

FORGIVENESS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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S U M M A R Y

In the nature of things it is right that Christian thought should be much concerned with forgiveness. The aim of this study is to discover just what the New Testament teaches in this respect. Right at the beginning one important principle is set forth - that in our approach to the New Testament we must set aside all preconceived ideas and allow it to speak for itself. But if it is to speak at all clearly we must come to it with some understanding of its background.

We must begin with forgiveness as set forth in the Old Testament and Jewish thought. The Jew recognised that forgiveness was only possible because of the mercy of God, but it was not earned on merit, but freely given in return for true repentance.

The New Testament took over the Old Testament idea of repentance, and while it places greater emphasis on the moral content, seeing repentance more as a 'turning' to God than sorrow for wrong-doing, the New Testament idea is not materially different from that of the Old.

By his teaching Jesus aroused much opposition from the religious authorities. He defined his position in his parables where he set forth a picture of God and showed that what he did and said was in accord with His will. Not only does he claim to be doing God's will, but that he was sent for this very purpose.

Jesus did not only proclaim God's forgiveness, but went on to show how man could receive it. In the Lord's Prayer one of the main conditions is illustrated, that to be forgiven we must be forgiving. The Prayer also shows that man has a need for forgiveness and that human and divine forgiveness are closely related.

But if forgiveness is always available, albeit conditionally, where does this leave the Unforgiveable Sin (Mark 3:28-30)? In fact it is not the sin but the sinner

that is unforgiveable and this is because he has refused to recognise God's Spirit and has become incapable of repentance.

For St. Paul the concept of 'justification' takes the place occupied by forgiveness in the other New Testament writings. His doctrine of justification restates Christ's gospel that God accepts even the sinful. There is no question of the sinner being made righteous, it is that because of faith he is brought into a new relationship with God in which he is treated as though he were righteous. A study of the language used by Paul makes this point very clear. In this faith, man's attitude to what God has done for him in Christ, is crucial, for justification is offered as the gift of God which can only be accepted through faith.

If man has found this right relationship with God then he has also found reconciliation. Christian teaching acknowledges the gulf between man and God, but goes on to show how in Christ that gulf is bridged. In the process of reconciliation God is always the reconciler and not the reconciled. The death and resurrection of Christ play an important part here. They show the love of God in its limitlessness and so remove the need for man's hostility and take from him his hopeless conviction that he has forfeited the love of a holy God, so making possible his return to fellowship with God.

Out of the close link that Christian theology has seen between forgiveness and the death of Christ has come the idea of Atonement. The Church has wisely not laid down any definite statement of the Atonement, for this is something that requires restating by each generation in its own terms. Despite the varying concepts used, all the New Testament writers seek to convey the same basic idea that Christ's death was 'for us'. Jesus too seems to have understood his death in vicarious terms. The vicarious nature of the cross is stressed in many of the theories of the Atonement that have been developed. Though they are all deficient in some way, their fault is that they are the

expression of men's experience and so must be inadequate in some way. The one point on which all agree is that the Atonement is the supreme revelation of the love of God. The problem is to explain the necessity of the cross. The basic idea behind the Atonement is reconciliation. Sin, which is basically an offence against love, results in separation from God. This can be overcome by a new flow of love between man and God. The cross shows God prepared to go to any length to accomplish this. In the end Atonement is possible because Christ becomes completely one with man in his situation.

Despite the emphasis we put on the place of forgiveness in Christian thought, the references to it in the New Testament are comparatively few. One thing is made clear. Nowhere is forgiveness equated with remission of penalty. The basic problem is one of the relationship between forgiveness and reconciliation. The suggested separation between the two is one which can be maintained in theory, but which does not seem to be borne out in practice. Forgiveness is nowhere related directly to the death of Christ though there is a close connection understood to exist between them. The basic New Testament message is not that Christ died that we might be forgiven, but that forgiveness is freely offered to all through grace as the gift of God.

The conclusion finally reached is that any attempt to maintain distinctions between forgiveness, reconciliation and justification is a purely academic exercise. Though it is true that the three concepts are not identical, it is virtually impossible to say where the difference lies, or where one ends and another begins. Although forgiveness is freely offered through grace, it can only be appropriated on fulfilment of the dual conditions of repentance and having a forgiving spirit. Two great questions remain of how forgiveness is effected and what its effect is. Forgiveness is effected when what we are and have done are seen to stand no longer between us and God. If that is the case, then it follows that the effect of forgiveness is to bring true fellowship with God.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

If we were to attempt to classify the world's religions we should surely have to place Christianity under the heading of an ethical religion. In it, perhaps more than in any other, great emphasis is laid on the problem of ethics and morals. Much of its teaching is taken up with the relationship between God and man and, especially, with how man has fallen short in this. One of the basic problems it has to face is, then, sin. Jesus Christ himself recognised this. "I came", he said, "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance". His was the claim that he had found the answer to sin and that men need no longer fear the Judgement, if they had faith in him and repented of their evil ways. Nowadays there is a certain reluctance to talk in such terms. "Sin" is a dirty word, in more senses than one. Yet we cannot get away from the fact that it is to the problem it raises that Christianity would claim to have the answer. And that is to be found in its concept of forgiveness.

This is something that we cannot ignore, for it lies at the very heart of Christian belief. The idea is to be found in the central petition of the Lord's Prayer, that prayer which Jesus taught his disciples and which is really a summary of all his teaching. There we find the idea of the universality of the fatherhood of God, the proclamation of the coming of his kingdom, the assertion of his sustaining power, the promise of his protection, and the assurance of his forgiveness. If we take these ideas and follow them through the New Testament we find that they form the bones of Christianity. Forgiveness then ought to occupy an important place in our theology, yet so often it is to be found as an adjunct to the treatment of the problem of sin.

Over the years the attention of many great Christian thinkers has been drawn again and again to this subject. There have been many theories as to its nature and origin.

But instead of recognising sin as a fact of life and trying to find a way to deal with it most have tried to develop a 'philosophy of sin'. It began with Paul and his account of the two Adams; Augustine followed; and in the same succession we have the reformers with their belief in original sin and their doctrine of predestination. But all this was very far from the mind of Jesus himself. He was far more concerned with the consequence rather than the cause of sin, and so his was a ministry of reconciliation and not condemnation. In as much, then, as we have devoted so much attention to the causes of sin rather than to ways of dealing with it we have not been strictly faithful to the teaching of Jesus Christ. Brought up, as we are, in the traditional view as set out by the reformers, we might well be surprised to learn just how little Christ did say about sin. Whenever the subject is raised it is to deal with the consequences and not the causes. For Jesus, sin was a basic fact of life; something that, because of human nature, was always there. This did not lead him to formulate explanations for it, and nor should it necessarily so lead us. There are more important features about sin than its origin. What really matters in the eyes of Jesus is what it does, to the individual, and to his relationship with God and his fellow men.

This twentieth century has been described as the time of man's 'coming of age', and it has been characterised by a questioning that has not been seen before. The search for truth is our legacy from the scientific approach to things and so no longer are we content simply to accept everything. Now we have to work it out for ourselves. Perhaps this is why there has been such a marked dissatisfaction with the traditional doctrines of sin. They were founded upon ethical and moral premises which are no longer accepted at their face value. In our time the whole system of morals and ethics has been put under the microscope and many have found them wanting. 'Thou shalt not' is not longer a sufficient reason, basically because God Himself has been called into question. As a

result a rethinking of the whole problem is now needed.

Another feature of our century has been the large number of attempts which have been made to return to the Historical Jesus. It has now been widely accepted that such attempts cannot succeed for lack of evidence. But this quest has been followed by another which may well be more fruitful. Rather than seeking to find the man Jesus, the aim is to recover his original teaching from the gospel teaching which has been handed down to us and which we now realise to be formed of a mixture of the teaching of Christ and the early church. Again this quest has been pursued with varying degrees of success. It has certainly meant that a large body of material has been isolated and confirmed as originating from Jesus, but equally it has turned up a large body of material whose origin has now been thrown into question. How one treats it largely depends on how radical one is. Nevertheless, it is to this return to the teaching of the New Testament and of Jesus in particular that we must go for a re-appraisal of the Christian doctrine of sin.

We are probably better equipped than any previous generation for this task. But always we must allow ourselves to be led and not to try to impose our own ideas and conceptions on the New Testament. It has to be interpreted in the light of its own background and its ideas must be seen as ideas of the first and not the twentieth century. "God has not dictated to us, even in the New Testament, any final theory of his reconciling work. We must search it out in the light he gives. Of course, in that quest the Bible is our indispensable inspiration. But we must learn to use the Bible in the light of its own deepest principles. We have to take the truths about God which Scripture brings us, and which the best thought of the Church has selected for emphasis, and try, not to collect authoritative passages, but to move in the spirit of the Bible towards apprehension of what God in Christ has done

to convey to us his pardoning love."¹

We need now to place the emphasis on the side of forgiveness for it is with that rather than with 'original sin' that Christ was concerned. The warning against simply compiling a list of passages is rather timely for relatively little can be achieved by this means alone. This must be but the first step, and from there we must seek to move forward along the lines of Jesus' ideas. All too often this has not been done resulting in the emphasis being placed on the sin and not its consequences.

We are now seeing the reversal of this trend and forgiveness is now being restored to its primary position. It is perhaps just as well that we do not have to rely on references in the sayings of Jesus alone, for, despite the importance of the subject, these are relatively few in number.² Doubtless much of Jesus' teaching on this, as on many other matters, has not survived to be handed down to us, but what we have must surely represent its central theme. The task of the Evangelists was one of condensation. They had limits imposed upon them by purely practical considerations. A careful choice had to be made of what should and should not be included and always the criterion was that the final result should open up the possibility of faith. Our task must, in a way, be an attempt to reverse the process they carried through. Their task was one of condensation; ours must be one of expansion. Of course in every such attempt we meet the dangers of subjectivity.

