from scientific experts, "Be true to your teeth, or they will be false to you."

On a broad view of human affairs there is an inescapable mass of testimony indicating a sense of justice in man, and, if man be made in the image of his Maker, pointing to the presence of infinite justice in God. A large part of human activity is taken up with jurisprudence, courts of law and equity. Justice has a place among the cardinal virtues of every ethical system worthy of the name. Limit these virtues to three or four, one of them must still be justice. A statue of justice has a place on the front of the Scottish National War Memorial. The concept of justice is slowly but surely eating its way into the domain of international, interracial and industrial relations. Where life is more primitive the passionate outbreak of mob violence against conspicuous outragers of justice, even while it takes an improper form, still testifies to an elemental sense of justice and a righteous indignation against

<sup>1</sup> Heim, K., *Jesus der Herr*, pp. 211f.

injustice. No part of human discipline is so difficult for individuals or for nations to endure as a sense of injustice. Nature and man, the handiwork of the Creator, confirm the testimony of religion that God is just. And as surely as justice is the foundation of Jehovah's throne there is no ground of forgiveness apart from the cross of Jesus Christ.

Now just because a sense of justice permeates life wherever we find it, the preaching of a just forgiveness is essential to the preservation of the moral order. God is not a private individual. For Him to forgive merely out of hand is to destroy the very order of the universe. If God may forgive without regard to what is just and right, why may not the bank cashier, the captain of industry, the nation with the heavier artillery, or the white planter do the same? The "indiscriminate forgiveness of sin would be precisely the subversion of the moral order of the world. The annulment of guilt is the annulment of the law of righteousness, out of the breach of which guilt arises; and the law of righteousness is only another name for the moral order of the world."<sup>1</sup> In an address delivered at Liestal, Switzerland, June 27th, 1938, Karl Barth maintained that God uses the Gospel of justification which is based on the death and manifest by the resurrection of Christ for the establishment of civic justice.<sup>2</sup>

Thornwell reasons that wherever men hold to moral distinction "they must likewise hold to a moral government. A moral government is a government of law, and every law implies a sanction, a reward for obedience and a punishment for disobedience. When God promulgates a law, He does it with a view of having it observed, and the object of the sanction is to supply a

<sup>1</sup> Warfield, *Christless Christianity*, pp. 247-248.

<sup>2</sup> Barth, K., *Rechtfertigung und Recht*.

strong and adequate motive for the observance of the law. Now the force of the sanction depends essentially upon the certainty of its execution. Unless the sanction be uniformly enforced the law is a dead letter."<sup>1</sup> Because the moral law is not detached from God, but "is the expression of His being," therefore, "it is irrefragable and inviolable. Through the Holy Scriptures it bears this character and our own consciences give a testimony to it; and all the so-called moral world order, with its phenomena of responsibility, duty, debt, repentance, suffering, remorse and punishment, is built upon the inviolability of the moral law."<sup>2</sup> The will of God is the expression of His character and the moral law which He promulgates is an efflux of the divine nature, a transcript of the character of God. Thus the holy character, the majestic sovereignty, and the glorious honour of God are behind the law, so that the law cannot be abrogated and its penalty must be inflicted. Because sin is the transgression of the law, it is in Milton's fine phrase, "the eternal outlaw," and, according to the best reading of the New Testament passage, the antichrist is "the man of lawlessness" (II Thess. ii. 8). Conversely, in satisfying the justice of God by enduring the punishment which our offences deserved, Christ has paid the highest tribute to the law and wrought the mightiest reinforcement to its tremendous sanctions that the universe has ever known. The law is holy and the commandment holy, just and good; for Christ hath glorified them.

But our age is more inclined to listen to examples that call for inductive than for deductive reasoning. No one can accuse Harnack of being biased toward conservative theology. And yet this great scholar finds

<sup>1</sup> Thornwell, II., 378.

<sup>2</sup> Bavinck, III., 344.

that the fundamental characteristic of early Christianity was its preaching of righteousness. After cataloguing the four distinctive elements in early Christianity this authority continues: "The atmosphere, from which those four principles which combined to form the new religion drew their vitality, was the conception of recompense, i.e., the absolute supremacy of the moral element." "No account of the principles underlying the mission preaching is accurate, if it does not view everything from the standpoint of this conception, the sovereignty of morality, and the assurance of redemption by the forgiveness of sins based on the cross of Christ." Morality was inculcated by the spirit of Christ and by the conception of judgment and recompense."<sup>1</sup> By this preaching of a righteousness that justified God men were called to such righteous living that the world still remembers the contrast between early Christian and pagan life. A godliness that stood out against the background of heathen vices followed such preaching. Yea, this preaching turned the world upside down and laid in the new world the foundations of justice and righteousness both in men's conceptions of God and in their relations one to another. Would we walk in the fellowship of the apostles and martyrs? Would we have a message as wholesome and effective as theirs? Then we must preach their Gospel which sets justice to the plummet even in justifying sinners.

Will some other Gospel do? A group of American Presbyterian ministers celebrated Christmas, 1923, by drawing up an affirmation declaring, among other things, that it was not necessary for Presbyterian ministers to believe or preach that "Christ executeth the office of a priest, in His once offering up of Himself

<sup>1</sup> Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Early Christianity*.

a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God.”<sup>1</sup> Over a thousand of the most prominent ministers in the largest Calvinistic body in the world thus declared that justice was not essential to forgiveness, and so opened the door to injustice and unrighteousness in every other sphere of life. Less than a decade afterwards, James Truslow Adams, the ablest American critic of American life, came out with a broadside against the disregard for truth in high places. In a burning Philippic, entitled, *The Crisis in Character*, he indicted government, banking, publicists and education with exchanging righteousness for expediency, justice for experimentation.<sup>2</sup> Similar warnings were sounded about the same time by Dr. Lawrence Wharton, preaching at the Kerrville Encampment in Texas, and by Dr. J. A. MacLean, with special reference to the crime wave. Professedly Calvinistic leaders repudiated the essential nature of a just justification and unrighteousness swept our land.

And according to the testimony of the 1936 Moderator of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland, this situation was not confined to America. Dr. Lamont finds this “mischievous falsehood” in Europe. “Liberal Protestantism, which had so wide a theological vogue a generation ago, and which did so much to weaken the witness of Protestantism, erred in its doctrine of divine judgment not only in being untrue to Scripture, but also in being ethically unsound. Through the idea of God which it encouraged, it discouraged the idea of divine judgment altogether. If it was right to use the word judgment in the sense of condemnation, then it was either self-acting, automatic, part of the mechanism of life, or it was a sentence which man, voluntarily or

<sup>1</sup> *Shorter Catechism*, XXV.

<sup>2</sup> Adams, *The Crisis in Character*, Harper's, August, 1933.



involuntarily, passed upon himself. Judgment was thus taken out of the hands of God in order that God might be made to appear purely merciful. This doctrine was palatable to the natural man, and this was certainly one reason for its popularity. Even Aristotle, pagan though he was, was a sound enough moralist to recommend that a doctrine which is highly gratifying to sense should be examined carefully before being accepted. Liberal Protestants, as a class, were not so particular. "They desired a God whose name was Love, but who must not be the Judge of all the earth. But there is no such God; for a being of that kind would be non-moral. An age which dreams of a non-moral God is apt to be followed by an age which believes in no God at all. To justify the ways of God to man by denying that He is Judge is to take a direct step to atheism."<sup>1</sup>

In other words, to this preaching of an easy forgiveness which fails to justify God is traced the collapse of American morals and the rise of European unbelief. "The greatest single contribution which any preacher can make to the good of the moral and social order is the vindication of the righteousness of God. By calling men to live in the presence of a just God we cast the shadow of His righteous sceptre over every relationship of life. The Christian minister is an ambassador of God, called to minister His holy hand in the hearts and consequently in the affairs of men every time he proclaims the forgiveness of sins. In the full-orbed Gospel "the law is not given up to screen the guilty, nor yet the guilty given up to maintain the law, but the violated moral order is both vindicated and re-established by its Founder, and the inroads of sin upon it are at length curbed by that stabler covenant in

<sup>1</sup> Lamont, *Tests in the Final Judgment in The Evangelical Quarterly*, VII. iv., 361.

which grace reigned through righteousness, thanks to Jesus Christ our Lord."<sup>1</sup>

God hath made man in His own image, and in spite of the ravages of sin there is a reflection of the divine particularly in the forum of human conscience. The greatest of modern philosophers found here a categorical imperative, a stern voice of the daughter of God, a sense of oughtness, a command and a demand that brook no denial. In the conscience of man the justice of the Most High is still to some extent mirrored. This seems to be the last part of the human consciousness to be wholly severed from its Maker, and the first point at which the energy of the Holy Spirit in re-awakening sinners becomes evident. Through this inlet of approach "eternal law has, in all ages, poured itself down through the human *conscience*, like a fountain through the channel it has worn for itself, and in this instance like hot lava working down a mountain gorge."<sup>2</sup>

Conscience bears her testimony against the violation of the laws of God, bringing home to man a sense of guilt, a feeling of criminality and the throes of remorse. The thief fancies each bush an officer, yea, conscience doth make cowards of us all. The murderer has such unstilled voice of condemnation in his soul that when he keeps silence his bones wax old and his moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Yes, murder will out. Even the inward way of the transgressor is hard. And the psychology which would stifle these cries of anguish with the remark that it is only guilt-consciousness with no objective ground in the divine order has sorely missed the meaning of a universal phenomenon. There is no place here for wishful

<sup>1</sup> Simpson, *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Shedd, *Discourse and Essays*, p. 300.

thinking. This thinking is diametrically opposite to our desires. It is in the highest sense involuntary. The sinner would hide from the all-seeing eye if he could. He cries for the rocks and hills to hide him from the wrath of God. This is simply "the reaction of law, the most dispassionate and unselfish of all realities, against its violator."

Literature is permeated with this sense of justice, the realisation that man ought to make restitution for wrong that he has done. Aeschylus is imbued with a sense of the inviolability of retribution; Shakespeare's manifold dramas are written to demonstrate that "the gods are just, and of our pleasant vices make instruments to plague us." John Hutton finds this sense of justice in Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and Shedd in the same author's *Remorse*. In the latter the guilty and guilt-smitten Ordonia is stabbed by Alhabra, the wife of the murdered Isidore. As the steel drinks his own heart's blood, Ordonia utters the one single word, "Atonement"! His self-accusing spirit, which is wrung with its remorseful recollections, and which the warm and hearty forgiveness of his injured brother has not been able to soothe in the least, actually feels its first gush of relief only as the avenging knife enters, and crime meets penalty.<sup>1</sup> Passing in review in addition to the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, such other examples as Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, Feuillet's *La Morte*, Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, Dostoievsky's *Crime and Punishment*, and Bernard Shaw's *The Showing Up of Blanco Posnet*, Hutton concludes that there is a sense of sin in all great literature. "Literature which has dealt with the human soul at such depth and with such purity and thoroughness of vision that what it has said is true, and

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, *ibid.*, p. 305.

will be recognised as true by serious souls in all times" is confessional. When these elect and priestly souls, who have spoken in great literature, plumb the depths of our beings, when they find man facing the great issue of life at the meeting place of the seen and the unseen, the temporal and the eternal, they proclaim man's duty to make reparation to everyone whom he has wronged. "It is Tolstoy's greatness . . . to have recalled with a fidelity to the facts of our conscience which is almost intolerably true, the instinct of the soul of man, aroused at length, and indignant at itself, and full of revenge upon itself . . . the instinct of man to regard himself as no longer belonging to himself, but to that one, if there be such an one, whom he has pre-eminently wronged."<sup>1</sup>

But "in poetry and art the experience of guilt is not mastered, no word of forgiveness relieves its tragedy . . . the gods remain wrathful, and dark fate works itself out to its inexorable conclusion."<sup>2</sup>

God's Gospel alone does adequate justice to this "inexpugnable sense of guilt which constitutes the most fundamental and persistent deliverance of our moral consciousness."<sup>3</sup> At the Chicago Congress of Religion the Christian minister told the story of Lady Macbeth and called in vain upon the representatives of the non-Christian religions there assembled to offer anything to cleanse the spot of blood from her lily white hand. "Zarathustra has no knowledge of the conceptions of remission or forgiveness of sins" (Geldner). In Hinduism "every action is followed by its consequences; every sin has its retribution; the one who sins has to take its

<sup>1</sup> Hutton, John, *Ancestral Voices*, pp. 132, 133, 140, 215.

