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TOWARD UNDERSTANDING THE ATONEMENT  
Some 19th and 20th Century Developments  
in Non-liberal Theology of the Atonement

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## TOWARD UNDERSTANDING THE ATONEMENT

### Some 19th and 20th Century Developments in Non-liberal Theology of the Atonement

This historical survey will reveal, I believe, that the insights of certain outstanding theologians of the past 150 years into the exhaustless subject of the atonement are relevant to theological issues facing the church today.

In the sub-title I have used the term "non-liberal", rather than "evangelical", because the latter, in its contemporary and more restricted sense as indicating that post-Fundamentalist resurgence of evangelicalism that is exemplified in the periodical Christianity Today does not adequately connote the larger sweep of modern conservative thought concerning the atonement with which this paper essays to deal. Theologians and theological movements can best be understood in relation to the historic times in which they exist. Probably the greatest influence affecting the theological climate of the nineteenth century--certainly as pertains to the atonement--was the emergence of religious liberalism in Germany as championed by Schleiermacher and Ritschl. The latter's "The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation", although centrally related to the subject of the atonement nevertheless differed radically and fundamentally from traditional understandings of the subject. Much of the significant conservative writing on the atonement in the past century has arisen as a protest against liberalism and in defence of the vital objective elements of the subject as opposed to the exclusively subjective elements in the moral influence theories of Ritschl and his followers. Thus Dale's work (The Atonement) in the latter part of the 19th century can be seen as a vigorous defence of the fact of the death and resurrection of Christ for our sins, without which there could be no objective basis for any real atonement in the Biblical sense. It is likely that Dale over-reacted and failed to give due weight to the valid criticisms of the traditional penal-satisfaction theories being offered by his contemporaries, such as F.D.Maurice and Professor Jowett, but nevertheless he strongly defended the all-important objectivity of the atonement.<sup>1</sup>

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1. The Anglican scholar, R. C. Moberly, in the appended historical chapter to his excellent work, Atonement and Personality, (see below) devotes 14 pages to evaluating Dale's work. His criticism is sympathetic and discriminating.

A later and far more profound defence of the objective elements in the atonement is that of Emil Brunner.<sup>2</sup> His work, Der Mittler, is one of the greatest books on the atoning work of Christ to come out of the 20th century. This classic volume is staunchly anti-liberal, at least in regard to an understanding of the atonement. No writer thus far, to my knowledge, has written as penetratingly as he has in showing the ground and necessity of an objective atonement for sin, if man is to be saved. No one has better revealed the utter inadequacy of Schleiermacherian and Ritschlian concepts of the atonement. It is manifestly impossible to do justice to Brunner's monumental contribution to atonement theology in this paper, but some glimpse into the burden of his thinking is due the reader.

Speaking of Schleiermacher and Ritschl, Brunner states:

It is evident that theologians of this type are anxious to understand the meaning of the Cross of Christ. But it is just as evident that they have completely failed to understand the Cross (438) . . .

Thinkers of this type have no idea that this fact [he is here speaking of the atonement] represents an actual objective transaction, in which God actually does something, and something which is absolutely necessary. . . . In this type of thought the significance of the Passion and Death of Christ is wholly subjective. . . . The meaning of Reconciliation is here misinterpreted. This is the subjective view: Man, quite wrongly, regards God as an enemy, as a Judge who wishes to punish him. At the Cross man becomes aware of his error; here the idea that God is love conquers the idea of His anger. Thus here the only gulf which separates man from God is illusory, namely, it is that which human error has placed between itself and God. Reconciliation simply means the removal of a religious error. (439)

The truth is rather that between us and God there is an actual obstacle, which blocks the way like a great boulder, an obstacle so great that we cannot push it out of the way by our own efforts. This obstacle is sin, or, rather, guilt. (443)

Brunner sees man's guilt as ultimately and intimately related to the holiness of God. Here he stresses the highly personal nature of guilt, which also stems from the holiness of God and is what makes man's guilt so infinitely great.

Guilt, however, is not in any sense something concrete (this may, perhaps, be regarded as the chief error in the doctrine of Anselm); it is something absolutely personal, it is the perverted attitude towards God, therefore it is something absolutely infinite. . . . So far as his attitude towards God is concerned his nature is perverted, spoiled, and lost. It is God's holiness and righteousness which makes us aware of this subjective fact as an objective fact; since our attitude towards God has been perverted, God's attitude towards us has also been changed.

It is not merely subjectively, from our point of view, that our guilt lies between us and God, but objectively, from the point of view of God. This is what constitutes its gravity. (443f)

Here Brunner is speaking of the wrath of God, the reality of which he insists is so essential that man perceive, even though the very idea of the wrath of God has become anathema to modern man.

The divine wrath corresponds to our guilt and sin. Whether man's relation to God is really conceived in personal terms or not is proved by the fact of the recognition of the divine wrath as the objective correlate to human guilt. This, then, is the obstacle which alienates us from God. It is no merely apparent obstacle, no mere misunderstanding; this separation is an objective reality, the two-fold reality of human guilt and divine wrath. . . . Only where man recognizes this reality of wrath does he take his guilt seriously; only then does he realize the personal character of God, and his own human, personal relation to God. The rejection of the doctrine of the wrath of God--as "anthropopathic"--is the beginning of the Pantheistic disintegration of the Christian Idea of God. In the whole of the Scriptures, in each of its parts, and in all the classical forms of Christian theology and of the Christian message, the full conception of the personality of God carries with it, indubitably, the recognition of the divine wrath. (445f)

Most eloquently, in the following passage, does Brunner describe sin as rebellion against the honor and majesty of God and his Law:

Sin against God is an attack on God's honour. Sin is rebellion against the Lord. But God cannot permit His honour to be attacked; for His honour is His Godhead, His sovereign majesty. God would cease to be God if He could permit His honour to be attacked. The law of His Divine Being, on which all the law and order in the world is based, the fundamental order of the world, the logical and reliable character of all that happens, the validity of all standards, of all intellectual, legal, and moral order, the Law itself, in its most profound meaning, demands the divine reaction, the divine concern about sin, the divine resistance to this rebellion and this breach of order. (444)

This leads Brunner, in the progression of his thought, to the great miracle of the atonement--forgiveness! Here is revealed the reality and the glory of God's love and mercy along side of, and united with, His holiness and justice, both of them manifest as triumphing together in the Cross, where Mercy and Justice have kissed each other. "The Cross is the only place where the loving, forgiving and merciful God is revealed in such a way that we perceive that His Holiness and His Love are equally infinite."(470)

We have time to dip into Brunner's thought only once more, fifty pages farther along, where he is speaking of justification and of man's faith in justification. Here it becomes clear that Brunner is by no means overlooking the essential "vicarious" elements in the atonement.

But this emphasis on the objective character of the Atonement does not rule out the necessity for a subjective process; indeed, this subjective process is really the aim of the Atonement. (522)

The central point, where the subjective and the objective aspects of Atonement meet, is this: the Word of divine justification. As a Word it means nothing unless it is heard, and, indeed, heard in such a way that it is believed. Faith in justification is the central point in the Biblical message, because the relation between God and man is a truly personal one.

Justification is the most incomprehensible thing that exists. All other marvels are miracles on the circumference of being, but this is the miracle in the centre of being, in the personal centre. Justification means this miracle: that Christ takes our place and we take His. Here the objective vicarious offering has become a process of exchange. Apart from this transaction, forgiveness is not credible; for it contradicts the holiness of God. Justification cannot be separated from the "objective atonement," from the expiatory sacrifice of the Mediator. Indeed, justification simply means that this objective transaction becomes a "Word" to us, the Word of God. When I know that it is God who is speaking to me in this event--that God is really speaking to me--I believe. Faith means knowing that this fact is God speaking to me in His Word.

It is only in this subjective experience, in faith, that the Atonement becomes real. But this subjective experience is completely objective in character. For this is what it means: that my "self" is crossed out, displaced, and replaced by Christ, the Divine Word. This is that "frohliche Wirtschaft" ("happy exchange" or arrangement) (Luther) by which Christ becomes mine and I become His. (524)

It is not that we can say that the Christian faith possesses a mystical aspect as well as an objective and historical aspect; this would be a very crude way of describing the situation. Here we are not concerned with connecting two essentially alien elements, nor even with an organic synthesis. However paradoxical it may sound to say so, the one is the other. The Christ, who as an historical figure is the One who offered His life on the Cross as an expiatory oblation and sacrificed it once for all, is also the One who speaks to us in the intimacy of faith. It is thus that He "dwells" within us; it is thus that He is now really our righteousness and our life--in so far as we believe. (527)

Brunner has here spoken of his understanding of righteousness by faith. The following passage well sums up this central portion of his thinking and reveals its intimate relation to the doctrine of the Trinity:

As the Mediator, Christ, in His Person and His Work, is the unfathomable mystery of God, into which we cannot and ought not to penetrate, so also the Atonement in its paradoxical combination of the subjective and the objective, of the historical and the present, of the Word and the Spirit, is the unfathomable mystery of God. It is the mystery of the Triune God. That God speaks for us is the mystery of the Son; that He speaks in us is the mystery of the Spirit. That which is expressed outwardly and that which is spoken within the heart, the Christ for us and the Christ in us, are one and the same God. This is the reason why faith, which is most subjective, personal, and interior, is at the same time also most objective; and that the Atonement, which is so wholly objective, unique, confronting us as something alien and exclusive, is at the same time the most subjective and the most personal fact there is. (528)

The themes which we have touched on in The Mediator, such as how the subjective and the objective elements combine, and how reconciliation is related to justification, to faith, and to the Christian life--all in the light of the atonement--will be further developed in the remaining sections of this paper, where we shall consider the contributions of certain other leading theologians of the period.

In the next section we propose to view the nature of the atonement through the eyes of one of the most profound, devout and influential writers of the nineteenth century, the independent Scotch Presbyterian, J. McLeod Campbell, whose great work, The Nature of the Atonement, has been called <sup>one of</sup> the noblest books on the subject to appear in any language or any time. We shall then notice something of how his insights have majorly influenced subsequent writers, such as R.C. Moberly, James Denney, and on down to present-day Evangelical thinkers.<sup>3</sup>

(Part II THE NATURE OF THE ATONEMENT)

#### McCleod Campbell

Concerning Campbell's book, The Nature of the Atonement, the conservative theologian, James Denney--who was himself a prolific writer on the subject--states: "Of all the books that have ever been written on the atonement, as God's way of reconciling man to Himself, McCleod Campbell's is probably that which is most completely inspired by the spirit of the truth with which he deals. There is a reconciling power of Christ in it. . . The originality of it is spiritual as well as intellectual, and no one who has ever felt its power will cease to put it in a class by itself."<sup>4</sup>

T. F. Torrance, writing in 1973, calls McCleod Campbell "one of the greatest (if not the greatest) of our Scottish theologians--whose voice we need to hear again today." He states that "his book, The Nature of the Atonement (1856). . . with Athanasius' De Incarnatione and Anselm's Cur Deus Homo, is one of the classics of all time on this doctrine." He adds, "We cannot read Campbell's writings without being aware that here is a godly man with the heart of a pastor and an evangelical concern to instruct his flock in the gospel of grace. His theology is one hammered out on the anvil of the parish ministry."<sup>5</sup> This pastoral concern for theology at the pew level is doubtless what led P.T.Forsyth to declare, during a series of talks to a ministers' study conference in 1909, "I hope you have read McCleod Campbell on the Atonement. Every minister ought to know that book and know it well."<sup>6</sup>

Whereas the historical situation against which Brunner majorly reacted was the rise of liberalism, as we have seen, that to which Campbell reacted was of a different nature. He was concerned about certain Calvinistic strains in the Presbyterianism in which he had been nurtured, and which he increasingly came to perceive as being inimical to the simplicity and effectiveness of the Biblical gospel of grace and salvation. His penetrating conceptions of the nature of the atonement were forged in the crucible of what for most men would have been a deeply embittering life experience. As a young minister in a country parish in Scotland, he began teaching a doctrine of unlimited atonement, and a form of assurance of faith, for both of which beliefs he was tried for heresy by the Presbyterian Church of Scotland <sup>and</sup> was defrocked in the year 1831. The next Sunday he preached to his loyal congregation in an open field, making no references to what had happened. For the next few decades he eked out a living in an independent parish while he wrote out his monumental work on the atonement. Near the close of his life, in 1865, he was reinstated and awarded an honorary degree in theology by the Church of Scotland; not, however, because his views were then accepted, but rather in order to undo their earlier folly, and doubtless also because the value of his work was beginning to be appreciated.