1. H.R. Mackintosh, "The Christian Experience of Forgiveness", p. 169

2. Allowing for parallels in the Gospels and the various sources, there are only five sayings of Jesus which contain references to forgiveness - Matthew 6:12; Mark 3:29; Mark 11:25; Luke 17:3; Luke 23:24 - plus the references in the stories of the Healing of the Paralytic (Mark 2:1-12), the Woman who was a Sinner (Luke 7:36-50) and the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-35).

It is all too easy to read our own ideas into what we find and always great care must be taken to make the approach with an open mind. Above all, we must be prepared to accept what we find and never attempt to twist the facts to suit our own preconceived ideas.

Such a warning is not as out of place as we might suppose. There is a tendency nowadays to begin any study with definitions. The intention is to avoid confusion and ambiguity. This may work well in many fields but surely if we apply it too rigorously in the field of theology we will be falling into the very trap we seek to avoid. If we first establish a definition of forgiveness, for example, and then look for examples of this in the teaching of the New Testament, are we not really just trying to impose our own twentieth century ideas? After all, for all that Jesus was the Son of God he still thought and taught in the manner of his contemporaries. His world was the world of first century Palestine. A far more satisfactory method then, is to begin with the idea of forgiveness in the then contemporary world; to see how this has influenced the thinking of Jesus in as far as we can know it; and then to see how this looks against the background of our own age and time. In this way we can reduce the dangers of subjectivity to a minimum and it may well be that we shall be able to shed new light on our own thinking.

Naturally, while we do this, we will all still have our own conception of forgiveness. While we cannot ignore this altogether, it is very much better to come to it last for often we have not worked it out as fully as we might have done. Then, at least, we shall be able to examine our own views honestly in the light of the facts, and they will have to be made to fit these facts and not the facts made to fit in with our own preconceptions.

Somehow we must transport our minds back to the time of Christ so that, as far as possible, we are able to look at the problem of sin and forgiveness. We cannot simply divorce the one from the other. Before we can come to an

understanding of forgiveness we must first know something of the current attitude to sin and this must necessarily involve us in some study of the Jewish doctrine of God. Our starting point must then be in the Old rather than the New Testament.

The Jew's understanding of God is of paramount importance for it depends on the light in which one sees God how one looks at sin. Our concept of forgiveness must in turn depend on our understanding of sin. If we take too light a view of sin, forgiveness will have little importance for us and if, on the other hand, we go to the other extreme and talk of the depravity of man, it becomes extremely hard to come to a rational understanding of forgiveness. Then it becomes something given, almost irrationally, though admittedly in the Grace of God, which we have to accept without explanation. To the thinking Christian to-day neither of these views holds much attraction. He recognises that sin, despite all the reluctance to talk about it, is a factor to be reckoned with. Its consequences are all too apparent for it to be ignored. And yet, at the same time, he finds himself very much out of sympathy with any kind of idea of predestination. Somehow this does not fit in with his conception of God in Jesus Christ. It is the kind of idea that might have grown out of certain parts of the Old Testament, but surely Jesus Christ shows us the impossibility of it. He is left then still seeking for his own understanding of the problem and where else should he turn but to Scripture?

The Bible is still to-day one of the world's best sellers, yet, paradoxically, it would be true to say that at the same time it is one of the world's least read books. In large measure this is due to the fact that we find it rather hard to understand. Modern translations are helping, but they cannot solve the problem. Most of the trouble lies in our neglect of the background to the Bible. Anything which becomes divorced from its background becomes hard to understand for then it stands completely

alone and we are given no clue as to how we should make our approach. If we had a better understanding of the worlds of the Old and New Testaments they would come very much more alive in our hands.

If this is true of daily bible reading it is equally true of more serious study. A knowledge of the background is essential if we are to fully grasp its message for us. There is much that would remain obscure unless it is illuminated by the light of the background, for the Scriptures were originally written for their own day and age and in the interests of economy assume much knowledge on the part of the reader. This is very much the case with the teaching of Jesus, especially in the parables. From them we can gain many insights, if we can bring them to life with a knowledge of the life and times of the people to whom they were addressed. We are, perforce, taken beyond the New Testament itself.

We must begin with the study of the nature of sin and the concepts of repentance and forgiveness in the Old Testament. This will give us the basis on which Jesus built his teaching on the subject. This leads to a systematic study of the concept of forgiveness in the New Testament. The method of approach adopted was to work systematically through the text seeking for the appropriate references. The conclusions reached come from exegesis and comments on these passages. This has meant that on occasion certain portions of ground have had to be covered more than once. In this connection it should be noted that each chapter was intended to stand on its own. Only at the end is there any attempt to bring them together in any way.

Much of the inspiration for this study came from Vincent Taylor's book, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation". There he puts forward many thought-provoking ideas, many of which run counter to the accepted ideas of to-day, and he poses certain questions which call for an answer. One aim of this study is to attempt to give such an answer.

He notes that there is a tendency in theology to-day "to identify forgiveness and reconciliation, and to regard justification simply as a Pauline version of forgiveness". It may well be that "the acceptance of this threefold identification obscures the teaching of the New Testament ... It is necessary, therefore, to ask : "What does the New Testament teach regarding forgiveness, justification and reconciliation; and also how are these experiences related to the death of Christ?"³ This last question is necessary for we have come to accept that forgiveness, justification and reconciliation are in some way bound up with the doctrine of the Atonement.

The case for a return to the New Testament has been admirably set out by Vincent Taylor in "Forgiveness and Reconciliation". He approaches the problem by returning to the original sayings in the New Testament itself. As he says, "It is of decisive importance for theology that we should be in no doubt as to what is actually the teaching of the New Testament".⁴ That it is necessary to make some such statement is an indictment on theology to-day. Its source must always lie in the pages of Scripture, and it is from there that our thought must develop. Without such a source our "Christian Experience" must always be suspect as an acceptable ground for the formulation of Christian doctrine.

All too often we tend to forget that knowledge of God comes by revelation and not speculation. Men can never reach up to God and all they have ever been able to learn of him has, of necessity, been handed down to them. It is to the pages of Scripture that we must turn first. In this we are indebted to the work of Dr. Taylor and much

3. V. Taylor, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation",
Preface p. vi.

4. V. Taylor, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation",
Preface p. vi.

attention will be paid to his findings and in particular to his claim quoted above. But, as this is no place for drawing conclusions, comment will be reserved until full consideration has been made of the appropriate passages in the New Testament.

One final thing remains to be said here. Even after having noted the warning of the dangers of subjectiveness, it is still true that anything we have to say about forgiveness, and especially about God's forgiveness, must be very personal. In many ways it is here that we come closest to our Maker. There is much of our understanding of his forgiveness that comes from our understanding of our own relationship to him. It is that relationship which largely illuminates the scriptures for us and enables us to draw from them the message of forgiveness they contain for us.

1. Repentance and Forgiveness in Judaism

"The Jews had a very highly developed sense of sin, and a whole system for dealing with it".¹ Any transgression of the revealed will of God was sin. As G.F. Moore points out the definition of sin formulated by the Westminster Divines could be taken as a statement of the Jewish conception of sin :- "Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the laws of God".² Sin was therefore a religious concept and not simply a moral one. Since men owed full obedience to God's will any failure to achieve this meant that man was in debt to God. This explains why the Aramaic for "sin" and "debt" was the same, and also the word play in the Lord's Prayer. This debt could be incurred in two ways, knowingly or unknowingly. Unintentional or unwitting sin was recognised as a special category under the law and special forms of ritual expiation were provided for them. But, on the other hand, no expiation was provided for deliberate sin (what is called sin done with a high hand). "The person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is a native or sojourner, reviles the Lord, and that person shall be cut off from among his people."³

In cases of unintentional infringement of God's will sacrifice removed the contamination and restored the state of religious purity or holiness. Attempts were made to lay down what kind of sacrifice was appropriate in any given situation, but, despite the belief in the efficacy of sacrifice, it was still recognised that unless sacrifice was conjoined with repentance it was useless. Sincere repentance was the condition of remission of sins. In spite of this the Jews never questioned the validity of the

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1. N. Perrin, "Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus", p. 90.
 2. G.F. Moore, (The Shorter Catechism, Q. 14.) Vol. I p. 460
 3. Numbers 15:30.

sacrificial system. As a revealed religion Judaism never had any motive for raising such a question. "A theory of the way in which sacrifices and other rites expiate the sin is in a revealed religion a superfluous speculation. God has attached to certain cases certain conditions on which he promises to remit sins. The essential condition is the use of the means he has appointed, whatever they are. To neglect them because a man does not see how they can be of any effect, is itself deliberate and wilful sin, vastly graver than the original offence."⁴

In cases where there was a definite breach of the law the procedure was straight-forward; the requisite sacrifice was offered, and provided it was accompanied by repentance, God's forgiveness was secured. There were, however, many cases where there was doubt as to whether an offence had, in fact, been committed, and there were others in which an offence had been committed completely unawares and for which no sacrifice had been offered. To cope with such a situation voluntary offerings, what we might call 'safety-first' sacrifices were made by the extra-scrupulous. In this way they hoped to account for any breaches of the law they might have made. Such a course of action was only practicable for the residents of Jerusalem, for all such sacrifices could only be made at the temple. Thus to meet the needs of all other Jews the public sacrificial system, maintained by the half Shekel poll-tax, came in to being. Of these, the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest placed the sins of the nation on the scapegoat by laying hands on it, was the most important. The transfer to the scapegoat cleansed the nation from pollution.