<sup>2</sup> Camfield, *Revelation and the Holy Spirit*, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Warfield.

sufferings and punishment.”<sup>1</sup> An Indian fakir crawls on hands and knees all the way to the Ganges to bathe in its sacred waters, only to find after the bath that the pain is still in his soul. There is only one message that can bring peace to the dying sinner and that is the Word of the Cross. There is only one death that can ease the death agony of a robber and that is the death of Christ. Only when the sinner finds that God is faithful and just to forgive him his sin; that is, only when the blood of Jesus cleanses him from all sin can he forgive himself. Forsyth described Christianity as the religion of the common man who lives daily by the sacrifice of Christ. Spurgeon confessed, “When my conscience was aroused to know the evil of sin, I felt that if God did not punish me, He ought to do so. I cannot help holding that atonement must precede pardon, because the little court within my own breast refuses to be satisfied unless some retribution be exacted for the dishonour sin has done to God.” We do not agree with every detail of Anselm’s presentation, but we still find his *Cur Deus Homo?* full of meaning because it seeks first the honour of God in the justifying of a sinner. An old saint once said that he believed he could endure even hell itself except for the fact that he knew he deserved it. The truest echo of the voice of God which sounds in the human breast cries for the vindication of justice, “first save the law, then save me!”

The cry of the heart is for a doctrine that “may assert Eternal Providence, and justify the ways of God to men.” And to these cries there is no answer save in the cross. We can only forgive ourselves when we do so on the ground that God hath justly forgiven us by Himself taking our penalty and bearing our punish-

<sup>1</sup> Moses, Prof. G. Y., of India.

ment. There is no other balm in Gilead. Though it be humiliating to our pride, it is solace to our agonised conscience that "with His stripes we are healed." We were obligated to endure a punishment proportionate to our sins, but God hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all, and by His sufferings we are released from our guilt. "This is the only view of the subject which can give quiet to the troubled spirit and relieve the apprehension of the guilty mind."<sup>1</sup> "Our offences He made His own offences, in order to make His righteousness our righteousness; His malediction is our benediction; from you Christ took flesh to Himself; from Him salvation to you; from you death to Him; from Him life to you; from you contumelies to Him; from Him honours to you."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thornwell, II., 379.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *Enarr.* in Psalm lx.

## A MEDITATION OF LOVE.

“As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love.”—JOHN xv. 9.

“God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”—ROM. v. 8.

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”—1 JOHN iv. 10.

“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”—ROM. v. 5.

“As I have loved you, . . . love one another.”—JOHN xiii. 34.

“Christ leads us to love, honour and glorify the Father, so that we do not halt at the humanity of Christ, through which mercy is exhibited to us, but are drawn through it to the invisible Father to marvel at Him whom we witness doing so great things for us through this humanity of Christ . . . Thus let him not halt here, but penetrate and consider: He does this, not of his own will, but by the will of God the Father. Then he will begin to delight in the most gracious will of the Father which He shows in the humanity of Christ.”—*Luther*.

## A MEDITATION OF LOVE.

THERE is one note that has never been erased from the Christian Gospel. That note is love. Love is the heart of the Gospel, for the Gospel shows that love is the heart of God. No serious student of the Gospel has ever been willing to deny this great dominant theme of the Evangel. It is universally admitted that the Gospel is in some sense God's love story.

The more completely the Word is accepted and its valid implications exhibited, the more marvellous becomes the manifestation of the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ. The cross of Christ is like a diamond with the love of God shining through every one of its many facets, and constituting it the divine magnet which draws men from every stratum of life to God. The New Testament presentation of the cross fills the heart with wonder, love and praise for the amazing grace of Christ. Only in the cross of Christ are the words of Marlowe's stately verse literally true: "Infinite riches in a little room."

No one account—least of all this account—can do justice to the riches of love in Christ Jesus. God honours men with the privilege of preaching the wealth of His love for a life-time here and of studying it for an eternity thereafter. One cannot hope to compress the study of the ages into an evening hour, or into a single chapter in a book. But a meditation upon the source of the love of the cross, the measure of God's love revealed in the cross, and the efficacy of this divine love, may freshen in our hearts some of the manifold streams of mercy which flow from Calvary's fountain.



## i.—THE SOURCE OF THE LOVE OF THE CROSS.

“God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” The disciple whom Jesus loved categorically affirms: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” The love of the cross did not come from man. It could not have come from man, for, as Paul tells us, the love of God appeared when we were “foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.” Indeed, our condition as wicked, ungodly sinners is one of the basic presuppositions of the apostle in his several epistles. And if one object that this is peculiarly Pauline, we have only to remind him of the Gospel records.

God made man good and surrounded him with everything that was conducive to godliness. The gospel of salvation by environment was proved ineffective in the Garden of Eden. Man chose to obey Satan, the father of lies, instead of the God of truth, and in a generation soiled his hands with the blood of his brother. Every imagination of man's heart was so continually evil that God found it necessary to purge the world with a flood. When the race became evil, He chose Abraham and dealt in overflowing covenant mercy with a family and a nation. God's record with His people is that of rising early and sending them one prophet after another to turn them from sin to God; but the record of this elect nation is, that they beat one of these prophets, another they wounded in the head and handled shamefully, a third they killed. Of many others they beat some and killed others, until the Son came, and Him they killed in order to appropriate the inheritance for themselves (Mark xii. 3—7).

No, the love of Calvary did not emanate from man. Below the cross gathered representatives of the human race, and from that mob there burst forth against the figure of the Crucified well-nigh every emotion contrary to love—envy, hatred, scorn, ribaldry, brutality, coarse indifference, intense mockery. “He is despised and rejected of men; . . . He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.” He affirmed: “All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head.” Indeed, as one studies the trial, mockery, scourging and crucifixion of Jesus, it seems that all the venom of the race was concentrated upon that Sufferer. Beneath the cross sin and hate reigned so supreme that hell itself seems to have broken loose. Elert sees here the culmination of man’s hostility toward God. “It was to be expected that the hostile community of mankind would fall at once upon God, their common opponent, at that moment when they were able to imagine that they could deal Him a deadly blow. That moment came when the Godhead stood before them in the limits of the human life of Christ. The individuals who had a part in the persecution and execution of Christ were only the organs of the whole hostile fellowship that has always been in conflict with God, and to this fellowship each of us belongs. The death of Christ is an act of human enmity toward God.”<sup>1</sup>

The love of Calvary was not, then, the love of mankind for God. Man there showed his hatred against all that was good. More than that, the race which expressed its nature in murdering the babes of Bethlehem and in crucifying Christ was not one whose love, loveliness or lovableness, was so evident as to elicit God’s love. In our human loves one who is loving,

<sup>1</sup> Elert, W., *An Outline of Christian Doctrine*, p. 55.

lovely and lovable, captivates our fancy, charms our sensibilities and constrains our affections. But whether one thinks of this world as mirrored in the microcosm of his own wicked heart, in the current daily journals, or on the pages of history, it is evident that such records of lust and sin, crime and carnage, could not have elicited the love of the holy God. The world was not a magnitude either great or good enough to merit His love. The love of the cross finds neither its source nor its sufficient ground in man.

Our Lord Jesus Christ did not find the source or supreme example of love in man. At Calvary Jesus' love exercised forethought and made provision even for His mother, rather than the converse. Where then did our Lord find an example after which to pattern His own great love? Is there any love towering above the lofty heights of Calvary of which that love of the cross may be described as the historical expression? When the shadows of the cross were pressing close about His heart, Jesus said to His own: "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you" (John xv. 9). The love of Calvary rises above the hatreds of earth, and finds its fount in the eternal love of the Father for the Son, and the Son for the Father, and the Spirit for each. In the eternal "I AM" there is a reciprocation of love; eternally the Father loves the Son, and the Son the Father; eternally there is a going forth of love to impress the likeness of the holy God upon His creatures. The love of Calvary is a replica, a manifestation of the eternal love of the Trinity. The cross was lifted by man's hate against God; but it became the prism through which were refracted the varied hues of divine love, kindness, longsuffering, compassion, mercy and grace to the children of men. Below the cross the blackness of human wrath and wickedness, above

the cross not only the decree of divine justice but the compassions of eternal love.

Here, then, in the Godhead is the secret of Christ's love. Love is a relationship which requires at least two terms, lover and beloved. In this case the loved were not objects that could merit the love of the holy God. But in the very being of God Himself there are eternal love relationships. "God is love." And hence out of that self-moving and self-motivated love ever existing between the Persons of the adorable Trinity love came forth into this world of sin. Out of God's great eternal love, out of the heart of the Trinity came the love of Calvary. Before the foundation of the world He did in love predestinate us unto the adoption of sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself (Eph. i. 4, 5). The eternal Son brought the love of heaven into this world of hate, and lifted it so high on that hill called a skull that every nation shall behold its light, every age be mellowed by its glow.

There was a knight of Bethlehem,  
His wealth was tears and sorrows ;  
His men-at-arms were little lambs :  
His trumpeters were sparrows.  
His castle was a wooden cross  
On which He hung on high ;  
His helmet was a crown of thorns  
Whose crest did touch the sky.

Angels desire to look upon the sight, and the Father loveth the Son because the love of God leads Him to lay down His life on the cross for His sinful creatures.

The fountain of love is in the Godhead. God the Father beholds every ray of His divine glory, every trait of His own character, in His Son and replica, and rejoices therein. God's love is His delight in His own holiness and His purpose to stamp that likeness upon His creatures. The cross is the revelation of the love

of the Father who proposed the covenant of grace, the love of the Son who freely undertook our redemption, and the love of the Spirit who sheds abroad this love in our hearts.

A first glance at the Gospel may lead one to speak of the love of the Son who became incarnate, and who, in that human nature, died for us, as greater than the Father's love. A British war-mother who had lost several sons understood differently. She declared that it took more love for one's country to give her sons than for the sons to volunteer. From a close study of the history of Abraham, Principal McIntyre concludes that God the Father desired someone of the sons of men to share with Him in His intense love for sinners, to reveal to some one of them His heart of redemptive love. It was hard for Isaac to offer up his life in the springtime of his days; it was harder for Abraham to strike the blow. If our Lord died in a sorrow which none can name, how shall we creatures describe the heart of God when He turned away His face from the Son of His love, when He was pleased to bruise Him, to put Him to grief?<sup>1</sup> When we think of the cross as the work of the distinct Persons of the Trinity, and consider that the Crucified was the only-begotten, the eternal Son, we remember the heart of a Father. But we are not left to speculation. The greatest love which Jesus knew was the love of the Father for Himself (John xv. 9). He died not to correct or surpass the love of the Father for Him, but to express that love. Jesus, whose love stands in a different category from all the loves of earth, died that in the cords of a man which bound Him to the tree we might know the bands

<sup>1</sup> McIntyre, D. M., *The Faith of Abraham*, in *The Evangelical Quarterly*, VIII., 1.

of the Father's love (cf. Hosea xi. 4). "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. xxxi. 3).