Campbell's conception of the nature of the atonement involved far more than his rejection of the Calvinist idea of a limited atonement in favor of an unlimited one, although this was doubtless a major cause of his deposition.

There was involved in his thought a major break with what had appeared to be central not only to the whole Latin or Anselmic understanding of the atonement, as being primarily concerned with "satisfaction" and "substitution" and imputation of Christ's merit, and with legal standing, etc., but also to important soteriological concepts in classic Calvinism as taught down into the 18th century by Jonathan Edwards, and also--and even more importantly because of its close bearing upon present-day evangelical teaching--to that Arminianly-modified Calvinism, as represented in the New England Theology, which was closer to Campbell's own day. This break did not involve so much a rejection of the concepts of substitution and satisfaction and legal standing as being unimportant elements in the atonement, as it did an almost revolutionarily different way of perceiving these elements. Campbell was confident that in the light of the atonement itself these elements would then be seen to be more in harmony with the reality which the Bible portrays. It was also his belief that in this manner the gospel would be simplified, purified of erroneous theological incrustations, and thus brought home to the ordinary Christian with greater acceptance, with greater joy and confidence in the Lord, and with greater result in fruitfulness than was usually seen in connection with previously accepted concepts of the atonement.

It would be a serious mistake to conclude, as some have erroneously supposed, that because Campbell moved away from what he saw as objectionable features in the older penal satisfaction theories of the atonement he was therefore a crypto-liberal, and his views could properly be classified along side of the modern advocates of the moral influence theories, in the Abelardian and Socinian tradition. No; Campbell cannot justly be so classified. He was like the liberals in that he saw, and reacted against, the same objectionable features in the older theories which they did. He was also like them in stressing a moral influence in the atonement, which all theories hold as essential. (Of what value would be a theory of the atonement without any moral influence?!) He differed radically from such liberals as Schleiermacher and Ritschl and their many modern successors, however, in that his orientation was thoroughly theocentric rather than anthropocentric. He had a vivid apprehension of the holiness of God, and of the corresponding wrath of God.<sup>7</sup> He held Jesus to be the uniquely divine Son of God, whose mediatorship is the only way of salvation for mankind. And most surely did he believe that Christ vicariously bore our sins in His body, and effected our salvation by His death on



the Cross, and his bodily resurrection and subsequent intercession for us in heaven. Yet at the same time, as we have already intimated, his concept of the nature of the atonement involved an understanding of "justification" and "righteousness" and "faith" that was markedly different from that held by most conservative, "orthodox" Protestants. Because some of the ideas which he challenged were felt to be so central to the gospel, and thus so near to the hearts of believers--especially, but not exclusively, Calvinist believers--it is not strange that his views met with the resistance which they did. Campbell recognized that in many instances he was (in his words) "touching the apple of their eye." Yet far from being a mere iconoclast, tearing down that for which he had nothing better to offer in its place, Campbell time and again makes luminous that which before was shrouded in darkness. He made little use of conventional theological terms, apparently sensing that they often obscured the simplicity of truth. One writer has remarked that in reading Campbell one senses that he is "piercing through the mists of theological arguments to apprehend the shining truth beyond."

Not only was Campbell opposed to the classic Calvinist doctrine of a limited atonement (one made only for the elect), but he also felt that the view held by many Arminians--and which is widespread in Protestantism today, including Adventists--that it was only the provision for man's pardon and reconciliation which was made at the Cross is a concept which falls far short of adequately understanding what actually took place on Calvary. He sees this deficient understanding of the atonement as a serious impediment to the attractiveness, and the confidence-inspiring property of the gospel. Pardon and justification were actually given to all men at the Cross, not merely provision made for them. [Note: The idea which Campbell was here advancing was, if I mistake not, one of the now almost forgotten features of the religious revival which occurred among Adventists toward the close of the ninth decade of the last century.]

Campbell especially objected to what he considered to be fictitious elements, which for centuries had come to be centrally associated with the atoning work of Christ in man's behalf. Although firmly believing the truth that Christ bore our sins, he could not "buy" the concept of the imputation of guilt to Christ. He could not conceive of God the Father actually punishing his Son as if He were guilty, when all the time He knew that He was innocent.

He could not see how this fiction could either enhance the honour of God (as a God of justice!) or help effect the salvation of man.

Campbell gives credit to Jonathan Edwards for having unwittingly given him the clue to an understanding of how the sufferings and death of Christ could render satisfaction to the Father for our sins without recourse to the concept of God punishing His Son. Edwards had reasoned that for adequate satisfaction to be rendered the Father "there must needs be either an equivalent punishment or an equivalent sorrow and repentance." Whereas Edwards opted for the former alternative and rejected the latter, Campbell did the opposite and found in the latter alternative a key which largely opened his understanding to what he felt was the real nature of the atonement. Christ so identified Himself with humanity, so felt the weight of our sins, and so perfectly sensed the pain and grief which they caused His Father's heart--which He knew so well, and which He had come to the world to reveal--that He was thereby enabled, in His perfect confession and repentance of our sins, i.e., in his perfect attitude in regard to them and to His Father, to render a perfect atonement for our sins. In this perfect atonement we participate when by faith we are "in Christ" and thus share in the fellowship of His sufferings. Christ's attitude then becomes ours: His hatred of sin, and His trust in His Father's heart of love, become ours, and thus we receive the gift of Christ's righteousness, which becomes a living reality in us.

It can be seen that this understanding of the nature of the atonement, which so commended itself to the mind and the heart of McCleod Campbell, also tends to eliminate the fictitious character of the ordinary understanding of "justification" as involving the imputation to man's account of Christ's righteousness conceived of as a fund of transferrable credit accrued by Christ's obedience, either active or passive, i.e., either by His life of perfect obedience, or by some imputable merit being accumulated by the sufferings of His Passion and death. Thus there is largely eliminated what is usually thought of as "imputation"--both the imputation of our guilt to Christ (for which God then punishes Him), and also the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, as something remote, and done apart from us, but which nevertheless "covers us" when we "believe in it." These fictional elements in our understanding of the atonement are thus seen to be inadequate, misleading, and largely unnecessary.

They tend to obscure the nature and the reality of faith, to turn it into mere belief in, and thankful assent to, what was done for them 2000 years ago--absolutely essential as that was to man's salvation--instead of viewing it as establishing within us Christ's attitude toward sin and His trust in His Father; or, in other words, as viewing it (faith) as being a heart-felt appreciation of the love of God as revealed to us in the Cross.

Campbell believed that his understanding was quite in line with Luther's as to the meaning of "justification by faith alone." In Chapter 2, which is devoted entirely to Luther, he quotes extensively from his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians --"into the spirit of which the great Reformer has so truly entered." (p.47) Although he sometimes disapproves of Luther's choice of words, as not well expressing what he believes to be his thought, he is nonetheless in accord with Luther's main ideas, such as "his true understanding of our participation in Christ and His righteousness," (48) and "his true appreciation of the glory which God has in our faith."(47)

Christ's vicarious confession and repentance for our sins as rendering satisfaction to the Father are what Campbell terms the retrospective aspects of the atonement. In Chapter 7 he takes up the prospective aspects--those which look toward the end for which the atonement was designed. This end he considers to be simply the bestowal of the gift of Christ's righteousness, presently received by faith. It is the gift of sonship. He sees the filial aspects of our relationship to God taking precedence over the legal aspects. This means our seeing God primarily as loving Father rather than primarily as Judge and Lawgiver. Campbell laments that traditional theories of the atonement have often conduced to "the substitution of a legal standing for a filial standing"as the gift of God to men in Christ.(69)

Although his literary style is difficult --a fault partly due to the richness and complexity of his thought--it is perhaps advisable at this point to let Campbell explain in his own words something of what he understands by the "prospective aspects" of the atonement. [It is not easy to select passages that are long enough to allow the reader to grasp the largeness of his thought, and yet are not so long as to be wearisome.]

All views of the work of Christ of course imply that its ultimate reference was prospective. . . .  
 But, what I have now been representing as the true view of the atonement, is characterised by this, that it takes the results contemplated into account in considering God's acceptance of the atonement. Not that the moral and spiritual excellence of the work of Christ could have been less than infinitely acceptable to God, viewed simply in itself; but that its acceptableness in connexion with the remission of sins is only to be truly and fully seen in its relation to the result which it has contemplated, viz., our participation in eternal life:--or, in other words, that the justification of God in "redeeming," as He has done, "us who were under the law," is only clearly apprehended in the light of the divine purpose, "that we should receive the adoption of sons."

This direct reference to the end contemplated, which distinguishes the view of the atonement now taken, as compared with those other systems in which that reference is more remote, I lay much weight upon. It explains, as they cannot otherwise be explained, those expressions in Scripture in which the practical end of the atonement is connected so immediately with the making of the atonement,--as when it is said that "Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity,"--that "we are redeemed from the vain conversation received by tradition from our Fathers, by the precious blood of Christ,"--that "Christ suffered for us, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Men have been reconciled by the seeming necessity of the case to the idea that such language is employed because these are the ultimate and remote consequences of that shedding of Christ's blood, which, it is held, immediately contemplated delivering us from the punishment of sin by His enduring it for us. [In the preceding sentence Campbell has been speaking of the view which he opposes. In the next sentence he speaks of the view which he favors.] But I regard as a great scriptural argument in favour of the view now taken of the atonement, that it represents the connexion between these results and Christ's suffering for our sins as not remote, but immediate. While, as to the internal commendation of the doctrine itself, my conviction is, that the pardon of sin is seen in its true harmony with the glory of God, only when the work of Christ, through which we have "remission of sins that are past", is contemplated in its direct relation to "the gift of eternal life."

The elements of atonement, which have now been considered [he is here speaking of the retrospective aspects] in relation to the remission of sins, contemplated in their relation to the gift of eternal life, teach us how to conceive of that gift. The atonement having been accomplished by the natural working of the life of love in Christ, and having been the result of His doing the Father's will, and declaring the Father's name in humanity [still up to this point retrospective], we are prepared, as to the prospective aspect of the atonement, to find that the perfect righteousness of the Son of God in humanity is itself the gift of God to us in Christ--to be ours as Christ is ours,--to be partaken in,--to be our life as He is our life: instead of its being, as has been held, ours by imputation,--precious to us and our salvation, not in respect of what is inherent in it, but in respect of that to which it confers a legal title. . . .(p.152ff, italics in the original.)

The passage requires more than a cursory reading.