But all these methods had only limited effectiveness. God himself must ultimately forgive sin. Before God can do this, men must turn from their evil ways and turn again to God. This was the great message of the prophets. They

4. G.F. Moore, "Judaism", Vol. I, p. 500.

were dealing with national sin, the cause of Israel's suffering, and the only cure was national repentance.

"What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the Lord : bring no more vain oblations cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow."⁵

This collective principle came to be applied to the individual. The prophetic teaching about sacrifice becomes in the Psalms an article of personal religion. God takes no delight in sacrifice and oblation; he does not demand burnt offerings and sin-offerings; but rather wishes men to do his will with delight and to have his law in their hearts (Psalms 40:6ff). On the contrary, thanksgiving to God is to be their sacrifice (Psalms 50:14). Despite this the sacrificial system remained an integral part of Judaism. The prophets and the psalmists did not manage to destroy the system (perhaps they did not try) but they did show that false reliance on sacrifice was to no avail. The magnitude of the sacrifice was immaterial for, without repentance, no rites availed.

With the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, the whole sacrificial system had necessarily to come to an end. Repentance was left as the sole condition for the remission of sins. This was not as disastrous as might be thought for the Jews held that God himself had made sacrifice impossible as a punishment for the sins of the people. For the sacrificial expiations of the law, repentance, with its fruit, good works, became the equivalent.

Though repentance, being the condition on which the forgiveness of sins depended, was very important, there is no specific Hebrew word for it. The prophets saw it primarily as turning back to allegiance and obedience to God. Hence they used the word שׁוּב = to turn back,

leaving it to the context to make the sense plain, e.g., "let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord,"⁶ i.e., let him repent. Here we see the basic sense of repentance as it is used in Judaism. Repentance is the abandonment of evil ways. Genuine repentance is shown when an opportunity to repeat the misdeed is rejected. Thus we do not find in the Jewish concept of repentance an indulgence to sin. The man who presumes on the remission of sin to allow him to sin does not know the meaning of repentance and annuls in himself its potentiality. As a Mishnah Yoma 8:9 has it : "If any one says to himself, I will sin and repent, (and again) I will sin and repent (and thus escape the consequences), no opportunity is given to him to repent. If he says, I will sin, and the Day of Atonement will expiate it, the Day of Atonement does not expiate it."⁷ True repentance involved desisting from the sinful act, the resolve not to commit it again and the abandonment of an evil way of life with the steadfast purpose not to walk in it again.

In the Old Testament the word נחם = "be sorry for something or for having done something", is also used for repentance. Thus God was sorry (repented) that he had made man (Genesis 6:6). Such regret frequently involves a change of mind regarding the future as well as the past and this is often the principal meaning of the word. So it is said that God will not repent (change his mind)⁸ or that if men would change their conduct, God would change his mind and not inflict evil or withhold good as the case may be.⁹ Though this notion of change of mind is present the primary sense of 'to be sorry' is always present. Thus, repentance, as well as being the rejection of the sinful way, also includes the idea of sorrow for sin and for

6. Isaiah 55:7.

7. G.F. Moore, Judaism Vol I, p. 508.

8. Numbers 23:19, I Samuel 15:29.

9. Jeremiah 18:8, 3:13.

its consequences.

The obligation to confess one's sins is explicit in the law (Numbers 5:6f). Model introductory formulae for confession are found in Psalms 106:6, I Kings 8:48 and Daniel 9:5. They were originally formulated for use by the high priest when he made the sin-offering for himself and his household, but in so far as they were derived from the confession of laymen (David, Solomon and Daniel) they were appropriate for individuals. The essential part of such a confession was the resolve not to repeat the action. The only difference between private confession and public confession on the Day of Atonement was in specification, the public confession being more general.

Men may be moved to repentance in two ways. They may see in their experience and in the word of God warning of the consequences of their sin - repentance induced by fear. Such repentance has value and is accepted by God as long as it is sincere. But repentance may also spring from love. When the sinner realises that his action is incompatible with love for God he is moved to repent. This latter kind of repentance is more highly esteemed by God. A similar distinction is made between serving God out of love and out of fear.

In Old Testament Judaism repentance is the sole condition of forgiveness and reconciliation. Its efficacy is such that they are never refused when it is offered. And so, even Manasseh, who is regarded as the sinner par excellence, received forgiveness from God on offering repentance (II Chronicles 33:11-13). God is ever waiting to receive the confession and supplication of the penitent sinner. Not only are his sins forgiven, but their memory is destroyed. In the sight of God they are as though they had never been.

Against this view we have to set the situation which existed in Jesus' day and which arose out of the Apocalyptic literature. Jews who sinned could hope for mercy and forgiveness on repentance, but not the Gentile

who was, as it were, a sinner by definition. Because he lived apart from the law, he defiled God merely by living. This is the point of view which influenced Paul, when, in his denouncement of Peter's conduct at Antioch, he exclaims, "We ourselves, who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners",¹⁰ although he did find this position to be incompatible with Christ's teaching.

In the apocalyptic literature (e.g. I Enoch 5:6f.¹¹) we see that the Jews recognised two groups of sinners; there were those who can hope for forgiveness and those who cannot. The second group includes not only the Gentiles, but also certain Jews who, because of their activities, were regarded as being beyond the pale : dice-players, userers, pigeon flyers, traffickers in seventh year produce, shepherds, tax collectors and revenue farmers. All such were denied their normal citizenship rights. Incidentally, it is against this background that we have to see Jesus' announcement of forgiveness for the 'tax gatherers and sinners'. They were the people who, according to the orthodox Jew, had no hope of forgiveness.

The Jewish point of view, then, was that, ultimately, God had himself to forgive sin. He is moved to do so by his own character and nature; "The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."¹²

10. Galatians 2:15.

11. I Enoch 5:6f. (Charles)

"And there shall be forgiveness of sins,
and every mercy and peace and forbearance:
There shall be salvation unto them, a goodly light.
And for all of you sinners there shall be no salvation,
But on you shall abide a curse.
But for the elect there shall be light and joy and peace,
And they shall inherit the earth."

12. Psalm 145:8.

The Jews held that, because of God's love for the patriarchs, they had a special place in his affection, a place denied to the Gentiles. The 'merits of the fathers' had won, not the right to forgiveness, but the favourable and privileged status of their descendants under the covenant. Forgiveness cannot be earned by man, but is freely given by God in return for true and sincere repentance.

2. Repentance in the New Testament

In the Old Testament the references to repentance are rather infrequent. As we have seen already, there was no specific word in Hebrew for 'repentance'. Some of the Old Testament passages dealing with repentance refer to God himself, e.g., I Samuel 15:35. "The Lord repented that he had made Saul king." In such cases the word has no moral overtone and means little more than simply 'to change one's mind'. But elsewhere the idea of repentance is expressed by words such as 'turn', and 'return', and it is obvious that here turning means much more than just a change of mind. What is indicated in these passages is a re-orientation of one's life and personality which includes a completely new approach to life, with a forsaking of sin and a turning to righteousness. This was, in effect, the fundamental call of the prophets to Israel. It represents the deepest level of Old Testament religion where sacrifice is rejected and it is seen that all that men can offer to God is contrition and not righteousness.¹

This prophetic requirement that repentance should be sincere² is, in the New Testament, made the condition of entry into the Kingdom of God. This was in strong contrast to the accepted idea of the day in which it was the outward observance of the law that was stressed, rather than the inward turning.³

John the Baptist was the first to review the prophetic call to repentance. He came preaching 'a baptism of repentance unto remission of sins'.⁴ The purpose of John's baptism was to be an outward sign of the individual's inward preparation for the coming kingdom. Of itself it gave no

1. Psalms 51:17.

2. cf. Joel 2:13 'rend your heart and not your garments'.

3. cf. Mark 7:6, Luke 18:9-14.

4. Mark 1:4, 5.

gifts of grace. According to Redlich⁵ the 'εἰς' in Mark 1:4 means 'with a view to something in the future'. John's baptism did not of itself ensure the remission of sins. After repentance and baptism, which was merely the outward sign of an inward repentance, the individual had to wait for the forgiveness of his sins, which would be given after the coming of the Messiah. Support for this view is taken from the fact that according to Matthew, John's baptism was to repentance only. Certainly the remission of sins was a characteristic of the Messianic Kingdom. It is, therefore, quite possible that Mark is reading back into his account of John the Baptist a later Christian experience of the apostolic age. Further support for this point of view is given by the earliest preaching of Jesus which is similar to John's,⁶ and which does not include the reference to the remission of sins. John's purpose is to bring the people to repentance in preparation for the coming kingdom. The repentance he proclaimed was ethical and went no deeper than that of the Old Testament. When we remember that in the Old Testament repentance was a condition of forgiveness, but not an assurance of it, for there could be no guarantee that God would forgive any particular individual, we can be sure that John did not preach a baptism of forgiveness.

The essential link which we now see between repentance and forgiveness arises out of the later teaching of the New Testament. It was seen that entry to the Kingdom demanded something more than repentance in the Old Testament sense of the term. Repentance becomes something more than just sorrow for moral wrongs. The emphasis is placed upon the 'turning', away from sin to God. In his preaching Jesus shows the integral connection between repentance and faith.