The glory of our Reformed faith is its testimony to a God who is infinite in majesty and eternal in love. The last chapter of the second book of Calvin's *Institutes* shows that the merits of Christ cannot properly be opposed to the mercy of God. "When we speak of the merit of Christ, therefore, we do not consider Him as the origin of it, but we ascend to the ordination of God, which is the first cause; because it was of His mere good pleasure that God appointed Him mediator to procure salvation for us. And thus it betrays ignorance to oppose the merit of Christ to the mercy of God. For it is a common maxim that between two things, of which one succeeds or is subordinate to the other, there can be no opposition. There is no reason therefore why the justification of men should not be gratuitous from the mere mercy of God, and why at the same time the merit of Christ should not intervene, which is subservient to the mercy of God. But to our works are directly and equally opposed the gratuitous favour of God and the obedience of Christ, each in its respective place. . . . Since the merit of Christ depends solely on the grace of God, which appointed this method of salvation for us, therefore His merit and that grace are equally opposed to all the righteousness of men." The order in which Calvinists have generally placed the divine decrees make electing love to precede redeeming merit, as apparently do Hebrews ii. 9 and Ephesians i. 3. The implications of this order are drawn out by Bavinck thus: "That God has forgiven sins, and has given life out of grace alone because of His own will and not because of anything in us, this Christ has

declared to us, and this He has obtained for us.”<sup>1</sup> Machen insists: “The fundamental thing is that God Himself, and not another, makes the sacrifice for sin—God Himself in the Person of the Son assumed our nature and died for us, God Himself in the Person of the Father who spared not His own Son, but offered Him up for us all. Salvation is as free for us as the air we breathe; God’s the dreadful cost, ours the gain. ‘God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.’ Such love is very different from the complacency found in the God of modern preaching; this love is love that did not count the cost; it is love that is love indeed.”<sup>2</sup> And from the heart of Africa Livingstone cries: “What is the atonement of Christ? It is Himself; it is the inherent and everlasting mercy of God made apparent to human eyes and ears. The everlasting love was disclosed by our Lord’s life and death.”<sup>3</sup>

It is just here that Unitarianism runs astray. In the words of Channing, it objects to limiting divine mercy by justice, asserting: “It will not hear that God needs any foreign influence to awaken His mercy.” An eternal love knows no time when it needs to be awakened, and the New Testament and the Trinitarian writers of every age rightly object to this word foreign. Paul categorically asserts that “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” The writer has elsewhere shown that the New Testament writers teach the deity of Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> Redemption is a divine work in the sense that God was not only the author of the plan, but that God was also

<sup>1</sup> Bavinck, *ibid.*, III., 357.

<sup>2</sup> Machen, J. G., *Christianity and Liberalism*, p. 132.

<sup>3</sup> Livingstone, D., *Last Journals*, Aug. 5, 1872.

<sup>4</sup> Robinson, W. C., *Our Lord, An Affirmation of the Deity of Christ.*

the agent by whom the work was accomplished. The apostles have a "deep conviction of the presence of His deity in all His atoning work. They speak of it as a divine work accomplished by God Himself."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Augustine says: "The Mediator was both the offerer and the offering, and He was one with Him to whom the offering was made."<sup>2</sup> John Wessel, a precursor of the Reformation, puts the truth in these words: "Ipse deus, ipse sacerdos, ipse hostia, pro se, de se, sibi satisfecit."<sup>3</sup> In his *Pensées* Blaise Pascal reminds us that "the judge is Himself the sacrifice." Shedd takes up the refrain thus: "Himself the judge, Himself the priest, Himself the sacrifice."<sup>4</sup>

And just because the Gospel is the message which comes straight from God's great heart of eternal love, it is good news, the best, the kindest, the grandest, the most wonderful news ever proclaimed in the universe. It is the good news of light in a world in darkness; the good news of life for dying sinners; the good news of hope for condemned sinners; the good news of freedom from the chains of sin; the good news of life from the certainty of death; the good news of forgiveness from the just desert of punishment to everyone who, by grace, receives it. This is the message which changes the whole aspect of the world and of every relation in it; the message of love, and life and hope for a sin-sick, darkened, despairing world awaiting only the righteous wrath of its Maker. Here is the sun which rises with healing in its wings, cleaving the clouds and rolling away the mists of hate, selfishness and fear in the life of the individual, and placing the eternal love of the

<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, George, *The Apostles' Doctrine of Atonement*.

<sup>2</sup> *De Trinitate*, IV. xix.

<sup>3</sup> *De Causis Incarnationis*, xvii.

<sup>4</sup> *Discourses and Essays*, p. 273.



Father as the foundation for every fatherhood and social order.

ii.—THE CROSS, THE MEASURE OF GOD'S LOVE.

The full force of this truth must be maintained if we are to behold the true wealth of divine love which streams from Calvary. Sin is the contradiction of God's holiness; hence, according to His very nature, God is and must be opposed to sin. The justice of God, which is simply His holiness acting in His power, must execute the penalty against sin. For Him not to do so were not to be the just God. The Holy One must punish sin; but this necessary fact does not destroy or nullify the love of God, it only determines the method according to which love acts. God must punish sin; but in immeasurable love He visited this judicial infliction not upon those who themselves deserved it, but Himself endured that penalty. Mercy and compassion will not be denied. Justice requires the penalty, the sword of wrath must fall; but eternal love becomes incarnate in order to step between, "being made a curse for us."

This is not, as Unitarians would have us believe, the case of one paying that another may release us. We owe to God and God Himself makes the payment. In unmerited love God meets for us His own requirements. God's mercy and compassion work thus: He graciously permits a substitution of the penalty; He provides a substitute; He is the substitute. The offended party allows, prepares, and is the substitute for the offender. "When justice is satisfied for man by the extraordinary method of substituting God for man; by the method of incarnating, humiliating, and crucifying a person of the Trinity; we see the highest conceivable form of divine

compassion and pity.”<sup>1</sup> “The cross of Christ was the noontide of everlasting love; the meridian splendour of eternal mercy.”<sup>2</sup>

Not by denying justice which were to deny Himself and destroy the moral order, but by meeting the requirements of justice in a just economy planned by His own infinite wisdom God’s love saves us. And the love which thus gives itself in our stead is a greater love than that which teachers of the merely moral influence theory find at Calvary. A forgiveness that cost God nothing reveals no love. A forgiveness which was purchased by God merely at the expense of such ignominy and pains as man may inflict speaks little for God’s love, since the blessedness of the divine being is above and beyond any suffering which may be externally inflicted upon Him. Only a requirement that springs from God Himself, a wrath that breaks forth from His own being, is sufficient to reveal a love that cost the infinite and adorable Trinity an effort, and a sacrifice, that is inconceivable and unutterable. When we face the cross in the Biblical manner we are silenced by the unspeakable gift of His love. Hooker wrote, “Let it be counted folly, or frenzy, or fury, or whatsoever; it is our wisdom and our comfort. We care for no other knowledge in the world but this,—that man hath sinned and God hath suffered<sup>3</sup>; that God hath made Himself the sin of men, and that men are made the righteousness of God.”

With the great Bible texts in our heart and mind we come in humbled silence to the cross to meditate on a love that is too lofty for our puny words. But as we ponder these holy words the Spirit reveals ever

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, II., p. 447.

<sup>2</sup> Gaold, *Maclaurin’s Works*, I., p. 78.

<sup>3</sup> Hooker means thereby God in the Person of Christ.

brighter gleams of the wonder of God's ineffable love for us. "As the Father hath loved Me," that is the greatest love Jesus could think of. And yet "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him," until He cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Truly, "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." As these texts mill around in the mind we attain some apprehension of the things that the angels desire to look into. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." For God so loved the world that, in the way in which Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, He did give His only begotten Son to be lifted up for our salvation (John iii. 15, 16). Gogarten tells us that the career of Christ finds its culmination in the cross, for there we see Him taking the curse of the law and the wrath of God to remove these from the believer, and there we behold the love with which He did this.<sup>1</sup>

If one wishes a historical comparison, Abelard denied the requirements of divine justice and taught that the whole efficacy of the cross was in inciting our love to God. Bernard of Clairvaux vigorously opposed Abelard, accusing him of locating "the glory of redemption not in the value of Christ's blood, but in its effects in our walk and conversation." To which of these two protagonists did the love of God mean most, the defender or the opponent of the merely moral influence theory of atonement? To ask the question is to answer it, at least, for those who are familiar with the mediæval thinkers. For all the Christian ages since John, Bernard of Clairvaux is the greatest preacher of the love of God.

<sup>1</sup> Gogarten, *Ich Glaube An Den Dreieinigen Gott*, p. 159.

Or to take a more recent example: I have read many modern expositions of the cross which treat the motives or spirit in which Christ offered Himself as though this were the whole efficacy of His death. But I have never read a modern exponent of the motives or spirit in which Christ made His great sacrifice, who gave as satisfying an exposition of this aspect of Christ's suffering as did James H. Thornwell. The Columbia theologian saw in the cross the glory of the sufferer, the expiation of guilt by penal substitution; but in and through it all he beheld the beauty of that priestly spirit in which Christ, adoring the holiness which required the offering and consumed with compassion for the sinner, gave Himself in our stead. Preach the whole Gospel, and the love of God breaks in a never-ending stream upon the listener. That is why the old, old story of Jesus and His love is ever good news. Calvary opens vistas into the eternal love which time can never exhaust.

In Romans v. Paul reasons that it was a greater mercy to accomplish our redemption than to apply that redemption. The difficult thing was to lay the foundation of forgiveness. "If God so loves the world as to atone vicariously for its sin, He certainly so loves it as to remit its penalty."<sup>1</sup> If, when we were enemies, by His unspeakable love He reconciled us by taking the judicial infliction which was properly ours, surely now that He has placed us on the new reconciled footing His compassions will lead God to say: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee."

And correspondingly this way of forgiveness which God hath wrought is a greater, an infinitely greater, manifestation of His love than an empty pardon. If it

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, II., 393.

were by some breath, turn of the eye, or wave of the hand that life joined issue with death, His love would not be proved almighty. The Socinian attempt to treat forgiveness as the antithesis of atonement and justice as the denial of mercy is forgetting that it is God who gives Himself for us that He may justly forgive us. "The vicarious atonement of Christ is the sovereign and judge putting Himself in the place of the criminal."<sup>1</sup> The judge who pays the fine which his just sentence required is thereby revealed as more compassionate and loving than the judge who violates his oath of office and pardons the offender without a fine. The former showed his love by meeting the cost; the latter had the character neither to decree justice nor to exhibit love. The forgiveness of sins is a marvellous manifestation of God's love when it is preached in the Biblical way. It is God who justifies, the just God who justifies the ungodly, because His own love hath caused Him to bear our sins in His own body on the tree. But an easy, a cheap forgiveness preaches a superficial love, if it preach any love at all. Rather it preaches a cheap sentimentalism that makes God a compromiser with sin, dethrones justice, and destroys all occasion for a great love.