As we have previously noted, Campbell seldom mentions the terms "imputed" and "imparted", since they are not congenial to his way of thinking. The following paragraph is an exception to this rule, however. In it can be seen how his understanding of the matter largely supercedes the need for such theological terminology, along with the dubitable distinctions which it entails, and thus clarifies and uncomplicates the whole picture of how salvation is effected.<sup>8</sup>

But a righteousness imparted as that to which a right has been conferred by a righteousness imputed;--divine favour and acceptance first resting upon us, irrespective of our true spiritual state, and then a spiritual state in harmony with that favour, bestowed as an expression of that favour;--a right and title to heaven made sure irrespective of a meetness for heaven, and then that meetness--the holiness necessary to the enjoyment of heaven--bestowed upon us as a part of what we have thus become entitled to:--this is a complication which the testimony of God, that God has given to us eternal life, and that this life is in His Son, never could suggest. The elements of that life may come to be taken into account afterwards; but the evil effect of the first separation between the favour of God and the actual condition of the human spirit in its aspect towards God, never can be altogether remedied,--while this root error will always tend to develope itself in reducing the meaning of the words, "eternal life," to the conception of an unproved future endless blessedness that awaits us as those who trust in Christ's merits, not a spiritual state into which we enter in receiving the knowledge of God in Christ. Thus confusion and perplexity are introduced into the whole subject of righteousness and eternal life, when, this life being admitted to be given, righteousness is not recognised as simply an element in that gift, or rather an aspect of it. (155f)

Two hundred pages farther along in this unique book, which P.T. Forsyth counseled his fellow-ministers to "know, and know well," Campbell ably answers the objection--sure to be raised by those feeling that the apple of their eye has been touched--that thus to de-emphasize the imputation of Christ's righteousness as the ground of our confidence would surely be to foster self-righteousness. Not so, says Campbell; quite the contrary.

I have been at pains, in relation to justification by faith, to show how faith excludes boasting; not by any artificial arrangement, nor at all by denying to the faith itself the attribute of righteousness, but, on the contrary, because it is itself the true righteousness, and that boasting is impossible in that light of the truth into which faith introduces; for in faith we are beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and no flesh shall glory in His sight. I would add here, that the life of so. ship, as now represented as quickened in us, excludes boasting.

That faith is trust in God, as He is revealed in Christ, excludes, as we have seen, boasting, and makes the righteousness of faith to be the opposite of self-righteousness;--that this faith apprehends the fatherliness of God, and that its responsive trust is sonship, this yet more and more excludes boasting. The trust of a child in a Father's heart is just the perfect opposite of a self-righteous trust; for it is a going back to the fountain of our being,--a dealing with that interest in us which was before we did good or evil; and, as cherished by us sinners towards God, against whom we have sinned, such trust deals with fatherliness as what has survived our sins; so that our trust, so far from being self-righteous, implies, commences with the confession of sin. Doubtless this trust is in itself holy--the mind of the Son; but it is not on that account less lowly--less remote from boasting. Are we not, in cherishing it, "learning of Him who is meek and lowly in heart?"

There is, indeed, a further exclusion of boasting, in the consciousness that it is in the Son that we are approaching the Father,--that He, who made atonement for our sins and brought into humanity the everlasting righteousness of sonship, is not the mere pattern of our life, but is Himself that life in us in which we are able to confess our sins, and to call God Father; that He is the vine, that we are the branches. But I feel it important that we should realise that in its own nature, and apart from its derived character as existing in us, the confidence of sonship is essentially and necessarily the opposite of self-righteousness. (354f)

It may seem that Campbell is belaboring this point, vis., that getting away from the concept of imputation does not lead to self-righteousness, but on the contrary, leads to lowliness and to the ascribing of all righteousness to Christ. But there is good reason for his emphasis upon the matter; it is this: The chief benefit or advantage of the imputation theory has been held to be this very point that it produces a confidence that is free of self-righteousness. But Campbell contends that it is only by getting away from the imputation theory that true freedom from boasting is attained. This is what Campbell is actually saying in the following (condensed) paragraph, which follows immediately after the last-quoted passage.

I the more insist upon this. . . because I believe that the whole attraction to conscience which has been found in the conception of an imputation of Christ's merits to us [i.e., the view which Campbell opposes] has been its seeming fitness to secure the result of a peace with God free from self-righteousness, and which shall be really a trust in God and not in ourselves. . . This right result, essential to the glory of God in us, the truth of the life of sonship in us [i.e., the view which Campbell favors] secures, and alone can secure. (355 The single underscoring [italics] are present in the original.)

He is here concerned not only with freedom from self-righteousness, but also with "peace with God", or assurance of salvation, which is another falsely-supposed advantage of the imputation concept. It will be recalled that

one of the two charges against him in the heresy trial was that he taught an unorthodox form of assurance of faith. (The other charge was that he taught the doctrine of an unlimited atonement.) Peace and the assurance of acceptance with God are very practical matters at the parish level. In his early pastoral ministry at Row, Campbell stressed assurance as a kind of test of the validity of one's faith.<sup>9</sup>

An objection often raised to Campbell's understanding of the nature of the atonement is the question of how it would be possible for Christ to offer a perfect confession and repentance for sin when He Himself had never sinned. Would that not constitute a fictitious element just as surely as in the theories objected to? Is vicarious penitence any better than vicarious punishment as a means of atonement? In this connection the following passages from Ellen G. White become deeply significant:

Christ came not confessing His own sins; but guilt was imputed to Him as the sinner's substitute. He came not to repent on His own account; but in behalf of the sinner. As man had transgressed the law of God, Christ was to fulfill every requirement of that law, and thus show perfect obedience. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!" Christ honored the ordinance of baptism by submitting to this rite. In this act He identified Himself with His people as their representative and head. As their substitute, He takes upon Him their sins, numbering Himself with the transgressors, taking the steps the sinner is required to take, and doing the work the sinner must do.<sup>10</sup>

The Lord can take every one of us in His embrace; for His arm encircles the race. Let us remember this, after Christ had taken the necessary steps in repentance, conversion and faith in behalf of the human race, He went to John to be baptized of him in Jordan. . . . Have you thought of what this means to us that in this prayer ["This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him."?] is included every son and daughter of Adam who will believe in Christ as a personal Saviour, and take the requisite steps in repentance, conversion, faith and baptism? . . ."<sup>11</sup>

White's view appears to be in harmony with Campbell's. Christ confesses and repents for us, not in the sense of instead of us, but in the sense of showing us the way, and sweeping us up together with Him into the same penitential act, thus letting the same mind be in us that was also in Christ Jesus: the same attitude toward sin, and the same trust in the Father's love and mercy. Clearly, Ellen White taught that Christ in truth repented for us.

We shall take note of one further characteristic of Campbell's thought. It is the movement to transcend egocentricity in religion. This strand is interwoven throughout the book, but we cannot take time to trace it here. It is most clearly revealed in his Reminiscences and Reflections, written near the close of his life, as he looked back upon the pastoral experiences of his youth. He states:

That the interest of religion as the means of escape from future misery or of securing future happiness has nothing holy or spiritual in it is certain. It is but the instinct of self-interest deferred to a remote future, and cannot be placed higher than the same interest in its relation to present and earthly things. But it is not therefore to be confounded with that self-seeking which is sin,--nor is the attempt to suppress it to be exalted to the dignity of self-sacrifice. Let it be kept in its own place, and let not religious earnestness which has no better root than the instinct of self-preservation pass for that which it is not.<sup>13</sup>

Concerning those who have advanced beyond an egocentric concern for safety, he writes:

Safety in God's universe is felt, but it is now scarcely thought of, because the Father's heart in which we are trusting is so full a fountain of other and richer blessing that this, our cry before, is scarcely thought of. And while safety sinks down to its proper level, new desires and hopes take possession of our hearts, set free for them by the remission of sins,--the desires and hopes which pertain to eternal life, now known in the truth of what it is--the knowledge of God the Father and of His Son Jesus Christ. . .

Charitably he continues:

We do not in this light of life indulge in hard thoughts of those who yet know no higher religion than the fear of hell and the hope of heaven. Nor do we attempt to set them free by telling them that their religion is a form of selfishness. We know that we ourselves have been raised to the higher level on which we now find ourselves, not by the becoming indifferent to our own well-being, but by coming to know our true well-being as given to us, not won by us,--given in Christ. To be blessed in the life of love quickened in us by the faith of God's love--this and this alone is our true deliverance from the life of self. If we seem to attain this deliverance otherwise--by simply endeavouring to get above our interest in self by a resolution and an effort--we either deceive ourselves and mistake the effort for success, or we escape self-deception at the price of a despairing consciousness of failure.<sup>14</sup>

These are words of spiritual wisdom, as well as of deep psychological insight.



Subsequent Appraisals of McLeod Campbell

We have already noted Denney's high praise of Campbell, as well as that of T.F.Torrance, who observes that his voice needs to be heard again today [1973]. References bordering on the eulogistic are easily found among the writings of other distinguished theologians. Dr. Dale, in the 18th edition of The Atonement, remarks that "those who have read his book will understand me when I say that there is something in it which makes me shrink from criticism. . . I feel in no mood to argue with him; it is better to sit quiet, and to receive the subtle influence of his beautiful temper and profound spiritual wisdom."<sup>15</sup>

The Methodist theologian, John Scott Lidgett, author of The Spiritual Principle of the Atonement (1897), calls attention to "the conspicuous service rendered by McLeod Campbell in his great attempt to rescue the atonement from Calvinistic and governmental explanations, and to interpret it in terms of Fatherhood." He freely acknowledges that Campbell's book "puts us on the highroad to a true conception of the matter."<sup>16</sup>

Mozley, in Some Tendencies in British Theology, writes: "Except in the case of the greatest thinkers and writers on religious and theological subjects, we read those of a previous generation rather to learn what they thought than to see with their eyes. Occasionally some one stands out in almost lonely pre-eminence, so that our interest in him is living, not just historic. Not a few have felt that to be true of McLeod Campbell. . ."<sup>17</sup> This is similar to Denney's testimony: "he walks in the light all the time, and everything he touches lives."<sup>18</sup>

In the final year of the 19th century, Edward Caird, in The Fundamental Ideas of Christianity, could remark, looking back upon Campbell's heresy trial and its aftermath, "In this case it may fairly be said that the heretic has in the long run converted the church."<sup>19</sup>

His influence has extended on into the 20th century. A.B.Macaulay, in the Preface to his book The Death of Jesus (1938) [The Cunningham Lectures, '37], states: "Readers will easily perceive who my masters have been: Dr. J. McLeod Campbell and Principal James Denney." He adds, "A nobler book on the Death of Jesus than the former's The Nature of the Atonement has, in my judgment, never been written in any age or language."

In the early 1960s, George M. Tuttle, of Toronto, Canada, wrote a doctor's thesis on The Place of John McLeod Campbell. In summarizing Campbell's contributions, Tuttle states: "He replaced legal fictions with ethical realities. Instead of expressing the relation of men to Christ, and vice versa, by such terms as substitution and imputation, he strove to prove that these relationships were more direct and natural."<sup>20</sup> Tuttle emphasizes that Campbell's views were Bible based and that for him Revelation "takes precedence over all questions of rational speculation, and even over creedal and ritual forms which purport to have a Scriptural foundation." Tuttle was also impressed by a sense of wholeness in Campbell's approach: "Finally, Campbell's sense of wholeness is further demonstrated by his fervent desire to show the natural and necessary relation which exists between who Christ is, what He does for men, and what He does in men; that is, between the incarnation, the atonement and the sanctified life. All these ideas form the background of Campbell's view. Not only for himself alone, but for others, he made them an explicit part of the theology of the atonement."<sup>21</sup>

After citing Campbell's influence on Brunner, Frank, Vincent Taylor and others, Tuttle concludes: "Campbell is thus not without solid support for his doctrine that Christ in His manhood so identified with sinful men that He represented them even in their guilt, and offered to the Father on their behalf an adequate repentance satisfying to the Father. . . Campbell's understanding of this aspect of the atonement continues to be a living option for serious minds."<sup>22</sup>

#### R.C.Moberly

Another one of the "ten best books on the atonement" listed by Vincent Taylor is Atonement and Personality (1901), written by an Anglican scholar and Regius Professor of Pastoral Theology at Oxford, R. C. Moberly. In a sense, Moberly can be seen as standing on the shoulders of Campbell, for he enlarges upon and deepens the insights of the latter, and in measure supplements his deficiencies, while at the same time adding a richness and originality of his own. As the title implies, this work bespeaks a more modern understanding of the nature of human personality than would have been possible fifty years earlier, in Campbell's day. The latter half of the 19th century witnessed the beginnings of scientific studies into the unity in complexity of the human psyche, and Moberly's work reflects, in some degree, that concern.