5. Redlich, "The forgiveness of sins", p. 120.

6. Mark 1:14, 15.

Repentance comes to mean the turning from sin, just as faith was the turning to God. The two are brought into closer proximity when we remember that both are the gift of God, not the achievement of man.⁷

Jesus' supreme teaching on repentance is to be found in the parable of the prodigal son. There is here an advance on John's idea of repentance. Not only is there confession of sin, but there is a consciousness that sin is something directed against God. It is to overcome this sin that the prodigal seeks to return to the body of the Father's family. As it is set out here there is a similarity between Jesus' view and the teaching of the Old Testament in that the new attitude and the change in life which constitute repentance are only considered in relation to God. According to the Old Testament, human and divine forgiveness were completely separate, and the absence of forgiveness between man and man made no difference to the relation of man to God. This is still the normal view of repentance to-day. It is usually considered as a personal act affecting only the individual and his relation to God.

It has been argued that this is not a full understanding of the meaning of the word. Redlich argues that 'repentance without a forgiving attitude is unworthy of the name. Love of God and love of men are inseparable'.⁸ A study of language does not help very much here. In extra-biblical Greek *μετάνοια* never refers to the moral state of a man, but suggests only a change of attitude to specific behaviour. The Greek does something and afterwards is sorry for it - that is as far as it goes. It is when we come to Hebraic usage that we begin to find reference to a change of character. According to Billerbeck the essence of repentance in Rabbinical teaching is, as we have seen above,⁹

'(a) Confession of sin and petition for forgiveness with

7. cf. Acts 5:31, 11:18. Romans 2:4, II Timothy 2:25.

8. Redlich, "The Forgiveness of Sins", p. 126.

9. Repentance and sin in Judaism p. 3.

regret and sorrow, (b) the abandonment of the sin. Where either of these is lacking the repentance is not complete, but it is hypocritical repentance',¹⁰

The place of forgiveness for others in repentance comes from the teaching of Jesus in the parables. Although this element is absent in the Prodigal Son, the parable of the Unmerciful Servant emphasises the need for forgiveness before forgiveness. Repentance is also present in the parable in the servant's cry for mercy and his promise to repay the debt. We have to ask whether we are justified in taking these two parables together and drawing from them a wider definition of repentance. If we are to do this it makes it difficult to understand why Jesus placed so much emphasis on forgiving others while merely exhorting his followers to 'repent and believe' without explaining that the repentance he had in mind was not what his hearers would assume it to be. Much as it is an attractive point of view we cannot make this assumption that repentance in the teaching of Jesus was materially different from the repentance of Judaism. The emphasis is changed from the idea of sorrow for what has been done to the importance of turning to God, but the content of the idea of repentance has not been dramatically enlarged.

The essential difference between Judaism and Christianity does not lie in a different understanding of repentance. It is rather that for Judaism repentance is something a man ought to do, and for Christianity it is something he can do, because Christ has made it possible. In Christ the whole thing is the gift of God. What used to be simply a command in the law and an exhortation in the prophets, has now become the gift of God in Christ, a gift which is appropriated by faith, for 'God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins'.¹¹

10. In T.W. Manson, "On Paul and John", p. 59.

11. Acts 5:31.

3. God's Representative

During the course of his short ministry Jesus encountered much opposition from the religious authorities of his day. His trouble was that he was too forthright in his teaching and too unorthodox in his methods. While he had the greatest respect for tradition¹ he could not for a moment accept that it was all important. He recognised, unlike the Pharisees, that there were times when rigid observance of the law did more harm than good.² Not unnaturally, such a view raised a great deal of opposition. But even more than his unorthodox beliefs, Jesus' actions were strongly frowned upon by the authorities. Almost every situation was catered for in the law and anyone who did not follow its guidance could hardly be called a good Jew. The official attitude was that the law, as God's law, had to be followed implicitly.

Of all his actions the one that raised the most indignation was Jesus' association with the outcasts. At the time of Jesus the Jews recognised two groups of sinners; those who could hope for forgiveness and those who could not. This second group included the Gentiles and those Jews who led an immoral life, fully knowing the consequences, or, who by their profession, were prevented from observing the law in general and the sabbath law in particular.³ All such people were denied their normal citizenship rights. They were regarded as beyond all hope of penitence and forgiveness and their very presence in a house defiled all that was in it. From the orthodox point of view anyone who kept company with such could not be a good Jew. It is therefore not hard to see why the Pharisees were so completely opposed to the teaching of Jesus. It was not

1. cf. Matthew 5:17-20.

2. cf. Mark 2:23-28.

3. Dice-player, usurer, pigeon flyer, shepherd, tax-gatherer, revenue farmers. In Perrin, "Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus", p. 93.

so much that they fundamentally disagreed with him, but that they could not condone his behaviour and so could not respect anything said or done by a man who persisted in behaving as he did. So time and again Jesus found the Scribes and the Pharisees ranged together in opposition to him. They simply could not see his point of view and Jesus was driven to defend his actions and his teaching.

Jesus being the kind of man he was, was not content with simple defence. He knew, as many have since found out, that attack was the best form of defence. The most obvious justification of his conduct is to be found in the simile of the physician (Mark 2:17). It is the sick who need the attention of the doctor, not the healthy. This is exactly Jesus' reason for associating with the outcasts - they are the ones who need help. Heaping condemnation alone upon them will do no good. The only thing that will have any effect is loving care and attention. This and this alone can bring them to recognise their position for what it is and then to throw themselves on the mercy of God.

There is, however, another more subtle way in which Jesus vindicates his actions. He showed his critics in parables what God was like, and left them to draw the implication that he was acting in this way because that was God's will for him. One other thing follows on from this. If Jesus, in going among the outcasts of society, and indeed in all that he did, was simply carrying out God's will, he was doing what God himself would have done and so he was, in a sense, God's representative.

The parable of the prodigal son, or, to be more accurate, the father's love, is obviously intended to illustrate the boundless love of God. The younger son has, by his behaviour, forfeited all his rights and is no longer fit to be called a son. Forced by circumstances to return and throw himself on his father's mercy, he finds that his father's love is such that he receives

complete forgiveness and reinstatement. As both Jeremias and Linnemman point out, we cannot look upon this parable as allegory. But while we cannot make definite identification of the characters, they do point the way for us. If the father is not to be identified with God, his love is at least to be seen as an image of God's love for us. Again the position of the younger son was very similar to that of the outcasts and it is clear that this would be plain to the audience. Thus "the parable describes with touching simplicity what God is like, his goodness, his grace, his boundless mercy, his abounding love. He rejoices over the return of the lost, like the father who prepared the feast of welcome."⁴ But the parable does not end here. It goes on to describe the protest of the elder brother when he returns to find the celebration in honour of his brother's return in full swing. The point to be noted here is that the father's gesture of love is repeated. When the elder brother refuses to go in once again the father comes out to meet his son. His protests are shown to be unnecessary for all is now his, and in any case surely celebration over the return of the lost is only right and proper? At this point, the parable comes to rather an abrupt end, seemingly reflecting the situation as Jesus saw it. The pharisees, like the elder son, are making their protest, but it is a protest which is unnecessary, for God's love is boundless and encompasses all, good and bad alike.⁵ Just as the elder brother has to decide whether or not to accept his father's invitation, so the Pharisees are invited to recognise that in their condemnation of Jesus their self-righteousness and lovelessness separate them from God. "This", says Jesus, "is what God is like". Thus he vindicates his association with the outcasts of society by claiming that in this he is merely doing the

4. Jeremias, "The Parables of Jesus", p. 131.

5. cf. Matthew 5:43-48.

will of Him that sent him. We have here, therefore, a claim that Jesus understands himself to be God's representative, and so the authority upon which he acts is that of God himself.

Closely related to the parable of the prodigal son are the two parables of the lost sheep (Matthew 18:12-14, Luke 15:4-7) and the lost coin (Luke 15:8-10). Once again the background is the Pharisees' disapproval of Jesus' conduct. On this occasion, Jesus tells how both the shepherd and the woman searched till they found what had been lost, and how, when their efforts were rewarded with success, they celebrated with their friends. We are to see in their reaction a picture of God, for both parables end with a paraphrase for the divine name, something made necessary by the fact that emotions could not be ascribed to God. The point that they seek to make is therefore that God will rejoice when sinners repent and return to the fold. This future tense is to be understood in an eschatological sense. "At the Final Judgement God will rejoice when, among the righteous, he finds a despised sinner on whom he may pronounce absolution."⁶ It is of redemptive joy that Jesus speaks in these parables and in this he finds his justification. Since God's mercy is infinite, his supreme joy is in forgiving and it is therefore his supreme wish that the lost return. It is this wish that Jesus seeks to fulfil. It is the task of God's Son to bring home the lost and this he can only do if he goes out and seeks them. Once again, we see Jesus claiming to be God's representative.

This eschatological note is continued in the parable of the good employer (Matthew 20:1-15). Here the Kingdom of God is compared to a reckoning and is therefore to be understood in an eschatological sense. Like the other parables of Jesus, this one was all the more vivid to his hearers because it spoke of conditions with which they

6. Jeremias, "The Parables of Jesus", p. 136.

were only too familiar. Unemployment was a spectre which hung over everyone in those days. The parable is spoken to men who resemble the murmuring labourers and so again, as in the prodigal son, it presents a challenge. It ends with a question "Are you envious because I am good?", putting Jesus' critics on the spot. As in the incident of the paying of the taxes,⁷ the tables are turned and it is the Pharisees who are in the difficult position. They had tended to regard the position of Jesus as indefensible, but now they find that their own is not as secure as they had thought. God is here depicted as a good employer who cares for his employees and who is also concerned for those whom he is unable to provide with work. He is, therefore, willing to give a share in his kingdom, however undeserved it may be, to publicans and sinners. God is all goodness, hence to deny some the right to approach him is to deny this. So Jesus in his association with such 'objectionable' people is only attempting to put this into practice. As God's representative, he must act under his orders.