If a young man were to avow his love for a woman, and then, to prove it, cast himself down from the bridge spanning the Golden Gate, he would reveal not a great love, but a great waste. And if he were killed in making the leap, she might well thank Providence for saving her from a mere exhibitionist. But if she were out in the current waging a losing fight against the undertow, and threatened by sharks, and he then dashed in to save her and gave his life for hers, she could

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, II., 383.

never forget that her days were spared at the price of a great love. Lucy Manette could never forget the love of Sidney Carton which, at the cost of his own life, gave her, her husband, and her child life and the peace of England. The truly Christian heart can never forget that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission," and that "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

Moreover, there are still other thoughts which ought to deepen our appreciation of the magnitude of God's love manifest at Calvary. Here we see the heinousness of our sin as we see it nowhere else. Sin is so black that it required all this suffering to save us. Here as nowhere else in human history the awful reality is revealed. True Thornwell writes: "In the penal flames of hell we contemplate the inextinguishable hatred of God to all forms of iniquity." But hell is beyond the frame of temporal visible history, however much its tremendous reality ought to affect life in the present frame.

Again that outbreak of hate beneath and upon the Crucified shows how little deserving man is of the infinite love of God. Then you and I are called to stand with Paul before that cross and appropriate every item of it to ourselves. "He loved me and gave Himself for me." It is my sin which crucified Him; it is my guilt that He expiated, my penalty which He endured; those are the hateful expressions of the sins of my heart which dragged Him to the cross, which spit upon Him and mocked Him. Yea, all that outbreak of sin is a revelation of the venom which works in my breast; all that agony was necessary to save me; how wonderful is the love of Christ!

Perhaps Paul had the most dramatic revelation of this love for Christ's enemies. While he was persecu-

ting the Saviour by scattering His disciples, trying to assuage an accusing conscience by raging against the Church, Christ appeared unto him. The persecuted Saviour revealed Himself to the persecuting zealot as the propitiation for Paul's sins, the answer to the pungent goads of his conscience. Jesus interceded for Paul as He had earlier done for His crucifiers: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And just so does the same heavenly high priest intercede for us. We are believers because He who loved us enough to put Himself in our place made intercession for us, sued out for us on the basis of His atoning death the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit. We are His because He loved us enough to die under our punishment, and then loved us enough to remember for us in the presence of the Father that awful day of darkness, and pleading His wounds secure for us the grace of faith.

### iii.—THE EFFICACY OF THIS DIVINE LOVE.

The first and fundamental effect of the cross was Godward. God's glory was the ultimate end as His love was the first cause of Calvary. God was the active moving force there, and thereby God's love accomplished cosmic changes. God did there that which changed the whole relation of the world to Himself. The love of God wrought the great reconciliation whereby God was related no longer to the sinful creatures of this world only as their just judge, but to those who receive the atonement as their loving heavenly Father; the world was no more merely the instrument which the evil one was using for our destruction, but our Father's house; eternal destiny was not still loaded with darkness, wrath and punishment, but with light, fatherly kindness and heavenly fellowship. By His

death Christ removed the obstacles which divine justice had necessarily placed in the way of fellowship with guilty sinners, so that the Pentecostal effusion of the Holy Spirit might bring a host from every nation and kindred and tribe to wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," that we might receive the promise of the Spirit. As the merits of Christ are consequent upon the everlasting mercy of God, so the regenerating grace of the Spirit depends upon and flows out of the atonement. His expiation is efficacious. Thereby He removed the obstruction to the righteous flow of divine grace, and on that basis He sued out for His people the new life which the Holy Spirit brings. The love of the Almighty brought to earth by the cross is the mightiest dynamic which has ever blessed this planet.

And this record is not a mere account of the moral influence which the impact of the cross makes on us. Only some of the Jerusalem rabble were mightily moved, notably the centurion and one of the two thieves. Another thief died cursing and mocking, soldiers callously gambled, chief ecclesiastics were unchanged. The heart of man has been hardened by sin, his sensibilities dulled and his spiritual apprehension blinded. The cross is so potent among men, then, not primarily because of the reflex action which it naturally awakens in men. The love of Calvary is efficacious because God the Holy Ghost sheds abroad that love in our hearts (Rom. v. 5). God so accompanies the preaching of the cross which the intelligentsia call foolishness with the presence of His Spirit that the cross becomes to saved sinners the power of God and the wisdom of God (I Cor. i. 18—24). According to the counsel of His own will, God has willed to make the love of Christ



efficacious in saving many. "By His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities." "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." What God hath redeemed, God is going to have. The love of God is pre-eminently exhibited in the cross, but that love is not exhausted there. The Holy Spirit sheds abroad the gracious love of God, reaching blackened lives and opening seared hearts, so that sinners appropriate the love of Christ to their own salvation.

The cross so clearly reveals the saving love of God that sinful man may apprehend it. When Christ so forgot Himself as to take the form of a servant, and in the likeness of men became obedient as far as death, and that the death of the cross (Phil. ii. 7, 8), He brought the ladder of salvation so low that the last, the least and the lowest may touch its bottom rung. Society has no "untouchables" too abject to apprehend the crucified Redeemer.

And conversely, there are no philosophers so wise, no scientists so learned that they can attain a saving knowledge of God apart from Christ. For sinners, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ (II Cor. iv. 6), and everyone that believeth on Him hath everlasting life (John iii. 15, 16, 36.) No one knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal Him (Matt. xi. 27; Luke x. 22); and no one cometh unto the Father but by Him (John xiv. 6). Ruskin has pointed out that God's way of revealing Himself has been simple enough for all His creatures to understand. The admission of creatures to communion with their Creator has been rested "not on their having a knowledge of astronomy, but on their having a human soul." In

order to render this communion possible the deity has stooped from His throne, and has in the person of the Son taken upon Him the veil of human flesh, and in the person of the Father taken upon Him the veil of our human thoughts, permitting us by His own spoken authority to conceive Him simply and clearly as a loving Father and Friend. But when, in our pride of heart, "we refuse to accept the condescension of the Almighty, and desire Him, instead of stooping to hold our hands, to rise up before us in His glory, we hoping that by standing on a grain of dust or two higher than our fellows, we may behold the Creator as He rises—God takes us at our word. He rises into His own invisible and inconceivable majesty; He goes forth upon the ways which are not our ways, and retires into the thoughts that are not our thoughts. And presently we say in our vain hearts, 'There is no God.'"<sup>1</sup>

The ministry which culminated at Calvary is the revelation of God's own heart and desire for men. Near the beginning of His ministry Jesus said that "God is a Spirit." This great truth might have remained an abstract proposition except that His own ministry gave it content. The great loving heart of God has been revealed on the pages of our history in a human life—the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Would you know God? "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," saith Jesus. Stoop to Bethlehem's manger and read the words, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," and God is no longer an abstraction. Follow that life of love as Jesus obeys, toils, provides for the home in Nazareth, as a thousand miracles of mercy spring from His hands to show the very heart of God in this vale of sorrow and sighing; see His arms

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, J., *Fronde Agrestes*, cited by Moffatt, *The Day Before Yesterday*, pp. 78-79.

open for the babes, His touch of the bier which gives a widow back her bairn; hear His words of assurance in the darkest hour of a father's anxiety, His forgiveness for the paralytic and for the woman of the city; go with Him through the Garden and the Judgment and the *via dolorosa*; mark His prayer for His tormentors, His provision for His mother, His pardon for the penitent; remember that He is risen, ascended, and at the right hand of God. Our flesh and blood brother who loved us and gave Himself for us is now in the glory. God hath to-day not only a heart of infinite grace, but also one of brotherly sympathy. We have here no merely abstract picture of God's love. God is revealed, "the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." The nearer we draw to this saving revelation, the closer we lean on Jesus' bosom, the sooner we learn that "God is love." "Just in the Crucified do we recognise the loving will of God, and from the friendly heart of Jesus rise aloft to the heart of God."<sup>1</sup>

In the ministry of our Lord there is something for the tendrils of our hearts to attach themselves to. He is the infinite-sided magnet which draws "all men unto Himself." God is no empty abstraction. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, this is the revelation that brought such grace to Martin Luther. God in the crushing burdens of life, God in His justice and judgment became to Luther God in His strange work. But God in Christ was the work of God's delight. Here is His heart made known, and it is all sweetness and light, mercy and forgiveness. God is already gracious; we know it as we contemplate the wounds of Christ. Because "satisfaction has first

<sup>1</sup> Luther cited by Seeberg, *ibid.*, p. 184.

been rendered most completely to righteousness," God is "merciful will, kind will," "nothing but love," "nothing else than pure benevolence." It is truly dangerous for sinners to seek to know God apart from Christ. He is the content of Scripture, the essence of the apostolic preaching.

The New Testament and the Apostles' Creed furnish abundant evidence that the most primitive Christian preaching consisted chiefly in the things concerning Jesus (Luke xxiv. 19; Acts i. 1; xxviii. 31; v. 42; and the oral Gospel as given in Acts and I Cor. xv. 3—4).<sup>1</sup> The Reformer perceived that this was the way in which God willed to make His grace known to us, and insisted that sinners cease attempting to build the temple of divine truth beginning with the roof, the *theologia gloriæ*, and start rather from the ground, the *theologia crucis*. The Reformer never tired of commending Christ as Jacob's ladder, the way of access for sinners to God. "He has made a ladder, a way and a bridge to you, and He says, I climb down from heaven to you, and become man in the womb of the Virgin Mary, lie in the cradle at Bethlehem, suffer and die for you; believe in Me and trust in Me there, who has been crucified for you." "We must carefully observe this order, we must not climb up to examine the divine majesty until we have comprehended this Child Christ; we must ascend to heaven on this ladder which is put before us, and we must avail ourselves of the steps which God has prepared and fitted for this purpose. The Son of God did not desire to be seen and found in heaven; therefore He descended from heaven to this lowly place and came to us in our flesh, and laid Himself in His mother's bosom and in the cradle, and was nailed to the cross. This is the ladder which He has set up on earth so

<sup>1</sup> Heffern, *Apology and Polemic in the New Testament*, pp. 56, 58.

that we may ascend to God upon it. . . . Remain on this road and use this ladder." "Christ alone is the way and the truth." "Therefore the true theology and knowledge of God is to be found in the crucified Christ." "Begin your wisdom and your knowledge with Christ, and say: I know no other God than Him who is in that man." "There is life only in the grace and truth of the beloved Son of God, Jesus Christ . . . and no one knows anything of God except it be revealed to him by the Son who knows the Father's heart, . . . for without Him no one can be saved." "God cannot be apprehended save only in the flesh of Christ. . . . He who has Christ stamped upon his heart can assuredly thereafter mount up to the Father."

Again Luther speaks of God in His majesty as naked, and of God in Christ as God clothed in such signs or wrappings as we can apprehend. "It is the first step in the wrong direction, when men depart from God as He has clothed Himself and become incarnate, and pursue the naked God. . . . But let us all take care to abide by these signs in which God has revealed Himself to us. . . . His Son, born of the Virgin Mary, and lying among the oxen in the manger, the Word, baptism, the Lord's Supper and absolution. For in these pictures we see and find God whom we are able to bear, God who comforts us, raises us up in hope, and saves us." "Whoever desires to be safe and to handle so great matters without danger, let him simply confine himself to the forms, signs, and those wrappings of the Godhead, such as His Word and His works. For in His Word and His works He shows Himself to us; and those who touch these are made whole, as the woman with the issue of blood was made whole by the touch of His garment." As for old Israel Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so for all nations

“God sets up a sign of grace that He might be known by sinners, and that sinners might be saved.” “Christ is to be sought where He has manifested Himself and desired to be known. . . . In the New Testament we have for a visible form the Son of God in the bosom of Mary His mother, who suffered and died for us, as the Creed says. Besides this we have other visible forms, baptism, the eucharist and the spoken Word itself.”

In similar strain Thornwell writes: “The cross is the only place where men can truly find God, and the incarnate Redeemer the only being in whom a sinner can adequately know Him.”<sup>1</sup> The cross is mighty because it reveals God. And the Reformer has well observed that there is enough of the revelation of God in the cross to last a man all his life. We can never think of God as mere arbitrary or omnipotent will as long as we see Him through the cross.