It manifests a keen insight into the workings of human nature at the practical level, and<sup>at</sup> the same time combining this with an understanding of the nature of the atonement which clearly is akin to that of Campbell's.

We shall select samples from just one chapter of Moberly's book, (Chapter II, on Penitence), in order to exemplify what has been stated above. In recapping the previous chapter, Moberly writes:

In speaking of punishment we endeavoured to distinguish, as following naturally upon sin, two distinct trains of penal consequence; on the one hand the whole system of external punishment; on the other the whole history and process of inner anguish of soul. And we ended by asking for acceptance of these two principles;--first that the whole content of the former is capable of being transferred, by dutiful acceptance, so as to become the mere material of the latter; that is, all incurred pain may be transfused into penitence; and secondly that except only just so far as it is in this way transfused, and ministers to, or reappears as, penitence, penal pain is of no moral value to the punished personality at all. Righteousness may indeed be vindicated in the mere fact that I am severely punished. But except just so far as my punishment become, in me, the expression and voluntary sacrifice of my penitence, it is not within me, but without, that righteousness is vindicated and becomes triumphant.

On the other hand just so far as my punishment does really become my penitence, so far does righteousness win in my punishment a fuller triumph; for so far is it true that,--within my very self, as well as without,--punishment, translated into penitence, is in the highest sense, the victory of righteousness. (30f)

A few pages farther along, his thought has progressed a step further:

So the sin of the past is an abiding present; and this we are conscious that it is in two distinguishable ways. It is in us both as present guilt and as present power. Closely allied as these are, we do not think of them as simply identical. The most complete removal of past sin as present guilt--which is what is often meant by the phrase forgiveness of sins--would not of itself remove, might perhaps hardly even touch, the hopelessness of its yoke as present power. Tell the passionate man that he is forgiven every outburst of which he ever has been guilty: remove all shadow or suspicion of guilt; yet will he not thereby have acquired a perfect mastery of temper; when the provocation comes, he--the same he--will break into fever again. On the other hand, the completest removal of the tyranny of the past as present power, the completest imaginable capacity, for present and for future, of temperance or holiness, does not seem to go far towards undoing the passionate deed that is done, i.e., towards cancelling the past as present guilt. The guilt of that which has been guiltily done seems to be abidingly contained in the fact of my self-identity with the past. It is part of that continuity which personality means. How is it possible to be rid of this--this necessary self-identity with the past, which seems to be still present in me as guilt, as inveterately as I am I.

It has been, then, constantly felt that a real deliverance from sin must necessarily have each of these two aspects. It must mean a real removal of the conscience of guilt, which is the inherent presence of past sin in the soul. And it must mean such undoing of the power of sin, such effectual conquest of evil tendency and evil taste, as to make present and future holiness possible. It is one thing to be forgiven, to this moment, every touch of what has been wrong; it seems like quite another to have the possibility--nay to have even the hope,--of living from henceforth the divine life of holiness. (34f)

Moberly next asks the question what a perfect penitence would be like.

We are trying to think, at this moment, not of an imperfect, but of a perfect penitence. A man has been in the depths, under the slavery of passion, or of drink. . . Think then of the clearness of his insight into the terribleness of that degradation which has become the very condition of his life. Think of the pain of the struggle against sin, and the anguish of shame because to abstain is so fierce a struggle and pain. He is impotent, even to anguish: and it is anguish of spirit to be impotent. Every step, every consciousness is a pain. Think of the pain of the disciplinary processes (which, even though pain, are his hope, his strength, his joy!), the pain of the sorrow, the depth of the shame, the resoluteness of the self-accusing, self-condemning, self-identifying with the holiness outraged, the self-surrender to suffering and penalty, the more than willing acceptance, and development in the self of the process of scourging and of dying. Though every step be shame and pain, he flinches not nor falters, for moment by moment, more and more, his whole soul loathes the sin and cleaves to the chastisement; he will bear the whole misery of the discipline of penitence, that, at all cost of agony, even within the dominion and power of sin, he may yet be absolutely one with the Spirit of Holiness, in unreserved condemnation and detestation of sin. . . (38f)

In the light of these thoughts it is not too much to say that penitence, if only it were quite perfect, would mean something more like, at least, than we could, apart from experience of penitence, even conceive intellectually to be possible or thinkable, to a real undoing of the past;--a real killing out and eliminating of the past from the present "me." Penitence is really restorative. Its tendency is towards what might truly be called "redeeming" or "atoning." It would really mean in me, if only it could be consummated quite perfectly, a real re-identification with the Law and the Life of righteousness. (41)

Moberly is here speaking, of course, of an ideal penitence. It is what man needs to reach, but which he is utterly incapable of reaching--just because of the effects of sin, which produced the need in the first place. Such an ideal penitence is an impossibility for man to achieve.

And why is it inherently impossible? Just because the sin is already within the conscience: and the presence of sin in the conscience, if on one side it constitutes the need, and may incite to the desire, of penitence, on the other is itself a bar to the possibility of repenting. The sinfulness, being of the self, has blunted the self's capacity for entire

hatred of sin, and has blunted it once for all. I can be frightened at my sin; I can cry out passionately against it. But not the tyranny only, or the terror, or the loathing, but also the love of it and the power of it are within me. The reality of sin in the self blunts the self's power of utter antithesis against sin. Just because it now is part of what I am, I cannot, even though I would, wholly detest it. It is I who chose and enjoyed the thing that was evil: and I, as long as I live, retain not the memory only but the capacity, the personal affinity, for the evil taste still; as the penitent drunkard or gambler is conscious in himself, as long as he lives, of the latent possibility within himself--not of drinking only or of gambling, but alas! of passionately enjoying the evil thing. And this is true in a measure of all sin. The more I have been habituated to sinning, the feebler is my capacity of contrition. But even once to have sinned is to have lost once for all its ideal perfectness. It is sin, as sin, which blunts the edge, and dims the power, of penitence. (42f)

It is not difficult to see the direction in which Moberly's thought is moving. His next paragraph reads:

But if the perfect identification of being with righteousness which perfect consummation of penitence would necessarily mean, is ipso facto impossible to one who has sinned, just because the sin is really his own: what is this but to say--hardly even in other words--that the personal identity with righteousness in condemnation and detestation of sin, which penitence in ideal perfection would mean and be,--is possible only to One who is personally Himself without sin? The consummation of penitential holiness,--itself, by inherent character, the one conceivable atonement for sin,--would be possible only to the absolutely sinless.

The reader can now perceive clearly the author's goal: it is only Christ Jesus that can have a perfect penitence, and be the perfect Mediator between man and God, and it is only in Him that His righteousness--His perfect penitence and trust--can become ours. Speaking of this penitence in the hearts of believers, Moberly further declares:

It is the real echo,--the real presence--in their spirit, of Spirit; Spirit, not their own, as if of themselves; yet their very own, for more and more that Spirit dominates them and constitutes them what they are. It is, in them, the Spirit of human contrition, of human atonement; the Spirit of Holiness triumphing over sin, and breaking it, within the kingdom of sin; the Spirit at once of Calvary and of Pentecost; the Spirit, if not of the Cross yet of the Crucified, who conquered and lived through dying. (46)

Is it not the Spirit of the Crucified which is the reality of the penitence of the really penitent? Only there remains to the end this one immovable distinction. What was, in Him, the triumph of His own inherent and unchanging righteousness, is in them the consummation of a gradual process of change from sin to abhorrence and contradiction of sin. . . (47)

Finally, speaking of the salvation which they possess in Christ, he adds:

though not of themselves, it is by far the deepest truth of themselves. If not of, it is in, them: and when in them, it is the very reality of what they are,--the central core and essence of their own effective personality. Though it cries aloud in them that it is not of them; though it utterly transcends and transfigures them; yet is it more, after all, the very central truth of themselves than all else that they have themselves ever done or been.

In saying this, we are in part anticipating thoughts which lie beyond the range of our present subjects.

But it is well to say at once that it is precisely the impossible which has been, and is, and is to be, the real. What is precisely impossible in respect of ourselves, is exactly real in the Church--the breath of whose life is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. (45)

One of the several themes, or aspects of, the atonement that is developed in the remaining chapters of Moberly's book is the relationship of the atonement to the work of the Holy Spirit. The virtual absence of any elucidation of this relationship in Campbell's work is viewed by Moberly as one of its serious deficiencies. I feel that this deficiency is more apparent than real; for it seems to me that a close relationship between the atonement and the work of the Holy Spirit is implicit throughout much of Campbell's book. One of the excellencies of Moberly's work is that it makes that relationship explicit.

Because he is a high-church Anglican, it is not surprising to find that Moberly emphasizes also the close relation which exists between the atonement and the eucharist.

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The Southern Baptist theologian, Robert Culpepper, in his recent book, Interpreting the Atonement (Eerdmans, 1966)<sup>23</sup>, classifies Campbell and Moberly together (with no others) under the heading, "Views of Vicarious Confession or Vicarious Penitence." Of the former, he states: "Probably no treatment of the atonement in the modern period has been more influential than that given by the devout Scottish preacher-theologian, J. McLeod Campbell."<sup>24</sup> Of the latter, he comments, "Moberly's work, however, must not be interpreted simply as a re-interpretation of Campbell. It is a highly original work with a completely independent line of approach. Accordingly, these two together, Moberly and Campbell, present an extremely attractive view of the atonement."<sup>25</sup>

It is instructive to contrast what Culpepper says about these two men with his comments concerning the representatives of the first class<sup>26</sup> which he includes under "The Modern Period: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries", vis., "1. Views of Satisfaction or Penal Substitution."

Some theologians of this period have not hesitated to set forth the atonement in terms of the most rigid forms of seventeenth-century Calvinism. Among these should be included Charles Hodge, W.G.T. Shedd, and L. Berkhof, and, to a lesser degree, T.J. Crawford and A.H. Strong. All of these theologians regard the essential element in the atonement as the vicarious punishment of sin in Christ, our substitute. All of them, moreover, argue that retributive justice, or holiness which demands the punishment of sin, is the most important element in the character of God, and that, if the Lawgiver so ordains, he can punish his innocent Son in the place of guilty man. . . The imputation of the sinner's sins to Christ and of Christ's righteousness to the sinner is an integral part of the thought of these five theologians. Hodge and Berkof apply the Calvinistic idea of predestination to the problem under discussion and arrive at the idea of limited atonement, that Christ died for the elect only. Crawford, Shedd, and Strong, however, maintain that Christ died for all, but that not all appropriate the benefits of his death.

Generally speaking, the theological position enunciated above is offensive to the moral sensibilities of modern man, and relatively few theologians today hold this position in its unmitigated form.