At a first glance the story of the healing of the paralytic would seem to have little to do with forgiveness. In the Markan version the first five verses read like any of the other healing miracles. The references in v.5 to forgiveness come exactly where the work of healing would be expected. This has led some (Taylor,⁸ Bultmann⁹) to suppose that we have here a composite unit (vv. 1-5a, 10b-12 being a miracle story, with which the pronouncement in 5b-10a has been combined). Cranfield¹⁰ and W. Manson,¹¹ however, regard vv. 1-12 as a complete unit. They would claim that here we have a close connection between the

7. Matthew 22:15-22, Mark 12:13-17, Luke 20:20-26.

8. V. Taylor, "The Gospel according to St. Mark", p. 191

9. R. Bultmann, "The History of the Synoptic Tradition", p. 12-14, in Taylor, "The Gospel according to St. Mark", p. 191.

10. C.E.B. Cranfield, "The Gospel according to St. Mark", p. 96.

11. W. Manson, "The Gospel according to St. Luke", p. 53.

healing of sickness and forgiveness of sins. This was certainly the Jewish point of view. In any case, "what the incident is intended primarily to bring out is that the authority of Jesus in religion starts with the forgiveness of sins. He comes to deliver souls from the paralysis of moral and spiritual energy, the neuroses - to use a psychological expression - in which a misdirected life has resulted, and from which the soul must be freed if the power of God is to take effect in the lives of men".¹² But while we would seem to be justified in inferring that Jesus saw the cause of the man's affliction to be sin, and understood that spiritual restoration was a condition of his recovery, we cannot simply assume that Jesus, as a child of his times, saw sin as the cause of every affliction. Even so, it is not too much to believe that he was able to see where mental, spiritual and physical conditions were related. Modern medicine has confirmed for us that such a connection can exist; that paralysis can occur where there is no physical cause. While our speculation that we have an example of this here can only be, and must remain, mere speculation, it does seem to be supported by the offer of forgiveness which is made as though it would remove the cause and so effect the cure.

Forgiveness was at any rate offered and the point at issue is on what, or at whose, authority. It has been suggested, but with little foundation, that the forgiveness of sins was a messianic function which Jesus exercised in his role as Son of Man.¹³ Certainly it was the Jewish view that only God could forgive sins, hence the reaction of the scribes. Here, as W. Manson points out, we have the primary protest of Judaism against Christianity. It was not that the Jews did not believe in divine forgiveness, but that they protested against the assumption that any human being is entitled to make declaration of that

12. W. Manson, "The Gospel of Luke", (Moffatt Commentary) p.51.

13. Billerbeck, Vol. 1, p. 495, 1017, in Taylor,
"The Gospel of Mark", p. 195.

forgiveness. As the scribes understood it, in making his claim to have the authority to declare the forgiveness of sins, Jesus was blaspheming inasmuch as he was assuming one of the prerogatives of God.

The astonishment of the scribes must have been apparent in their faces for Jesus immediately goes on to offer proof. A simple declaration of forgiveness cannot of itself be verified, but the success or failure of the cure would be visible to all. Jesus' power to heal comes from God, so too, therefore, does the authority to declare sins forgiven. This proof of itself seems to have satisfied most of the audience who dispersed glorifying God, but, lest there be any who were not, Jesus himself plainly sets forth his authority in the words, "The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins".

Here suddenly and without explanation, we encounter this title, "Son of Man", and the problem is raised of what meaning we are to attach to this phrase. Several solutions have been offered.

- 1) Son of Man = 'man' (As in Ezekiel).¹⁴
- 2) It is a messianic title. This usage would seem to originate in the famous passage in Daniel 7:13f In this vision the figure of the Son of man is to be seen as a collective symbol for the elect. Later in the Similtudes of Enoch the term is an actual title. In ten occurrences it is prefixed with a demonstrative; 'this Son of Man'. According to Charles,¹⁵ 'that' and 'this' are usually renderings of the Greek article. Hence 'that Son of Man' is the equivalent of (The Son of Man). Unlike Daniel 7:13f there is no doubt here that we have an actual title for the eschatological figure. It is from the Similtudes that we get the most com-

14. Ezekiel 2:1; 2:3; 3:1; 5:1; 7:2.

15. R.H. Charles, "The Book of Enoch", pp. 86f.

plete picture of the Son of Man in Jewish apocalyptic tradition. He is a preexistent divine being (48:2f; 62:7). He is hidden in the presence of God from before all creation (48:2). He is revealed on that day, i.e., at the End. He appears to deliver the elect from persecution (62:7f). He judges kings and rulers who have persecuted the elect (46:4; 62:11; 69:27). He presides as a ruler in glory over the elect as a redeemed community in eternity.¹⁶

- 3) Jesus used the term of himself as the 'Ideal' man, though not in a messianic sense.
- 4) Jesus used the indeterminate form 'bar nash' - "I who speak", and later this was modified in transmission to 'bar nasha' - "Son of Man".
- 5) This is a later insertion reflecting the beliefs of the Christian community.

Of these, W. Manson prefers the second arguing that "Not a few passages in the gospels describe the Son of Man, "sitting at the right hand of power" and "coming with the clouds of heaven".¹⁷ In this he is supported by R.H. Fuller who, speaking of pre-Christian Jewish apocalyptic tradition, says, "This tradition provides the most likely source for the concept of the Son of man as used by Jesus and the early church".¹⁸ Taylor, on the other hand, would take the third. He argues that the messianic use of the title would be unknown in Jesus' day, presumably since the Similitudes of Enoch, which popularised this usage, is of later date, and that the other popular view, that 'man' is meant here, is completely

16. R.H. Fuller, "The Foundations of New Testament Christology", p. 39-40.

17. W. Manson, "The Gospel of Luke", p. 52.

18. R.H. Fuller, "The Foundations of New Testament Christology", pp. 39-40.

alien to the thought of Judaism and early Christianity. It is very difficult to come to a definite conclusion here, but, on the whole, the view of Manson and Fuller is to be preferred.

Various interpretations of $\epsilon\nu\ \tau\eta\varsigma\ \gamma\epsilon\varsigma$ have been offered :

- 1) It contrasts authority to forgive sins on earth with 'divine prerogative exercised in heaven'. (Taylor).
- 2) It denoted the period of Christ's earthly life - even before his death and resurrection he has this authority.
- 3) It qualifies $\epsilon\mu\alpha\rho\tau\iota\alpha\varsigma$, so = 'done upon earth' or 'among men'. This last seems the simplest and should probably be accepted.¹⁹

Two interpretations of the claim to forgive are open to us. Either Jesus is claiming to forgive sins himself and so, in the view of his critics, is taking over one of God's tasks, or, he is bringing the assurance of forgiveness given by God himself. The words of the declaration itself are not very helpful here. It could simply be an announcement of God's forgiveness, the passive being a way of reverently avoiding God's name, i.e. = 'God has forgiven you',²⁰ or it could equally well imply that Jesus himself is forgiving the man. In any attempt at clarification two points should be noted. Firstly, Jesus, whatever he might have meant, does not say, "I forgive you", and secondly, that his authority is an authority exercised 'on earth' and as 'Son of Man'. If Jesus had intended us to understand that he, himself was forgiving this man he would surely have been more definite in his statement.

19. C.E.B. Cranfield, "The Gospel according to St. Mark,
p. 100-101.

20. J. Jeremias, "New Testament Theology", Vol. I, p. 11,
Mark 2:5 - "My son, there is one who forgives you
your sins".

The words 'your sins are forgiven' do have a definiteness about them, but it is the definiteness which makes them the words of one who has been sent to declare this fact. They are the words of prophetic declaration, but they are not the words of God himself. And yet, while there is some degree of similarity here with the declaration of Nathan,²¹ the two instances are not truly parallel. There the prophet reverently conveys God's word to David, but here Jesus is speaking with the conviction of one who sees the man through the eyes of God. He does not simply declare - he acts. The cure is the action of God in Christ. The power to heal which Jesus undoubtedly has, comes from God and, so too, does his right to declare the forgiveness of sins.

A similar declaration of forgiveness is made by Jesus to the penitent woman who comes to him during the feast in the house of Simon, the Pharisee.²² In this instance, it is ascertained that Jesus is confirming the woman's experience. She has received forgiveness from God and is grateful. Now Jesus tells her that this is indeed the correct response to show. Jeremias argues that the forgiveness she has received came from God, the passives ἀφῃωυται, ἀφῃζεται (v. 47) are circumlocations for the Divine Name. So his translation of verse 47 reads, "Therefore I say to you that God must have forgiven her sins, many as they are, since she displays such deep thankfulness; he to whom God forgives little, shows little thankfulness".²³ Plummer, too would here see Jesus making a declaration of God's forgiveness. The use of the perfect ἀφῃωυται (v. 48) (= have been, and remain, forgiven) implies past forgiveness. It is not a word which would be used by someone actually offering forgiveness for the first time. The fact is that the

21. II Samuel 12:12.

22. Luke 7:36-50.

23. J. Jeremias, "The Parables of Jesus", p. 127.

teaching of Christ had previously brought this woman to repentance and the assurance of God's forgiveness. Her case was not as hopeless as she had thought and this new knowledge had filled her with love and gratitude. Jesus now personally confirms her assurance and publicly declares her forgiveness for all to hear.