Warm, sweet, tender, even yet  
 A present help is He,  
 And faith hath still her Olivet  
 And love her Galilee.

<sup>1</sup> Cited by Hendry, G. S., *God the Creator*, pp. 90, 93, 108, 112, 114, 116. The writer does not agree with Hendry that Luther taught a purely Christocentric theology, but would point to other teaching, of Luther concerning God as He is everywhere active in life as given, e.g., in Seeberg, *Lehr. d. Dogmengeschichte*, IV., I., 174-183; Hendry's *ibid.*, p. 100-101; Althaus, *Paulus U. Luther*.

The written Word must be read in the name of Jesus Christ, who is its living Lord, its present subject and its constant theme, if it is not to become a mere statement of abstract principles. But also the living Word must be accepted in all the glory which He has ascribed to Himself in the Holy Scriptures if our faith is not to become the Christocentric pantheism of a Schleiermacher (Schaeder, E., *Theozentrische Theologia*), or the worship of a finite cult deity such as McGiffert has presented in *The God of the Early Christians*, and against which Dean Doumergue has warned us. As Van Til has indicated, our theism must be a Christian theism, and our Christianity must be a theistic Christianity. Theism cannot be separated from Christ, nor Christ from theism.

The cross hath drawn men, the cross does draw men by its matchless revelation of the love of God. The appeal of the cross applied by the Holy Spirit melts the heart of stone. Here is the marvel of the cross; it presents a scene of love such as the world had never seen before and will never see again. When the world was lost, ruined and undone, when all hope had fled from earth, and apparently fled for ever, Jehovah bows the heavens and comes down, and, travelling in the majesty of His strength, works out a redemption for His imprisoned subjects which astonished the angels and made the universe stand aghast. Here was love, unspeakable love, "When God the mighty Maker died for man the creature's sin." And when this amazing love is fully apprehended and distinctly realised, the stoutest heart of the proudest sinner will yield to its mighty influence. Love is the talisman by which God subdues the sinner's heart and gains his supreme affection. Let him firmly believe and strongly realise that Jesus was indeed the Lamb of God slain for the sins of the world, and that it was love, almighty love, which occasioned the awful sacrifice, and he will bow his soul in the depths of humility and give his heart to God. So the Gospel accomplished what the law could not do; it infuses into the sinner's mind a principle of holiness and living obedience; it gives him what nothing else could give him, a love of God, and under the sacred influence of the Holy Ghost fits him to enjoy the blessedness of heaven. Thus is Christ the Saviour of His people.<sup>1</sup>

When in His great love our Lord gave Himself for us, He at the same time flung Himself and His cause at love, that greatest dynamo of human affairs. Too often love and righteousness have appeared in separa-

<sup>1</sup> Thornwell, II., 379-380.

tion, if not opposition. Goodness has at times worn the cloak of Pharisaic pride, of Puritanical narrowness, of Javert's justice, or of the austerity of age. In the cross God hath joined together justice and mercy, love and righteousness, so that man cannot sever them. We must love Him who first loved us; and loving Him, we cannot but love that holy justice which is the crown of His own glory. A love like that of Calvary has evoked a response, and it continues to elicit our devotion. The cross is the incentive for consecration, the call which moves men to give up lives of wealth and prominence to preach the Gospel and serve in the mission field. If we to-day need a greater outpouring of life for the spread of the kingdom let us look to our preaching. "May the glowing and mellifluous power of Thy love," prays Francis of Assisi, "absorb my mind from all things that are under heaven, that I may die from love of Thy love, who hast deigned to die from love of my love." Towering over the lives of the great missionaries, Raymond Lull, Zinzendorf, Brainerd, Sam Lapsley, there is ever the vision and the constraining power of the love of Christ. Indeed, the history of the Church through the centuries in all that is noble therein is a series of reflections and refractions from the great love that shone in the bleeding back and the broken heart of the Crucified.

It has been suggested that there are about three types of mind—the metaphysical, the mechanical, and the social. Often the preacher, particularly if he be a teacher, is more nearly of the first type. The love of Christ is necessary, absolutely necessary, for each of us, individually and socially. After reviewing the various plans for social organisation, such as nationalism, socialism, totalitarianism, communism, each of which find their motive wholly in man and some of



which testify that "above all nations is humanity," Professor Latourette writes: "Only as men everywhere are seen to take their significance from God, a God who constrains men not only by judgment, but also by the cross, and calls them unto loving fellowship with Himself and with one another, can they find a sufficiently compelling motive for world-wide fellowship."<sup>1</sup>

The experience of Muretus, a scholar who had fallen on evil days, and was picked up in the streets and rushed to a hospital, is in point. There the doctors said to another in Latin: "Let us experiment on this poor wretch." The scholar replied in equally good Latin: "Will you call him a poor wretch for whom Christ died?"<sup>2</sup>

Shedd has an instructive essay on *Vicarious Atonement and Philanthropy*, in which he contrasts the cruelty of Islam with the softening influence of the cross. After recording a dreadful act of cruelty by Mohammedan slave-traders, a noted traveller, Sweinfurth, concludes: "The history of Islam has ever been a history of crime, and to Christian morality alone do we owe all the social good that we enjoy." "The doctrine of God's vicarious atonement—that the incarnate Creator of mankind suffered and died for both the slave and the master, that their sins might be forgiven—is the root of all genuine and deep love between man and man. They who feel that they have been redeemed by a common blood and sacrifice cannot bite and devour one another. This is the one touch of grace that makes the whole world kin."<sup>3</sup>

The apostle bows his knees "unto the Father of our

<sup>1</sup> Latourette, *Missions To-morrow*, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> Coffin, H. S., *The Meaning of the Cross*, p. 105-106.

<sup>3</sup> Shedd, *Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy*, pp. 222-223.

Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Our Lord carries love back to its ultimate source, the eternal love of the Father for the Son (John xv. 9). Referring to this intratrinitarian love, Thornwell finds<sup>1</sup> "a foundation for society in the very essence of deity. . . . There was the deepest union and the most ineffable communion, and it was only to reflect their blessedness and glory that other persons and other societies were formed, whose laws and principles must be traced to the bosom of the deity." Forgetting that each person enters society by birth into a family, Rousseau taught that society originated in a social contract; Aristotle held that man was by nature a political or social animal; but this Biblical theologian properly traced society back to the bosom of the eternal God. Now it is in and through the cross of Jesus Christ that this love of the Trinity becomes manifest to men, so that it may work out in human relationships. Hence, a minister is only true to the best interests of the social order when he openly and repeatedly portrays Christ crucified.

The very quintessence of the salt of the earth, the saving love of God which alone can supply the cement for a society which will in any way approximate doing the will of God as it is done in heaven, is in Jesus' words: "Love one another, even as I have loved you." "We love Him because He first loved us." The preaching of the cross will do more to establish the kingdom of God among men than all the social panaceas and all the international programmes ever proposed. Through the cross we see the Most High in terms of a life of love; through the cross we are moved to build a society of persons after the divine pattern; with the Word of

<sup>1</sup> Thornwell, I., 511.

the Cross the Holy Spirit is given to shed abroad in our hearts, homes and social order the love of God. The apotheosis of the spirit of the cross, the love of the Triune God, is the great *desideratum* for human society. Only under the cross do we recognise the right of the weaker over the stronger as a part of the moral structure of the universe. There we find love stronger than force; principle worth more than expediency; righteousness more precious than life. The love of Christ shed abroad in human hearts by the Holy Spirit does more to sweeten life, soften animosities, sanctify obligations, heighten responsibilities, cause men to do justly and love mercy, than all the other powers for good which act upon them.

Alexander Maclaren, of Manchester, says: "I have been so convinced that I was best serving all the varied social, economical, and political interests that are dear to me by preaching what I conceive to be the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that I have limited myself to that work. I am sure, with a growing conviction day by day, that so we Christian ministers best serve our generation."<sup>1</sup>

The glory of the God of all grace, the good of society, the needs of men dying without the story of God's great love, call upon us to give our pulpits anew to the preaching of the old, old story of Jesus and His love.

<sup>1</sup> Pattison, *History of Preaching*, p. 344.

## THE LAMB OF GOD.

“He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.”  
—ISAIAH liii. 7.

“Redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”—1 PETER i. 18-19.

“And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne . . . stood a Lamb as it had been slain.”—REVELATION v. 6.

“The sole sacrifice is Christ Jesus our Lord by which the wrath of God is satisfied.”—*Luther*.

“He alone is the Lamb of God, He alone is the oblation, the expiation, the satisfaction for sins.”—*Calvin*.

## THE LAMB OF GOD.

AFTER centuries of silence God again spake to His people through the stern voice of a wilderness prophet, and ere long one of the greatest revivals in all history was in progress. The pungent words of the prophet of God laid bare the consciences of men. Stung by his messages, convicted of sin, they rush to the baptism of repentance, crying for forgiveness. Moreover, a delegation of priests and Levites from Jerusalem, finding their own precincts deserted as men are drawn to the rough-clad prophet, have come to ask who he is. Perhaps the shadow sacrifices in the Temple are growing thin and unsatisfactory now that the real sacrifice is about to appear. The time is hastening on when worldly ecclesiastics will answer to Judas's agonising confession: "I have sinned," with that callous rejoinder: "What is that to us?"—an acknowledgment of their impotence to help sinners. To the conjoined cry from sinners' hearts and the half-confessed impotence of Israel's religious leaders, the long bony finger of the wilderness witness points to Jesus as John cries: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." In all history there has never been a cry that has gone so straight to the hearts of men and incited such a response from their souls. One of the Baptist's disciples treasured up that cry until on the Isle of Patmos a revelation which Jesus Christ made to him gave it heavenly proportions. Every branch of the Christian Church has given it first place in the hours of her devotion, the most sacred moments of her worship. Sinsick souls of every nation, clime, and tongue have found here the peace that passeth understanding, the kiss of God's own forgiveness.

## i.—THE LAMB OF GOD IN TYPE.

“It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these” (Hebrews ix. 23).

Jesus was pointed out as the Lamb of God, the bearer of sin, by John, the baptiser, the last of the Hebrew prophets and the son of a Jewish priest. John was speaking to representatives of the Pharisees, the priests and the Levites. Thus, one may not inappropriately see in the index finger which the Baptist turned upon Jesus the witness of the old Israelitic theocracy with its sacrifices and ritual.

Moreover, when one remembers that this scion of the Aaronic priesthood was a man dwelling not in the Temple precincts, but in the wilderness, subsisting on locusts and wild honey and clothed with camel's hair, he may well think of John as in a broader sense representing the whole gamut of human religion since Jehovah first slew animals to cover the primitive pair (Gen. iii. 21). The sacrifices of Israel pointed to the Servant of the Lord who should be led as a Lamb to the slaughter; but in a wider and less direct sense every sacrificial rite, however erroneous in performance, testified to a need for expiation that could be met only by the Lamb of God. “So all the sacrifices of mankind, directly in Israel and indirectly in the heathen world, point to the great perfect sacrifice which is Christ, the mediator of God brought to man upon the cross of Golgotha.”<sup>1</sup>

It is beyond the purport of this discussion to debate the various theories of the origin of sacrifice. The writer is of the opinion that Dr. S. M. Zwemer has

<sup>1</sup> Bavinck, H., *ibid.*, III., 305.

cited scholarly authorities,<sup>1</sup> and given adequate reasons for rejecting W. Robertson Smith's contention that sacrifices originated in totemism.