[italics supplied]

#### James Denney

We propose to sample the thought of but one other writer in this Section, James Denney, whose work deserves more attention than we have time to give it here. We shall content ourselves with a brief look, not at an early chapter as we did with Moberly's work, but at the last chapter of the last book (one of several) which Denney wrote on the atonement, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, which was published posthumously in 1917. This final chapter is entitled, "Reconciliation as Realized in Human Life." In the preceding chapter reconciliation had been considered as the finished work of Christ, a work done for sinners, but one in which they had no part in the doing. Of this Denney states, in the chapter we are now considering: "The legitimacy and necessity of this point of view it is vain to dispute. No one, however, questions that the finished work of Christ must in some way become effective for sinners-- must in some way become a power in their lives--if reconciliation is to be a realised in their experience." (286)

How this is to be accomplished is the theme of the chapter, which naturally centers upon the subject of faith, and how faith is to be properly understood. One senses that Denney is here cutting his way through theological verbiage in order to lay bare the essential nature of faith.

It is important to get rid of the idea that there is anything arbitrary in faith--that it is a condition to which it has pleased God, for reasons best known to Himself, to attach man's salvation, but which, so far as we can see, might just as well have been anything else. It is ideas of this kind which make faith itself a doubtful and uncertain quantity; which raise all sorts of unreal questions as to whether any alleged faith is of the proper kind; which get lost in attempts to distinguish between faith and works, inasmuch as this arbitrarily demanded faith is itself but a kind of work, on which salvation is made legally dependent; and which, worse than all, inevitably leave something artificial in the connection between faith and salvation, an artificiality revealed in all the distinctions between imputed righteousness and infused righteousness, or between the righteousness of faith and that of life, or between justification and sanctification, as things which must indeed both be provided for, but which have no natural, vital, or organic connection with each other. This perplexing and sometimes repellent part of the field of theology is cleared and simplified when we see that there is nothing arbitrary in faith, and that it is not so much a condition on which salvation is by the will of God made to depend, as the one natural and inevitable way in which the salvation of God, present in Christ, is and must be accepted by men. (288f)

Denney's definition of faith becomes apparent in the following:

If a man with the sense of his sin on him sees what Christ on His cross means, there is only one thing for him to do--one thing which is inevitably demanded in that moral situation: to abandon himself to the sin-bearing love which appeals to Him in Christ, and to do so unreservedly, unconditionally, and for ever. This is what the New Testament means by faith. It is the only thing which is true to the situation in which the sinner finds himself when he is confronted with Christ and the work of reconciliation achieved by Him. To believe in Christ and in the sin-bearing love revealed in Him is to do the one right thing for which the situation calls.

Faith of this nature is what justifies a man. What does Denney understand Paul to mean by "justification"? Continuing the above:

When the sinner does thus believe he does the one right thing, and it puts him right with God; in St. Paul's language he is justified by faith. God accepts him as righteous, and he is righteous; he has received the reconciliation (Rom. 5:11), and he is reconciled. It is quite needless to complicate this simple situation by discussing such questions as whether justification is 'forensic,' or has some other character, say 'real' or 'vital,' to which 'forensic' is more or less of a contrast.



And there is nothing superficial in what the New Testament calls faith, in its relation to this ultimate truth in God; on the contrary, faith exhausts in itself the being of man in this direction; it is his absolute committal of himself for ever to the sin-bearing love of God for salvation. It is not simply the act of an instant, it is the attitude of a life; it is the one right thing at the moment when a man abandons himself to Christ, and it is the one thing which keeps him right with God for ever. It is just as truly the whole of Christianity subjectively as Christ is the whole of it objectively, and it is no more lawful to supplement or to eke out faith than to supplement or to eke out Christ. Luther is abundantly right in his emphasis on faith alone. It is just the other side of Christ alone. Every Christian experience whatsoever--call it justification, adoption, or sanctification--call it love, or repentance, or regeneration, or the Spirit--lies within faith and is dependent upon it. . . (291)

In the next several pages he distinguishes the Protestant meaning of faith from the Tridentine (Roman Catholic) misunderstanding of it. He then returns to stress the broad inclusiveness and wholeness of Biblical faith:

Just as grace is the whole attitude of God in Christ to sinful men, so faith is the whole attitude of the sinful soul as it surrenders itself to that grace. Whether we call it the life of the justified, or the life of the reconciled, or the life of the regenerate, or the life of grace or of love, the new life is the life of faith and nothing else. To maintain the original attitude of welcoming God's love as it is revealed in Christ bearing our sins--not only to trust it, but to go on trusting--not merely to believe in it as a mode of transition from the old to the new, but to keep on believing--to say with every breath we draw, 'Thou, O Christ, art all I want; more than all in Thee I find' --is not a part of the Christian life but the whole of it. . . (301f)

In discussing faith as union with Christ, Denney's thought is distinctly reminiscent of Campbell's:

All His thoughts and feelings in relation to sin as disclosed in His Passion--all His submission to the Father who condemns sin and reacts inexorably against it--all His obedience in the spirit of sonship--in their measure become ours through faith. This itself, and nothing else, is our union to Christ. It is something which is accomplished through faith and the experiences to which faith leads, not something which has an antecedent existence and value of its own on which faith can presume. Faith freely and passionately identifies the sinner with the sin-bearer, absorbing into itself all His attitude in relation to sin; this is the only union with Christ of which experience has a word to say. (305)

The following paragraph climaxes this last chapter of the last book that has been left us by this devout and prolific writer on the atonement:

Acceptance of the mind of God with regard to sin, as something which wounds His holy love, to which He is finally and inexorably opposed--in other words, repentance and submission to all the divine reaction against evil; acceptance of love as the divine law of life --in other words, self-renunciation and sacrifice for the good of others: these are the main characteristics of the life of reconciliation as a life in which the soul identifies itself with Christ through faith. Each of them may grow continuously in depth and intensity. Repentance is not the act of an instant, in which the sinner passes from death to life, it is the habit of a lifetime, in which he assimilates ever more perfectly the mind of Christ in relation to sin--his sorrow, his confession of God's righteousness in judging it as He does, his unreserved submission to everything in which God's reaction against it comes home to him. Similarly the acceptance of love as the law of life grows perpetually more complete and profound. Under the inspiration of Jesus the reconciled soul sees opportunities for self-denial, calls for sacrifice, appeals for love, to which it would once have been insensible, or to which it would have been too selfish or too cowardly to respond. And it is in responding without reserve to such appeals, and entering without reserve into the mind of Christ in relation to sin, that the life of reconciliation to God is realised in sinners through faith in Christ. (328f)

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In this Second Section we have looked principally at the work of three writers, Campbell, Moberly and Denney. In a sense these three were kindred spirits. Notwithstanding their originality and independence from one another, they shared a common concern. Theirs was not primarily the task of defending the atonement from the subverting influences of rationalism. That was a work to be better performed by others, for example, Brunner. Their burden and contribution was to look more deeply into the nature of the atonement itself, to attempt to free it from certain rigid theological formulae in which it had become encased, and to let in some fresh air and some clearer light upon the wondrous theme of Calvary. They have sought to stimulate and to develop our understanding of the meaning of the Cross, to open before us new vistas, to move us to deeper study and above all to lead us into a closer personal relationship to Jesus Christ. To the extent that they have accomplished these ends without compromising essential Christian doctrine, we stand in their debt. These conservative, evangelical-minded men we may term liberal in the finest sense of the word. There are other theologians of the period--for example, P.T.Forsyth--who would be congenial in this group; but, for reasons of time and space, consideration of the above three must suffice.

Although we have necessarily been touching this aspect of the subject all along, in the next section we shall turn our attention more specifically from the nature of the atonement to the end (or the goal) of the atonement. In doing so we shall move from the British Isles to Sweden, and look briefly at an important historical study by Gustaf Aulen, entitled, Christus Victor.

(Part III - THE END OF THE ATONEMENT)

Gustaf Aulen

"It is the criterion of a great work of theology that it sets the ground rules for a discussion even if that discussion goes beyond the original argument. Measured by this criterion, Christus Victor looks better all the time."<sup>27</sup> Thus writes Yale historian, J. Pelikan, in 1968, some forty years after the appearance in English of Aulen's slim volume. Aulen's work is subtitled, "An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement." Brunner considered the "main error" of Ritschl to be that he set up a false antithesis of "either Anselm or the subjective interpretation."<sup>28</sup> These are two of Aulen's three. The third view, according to Aulen, is the real New Testament one, which he terms the "Classic View". Instead of mainly seeing the atonement in a legal and forensic framework, as does the Anselmic theory (which Aulen calls the Latin View) the Classic View lifts the whole matter into the realm of the great controversy between Christ and Satan and sees Christ as triumphing over the powers of sin and death. Not only was the Classic View that of the New Testament, in Aulen's understanding, but also, to a greater extent than is often recognized, was it the view of the early church Fathers, particularly Irenaeus. It was then almost lost sight of in the Middle Ages as the Latin View gained ascendancy under Anselm and his followers, only to be rediscovered and placed in prominence by Luther during the immediate Reformation period. Soon thereafter, however, the Classic View again fell into obscurity as the the other two streams--issuing simultaneously from Anselm and from Abelard and flowing down into modern times--increasingly dominated the scene. The Abelardian stream--contributed to by the Socinians, the Enlightenment; and German rationalism and idealism--became almost totally engulfed in the purely subjective aspects of the "moral influence" theories of the present day. The other stream, as we have noted, has been contributed to by Calvinistic strains, which have been strengthened by scholastic tendencies, while being discriminatingly opposed by such men as Campbell. It has ultimately persisted to modern times in the views of satisfaction or penal substitution

advocated by Hodge, Berkhof, Strong, and their many followers. Aulen wishes the Classic View to again become victorious over the other two, neither of which he considers to be adequate or in full harmony with Biblical truth; although he acknowledges that each contains important elements thereof.

Aulen criticizes Anselm in that his "doctrine provides for the remission of the punishment due to sins, but not for the taking away of the sin itself. It may be further noted that Anselm admits a 'non-personal' transference of Christ's merit to men. . ." (p92) He continues:

All this goes to show that the Latin doctrine of the Atonement is closely related to the legalism characteristic of the medieval outlook. Therefore, it ought to appear as a really amazing fact, that the post-Reformation theologians accepted the Anselmian doctrine of the Atonement without suspicion, altogether missing the close relation between this doctrine and the theological tradition which the Reformation had challenged with its watchword of sola gratia. . .(92)

Aulen begins his treatment of Luther by declaring:

It may be roundly stated that no side of Luther's theology has been more summarily treated or more grossly misinterpreted than his teaching on the Atonement. The fundamental mistake has been the assumption that his teaching on this subject belongs to the Anselmian type. (101)

He quotes a passage from the Longer Commentary on Galatians which includes the following sentence, "To destroy sin, to smite death, to take away the curse by Himself, to bestow righteousness, bring life to light, and give the blessing: to annihilate the former, and to create the later: this is the work of God's omnipotence alone." Commenting on the entire passage, he states:

These words might be taken as a text on which to hang an exposition of the whole essence of Lutheran theology. He is speaking of that which lies nearest to his heart, and he does it in language which cannot be misunderstood. Two things are perfectly clear: First, that we are again listening to the classic idea of the Atonement--indeed, we get the impression that it is being presented with a greater intensity and power than ever before; and, second, that the dramatic view of the work of Christ, which Luther so emphatically expresses, is organically and inseparably connected with his doctrine of Justification. That we are justified through Christ is, he says, one and the same thing as to say that He is the conqueror of sin, death, and the everlasting curse. Likewise we hear that this is the very centre of the Christian faith (capitalia nostrae theologiae). (107)