In the story of the healing of the paralytic, we have a unique situation in which the God-man Jesus Christ can be seen. What we have here is one of the events which gave rise to the doctrine of the incarnation for it is hard to determine whether it is Jesus or God who forgives the man. "For Mark and his Christian readers the scribes' unspoken thought that none but God himself could forgive sin expressed the truth of which those who thought it were unaware - namely, that he who did forgive men with divine authority must be God".²⁴ It was events such as this which showed us that God had indeed become man in Jesus Christ.

As we have noted, it is hard to come down on one side or the other in this matter. Perhaps in the light of the later Johannine sayings about the unity of the Father and the Son it is not necessary to be absolutely clear as to whether it is Jesus or God who forgives the man, for the question does not really arise. However, inasmuch as we are moved to come to some decision, we can say that the probability is that Jesus was conveying the forgiveness given by God himself. We have already seen that on another occasion,²⁵ this is what he did, and, from our earlier study of some of the parables, we found that Jesus saw himself as God's representative. Surely this confirms the view that we have taken here. This provides us with the extra independent evidence we need to turn possibility into probability. Jesus is here, at the beginning of his

24. C.E.B. Cranfield, "The Gospel according to St. Mark", p. 99.

25. On Luke 7:36-50, p. 8 above.

ministry, as he was to declare more openly later, acting as the representative of God. Thus the declaration of forgiveness is one of authority and assurance. It is little wonder that people marvelled at the authority with which he spoke for it was the authority of God himself. It is open to men to declare their conviction of God's forgiveness, but not with the assurance of Jesus, the Son of God. The word of men is open to doubt, but that of Jesus, God's representative, is as valid as that of him who sent him, even Almighty God himself. This, surely, is in line with our understanding of Jesus' mission as a whole. His task was to do, and to declare, the will of his Father. Jesus, the God-man, was not so much man's representative before God, as God's representative before man.

4. The Concept of Forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer

In this fifth petition of the prayer, we find considerable textual variation. Matthew uses ὀφειλῆματα Luke ἁμαρτίας and in the Didache we find ὀφειλῆς. ὀφειλῆμα is a rare word in biblical Greek. It is usually used in a legal sense of something owed, or an obligation to be discharged. At its narrowest, it is a money debt, but in its biblical use it denotes any religious or moral obligation which a man is duty bound to discharge. Luke has replaced this rare word with the more common 'sins'. As we shall see later, it is probable that they both have made their own translations from an Aramaic original.

It is more difficult to decide between Matthew and the Didache. We simply cannot say for certain which was original. In Aramaic a plural noun is often used to express a comprehensive abstract concept that Matthew could well have given a literal translation while the writer of the Didache has expressed himself in better Greek.

It is easier to decide between the next pair of variants. Matthew has τοῖς ὀφειλεταῖς ἡμῶν while Luke has παντὶ ὀφειλοντι ἡμῖν. This matches the end of the previous line while Luke uses the correct grammatical expression, but which is no longer the language of prayer.

The third important variant is to be found in the second part of the petition. There, we find in Matthew ἀφῆκαμεν, ἀφιεμέν, ἀφίωμεν and ἀφιομέν, Luke has ἀφιομέν and the Didache ἀφιεμέν. It is impossible to decide between the two present forms as ἀφιεμέν is the classical form of the verb while ἀφιομέν is a popular neologism. The subjunctive can be rejected on theological grounds since it weakens the expression. We now have to decide between the present and the aorist. Both tenses point back to the same Aramaic original - š^e baqnan, which is timeless. As Matthew uses the aorist throughout the rest of the prayer, it is likely that ἀφῆκαμεν is the

original here.

The fact that Matthew and Luke have made independent translations of Aramaic original seems to be confirmed when we look at the second part of the petition. Matthew reads, "as we forgive our debtors", while Luke has, "for we forgive everyone that is indebted to us". There is no apparent reason for this difference except that the original Aramaic has been translated differently.

As we have already noted, ὀφειλζμα is only used in a religious sense in Matthew. This usage here is confirmed by the use of παραπτωματα in the injunction which follows the prayer (Matthew 6:14). Elsewhere the root ὀφειλ is used in this sense in Luke 13:4 - "Do you think that they were worse offenders (ὀφειλισται) than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem? Matthew himself uses the word in the parable of the unmerciful servant which is built up around the concept of debt - in both the financial and religious sense.

The Aramaic hōbā has the same kind of double meaning and is the commonest expression for sin in the targums. This usage, however, dies out in later Christian literature, though it is to be found in rabbinic literature. It may well be that this use of the word was a limited idiom and Lohmeyer suggests that it is probably a 'Galilean' expression.¹

The association between ὀφειλζμα and ἀφειναι is common in Greek. The verb is often used in a legal sense of freeing from legal ties and obligations and hence can mean to remit a monetary debt. In LXX ἀφειναι translates nāsā and sālāh and once even kāphar, that is words which refer to the sin of cultic impurity. But, whenever ἀφειναι is used the idea of the cult is lost and a legal relationship is set up between God and the sinner. God's ἀφειναι is a voluntary renunciation of his claim on man,

1. Lohmeyer, "The Lord's Prayer", p. 193.

and grace prevails instead.

The change in the meaning of the verb has gone further in the New Testament. There, it is found in its legal sense only in the context of divorce. The more usual meaning is that a claim arising from a breach of an existing relationship is not pursued but the relationship is restored through grace. Forgiveness is thus a moral concept and not simply a legal or cultic one. The first and literal sense of the petition is that God shall release all who pray from the debts they owe to him.

Several problems face us in this petition of the Lord's Prayer. The first, and perhaps the most important of these, is the meaning to be attached to the concept of 'debts'. We cannot simply equate 'debts' with 'sin'. The words used for sin in the New Testament imply a deviation from the way God has set out for us. In sin we see the human will opposed to the divine will. We are given a definition of sin in I John 3:4 "sin is lawlessness". 'Debts' surely implies more than this. We are not simply concerned here with disobedience of the commandments but with some kind of 'loan'. In all that he is and has, man is indebted to God. He, therefore, owes his life to God and so there is a special relation between man and God. 'Debts' is a far wider concept than sin. It is all embracing and covers not only 'sin', i.e., transgression of God's law, but also all that we are and do and say. We have received all that we have, even our life itself from God (Luke 12:20). So we are always responsible to God and our life and every action should be repayment of this debt of existence.

But necessarily we must fall short. Like the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:24-35), we find payment of our debt an impossible task. Because we are not self-sufficient, we are continually receiving from God and so we are always under an obligation to him. There is no end to the loan we receive from God till the end of life,

itself. Thus, it is not until the Last Day, when the Lord comes to reckon with his servants, is it determined what exactly a man owes. So Lohmeyer would take the forgiveness prayed for in this petition to be eschatological. We will examine this view more closely after we have looked at the rest of this petition.

The fact that we speak of debts here and not simply sin, enables us to take a new look at 'forgiveness' itself. The verb almost always occurs with a noun such as ἁμαρτία, παραπτώμα, βλασφημία, or ἁμαρτήμα. There it conveys the moral and religious idea of forgiving, of pardoning. It is only here where we find it with ὀφειλόμενα is the legal sense of 'remit' also possible. We are enabled to see here a new width to the idea of forgiveness. It is not simply the removal of the consequences or the remittance of punishment. 'Debts' implies a relation between the offender and the offended. This relation is based on love and is disrupted by the debt. Until the debt is paid or forgiven, the relation remains broken. Where God forgives, it means that he removes the hindrance, created by man, which stands in the way of the restoration of fellowship. It would, of course, be better if the debtor himself restored the fellowship by making good the debt, but this is not possible, for, when forgiveness of the debt is asked, it is in the knowledge that all hope of repayment has been given up. Here, Lohmeyer would find further support for his claim that the forgiveness sought here is eschatological. The prayer is made in confidence that the Father will, in fact, forgive the debts and not simply remit them. But a man's debts are his life and his actions so he cannot be relieved of his responsibility for them. When he receives God's forgiveness, he is still responsible but, at the same time, he is one who has turned to God and asked to become the free, assured child of God. Wherever there is forgiveness, there is God's eschatological act among men. Thus, anyone who prays like this, knows that he is called afresh by God

to be his child, and that, at the same time, he asks afresh to become such a child of God. He overlooks what he has, in fact, made of himself and prays for God to make him as he was intended, and so to free him from his debts.

This petition is linked to the previous one by a simple 'and'. The implication surely is that, as the body cannot live without the bread that God supplies, so too, the heart needs the forgiveness which only God can give. We, therefore, need no special reason to ask for forgiveness. It is something that is as natural as asking for the food we need to keep us alive. And just as it is natural for the Father to supply bread, so is it natural for him to forgive. This follows from the Old Testament thought we find in many of the Psalms. God's forgiveness is always available because it is his sole property.

Another problem which faces us is that of the relation between the two parts of the petition. Does the 'as' express similarity or proportion? Linguistically, it is impossible to decide. The Greek $\epsilon\kappa$, probably corresponds to an Aramaic k^e and so permits both possibilities. The tenses of the verbs are not much help either for it must be remembered that, in all probability, they come from a timeless Aramaic p^e al and so tell us nothing unless we understand the basis of the original Greek translation, which is something that is far from clear. So, the only way in which we can hope to reach some conclusion, is from the content. Thus, what we have to try to determine, is how divine and human forgiveness can be related. This petition and the rule which follows in Matthew 6:14f, would seem, on the face of it, to pre-suppose that our act precedes that of God. On the other hand, the parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:21-35) teaches that the forgiving of the servant follows that of the master. This variation would suggest that the problem is not one of priority. We are not concerned here so much with a condition which has to be fulfilled, but an example which has to be followed. What is emphasised is that there is a

connection between human and divine forgiveness. If we do not display a forgiving spirit, then we cannot, in all honesty, ask for God's forgiveness.