There is considerable evidence that one purpose of primitive sacrifice was propitiation, that is, to appease the anger and avert the judgment of Deity. Ross finds this in *The Original Religion of China* (p. 106); James "believes with Dr. Westermarck that the idea of substitution is vital in blood sacrifice."<sup>2</sup> Professor W. Schmidt has this interesting account of the sin-offering of the Semang, a pigmy tribe of Malacca: "When the thunder rolls—this is the voice of the Supreme Being, Kari—they take a bamboo knife, make a little cut with it at the knee, mix the blood that comes from the wound with water, and throw the mixture skywards, praying at the same time for pardon for their sins, and also, if the storm lasts a long time, making a detailed confession of their sins."<sup>3</sup> Bavinck concludes that among the sin offerings the blood sacrifices take first place, and have a destructive and substitutionary character.<sup>4</sup> The power of priesthood and ritual in every land is rooted in the common consciousness of sin with its rift between God and man and the obligation to propitiate a properly offended Deity. Realising the blinding effects of sin, we would say of the sundry ethnic cults what our Saviour said of the Samaritan worship, "Ye worship ye know not what," and yet we recognise in their dim feeling after God, in their felt need for a substitute to offer for the sin of their souls,

<sup>1</sup> Zwemer, S. M., *The Origin of Religion*, pp. 142-150, citing on this point LeRoy, *The Religion of the Primitives* and G. A. Barton *Semitic and Hamitic Origins* in which the latter retracts his earlier support of totemism.

<sup>2</sup> James, O. E., *Origins of Sacrifice*, cited Zwemer, *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Schmidt, W., *Origin and Growth of Religion*, p. 281.

<sup>4</sup> Bavinck, *ibid.*, p. 305.

a groping after, if not a pointing toward, the Lamb of God. From the thousand smoking pyres on which men have offered animals, birds, and their fellow-men, there arises a universal testimony to man's need for a Saviour. Schmidt and Zwemer aver that this realisation is a remnant of the primitive revelation, while the way in which it has been so grossly misused is attributable to sin. Thus, their verdict, drawn from the study of human cultures, is in substantial agreement with Paul's account in Romans i.

Perhaps the offering of Isaac, so dramatically narrated in Genesis xxii., has been too little appreciated either in Christian or world history. The discovery of an old urn, on which is the figure of a ram caught in a thicket, led M. G. Kyle to conclude that this incident was used by the Lord to discourage and prevent human sacrifice. The presence of this fearful cult in Mesopotamia, North Europe and Mexico, as well as in the cannibalism of Africa and the South Sea islands, causes one to wonder whether it were not well-nigh universal for man to seek to substitute the fruit of his body or the body of his enemy for the sin of his soul. God tested Abraham to prove his obedience and to put a stop to human sacrifice. God provided the ram caught in the thicket and stopped the hand of the sorely tried father. The Most High said in effect you have not withheld your son, the only son of the promise, and so in blessing I will bless you. In this act you have typified the loving heavenly Father Himself. Take the ram and offer it now; and not you, but God through your seed will offer His only Son, the real sacrifice for sin. At least two of our great Gospel texts are modelled on this tremendous scene on Mount Moriah, namely: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely



give us all things?" and, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In this story the love of Abraham is a type of the love of God; and both Isaac and the ram are typical of Christ. In his heart Abraham offered up his son; on the altar the dumb beast was substituted for the child of promise until the antitype should come, the Lamb of God, made of the seed of Abraham to become that sin-offering through whose blood the promise to Abraham should be fulfilled and all nations blessed.

Although in the large John may represent the priests of all ages and nations who have offered sacrifices designed in some way to expiate sin, he is peculiarly the spokesman of Israel, and his testimony is to a responsible delegation sent by the religious authorities of that nation. The sense of his words, then, is that Christ is the antitype of the lambs which have been offered by Israel to God as sacrifices for sin, particularly as set forth in the ritual of Leviticus. "The New Testament sees in Christ an offering and the fulfilment of the Old Testament sacrificial worship."<sup>1</sup> Our Lord Himself, in His discourse on the road to Emmaus, bade His disciples find in Moses and the prophets the things concerning the necessity of His own death. Thus He pointed to the ritual law as offering prefigurations of His work. Moreover, Isaiah specifically states that the Servant of the Lord is like a Lamb bruised of the Lord for the sins of many. For these reasons we find in the sacrificial system of the Pentateuch a type of the work of Christ; and an examination of the steps in this ritual helps us in understanding and appropriating the work of the Saviour.

<sup>1</sup> Bavinck, H., *ibid.*, p. 311.

In making this examination the writer is availing himself of the careful studies of Dr. G. Vos.

The first step or act in the ritual of sacrifice is the selection of the animal. The lamb or other animal must be a perfect specimen of its kind, free from any blemish. The age and condition are carefully specified. The sacrificial lamb was repeatedly examined for any of the numerous defects which would unfit it as an offering. Only the best may be given to the Lord. Of course, an animal cannot make moral distinctions; but at least after a negative fashion it may be ethically clean, without moral defects or liabilities of its own. An innocent, morally pure, perfect animal is sacrificed for a sinful, abnormal, imperfect man. Thus, although the lamb to some extent symbolises man's giving of himself to God, it is not a mere picture of man. But since the lamb is ceremonially the opposite of man, we must call this a substitute for, rather than an exact picture of man. In more technical language this means we affirm the symbolico-vicarious rather than the purely symbolic doctrine of sacrifice. In Isaiah liii. the Servant in the innocence and meekness of a lamb is brought to the slaughter, for us who have gone astray like wayward sheep. Without a murmur or complaint He takes the punishment which our sins deserve. Of our Lord we read that He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners"; that He was "without sin," yea, "knew no sin"; and that we are redeemed "not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

The second step in the ritual is the laying on of the hands of the offerer. Bringing the animal to the sanctuary the offerer "leans" his hands on the head of the animal and presses down hard. The laying on of hands

is a common Biblical phrase which we have retained in ordination. The idea always symbolises something transferred from the one who lays his hands on to the one on whom the hands are laid. When the children of Israel transfer to the tribe of Levi the responsibility for conducting the worship of God they lay their hands upon them (Num. viii. 10). The thing transferred depended on the occasion, but there was always a transfer of something from one person or group of persons to another.

“The sacrifice made by the high priest on the day of atonement was piacular. It was the means provided to wipe out the guilt of the people.”<sup>1</sup> In this service two goats are used as ceremonially one to symbolise the double aspect of the expiation of sin, its punishment by death and its subsequent removal from the land. The complete work which one sacrifice could accomplish only by living again after death is in this ritual represented by the two goats which are ceremonially one. The law provides that “Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away.” “This undoubted act of the transference of guilt” indicates that the offerer transfers from himself to the sacrifice his guilt or desert of punishment by laying or leaning his hand on the head of the sacrifice. “Through the imposition of hands the offerer placed his sin upon the animal.”<sup>2</sup>

In other cases individuals “brought forward their victims, placed their whole weight upon them to symbolise the substitutive nature of the rite, and then slit

<sup>1</sup> Cave, Sydney, *The Word of Christ*, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Bavinck, H., *ibid.*, p. 306.

their throats.”<sup>1</sup> Isaiah says of the suffering Servant, “The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.” On Jordan’s banks a prophet of the priestly line has laid bare the sins of men and called them to repentance. He does not deny or disavow their need for a sacrifice for sin. But as he baptises One who needs no baptism of repentance for sins of His own, a dove, a sacrificial animal, lights upon that One; and John points Him out as the Lamb of God, the bearer of sin. By the voice from heaven, by the Spirit in the form of a dove resting upon Him, God has declared this One the Servant who should be led as a lamb to the slaughter; yea, by this word and act God has laid on Him the sins of the world. Thus, heeding God’s Word as a penitent sinner,

I lay my sins on Jesus,  
The spotless Lamb of God;  
He bears them all and frees us  
From the accursed load.—*Bonar.*

The third step in the ritual is the slaying of the sacrifice. The animal is to be slain by the offerer on the north side of the altar. “This act has given the altar the name *mizbeach*, ‘place of slaughter.’” Having transferred the guilt of his sin to the lamb, the offerer with his own hand kills the animal, thus signifying that death is the penalty of sin. He inflicts upon the sacrifice that which his sin deserves. After the slaying of the animal, the outpoured blood, the most eloquent symbol of death, is used as the exponent of expiating death. Death is the penalty of sin vicariously inflicted in sacrifice; and, at least in the exceptional case of the heifer whose neck is broken in the rough valley, guilt is put away by death even without any use of blood (Deut. xxi. 1—9). Thus, it is blood which has passed

<sup>1</sup> Morton, *In the Steps of the Master*, p. 399.

through the crisis of death that expiates for sin, while blood in its normal state does not so expiate. Blood which has been shed in death expiates; and without such shedding of blood, without such vicarious dying, there is no remission of sins. At the Last Supper our Lord assured us that His blood of the new covenant was shed for many for the remission of sins. He "was made a little lower than the angels . . . that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man, . . . that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death." The first thing in the most primitive Christian preaching is "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures"; and as though that were the culminating act of the sacrifice, the Lamb stands in the midst of the throne<sup>1</sup> "as it had been slain."

Fourthly, this blood which symbolises life that has passed through the crisis of death is applied to the covering of sins. In Leviticus xvii. 11 we read: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement (literally, a covering) for your souls: for it is the blood which maketh an atonement for the soul." Thus, in a ritual sense "blood" and "life" and "soul" are identical. According to the Old Testament conception the "soul" is distinctly associated with individuation and sensibility. When the spirit of life joins breath to a body, a soul, a distinct individual with sensations or feelings ensues. Putting these thoughts together we find that blood has its rich symbolism in sacrifice first, because it is shed blood, it stands for life given in death; secondly, because it stands for the death of another individual substituted for the offerer; and

<sup>1</sup> Thayer understands *ὢς* in the sense of a quality which really belongs to the person in Revelation v. 6. (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 681.)

thirdly, because this substituted death involves sensation, feeling, suffering. It is because the sacrificial blood has such a wealth of meaning, not from any morbidity or gruesomeness, that the New Testament so frequently speaks of the blood of Christ. All the riches of grace in Christ Jesus, all the efficacy of His atonement is in the phrase. "The blood of Christ is the only satisfaction, expiation, and purgation for the sins of the faithful."<sup>1</sup> Referring specifically to the *Te Deum laudamus*, which has been "regarded from early times as the classic expression of Christian faith,"<sup>2</sup> the Rev. Thomas Houghton has properly said: "The blood theology was, and has always been, the theology of the true people of God."<sup>3</sup> And a word of warning may well be sounded to those who caricature the phrase as a butcher-shop theory of the atonement, or undertake to remove the blood of Christ from Christian hymns, lest they count "the blood of the covenant, wherewith He was sanctified an unholy thing," or "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame."

With sacrificial blood "the priest shall make atonement for his [the offerer's] sin" (Leviticus iv. 35). The blood applied to specified objects obliterates sin from the sight of God. At the passover the father, as head and priest of the family, applied the blood to the doorposts and lintel of the house to cover the home from the visit of the angel of death. In the highest form of the ritual the high priest applies the blood to the mercy-seat in the holy of holies. The meaning is that our sin, our opposition to God, has called forth an

<sup>1</sup> *Institutes*, III., v., vi.

<sup>2</sup> Kostlin, in the *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopædia*, XI., 286.