When he comes to consider the doctrine of the atonement in post-Reformation orthodoxy, Aulen shows how Protestantism had lapsed back into the Latin view even more deeply than before:

The divergence of the Protestant doctrine from that of Anselm is often held to consist largely in this: that it treats the satisfaction made by Christ as being also an endurance of punishment; the sin of man had deserved punishment, punishment is the inexorable demand of justice, and, therefore, Christ endures it instead of men. But, as we saw in an earlier chapter, this idea belongs naturally to the Latin doctrine, and it occurs quite frequently in the later Middle Ages; indeed, it can be found even in Anselm himself. It is a far more important difference that in the Protestant doctrine the satisfaction is regarded as made not merely by the death of Christ, but by His whole fulfilment of God's law throughout His life. . .this may truly be called a development of the earlier doctrine; an important addition has been made to it. The life of Christ as a whole is now held to avail for the satisfaction of God's justice. Yet even this development does not involve any abandonment of the essential Latin idea; it might rather be said that the Latin idea is now more fully worked through to its logical conclusion than ever before. . . (129)

"If, then, it is true of the Latin doctrine of the Atonement in general that it is wholly comprehended within a rigid legal scheme, it is doubly true of the Protestant form of that doctrine,"

Aulen sees the nineteenth century as characterized by "a continuous conflict between the 'subjective' and the 'objective' views of the Atonement." In this connection he makes an insightful distinction between all three views:

It is particularly interesting to note the order in which the two ideas, Salvation and Atonement, are arranged. Wherever the classic idea of the Atonement is dominant, the two coincide; alike in the early church and in Luther, Salvation is Atonement, and Atonement is Salvation. With the Latin doctrine the case is different; Atonement is treated as prior to Salvation, a preliminary to it, making the subsequent process of salvation possible. But Schleiermacher reverses the order; Salvation (the change in the spiritual life) comes first, and Atonement (Reconciliation) follows as its completion. (136)

Of the modern period, Aulen observes:

Meanwhile the classic idea dropped almost out of sight in the sphere of theology; it has been the common assumption that the other two types of doctrine were the only possible forms which the Christian doctrine of the Atonement can take. Nevertheless, the classic idea has never wholly died out; it was too deeply rooted in the classical formulae of Christianity to be completely lost. It reappears from time to time in the hymnody of a Wesley in England or a Grundtvig in Denmark. . .

But now Aulen sees the situation changing:

In the course of the long controversy the two rival doctrines have exposed one another's weak points; and now it is becoming clearer with every year that passes that they both belong to the past. It is the outstanding characteristic of the theological situation to-day that in many ways and on many sides the humanistic outlook which has been dominant for nearly two hundred years is being fundamentally challenged. . . .

. . a door appears to stand open now, which has been closed for centuries, for the classic idea to come again to the fore. . .(145)

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One feature of Aulen's classic view of the atonement deserves special mention, particularly in view of the vigor with which our Calvinist friends chide Adventists for denying that Christ's atonement was altogether "finished on the Cross". It is the on-going nature of Christ's atoning work that is implicit in the Christus Victor theme, and which really is inseparable from it.

The classic idea of salvation is that the victory which Christ gained once for all is continued in the work of the Holy Spirit, and its fruits reaped. So it is in the Father; and so it is in Luther; but it is typical of him that the Finished work and the continuing work are even more closely connected together than before. The victory of Christ over the powers of evil is an eternal victory, therefore present as well as past. Therefore Justification and Atonement are really one and the same thing; Justification is simply the Atonement brought into the present, so that here and now the Blessing of God prevails over the Curse. It is therefore beside the point to argue whether Christus pro nobis or Christus in nobis is more emphasised, propter Christum or per Christum; for these are not two different things, but two sides of the same thing. Both are equally essential. (150)

The on-going intercession of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, the on-going work of the Holy Spirit, the progressive triumphing over the power of sin in the lives of believers are all aspects of atonement in its larger, continuing sense. This continuity has been stressed wherever in history the classic view has appeared. Aulen underscores this throughout his historical survey. Thus, in discussing the contribution of Athanasius, he writes:

Christ's work has a direct relation to sin; He came in order that He might break the power of sin over human life. . .

The work of Christ is the overcoming of death and sin; strictly, it is a victory over death because it is a victory over sin. And, further, the note of triumph which rings through this Greek theology [that of Athanasius] depends not only on the victory of Christ over death accomplished once for all, but also on the fact that His victory is the starting-point for His present work in the world of men, where He, through His Spirit, ever triumphantly continues to break down sin's power and 'deifies' men. (44)

It is apparent that these larger aspects of the atonement, dealing with Christ's ongoing victory over sin in believers lives have some bearing upon distinctive Adventist teachings regarding the intercessory work of Christ, the "final atonement", the "close of probation", and upon the question of any further character purification subsequent thereunto. Further study in these areas seems to be needed.

In this section we have been especially considering the end of the atonement. Conceived of in the light of the Christus Victor theme in its ongoing dimensions, it could well be said that the end of the atonement is the end of sinning.<sup>29</sup> Expressed positively, it would be the life of Christ realized in the believer, or differently expressed, as the life of sonship in which God is glorified in being the loving Father of His dear children. The vindication of God as Father is a greater glory than His vindication as a just Judge and Lawgiver [cf. McLeod Campbell]. To thus consider the end of the atonement to be the sanctification of God's family of believers is in no wise to downgrade justification, nor is it to enter into futile discussion as to which takes precedence over the other, sanctification or justification.<sup>30</sup> Such questions lose much of their relevance in the light of a broader understanding of the atonement.

#### Some Reactions to Christus Victor

One of the contributors to the Festschrift, Essays in Christology for Karl Barth, was J.B.Torrance [not to be confused with T.F.Torrance]. His article is entitled "The Priesthood of Jesus: A Study in the Doctrine of the Atonement." His central concern is lest over-attention upon the kingly office of Christ should overshadow and obscure His office as priest. He criticizes Aulen at some length for not keeping a proper balance between the two.

A clear example of a one-sided emphasis of this kind comes in Gustaf Aulen's influential book, Christus Victor. In reaction to a semi-Pelagian view where the emphasis is placed too exclusively on the work of Jesus as man, Aulen argues for what he calls a "classic" or "dramatic" doctrine of the Atonement. . . This, he tells us, is the teaching of the New Testament and was the view of the early Church. From this standpoint he vigorously attacks what he calls the "Latin" view or "objective" view, where the main thought is that of satisfaction made by Jesus as man to God for the sins of the world. . . Aulen is so concerned to show that the "objective" view has its origin in Latin views of penance, merit and satisfaction, that he overlooks all that the New Testament has to say about the priesthood of Jesus and His propitiatory sacrifice for our sins. (158ff)

In technical terminology, Torrance faults Aulen in that he "defends the anhypostasia of Christology at the expense of enhypostasia. But both must be taken together if we are to be true to the New Testament witness." (169) In his own view, which appears to be strongly Representative in character, he seems to me to overemphasize Christ-instead-of-us elements, for he continues: "The act of God in Christ for us, and the act of man in Christ for us are inseparable. Together they teach the substitutionary character of Christ's atonement. Anhypostasia emphasizes that God substitutes Himself for us. Enhypostasia emphasizes that the man Jesus is substituted for us." This, he feels, is the doctrine of the "wondrous exchange" taught by the Reformers. (169) Both of these substitutions are described as being "for us" (and not in us?) His whole handling of the subject of the priesthood of Christ seems to be weakened (or somewhat distanced from man himself) by his strongly representative view. This is seen in his mention of the work of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement:

Two statements can be made about that action. (1) When the High Priest enters into the Holy Place, in virtue of his solidarity with the people, all Israel might be said to enter the sanctuary in the person of the High Priest. (2) When the High Priest passes within the veil with the blood of the atoning sacrifice, God accepts all Israel in the person of the High Priest. That twofold statement brings out the cardinal teaching of the Old Testament that the priest was the mediator of the covenant, and that God's saving relation with His people was mediated at the hands of a priest by means of a propitiatory sacrifice. The High Priest realized in his own person on behalf of Israel God's covenant communion with His people. (170) (italics not supplied)

In fairness it should be added that toward the close of the article he tries to correct this apparent deficiency by saying that we stand related to the Death of Jesus in two ways: ontologically and pneumatologically, and only when in the latter way, i.e. only after Pentecost and after the sealing of the Holy Spirit in faith, do we become actual partakers of His blessings. Still, there seems to be a serious failure to bring the two together in any comparable way to that achieved by the thinkers which were discussed in the second section of this paper. He continues:

It could likewise be shown that the New Testament doctrine of justification and imputation must be understood in these terms. The righteousness which is imputed to us by faith is no legal fiction. It is the righteousness of Jesus Christ who in our name and in our stead has offered to God a perfect obedience and said "Amen" to the divine judgment on our sin. He is our righteousness and we are accepted in Him. . . (172)



Even though he says there is "no legal fiction", and even though he uses--without acknowledgment--a Campbellian phrase ["offered to God a . . . 'Amen' to the divine judgment on our sin."] he nevertheless comes "so near and yet so far!" from understanding the subject of justification by faith the way Cambell does. (If I mistake not.)

Aulen is also criticized by E.R.Fairweather in an article entitled, "Incarnation and Atonement: An Anselmian Response to Aulen's Christus Victor." (Canadian J. of Theol. Vol. 7: No.3, 1961, p.174) "No doubt Aulen is right in seeing in the whole story the triumph of God over the powers of evil, but he goes desperately wrong in failing to recognize that the very heart of this divine triumph is the conquest of sin by the perfect human obedience of the Word made flesh."

Ted Peters apparently views Aulen differently. In an article in the Lutheran Quarterly (Vol. 24, No.3, Aug. 1972 p.309) entitled, "The Atonement in Anselm and Luther: Second Thoughts about Gustaf Aulen's Christus Victor", he acknowledges Aulen to be "correct in his contention that this 'Christus Victor' interpretation of the Atonement is originally related to the heart of Luther's theology, namely, this doctrine of justification by faith. It is Christ's redemptive work received in faith through which a man is saved. 'Therefore we are justified by faith alone, because faith alone grasps this victory of Christ'"

For an update on how Aulen himself felt about his book twenty years later we are indebted to a trio of scholars at Fuller Theological Seminary (Jack Rogers, Ross Mackenzie and Louis Weeks) who published, in 1977, a volume entitled, Case Studies in Christ and Salvation (Westminster Press)

Reflecting in 1950, Aulen wrote regarding Christus Victor, "Since that time [1930] nothing has happened in theology that has induced me to change this opinion. On the contrary, I am more than ever convinced that without this outlook of the atonement as a drama one will lose connection with the fundamental biblical message."(120)

In his 1950 reflections Aulen "wanted now more strongly to emphasize: First, the universal and cosmic character of the great drama that has its center in the Atonement; secondly, the indissoluble connection between the cross and resurrection of Christ; and thirdly, that the atonement is not only a work that is once for all completed but also a work that is continued until the last judgment, the church of Christ being the instrument of this work." (italics supplied)

## PART IV - THE END OF DOCETISM

The first chapter in D. M. Baillie's book, God Was in Christ: An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement (1947), is entitled "Christology at the Crossroads." The first of two recent trends which he felt were "producing a changed situation for Christology" he discusses under the heading, "The End of Docetism." He begins: "It may safely be said that practically all schools of theological thought to-day take the full humanity of our Lord more seriously than has ever been done before by Christian theologians." Notwithstanding the important work of the early Church Councils in contending for the full humanity, as well as the full deity, of Christ, Baillie sees the church through the ages as having been

continually haunted by a docetism which made His human nature very different from ours and indeed largely explained it away as a matter of simulation or 'seeming' rather than reality. Theologians shrank from admitting human growth, human ignorance, human mutability, human struggle and temptation, into their conception of the Incarnate Life, and treated it as simply a divine life lived in a human body (and sometimes even this was conceived as essentially different from our bodies) rather than a truly human life lived under the psychical conditions of humanity. The cruder forms of docetism were fairly soon left behind, but in its more subtle forms the danger continued in varying degrees to dog the steps of theology right through the ages until modern times.