How then can we say that human and divine forgiveness are related? It is God's nature to forgive, but we cannot say the same about us. God's forgiveness demonstrates his graciousness and so determines our lives. Can we say the same about ours? Our forgiveness is surely quite a different thing from God's and yet, it is based on God's action towards us, and so it must be similar. Despite the apparent differences between the two kinds of forgiveness, they are obviously equated here. In the second clause, the same words are used in the same places. Are we not, therefore, forced by the equality on the one hand and the difference on the other to the conclusion that human forgiveness can, and must, be understood simply as a reflection of the divine forgiveness.

We have here a development of Jewish thought. Throughout Rabbinic teaching, we find the idea that the merciful man will receive mercy and the forgiving man forgiveness. "Whom does God forgive? Him who overlooks the transgressions of others?"² Even the Day of Atonement is only valid when forgiveness is sought and granted for all sins, though not necessarily given, from those who had been wronged. The highpoint of such teaching is probably to be found in Ecclesiasticus 28:1-5.

"He that takes vengeance will suffer from the Lord,
and he will firmly establish his sins.
Forgive your neighbour the wrong he has done,
and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.
Does a man harbour anger against another,
and yet seek for healing from the Lord?
Does he have no mercy toward a man like himself,
and yet pray for his sins?

2. W. Barclay, "The Plain Man Looks at the Lord's Prayer",
p. 107.

If he himself, being flesh, maintains wrath,
who will make expiation for his sins?"³

But although we have Jewish precedent for the relation between human and divine forgiveness, this idea does not find a place in Jewish prayer. Norman Perrin points out that this petition is, in fact, the really unique thing in the Lord's Prayer.⁴ Abrahams sees the idea as Jewish, but not its liturgical adaptation. The Jew would agree that man ought not to expect to receive what he is not ready to give, but God's forgiveness is absolute. "In the Jewish liturgies, man admits his sin and prays for pardon - he throws himself unreservedly on the divine mercy and knows no limits to it. Never does a Synagogue prayer assign any limits to it. Hence the Jew prays for forgiveness 'sans phrase'."⁵ Indeed, the Jews would probably argue that there could be no conditions to God's forgiveness. The unforgiving man does not deserve pardon, but who does? In fact, because of his hard-heartedness, the unforgiving man is in most need of forgiveness. So, here we have a new emphasis put on the necessity of being forgiving ourselves. This surely, convinces us of the originality of the Lord's Prayer and prevents us from seeing it simply as a mosaic made up from existing Jewish prayers. The ideas can be paralleled (see Abrahams II, p. 98) but the method of expression and, especially the brevity, are quite new.

If then, human and divine forgiveness are so closely related, we are faced with the problem of how others can be our debtors. To avoid this, the word is usually taken in the sense of 'sinners', but this ignores the fact that even Luke has used ὁ φειλόμενος here although he changed it in the first clause. We have to take into account the

3. W. Barclay, "The Plain Man Looks at the Lord's Prayer", p.108.
4. N. Perrin, "The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus", p. 194.
5. I. Abrahams, "Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels", Vol. II, p. 97

special colouring which we get when ὁφειλόμενα is used. What we have to determine is how human relations can be likened to a debt. We have to remember that we are dealing here with a community of brothers. God is the Father Almighty, we are his children. As we have seen, Lohmeyer sees this petition as a prayer to become afresh the children of God. Hence, it follows that we are all brothers and therefore owe one another brotherly love. Sin is an attitude of rebellion to the will of God; it is disobedience, a falling short. "It is begotten by pride and produces as unlovely offspring self-centredness, self-dependence, self-righteousness."⁶ It is this self-centredness that leads to the withholding of the love we owe to one another. So, in this way, we are each debtors to our brother. What we are called upon to do here is to forgive all those who have not lived up to the Second Commandment and, as we ourselves in our lives fall far short of this we have to seek not only God's forgiveness but also that of our brother for we have wronged him just as much as our God by depriving him of the love that is his due. However, in that our own actions are most important, we have to forgive our debtors even though they may not forgive us. That is not quite so important. And we can forgive because we have experienced the forgiving love of God. The forgiveness we offer is only the effect of that which we have already experienced from God. Thus, in this sense, God's forgiveness is prior, for without knowledge of it we cannot forgive. Our action in forgiving others is a repetition of God's action towards us so that it is light of his light, spirit of his spirit and love of his love.

We can now see more clearly how we can understand the connection between the two parts of this petition. The second part is not a boast of our action, nor yet a promise of future deeds. It is rather the recognition that, because we have this special relation with God our Father, we also are closely linked to our debtors - our brethren.

6. G. Ingle, "The Lord's Creed", p. 165.

In conclusion, we shall look at Lohmeyer's view of the nature of the forgiveness prayed for in this petition. He would argue that God's forgiveness is eschatological and is not a continually recurring act as we would normally suppose. The view that this is something given or withheld by God, according to circumstances at the last judgement, is one which is supported by the parable of the Unmerciful Servant. The natural conclusion we would draw from this petition is that forgiveness is something we can get over and over again. The rest of the teaching of the New Testament would tend to support this. Forgiveness is always available when true repentance is shown. This does not conflict with what is taught here for, surely, if we truly repent, then we will have forgiven those who have wronged us. For when we repent, we throw ourselves on the mercy of God and when we do that we surely cannot be unmerciful to others. However, it is still possible to see the forgiveness prayed for here as something which is given once and once only. During life we are forgiven if we repent but there is still the last Judgement. Then our whole life is taken into account and, if we have not been forgiving ourselves, God's judgement will be laid upon us despite the forgiveness we have already received, and we will receive what had previously been withheld through grace. So, it is quite true to say that God's forgiveness is a continually recurring thing and, at the same time, to hold that it is something that is given once and for all. It is something that we need to receive day by day and it is also something which is given or withheld at the Last Judgement. Thus, it is both a continuing process and God's eschatological act.

5. Mark 3:28-30 - Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit

"The saying is one of the most challenging of the words of Jesus and misapprehensions of its nature have caused untold degrees of suffering. The truth of the saying must not be weakened or explained away, but it must always be estimated in the light of the major truth of the Gospel, namely that, where there is true repentance, or even the possibility of repentance, sin can be, and is, forgiven by God."¹

Two forms of 'blasphemy' are contrasted here, that against men and that against the Holy Spirit, though it has been suggested that τοῖς υἱοῖς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is an over literal rendering of the Aramaic original and that this should be seen as a reference to the Messianic Son of Man. Rawlinson has suggested that the phrase 'son of man' refers to Jesus himself, but not in a Messianic sense. He seems to take the meaning to be that blasphemy against himself can be forgiven, but not that directed against God's Spirit which motivated his actions. As Lagrange puts it, "It is excusable to fail to recognise the dignity of the One who hides Himself under the humble appearance of a man, but not to disparage works manifestly salutary which reveal the action of the divine spirit."²

The important point about this saying is not so much whether it is Messianic or not but the universality of forgiveness apart from the exception which follows. Elsewhere, as we have noted above, the gospels assure us that forgiveness is always available on repentance. Why then, should this particular instance be exempt? In normal Greek usage βλασφημία is slander to men and

1. V. Taylor, "The Gospel according to St. Mark", p. 244.
2. V. Taylor, p. 242, quoting Lagrange, "Evangile selon Saint Marc", p. 276.

irreverence towards the gods.³ In LXX and NT the verb is used of defiant hostility to God in speech.⁴ For example, the claim to be able to forgive sins (Mark 2:7) was seen by the Jews as an example of this. This was something which only God could do and to claim to do so was to set oneself up in opposition to him. Here, it would seem that the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit was the attributing of Christ's acts of healing to the agency of Beelzebul and not to the Holy Spirit. Such a charge is a deliberate denial of the power and greatness of God. But why should this alone be unforgivable?

The Holy Spirit here refers to the Jewish Spirit. As the Jews saw it, the Holy Spirit had two functions - to reveal God's truth and to enable men to recognise it. In this case, men had looked on the work of that Spirit but had not recognised it. They refused to accept that what they saw was the work of the Holy Spirit. The sin against the Holy Spirit was the refusing to follow its guidance. Forgiveness is impossible because, since the Holy Spirit can no longer be recognised, its guidance cannot be followed. Here men looked on good but saw evil. How then can repentance be possible if sin and evil cannot be recognised? Thus, this sin alone is unforgivable because by its very nature it precludes the possibility of repentance, the one condition which must be fulfilled before forgiveness can be offered and received.

Some commentators see this saying as hyperbole. Jesus was only trying to show forcefully that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit was a far more terrible sin than that against men. This offers an apparently easy explanation but the OT passages cited in support (Numbers

3. V. Taylor, p. 243.

4. II Kings 19:4; Isaiah 52:5; Ezekiel 35:12; Daniel 3:29, cf. H.W. Beyer, "Theological Dictionary of the New Testament", I p. 621f.

15:3f; I Samuel 3:14 and Isaiah 22:14) do not, in fact, seem to be entirely relevant. We seem to be left with the view of Vincent Taylor that the sin against the Holy Spirit 'is a perversion of spirit which, in defiance of moral values, elects to call light darkness'. In time, the moral values become upset and we are faced with the situation in which good has become evil and evil good. Repentance, and hence, forgiveness, are therefore impossible. Thus, it is not God, but man himself who brings about the possibility of an unforgivable sin. God's grace is still boundless, but it is man who cannot bring himself to avail of it.