<sup>3</sup> In *Peace and Truth*, XXI., 80, 173.

opposing reaction from the offended holiness of God. We or our sins need to be covered; and by the blood of expiation God blots out our sins as a thick cloud, and remembers them against us no more. He removes them as far as the east is from the west. Among men the offender seeks to placate the offended; and among the pagans man would placate the gods or smooth out the wrinkles from their frowning faces. But according to the Bible, it is God who covers us from His own wrath by expiatory blood. He provides the Lamb for the propitiation of our sins, He offers the Lamb, He is the Lamb, He blotted out "the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross," and thus in Him "we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." Clement of Rome tenderly exhorts us: "Let us fix our gaze on the blood of Christ, because it was poured out for our salvation, and brought the grace of repentance to the world."

The fifth step in the sacrificial ritual is the burning of the lamb or of certain parts thereof upon the altar. This burning yields an odour of a sweet savour of delight to Jehovah. The Scriptures speak of the punishment of sin as something required by the justice of God, they do not speak of it as His delight. Luther saw in it God's strange work. But consecrated obedience to God is His delight. Hence the expiatory meaning of the offering seems to have been completed in the former acts. The thought, then, is that the penal transaction being ended, sin covered, and the way of access now being opened, the life is consumed, sublimated, changed into a finer substance by consecration to God. This process seems to be applicable both to the substitute and to the offerer. In His high-priestly prayer our Lord declared that He sanc-

tified Himself for our sakes that we also might be sanctified by the truth (John xvii. 19). That He might be the end of the law, fulfilling its precepts as well as enduring its penalty, Christ offered to God an active consecratory obedience on behalf of sinners, "so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." And it is also true that the blood of Christ purges our consciences from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. ix. 14). By His once offering of Himself Christ has for ever removed the penalty due to sin, secured for sinners free access to God and procured for them that peace of conscience that the law could never give. On the new footing which He has obtained for us we also become "followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour."

The sacrificial meal is the final act of the ritual. The sacrifice has been given to God; and now at His sanctuary we are His guests partaking of His food. The offence has been removed, and we enjoy the peace offering. A table fellowship indicates the cessation of hostilities and the enjoyment of communion again. The favour and blessedness of the Lord which works wholeness in the recipient is the thought here. The eating of the passover was such an act, and similarly the table of the Lord<sup>1</sup> is not a renewal or repetition of His sacrifice, but a sacrificial meal based on the sacrifice of Christ which has been offered once for all. Since Christ our passover was once sacrificed for us, therefore, the cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood

<sup>1</sup> In the early Church the Lord's Supper was partaken at a table; the substitution of an altar for a table came later, vide W. Lowrie, *The Church and Its Organisation in Primitive and Catholic Times*, pp. 268, 281-288.



of Christ and the bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ (I Cor. x. 16).

## ii.—THE LAMB OF GOD INCARNATE.

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” All down the ages through the testimony of an accusing conscience, God’s voice has been heard, it may often have been faintly, calling man to realise his need for expiation. The ram which God provided as a substitute for Isaac, the passover lamb, and the whole sacrificial system of Israel, have pointed forward to one who in His personal life would be a true substitute for sinful persons, and whose infinite worth would cover the awful demerit of sin. The suffering Servant of Isaiah is the most detailed prophecy of this coming substitute.

Through the mouth of John the Baptist, a prophet and more than a prophet, the precursor sent to prepare the way for the Lord, God designated Jesus of Nazareth as the Lamb which He had provided to be the real sin-bearer. All other sacrificial animals had been types and shadows which could never adequately expiate sin. Here was the antitype, the reality, God’s true sacrifice. And as when the antitype is come the types pass away, so in the providence of God the offering of sacrifices in Israel passed away when Christ the Lamb of God had accomplished God’s sacrifice on Calvary in substitution for sinners.

Jesus of Nazareth, then, is the Lamb of God. If you would be free of your guilt and sin, He is the sin-bearer which God has provided, accredited and accepted. “By transferring to Himself the punishment we deserved, He has obliterated our guilt before the throne

of God.”<sup>1</sup> There is no other substitute or sacrifice for sin acknowledged by God. The only sacrifice is Jesus, to whom the sacrificial lambs all pointed. He is in truth the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. He is that propitiation for sins which justifies God in tolerating a sinful race for an historic period and in saving guilty sinners. By the hand of John God directs us to bring our guilt to Jesus, to confess our sins over His head, to find cleansing in His blood, in His offering up of Himself once for all.

However, the words of our text are most carefully chosen to set forth not only God’s appointment of His Lamb, but as well to manifest the free, voluntary act of the Saviour in offering Himself. He is not only the Lamb of God, but as well the One who “taketh.” Of His own will and free accord He took the load of our sins. It was His delight to do His Father’s will. In the roll of the book it is written of Him, “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.” Of His own power He laid down His life for the sheep (John x. 14—18). The Son of man came from heaven to give His life a ransom for many.

John sees Jesus as the One who actively takes away sin. The word translated “taketh away” means in the first place to lift or raise up, then to take upon oneself and carry that which is raised up; that is, to bear, and finally to bear away what has been raised up. Our English translation preserves only the last meaning. But as John used the word the earlier meanings are not absent. The thing which John saw was Jesus lifting that awful weight of sin and placing it upon His own shoulders. No doubt He would and ultimately did bear it away, and we who live after Calvary properly read it

<sup>1</sup> *Institutes*, III., IV., XXVI.

that way. But for John, speaking at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, the moving thing was just this matchless act of the Saviour in placing Himself beneath that crushing load. Something of the same flavour is given in the marginal translation in the Revised Version of I Peter ii. 24: "Who His own self carried up our sins in His own body to the tree;" and, "The bond . . . that was against us, . . . He hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Col. ii. 14, R.V.).

This thought fits the context. John was baptising for repentance and for the remission of sins. When Jesus offered as a candidate for the rite, John at first declined. But the clean, pure Lamb of God insisted on numbering Himself with the transgressors that He might bear the sins of many. In this act He publicly accepted His vocation and assumed all the burden and responsibility for expiating our guilt. As John contemplated this "great act of loving communion with our misery,"<sup>1</sup> his heart overflowed with admiration, love and gratitude, and breathed itself in the great words of our text: Behold Him, the Lamb of God, who of His own accord has placed His own neck beneath our yoke and lifted to His mighty shoulders the load of a world's sin. John's thoughts are focused upon the vicarious baptism of Christ and the tremendous fact that in this act the Saviour identified Himself with His people and loaded their responsibilities to the holy God upon Himself. The Church of the later Middle Ages placed these words in the mouth of the Saviour: "Of My own will did I offer up Myself unto God the Father for thy sins. My hands were stretched forth on the cross, and My body laid bare, so that nothing remained in Me that was not wholly turned into a sacrifice for the

<sup>1</sup> Denney, *The Death of Christ*.

appeasing of the divine majesty" (*De Imitatione Christi*, IV., viii.).

Something of John's realisation that Jesus had freely taken this burden and the admiration which it evokes breaks through the words of Augustine: "The mediator was both the offerer and the offering; and He was also one with Him to whom the offering was made." "How hast Thou loved us, for whom He that thought it no robbery to be equal with Thee was made subject even to the death of the cross; for us both victor and victim, and victor because victim; for us both priest and sacrifice, and priest because sacrifice."<sup>1</sup>

As we come then to this marvellous act of self-immolation, it is fitting that we stop to consider the elements which give value to the sacrifice of Christ. Two representative scholars, Thomas Aquinas and A. B. Bruce, using different verbiage, list essentially the same four elements.<sup>2</sup> One of these is the exceeding love of Christ for sinners. His sacrifice has such value because of the magnitude of His love. Looking upon us in our misery, His great heart of compassion went out to us and moved Him to accomplish our redemption. Love lends worth to any gift. The immeasurable love of Christ lifts His sacrifice in worth and value. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as the love of God the Father, wrought our redemption. Even the chief of sinners knows that in His death "He loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). Secondly, the extent and manifoldness of His suffering, or the generality of His passion and the greatness of the grief which He assumed. He bore every kind of suffering

<sup>1</sup> *De Trinitate*, IV., xix. ; *Confessions*, X. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Aquinas as given by Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine*, p. 246. Bruce, A. B., *The Humiliation of Christ*, 2nd edition, p. 344.

which it was possible for a holy being to endure. Aquinas says that His grief was the greatest possible in this life. He sustained every variety of suffering, including the pain which springs from sympathy with sinful men. Luther, largely followed by Calvin, wrote: "In His tender innocent heart He felt the wrath and condemnation of God, tasted for us eternal death and damnation, and, in short, suffered everything that a damned sinner has merited and must suffer eternally."<sup>1</sup> And Duncan graphically exclaimed, "Ay, ay, d'ye know what it was—dying on the cross, forsaken by the Father—d'ye know what it was? What? What? It was damnation, and He took it lovingly."<sup>2</sup> Calvin, the *Heidelberg Catechism*,<sup>3</sup> and, in a measure, Barth,<sup>4</sup> interpret the descent into hell as meaning that Christ bore in body and soul the wrath of God against sin.<sup>5</sup> Or in the words of the Genevan: "He sustained the weight of the divine severity; since being smitten and afflicted of God He experienced from God all the tokens of wrath and vengeance."<sup>6</sup> Not that our Lord ever ceased to be the beloved Son in whom the Father delighted. Just because He laid down His life freely that He might take it again did the Father pre-eminently love Him (John x. 17). He suffered not the affection of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Institutes*, II., xvi., x.

<sup>2</sup> Stuart, Moody, *Recollections of John Duncan*, p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> *Heidelberg Catechism*, answers 14, 17, 37, 44.

<sup>4</sup> Barth, *Credo*, p. 88.

<sup>5</sup> The exposition of Rufinus, the earliest [commentator on the Apostles' Creed, of H. Bavinck, one of the ablest modern scholars, and certain Scriptural passages (Matt. xii. 40; Acts ii. 26-31; xiii. 35-37) favour the interpretation of this clause given in the *Larger Catechism*. Ecolampadius among the Reformers and K. L. Schmidt among current scholars interpret the clause literally and the latter similarly understands 1 Peter iii. 19; Revelation i. 18; Ephesians iv. 9; Romans x. 7.

<sup>6</sup> *Institutes*, II., xvi., xi.

divine anger, but the effect of that anger which we justly deserved. His sufferings were of every kind, sufferings in body and in soul, sufferings individual and social, ignominy and shame, cursings and spittings, sufferings from man, from Satan, from God. Hopkins writes: "O what a melting consideration is this, that out of Christ's agony comes our victory; out of His condemnation, our justification; out of His pain, our ease; out of His stripes, our healing; out of His gall and vinegar, our honey; out of His curse, our blessing; out of His crown of thorns, our crown of glory; out of His death, our life." The third element is the value of His life, or the dignity of the sufferer. Since this is the life of a Divine Person, one who is both God and man, it has infinite value. Christ died in His human nature, but the One who died is a Divine Person, and therefore the death has infinite value. This is the great fact which makes a drop of His blood of more value than the prayers of saints or the blood of a host of martyrs. Even if there were works of supererogation to make a treasury of merits, the infinite demerit of our sins could not be wiped out with a treasure of finite merits. "Infinite with infinite must be weighed." The final element is Christ's universal obedience to His Father's will. "The offerings of beasts are not the true offerings. The true offerings of God are obedience (I Sam. xv. 22), mercy (Hos. vi. 6), a broken spirit (Ps. li. 17), heeding God's voice (Jer. vii. 23). These offerings should be brought by the servant of the Lord." "From the beginning to the end He subjected His will to the entire, perfect, holy, 'rich in love' will of God, and sanctified Himself with body and soul in all its powers as a perfect offering to God."<sup>1</sup> His meat

<sup>1</sup> Bavinck, H., *ibid.*, III., 308, 362.

was to do the will of Him that sent Him. He was obedient as far as death itself, and that the death of the cross. By His one life of obedience, culminating in Calvary, He made many righteous. He obeyed the law both moral and ceremonial in all of its demands. Sin was not found in Him, but holiness shone through His every act, word, and deed. No priest ever examined a lamb for the sacrifice as the centuries have examined Christ. Before such a scrutiny every man has fallen.