But now the belief in the full humanity of Christ has come into its own. . . (11)

This trend, he makes plain, is not anything approaching a surrender to the position of liberal Protestantism, which no longer recognizes Jesus to be the uniquely divine Son of God as Scripture portrays Him to be. No, he sees this trend among those who cling steadily to the full deity of Christ, and are thus far from being "modernists." Their disagreement with the latter, however, is not on the grounds that the liberals have made Jesus too human "for they are eager themselves to go the whole way in acknowledging that our Lord's experience in the days of His flesh was limited by the conditions of human life and human nature in this world." (12) In discussing the "human character of our Lord's moral and religious life" he states:

Our Lord's life on earth was a life of faith, and His victory was the victory of faith. His temptations were real temptations, which it was difficult and painful for Him to resist. His fight against them was not a sham fight, but a real struggle. When we say non potuit peccare, we do not mean that He was completely raised above the struggle against sin, as we conceive the life of the redeemed to be in heaven, in patria.

In the days of His flesh our Lord was viator. And when we say that He was incapable of sinning, we mean that He was the supreme case of what we can say with limited and relative truth about many a good man. 'He is incapable of doing a mean or underhand thing', we say about a man whom we know to be honourable; and so we say in a more universal and absolute way about Jesus: Non potuit peccare, without in any way reducing the reality of His conflict with His temptations. . .(14f)

Among "those theologians who are most explicitly in revolt against theological 'liberalism' and the 'Jesus of history' movement'" Baillie sees Karl Barth, and after some discussion he states:

But still more notable is the answer that Barth gives to the question whether it was fallen or unfallen human nature that Christ assumed in the Incarnation. He knows very well that the orthodox tradition, whether Catholic or Protestant, has always most explicitly answered: 'Unfallen human nature.' But Barth himself quite boldly answers: 'Fallen human nature', and maintains that this is what is meant by the Word becoming not only man but flesh. (p.16)<sup>31</sup>

Baillie points out that the phrase "fallen human nature" can be taken two different ways:

To say that Christ assumed our fallen human nature may, indeed, mean only that He was subject to pain and death as other men are in this 'fallen' state, but might also be taken to mean that He inherited original sin as other men do, though He was never guilty of committing actual sin. The latter meaning seems to have been definitely intended by the Adoptionists, and also by Menken, though not by Irving, who was astonished and greatly distressed by the accusation of heresy which ultimately resulted in his deposition from the ministry of the Church of Scotland. Barth is quite conscious that he is adopting a position that has always been regarded as heretical. He maintains, of course, the sinlessness of Jesus, and there is no definite indication that this refers only to 'actual' and not to 'original' sin, so that it is difficult to say what he really means, though it is plain that he is moved (as Irving certainly was) by the conviction that a completely human experience like our own must be ascribed to Christ. . .[Barth] does not shrink from saying 'fallen human nature', because that is the only human nature that we know in ourselves. (16f)<sup>32</sup>

In view of a renewed interest in this topic in the theological world it is not strange to find that the humanity of Christ has become the subject of a doctoral thesis for the University of London, entitled, The Humanity of the Saviour. A Biblical and Historical Study of the Human Nature of Christ in Relation to Original Sin, with Special Reference to its Soteriological Significance. This thesis was written by Harry Johnson and published in book form by the Epworth Press, London, in 1962. The following is excerpted from a review of Johnson's book which appeared in the London Quarterly and

Holborn Review (Vol.33, p246f), in 1964:

It is hardly surprising, considering the preponderant tendency throughout the history of Christology to neglect the humanity of Christ, that a theory which boldly states that the Son of God assumed fallen human nature should have received but scant attention. Apart from a handful of protagonists, it has been traditionally judged (usually very summarily) as unavoidably impairing the sinlessness of Jesus, and therefore rejected as heretical. Of late, however, the doctrine has been revived and has acquired in certain quarters some formidable advocates, notably Karl Barth. It is opportune, therefore, that a book should now appear which offers a comprehensive investigation into the doctrine. Dr. Johnson's book, however, is more than an investigation: it is a rationale of this whole Christological position, which makes clear not only the importance and value of the theory for a satisfactory doctrine of the Incarnation, but also argues its necessity for an adequate and convincing doctrine of the Atonement. Necessarily, in view of the controversial nature of the theory and the history of its treatment, the first part of the book is devoted to the crucial task of definition. This is undertaken in the context of a discussion of the doctrines of the Fall and of Original Sin. Dr. Johnson does not shun the problems which arise when one tries to integrate the concepts of responsibility, guilt and the 'inevitability' of sin into a satisfying definition of fallen human nature; nor does he balk the greater difficulties of relating these question to the person of Jesus, whom it is categorically asserted, remained sinless. . .

The conclusion of the book draws out what has been implicit in the previous sections: the powerful soteriological motivations of the theory. It is here that its true value and significance can be estimated. This is an important book which will have to be reckoned with. It treats of a large theme at a high level of argument, and will necessitate further attention being given to the status and acceptability of this strangely neglected doctrine.

The fifth and final part of Johnson's book is entirely taken up with the various ways in which the view that Christ assumed fallen human nature in His incarnation strengthens and enhances each of the commonly held theories of the atonement, which Johnson discusses each in turn. Concerning the theory of penal substitution, he states:

Yet if we are to avoid the concept that Christ, the Perfect and the Innocent, was punished by the wrath of God, we must find the answer to the question how Christ bore our sins. The Christological theory that we have been discussing suggests a possible answer. The Son of God when He became incarnate assumed 'fallen human nature', and it was this nature that He took to the Cross and finally redeemed. . .(p208)

Concerning the Christus Victor theory, he says:

If this struggle on the Cross is to have its full power, the victory must be won not merely in an external way, it must be won in the nature of man. . . If Christ assumed our 'fallen human nature', He took upon Himself the very nature in which the powers of death and sin were deeply entrenched. Thus throughout His incarnate life there was a struggle; these powers tried to make Him a sinner like the rest of mankind, but always they were

held at bay and Christ lived a perfect life. On the Cross the final victory was won when these powers that were rooted in fallen human nature were finally defeated and eradicated. In this defeat was the victory of God in Christ, and, through faith in Christ, that victory becomes a reality in men's lives. (210)

The Christus Victor theme, as we have seen, has been criticised for stressing the kingly role of Christ as God to the relative neglect of the priestly role of Christ as Son of Man and representative of humanity (--of stressing anhypostasis at expense of enhypostasis). Mindful of this criticism, Johnson explains:

It has been asked in what way the humanity of Christ is necessary to this interpretation of the Cross. Here is a definite and emphatic answer. It was by the very act of the Incarnation, the assuming of 'fallen human nature', that the battle was joined, and the final victory was itself won within human nature. The addition of this Christological position strengthens the 'Christus Victor' theory of the Cross. (210)

Johnson himself favors the Representative theory. He naturally sees this, too, as being strengthened by the fallen-nature Christology. [In my opinion the representative theory of the atonement, while having an important element of truth in it (as they all do), falls seriously short of stressing adequately that the victory is not merely won for us in Christ as our Representative, but in us by faith and by the Holy Spirit. In this regard, both the vicarious-penitence theory of Campbell and Moberly and the Christus Victor theory of Aulen seem to me to be nearer the truth of the matter.]

It is unfortunate that Johnson makes no mention of the vicarious-penitence theory. (Perhaps this is because he is taken up with the representative view.) For it is this understanding of the nature of the atonement that could be most fittingly joined with the fallen-nature Christology, each being enhanced by the other. The vicarious-confession-penitence theory of the atonement, it would seem, belongs with the kenosis theory of the Incarnation, for both of them emphasize the extreme down-reaching of the divine movement manward. As we shall notice shortly, it was chiefly among the so-called "kenosis theologians" of the Erlangen School on the Continent that the fallen-nature Christology found some of its chief protagonists.

In the historical section of his thesis, Johnson discusses a score of theologians and others who have espoused the fallen-nature Christology through the centuries. Among them is Johann K. Dippel (1673-1734), one-time physician to the king of Sweden; Gottfried Menken (1768-1831), an influential

German preacher, who was awarded the degree of D. of Theol. three years before his death; and the Scottish preacher-theologian, Edward Irving (1792-1834), who was active in the British Advent Awakening. Several theologians holding this view were prominently associated with the University of Erlangen and its "kenosis theology." Johann Christian Conrad von Hoffman was a leading exponent of this school, beginning a long term as Professor of Theology at Erlangen in 1841.<sup>33</sup> Another prominent theologian of this persuasion was Eduard Böhl (1836-1903), who for 24 years (1865-89) was Professor of Reformed Dogmatics in Vienna.

G. C. Berkouwer, in his work, The Person of Christ (Eerdmans, 1954), discusses a controversy between Böhl and Kuyper over the nature of Christ. He states: "The old conflict between Kuyper and Böhl suddenly achieves new relevance to the student of present-day Christology." (338f) His discussion of this matter occupies several pages (338-343). In Kuyper's opinion Böhl "seriously detracted from the fact that Christ was 'holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners' (Heb.7:26). Kuyper. . .acknowledges that Böhl is right in stressing that Christ, to be our redeemer, must assume our nature and not another; and plainly asserts that Böhl denies that Christ ever fell into personal sin. But he demurs when Böhl teaches that the guilt of Adam is imputed to Christ as well as to us. He quotes Böhl as saying: "In virtue of his birth Christ had just as complete a human nature as we and, as such, shared the imputation of the sin of Adam with us." Against this view Kuyper ranges all the passages of Scripture which incontrovertibly teach the absolute holiness of Christ. At this point we plainly run into the problem of original guilt. . .(339)

Kuyper, says Böhl, imperils the unabbreviated human nature of Christ. This is even more plain in the following statement of Böhl: "What an impossible thing, moreover, that God the Lord should, in the case of Christ, have held back one factor in the great account: that of the imputation of Adam's guilt; and that he should have permitted the Redeemer to come into the world through a back-door." Böhl is worried that Kuyper is not doing justice to the truly human nature of Christ and solidarity with us implied in this nature. With Luther he wishes to draw Christ fully into the flesh--a flesh which bears the likeness of sin. It would be hard to assume that this passionate discussion was based on a misunderstanding. And from later developments this seems still less likely. Van Niftrik, too, regards the issue as important and stresses the fact that Christ did not come to us as an ideal man but in the flesh. He knows he is liable to the charge of violating the sinlessness of Christ, but he answers: "But the gospel does not say that Christ became an ideal man; rather that he became flesh and, in the Biblical idiom, this often means man as sin made him. Thus, he says, Christological thought is in ferment. . .(341)

Berkouwer sees the Kuyper-Böhl controversy as having changed its form and as now being relevant in connection with the concept of the "incognito Christ"

Thus old problems come to us with new faces. The continuity in this progression is evident from the common criticism by Böhl and Barth of Calvin. Theology is presently pondering the implications of the Incarnation of the Word. Special emphasis is again laid on the fact that Christ was born in the human nature of the post-Fall situation--and idea which Reformed theology has always accepted and which Kuyper affirmed. (342)

The last sentence in the above quotation is rather astounding in that it seems to be saying that Reformed theology has always held the position of Böhl in regard to the nature of Christ. Just what Berkouwer means by this statement is not clear to me. Be this as it may, it is clear that questions regarding the full humanity of Christ are still considered to be important to discuss by one of the outstanding conservative theologians of our day.