But thee, but thee, O sovereign seer of time,  
 But thee, O poet's poet, wisdom's tongue,  
 But thee, O man's best man, O love's best love,  
 O perfect life in perfect labour writ,  
 O all men's comrade, servant, king, or priest,—  
 What *if* or *yet*, what mole, what flaw, what lapse,  
 What least defect, or shadow of defect,  
 What rumour tattled by an enemy,  
 Of inference loose, what lack of grace  
 Even in torture's grasp, or sleep's or death's—  
 O, what amiss may I forgive in thee,  
 Jesus, good paragon, thou crystal Christ.—*Lanier.*

But Jesus is the Lamb of God without spot or blemish, whose perfect obedience qualifies Him to offer Himself as an acceptable sacrifice for sinners. In His love and obedience He offered Himself to endure the wrath we deserved. The offerer in His Person is the Lord of glory, of infinite worth, as in the nature which He assumed He is man and hence capable of dying for men. Thus by one sacrifice of Himself He hath for ever put away sin, and ever liveth to make intercession on the ground of that all-sufficient sacrifice for sinners.

Our Lord hath done really what the Old Testament sacrifices could only do typically. "For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins." Since these sacrifices were only "a shadow of the good things to come," they could never make the

worshippers perfect. Rather, "in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins year by year."

Not all the blood of beasts  
On Jewish altars slain,  
Could give the guilty conscience peace,  
Or wash away the stain.

But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,  
Takes all our sins away ;  
A sacrifice of nobler name,  
And richer blood than they.

My faith would lay her hand  
On that dear head of Thine ;  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And there confess my sin.

My soul looks back to see  
The burdens Thou didst bear,  
When hanging on the cursed tree,  
And hopes her guilt was there.

Believing, we rejoice  
To see the curse remove ;  
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,  
And sing His bleeding love.—*Watts.*

### iii.—THE LAMB OF GOD ENTHRONED.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." In John's mouth the meaning of the words was, the Lamb who taketh upon Himself the sins of the world. But in view of the One who did so take, we may well be assured that He would not stop until He had entirely removed that curse; and the New Testament record shows that our Lord did carry our sins to the tree and take away the accusations that were against us by nailing them to the cross. Hence, the Church has been essentially correct in reading this text in the light of the whole New Testament as it is translated in the Authorised Version.

As has been earlier indicated, this representation of



the Saviour's work immediately struck the heart of His disciples, and has, perhaps, been more widely used than any other statement of the atonement. The Old Testament sacrificial system had prepared the way for an easy apprehension of this truth. Isaiah liii. guided the thought of our Lord<sup>1</sup> as well as that of His apostles. Peter assured the believing Jews that they were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot or blemish. Hebrews rings the changes on Christ as both the priest and the sacrifice, offering Himself once for all to obtain for us an eternal redemption. As He yielded up His spirit a sacrifice to God, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, God thus signifying that the true sacrifice for sin had been made, guilt expiated, and the way of access into the holy of holies opened, never to be closed again. Any penitent sinner, every believing sinner may at any time or place enter into the very presence of God through the new and living way which Christ hath opened for us by the sacrifice of Himself. Sacred places, priestly mediators are not necessary. Every Christian may equally be a true priest of the Most High God, and every place where one prays in Spirit and in truth may be a Bethel with angels of God ascending and descending to us through the sole mediation of the Son of man, the heavenly high priest of our profession. Christ has been openly set forth in His own blood as the propitiatory mercy seat (Rom. iii. 25). John takes up the thought and presents Christ some thirty times as the Lamb. As long as the Apocalypse is read the Christian must remember that the heavenly Church clusters around the Lamb, yea, that the midst of God's own throne is reserved for the Lamb standing as it

<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer, A., *The Mysticism of St. Paul*, p. 59.

had been slain. With Hebrews and Revelation before us, Christian imagination visualises the high priest of our profession pleading in glory the merit of His atoning sacrifice, and suing out for those whom the Father hath given Him gifts of saving and sanctifying grace.

Hence, the Church on earth, which is only properly a Church as she seeks to conform to the Church above and to reflect on earth the light of heaven, has also centred her thought in the Lamb for sinners slain. Several liturgical pieces widely used throughout Christendom are redolent with this thought. One seems to have formed part of an early Oriental hymn which was united with the *Gloria in Excelsis*, and now forms part of a chant which is found in the liturgies and hymnals of many Christian communions. This ancient canticle as given in the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*, one of the documents of the Reformation, contains the petitions: "O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that taketh away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer."

The *Common Service Book of the Lutheran Church* provides that the congregation shall sing at the celebration of the Lord's Supper: "O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us (*twice*). O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, grant us Thy peace. Amen." Elsewhere in the same liturgy occur the words: "He is the very Paschal Lamb which was offered for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world."

A well-known hymn by Horatius Bonar contains the stanza:

Glory be to Him who loved us,  
Washed us from each spot and stain!  
Glory be to Him who bought us,

Made us kings with Him to reign!  
 Glory, glory,  
 To the Lamb that once was slain!

The time-honoured Scottish piety of the psalms and paraphrases, of morning and evening worship, of thanks after as before meals, the heart piety that traces God's way in every season of reviving grace, glories in this Gospel. "It welcomes His Word and rests in its witness, being satisfied as to its truth and its authority: and when that Word speaks of Him as the sacrificial Lamb and the enthroned Priest, the faith to which the Gospel summons us, hastens to take shelter under the covert of His sacrifice and the shield of His intercession. . . . In coming to Him as priest, they (His clients) take shelter under the shadow of His one sacrifice once for all offered as the Lamb of God; and they put their case in His hand as their advocate, that He may plead their cause and perfect what concerneth them."<sup>1</sup>

Charlotte Elliott's much loved hymn is sung throughout the English-speaking world:

Just as I am, without one plea,  
 But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
 And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,  
 O Lamb of God, I come!

The lamb was a favourite pictorial representation of Christ in the catacombs. Arseniev assures us that, for the Oriental Church, Christ's "death, His sacrifice on the cross, is contacted as a heart-shaking, ever-present reality," that "the whole Christian philosophy of salvation is concentrated here as in a focus," that "we are lifted up into the presence of His eternal sacrifice" as we direct our minds to the vision presented in Revelation.<sup>2</sup>

And with this vision of the Lamb in heaven, which

<sup>1</sup> Macleod, Principal J., *The Gospel Call in Peace and Truth*, XX. 73, pp. 22, 26.

<sup>2</sup> Arseniev, N., *We Beheld His Glory*, pp. 131-132.

is properly normative for every branch of the Christian family, we may well close our meditations. For it is a wise observation that no sermon is worth while which does not leave the hearer in the presence of the throne of God and of the Lamb. John beheld in the midst of the throne and of the four living ones and of the four and twenty elders, a Lamb standing as it had been slain. He saw the dignitaries of the Holy City falling down before the slain Lamb, offering Him the prayers of the saints in golden incense bowls, chanting His praises. The presbyters of the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn in heaven, the myriads of angels, yea, all creatures in the universe, praise the Lamb because He was slain and did redeem for God with His blood men of every nation and kindred and tribe (Revelation vi.).

And that part of the flock which treads earth's dusty way catches the notes of the heavenly worship and antiphonally echoes back the chorus:—

Crown Him with many crowns,  
 The Lamb upon His throne ;  
 Hark ! how the heav'nly anthem drowns  
 All music but its own ;  
 Awake, my soul, and sing  
 Of Him who died for thee,  
 And hail Him as thy matchless King  
 Through all eternity.

Crown Him the Lord of love ;  
 Behold His hands and side,  
 Rich wounds, yet visible above  
 In beauty glorified :  
 No angel in the sky  
 Can fully bear that sight,  
 But downward bends his wond'ring eye  
 At mysteries so bright.

There is a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness ;  
 there is a river whose streams make glad the city of

God, and on whose banks grow the trees, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations. But this stream rises not from the systems of human philosophy; the ideologies of men are broken cisterns that can hold no water. The water of life, the crystal stream casting up its silver spray, the beautiful river at which the saints do gather, flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

And the city watered by this stream has "no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. xxi. 23). "The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's land." Or in simpler prose, "comprehensively, incarnation and expiation are accomplished for this purpose: that God might again be recognised and honoured by His creatures as God. Sin was erroneous knowledge of God and of all His virtues, and an approach to and adoration of the creature. But in Christ God has again revealed Himself, established His sovereignty, justified all His virtues, glorified His name, maintained His Godhead."<sup>1</sup> In the expiatory cross of Christ, the moral grandeur of the Triune Jehovah is revealed as nowhere else. "There never was witnessed such a scene in the universe before—the infinite holiness and goodness of God sounded to their depths, the whole moral energy of the Godhead in action." "Never was there such a doxology as when Jesus died, and the whole work of redemption is a grand litany which has no parallel in the history of the universe."<sup>2</sup> Since nowhere else was the divine worth so worshipped, naught else makes the glory of God so luminous; therefore, the cross is the focal point and kernel of the Gospel.

<sup>1</sup> Bavinck, III., 344, 377.

<sup>2</sup> Thornwell, II., 424, 419.

# THE SOVEREIGN GRACE UNION.

## BASIS.

- i. The Absolute Sufficiency of Holy Scripture for all matters of Faith and Practice.
- ii. The Triune Jehovah.
  - a. The Sovereignty of God.
  - b. The Deity and perfect Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ.
  - c. The Personality of the Holy Ghost.
- iii. \*The Fall of Man.
- iv. Unconditional Election.
- v. Particular Redemption.
- vi. Effectual Calling.
- vii. Justification by imputing the Obedience and Satisfaction of Christ.
- viii. Final Preservation.

\* Whereby he has "wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation."—*Westminster Confession*.

On the whole of the above, see the doctrinal Articles of the Church of England, and of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

## AIMS AND OBJECTS.

- To proclaim and defend the Doctrines of Free and Sovereign Grace.
- To print and reprint literature expounding such doctrines.
- To encourage publishers to issue such literature and to assist its circulation by purchase and distribution to Clergy, Ministers, Preachers, Theological Students, Members of Parliament and others.
- To hold Conferences and Meetings to reaffirm the Old Truths in these days of Apostasy and Declension.
- To raise a Testimony against Romanism, Ritualism, Rationalism, Arminianism, Modernism and other evils in religion.
- To circulate tracts, pamphlets and books, maintaining the Doctrines of Grace, which may be presented to the Union for that purpose, and to print and circulate such publications subject to the approval of the Council, for which any person or Society undertakes to provide the funds.

# THE SOVEREIGN GRACE UNION

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The Sovereign Grace *Mission* was formed in 1875, and reconstituted under its present title in 1914 by the late Rev. Henry Atherton, "for the proclamation and defence of the Doctrines of Free and Sovereign Grace."

It seeks by means of conferences, meetings and publications to set forth pure and undefiled religion, while opposing and exposing error in its many forms.

There can be no doubt that the Lord has been pleased to bless and use this effort for the awakening of some, and the comfort and support of others of His elect and redeemed family.

FUNDS ARE NEEDED to maintain and extend this work. Every subscriber will receive copies of all pamphlets issued, as well as the Quarterly Magazine, "Peace and Truth," at an average cost to the Union of 5/- a year. A subscriber of 10/6 per annum (or over) will receive in addition a copy of every bound book issued.

The Committee asks for your prayers and for your financial support that this work may still be continued to the glory of God.

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