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One of the proponents of the fallen-nature Christology which Johnson discusses (pp155-159) is Thomas Erskine (1788-1870). This fact is of particular interest in this study because Erskine was a bosom friend of McLeod Campbell. So close was their friendship, and so highly esteemed by the latter was the former, that Campbell named one of his sons Thomas Erskine Campbell.<sup>34</sup> We have stated earlier that the vicarious-penitence view of the nature of the atonement and the doctrine that Christ assumed our fallen nature seem naturally to fit together. The Erskine-Campbell friendship strongly suggests (although, of course, it does not establish) that the theological views of the two men on these subjects were congenial. A similar tie, which points in the same direction, is the fact that Campbell was also a close friend of Edward Irving. They even preached in each other's pulpits.<sup>35</sup> And they both got tried for heresy by the Church of Scotland, within a few years of each other.

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#### SUMMARY

In this historical survey we have sampled the thinking of the authors of five of the "ten best books on the Atonement in the modern period"--as listed by Vincent Taylor. We have seen Brunner in The Mediator defending the historical objectivity of the atonement in a manner that brings out at the same time its complete subjectivity and personalness. We have focused especially on

the innovative insights of McLeod Campbell into the nature of the atonement, which he perceived to be importantly different from Calvinist strains which he saw as having complicated and obscured the simplicity of the gospel and of faith by having injected fictitious elements into atonement theology. We have seen how R. C. Moberly has expanded the insights of Campbell and given more attention to the nature of human personality. We have seen something of how James Denney has related these (and similar) insights to soteriology and especially to the nature of faith. We have also traced something of the influence that these three men have had upon subsequent thinkers, down to the present day. Then we have reviewed Aulen's *Christus Victor* and indicated some of the mixed reaction which it has evoked. Finally, we have looked at a recent trend among non-liberal theologians to take more seriously the humanity of Christ, and we have indicated something of the important bearing which this trend might have upon the subject of the atonement.

Although we have devoted more of our attention to the vicarious-penitence and the *Christus Victor* views than to the penal-substitution and governmental theories, it should be remembered, as the Australian scholar, Leon Morris, has well expressed it in concluding his evangelical book, The Cross in the New Testament, that no one theory can be adequate to comprehend the richness of the atonement.

No theory of the atonement so far put forward has ever been able to win universal assent, and it is fairly safe to say that none ever will. . .

We ought not to act as though any of our petty theories had comprehended the whole. The atonement is too big and too complex for our theories. We need not one, but all of them, and even then we have not plumbed the subject to its depths. There has always been a tendency for men to think that one theory is sufficient. . (400f)

I can think of no better way to conclude this paper, which has merely scratched the surface of an inexhaustible theme, than to quote Morris's concluding paragraph:

The chief impression that a study of the atonement leaves with us is that of the many-sidedness of Christ's work for men. When He died for us on the cross, He did something so infinitely wonderful that it is impossible to comprehend it in its fulness. However man's need be understood, that need is fully and abundantly met in Christ. The New Testament writers are like men who ransack their vocabulary to find words which will bring out some small fraction of the mighty thing that God has done for us. And yet, though it is so complex and so difficult, it may be put very simply: 'the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me' (Gal.2:20).



### Some Desirable Areas for Further Study

I have been impressed during the preparation of this paper with many similarities between some of the themes touched upon here and prominent features in what in Adventist circles has been termed The 1888 Message. I surmise that a study aiming to bring out these similarities, as well as differences, might prove to be highly enlightening.

A related study, which also might be fascinating, would be to compare the views of McLeod Campbell (and Moberly and Denney) with those of Ellen G. White on the atonement and related topics. Such comparison was touched upon in this paper, where was cited White's statements about Christ's having taken the necessary steps of confession and repentance as man's Representative and Example.

## NOTES

1. [at foot of page one]
2. Brunner cannot be classified as an "evangelical", as the term has come to be generally understood; but unquestionably he is "non-liberal" in his handling of the atonement. It is for this reason that his work is given at least token attention in this partial survey of recent conservative thought on the subject. Much the same could be said in regard to several other writers whose works we shall consider, in greater or lesser detail, such as McLeod Campbell, R.C.Moberly, and Gustaf Aulen, who are usually not considered to be "evangelicals" in the narrower sense of the term.
3. Vincent Taylor, in his little book, The Cross of Christ (Lectures at Drew University, in 1956) lists among the "Ten Best Books on the Atonement" works by McLeod Campbell, Dale, Denny, Moberly, Brunner (The Mediator) and Aulen (Christus Victor, to be reviewed in Part III of this paper) Campbell's book--the first listed--was published in 1856, just one hundred years prior to Taylor's lectures. See also The Expository Times, Vol.48, No.6,p267ff for an article by Taylor, which is built around the "ten best books."
4. James Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1917, p.120.
5. T. F. Torrance, "The Contribution of McLeod Campbell to Scottish Theology", Scottish J. of Theol., Vol.27, No.3 (Aug., 1973) p.295f.
6. George Milledge Tuttle, The Place of John McLeod Campbell, University of Chicago Department of Photoduplication, 196\_, p.300.
7. Campbell writes: "The wrath of God against sin is a reality, however men have erred in their thoughts as to how that wrath was to be appeased. Nor is the idea that satisfaction was due divine justice a delusion, however far men have wandered from the true conception of what would meet its righteous demand." The Nature of the Atonement, p.135.
8. Ellen G. White writes: "Many commit the error of trying to define minutely the fine points of distinction between justification and sanctification. Into the definitions of these two terms they often bring their own ideas and speculations. Why try to be more minute than is Inspiration. .? (MS 21,1891)
9. McLeod Campbell, Reminiscences and Reflections, p.136.
10. Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, Jan. 21, 1873. (Vol. 41, No. 6 p.42)
11. Ellen G. White, General Conference Bulletin, 1901, p.36.
13. McLeod Campbell, Reminiscences and Reflections, p.191.
14. Ibid., p.193f.
15. R. W. Dale, The Atonement, The Congregational Union of England and Wales, London, 1902, p. 424 (15th edition!)

6. John Scott Liggett, The Victorian Transformation of Theology, Epworth Press, 1934, p.38.
7. Quoted in Tuttle, Op.cit., p.277.
8. James Denney, Op.cit., p.120.
9. J. Caird, The Fundamental Ideas of Christianity, Maclehose, Glasgow, 1899, Vol. 1, p.88. Quoted in Tuttle, Op.cit., p.236.
10. Tuttle, Op.cit., p.304.
1. Ibid., p.306.
2. Ibid., p.295.
3. This book by Culpepper, Interpreting the Atonement, along with Leon Morris's The Cross in the New Testament, was favorably reviewed in the Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol.22, p249f (1969).
4. Culpepper, Op.cit., p.115.
5. Ibid., p.118.
6. The second classification is the "Moral Influence Views", under which he discusses Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Horace Bushnell, Hastings Rashdall and R.S.Franks. The third, is the Campbell-Moberly view, which he terms "Views of Vicarious Confession and Penitence." The fourth is "Views of Sacrifice", under which he lists Hicks and Vincent Taylor. The last is "Triumph over Evil Powers", the view of G. Aulen.
7. Jaroslav Pelikan, in the Foreward to Christus Victor, by G. Aulen. p.xix
3. Emil Brunner, The Mediator, Westminster Press, Phila., 1947, p.440.
9. The concept of the atonement as effecting Christ's victory over the powers of death and of sin points up a theological problem which has recently been underscored by G.C.Berkouwer in his large book which bears the very small title, Sin (Eerdmans, 1971). The last chapter is entitled "The End of Sin". It poses the question: When is the victory over sinning completed? Throughout most of the chapter Berkouwer wrestles with the problem of trying to harmonize the church's creed, which states that the end of sin corresponds with "after this life" (Lord's Day 44), with the Protestant rejection of any idea of purgatory. He seems to agree with his mentor Bavinck in looking wistfully toward the Catholic solution. "We see, then, that it is more than a facetious comment when Bavinck finds something 'rather attractive' in the Catholic dogma, if only at first hearing." Berkouwer notes that "all sympathy for purgatory in Protestant theology is tied up with the opposition against a 'magical' or sudden change in death." (p553) He continues, "Thus R. Hoffman contends, with Hase, that the evangelical protest is against the achievement-character of purgatory (masses for the souls of the dead and indulgences), but not against 'postulating of any circumstance of purification whatsoever after death.'" The idea of any purification after death seems to come close to being a Protestant version of purgatory.

Berkower seems to feel that the least unsatisfactory solution to this vexing problem lies in a sort of philosophical tension between the "already" and the "not yet". Be this as it may, he voices a timely warning when he cautions against adopting a Cavalier attitude toward sin. "Too often men have taken their polemical starting-point in the "self-evidentness" of those sins which continue in our present dispensation; thus they have tended to give to sin a certain legitimacy in the Christian life. So doing, they have actually inhibited a passion for 'holiness which can be attained in this world.'" (p548)

30. Karl Barth is not really giving the edge to sanctification when he asks, "Yet in relation to the relationship between justification and sanctification are we not forced to say that teleologically sanctification is superior to justification and not the reverse?" (CD IV:2, p508) He explains: "In the simul of the one divine will and action justification is first as basis and second as presupposition, sanctification is first as aim and second as consequence; and therefore both are superior and both are subordinate." (508) Again, "we can give only a twofold answer to the question of priority in the relationship of these two moments and aspects. Calvin was quite in earnest when he gave sanctification a strategic precedence over justification. He was also quite in earnest when he gave the latter a tactical precedence." (510) The whole first part of Section 66 of Barth's Church Dogmatics contains a very discriminating analysis.
31. See pages 147 to 159 in Barth's Church Dogmatics, I:2.
32. Same as 31.
33. Barth includes H. Bezzel, another theologian of the Erlangen school, in his roster of proponents of the fallen-nature Christology. (CD I:2, p155). Geoffrey Bromiley, in his Historical Theology, An Introduction (Eerdmans, 1978), discusses Thomasius, who was another prominent "kenosis theologian." Bromiley states that Thomasius "insists that the assumed nature was human nature 'as it had come to be in consequence of the fall.'" (p374)
34. Tuttle, Op.cit. p .
35. In his Introductory Narrative to his father's Reminiscences and Reflections McLeod Campbell's son writes: "It was in the summer of this year [1828] that my father became acquainted with Edward Irving. Mrs. Oliphant quotes a letter dated June 10th, in which Irving speaks of preaching at Row on the preceding Sunday; 'I was much delighted,' he says, 'with Campbell and Sandy Scott, whom I have invited to come to London.' On the same day my father writes: 'I have the prospect of preaching the glad tidings of free pardon in London. . . Mr. Irving has been with me and is away. I have had much pleasure in his short visit. His peculiar views are new to me, as to others, and too important to be suddenly taken up, but I feel much cause of thankfulness to be given me in possession of his most Christian friendship. . Tell \_\_\_ of my going to London, and that I am to preach in Irving's pulpit'. In a letter written some years later I find the following:--'I remember when first we met our parting was in Glasgow; and after we had prayed together, in separating he said to me, "Dear Campbell, may your bosom be a pillow for me to rest upon, and my arm a staff for you to lean upon."' The visit to London was accomplished; and Irving wrote that his Kirk-Session 'were loud in their acknowledgments to Mr. Campbell.'" (p28f)