6. Justification by Faith

"The idea of justification by faith has often been interpreted as an idiosyncrasy of St. Paul, but, in fact, it is quite familiar to the religion of the Old Testament as the apostle shows."¹ Paul looked on sin and the sinner from the Old Testament point of view. Man knew himself to be a sinner not through conscience, but because he recognised that he had contravened some rule, and his sufferings were a punishment for that. An 'unrighteous' man was under condemnation and could only be pronounced guiltless by some competent authority. This involved 'remission of sins' (ἀφεσις τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν) which is not identical with forgiveness, and which led to his justification. δικαιόσθαι does not describe an ethical quality in a man's character, but a status conferred on him. Almost every prayer for pardon and cleansing in the Psalter takes it for granted that it is God who freely puts man right with himself. Jeremiah in his day came preaching righteousness but found that men could not repent and so set themselves right with God.² He, too, came round to the view that in the New Covenant God Himself bestows righteousness by way of pardon.³ Salvation was, and is, the absolute gift of God.

It was this idea that Paul took and made his own. It became his way of expressing what God's redeeming love in Christ meant for him. In our interpretation of what Paul meant to convey by this concept, we have always to bear in mind his background. He had been brought up in the rabbinic tradition. He, himself, tells us that he had ardently followed the pathway of legally acquired righteousness only to find that it led to a wilderness of

1. H.R. Mackintosh, "The Christian Experience of Forgiveness", p. 93.

2. H.R. Mackintosh, "The Christian Experience of Forgiveness", p. 94; A.B. Davidson, "Theology of the Old Testament", p. 282; Jeremiah, 13:23; 23:6; 31:34.

3. Jeremiah, 31:34.

spiritual unrest and frustration. It was probably this failure which made him so bitter against the followers of the new 'Way' taught by Jesus Christ, and which therefore led to the great change which was to take place in his life. Inflamed by a spirit of hatred and persecution, he had set out for Damascus and, on the road, his whole life was changed. There, he came face to face with Christ himself and in that revelation he saw the true way to the inner rest he sought. There, he knew himself 'saved'. The blessedness and acceptance of a child of God were now his.

The key fact in all this was that Paul himself had not found the way to peace, for God had intervened. Now he could see how it was that 'salvation is of the Lord'. This was something that was to figure prominently in his exposition of justification. It was something that could not be earned on merit.

The Jewish idea was that a man's salvation depended on himself. It was won by observance and fulfilment of the law. From his own personal experience, Paul had seen how the law, which in itself was holy and good, could become a curse when it became a menacing statutory code. In such circumstances the law actually made salvation an impossibility, for, instead of bringing us to God, it creates a barrier between man and God. It is Paul's contention that this law of commands is abolished by the cross (Ephesians 2:15). Divine grace supervenes upon the failure of man and what is impossible through the observance of law is made freely available through faith. God has now acted to reconcile the world to himself.

This was at the heart of Jesus' gospel and here we find it taken up again. It is God alone who saves and, when he does so, it is not to reward human merit but in virtue of His free and unchanging love. What Paul is concerned to show is to show how sinful man can be seen righteous in the eyes of God. The fact that all this is a repetition of the gospel of Jesus surely shows that justification deliberately gets the prominence it does.

This is no mere apology against the attacks of the Jews. While it is true that his main treatment of the idea is to be found in the context of Jewish controversy, we are not justified in saying that the idea only arose in such a context. As a Jew himself, the problem of the place of the law must have given Paul much cause for concern. First, he had to reach his own understanding, then, as a missionary, he had to communicate this. This would naturally mean that he had to clear the ground of the belief that salvation had to be earned and replace this with the certainty that it comes freely from God. The case of the Gospel against Law had, in the nature of things, always to be put, and, as such, was of vital importance for all, Jew and Gentile alike.

As a Jew, Paul could not but believe that righteousness must, in some way, attach to those who are to obtain salvation. Now that attainment by merit had been proved impossible, the problem was in what way could men be said to be 'righteous' before God. Paul found his answer in the concept of justification.

The meaning of δικαιόω

Sanday and Headlam (Romans ICC p. 28-31) claim that the verb δικαιόω means properly 'to pronounce righteous', and that it cannot mean 'to make righteous'. "There may be other influences which go to make a person righteous, but they are not contained, or even hinted at, in the word δικαιόω. That word means 'to declare righteous', 'to treat as righteous'; it may even mean 'to prove righteous'; but whether the person so declared, treated as, or proved to be righteous, is really so, the word itself neither affirms nor denies."³ They argue that such an interpretation of the verb is supported by the regular use of the

3. ICC Rom. p. 30

word in classical Greek, the LXX and the NT itself,⁴ especially in Romans 4:5; "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness". "Here it is expressly stated that the person justified has nothing to show in the way of meritorious acts; his one asset (so to speak) is faith, and this faith is taken as an equivalent for righteousness."⁵

Burton (Galations ICC p. 460-474) finds the origin of Paul's use of δικαιοῦν in the Old Testament. He maintains that 'in Hebrew usage and the Greek usage of Semitic writers the terms are prevailingly moral as well

4. cf. Moulton and Milligan, "Vocabulary of the Greek Testament", p. 162-163. δικαιοῦν is used in Classical Greek in the general sense of 'think or deem right'. e.g. P. Giss, 1.47:16 (time of Hadrian) with reference to a girdle of which a man reports - ἀλλ' οὐ δεῖ δικαιοῦσα ἀγοράσαι ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι δυνάμενον - I did not think it right to purchase it, seeing that it is liable to be rejected.
p. Tebt II 444 (1st Cent. A.D.) τὰ δ[ικαί]α τῆς συνγραφῆς δετακομένα κεφάλαι (ε. δεδικοιωμένα κεφάλαια) - 'The sums fixed (declared just) by the contract'.
c.f. also Theological Dictionary of the New Testament II p. 211-214. In LXX δικαιοῦν is a forensic term constantly used in the positive sense of 'to pronounce righteous', 'to justify', 'to vindicate'. e.g. Exodus 23:7; Deut. 25:1; Jos. 33:32; Ps. 19:9:50:51; Isa. 5:23; 42:21; Jer. 3:11; Ezek. 16:51; 16:52; Ps. Sol. 8:27; 9:23. Godet, "Commentaire sur l'Epitre aux Romains" (Eng. trans T & T Clark 1881) p. 199 - there is no example in the whole of the classical literature where the word = 'to make righteous'.
5. ICC Romans p. 31.

as forensic', and that in Second Isaiah and the Psalms righteousness is in content the equivalent of salvation.⁶ In the New Testament he understands the meaning of the verb to be 'to recognise or to declare one to be righteous'; 'to recognise as acceptable (to God)' or in the passive, 'to be accepted by God'.

C.H. Dodd also makes a distinction between the usage of the LXX and classical Greek. Normally δικάζω would mean 'to do justice to', but in LXX it is used in the sense of 'to vindicate' (Ps. 81:3; II Kings 15:4) and also of putting a person in the right by declaring him righteous. (Exodus 23:7; Isaiah 5:23). "This is a sense of δικάζω which is strange to non-biblical Greek, in which δικάζω τοῦ ἀδίκου would mean 'to condemn or punish the unjust'. The Greek reader would constantly find something a little strange in the use of the word since its connection with the narrower sense of 'justice' gives to the Greek-speaking world a thinner and poorer substitute for this characteristic Hebrew idea."⁷

Jeremias ('The Central Message of the New Testament p. 51-57) also finds a connection between justification and salvation in the pages of the Old Testament. Originally, the verb belongs to legal terminology. In the active, it means 'to do a man justice' and in the passive, 'to be acquitted'. It is found in this sense in the New Testament in Matthew 12:37, a reference to the Last Judgement, and in Paul's quotation from Isaiah in Romans 8:33f - 'It is God who acquits; who is to condemn'.

Later the meaning of δικάζω came to be extended, particularly when it was used of God's action. Pointing to the Parallelism in Isaiah 45:25⁸ Jeremias claims that

6. ICC Galatians p. 466.

7. C.H. Dodd, "The Bible and the Greeks", p. 52.

8. J. Jeremias, "The Central Message of the New Testament", p. 52.

this demonstrates that $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\theta\epsilon\iota$ here assumes the meaning 'to find salvation'."

He also finds examples of this usage in post-biblical Judaism. "At least two instances can be adduced." In Pseudo-Philo's 'Biblical Antiquities' (written after AD70) 'to be justified' appears as a parallel to God's election (49:4) and similarly in Fourth Ezra (written AD 94), 'to find grace', 'to be justified' and 'to be heard in prayer' are used as synonyms (12:7).

The last mentioned passage is the beginning of a prayer. It reads :

O most high Lord,
If I have found grace in your eyes
and if I have been justified in your presence before many
and if my prayer assuredly rises to your countenance ...

The last three lines are in parallelism. In the first and second of these 'to find grace' alternates with 'to be justified' without any apparent change in the meaning. Therefore, the literal translation 'to be justified', is too narrow and does not get to the heart of the expression. Rather what the text intends is :

If I have found grace in your eyes
and if I have found good pleasure in your presence
before many

What is important here is that the idea of a trial in court has been abandoned. 'To be justified', as applied as an act of God and parallel to 'to find grace' does not have the narrow meaning 'to be acquitted' but rather the more extensive one of 'to find good pleasure'. This is confirmed by the third parallel line, which indicates how God's grace, his good pleasure, is expressed; it consists in his hearing the prayer."⁹

9. J. Jeremias, "The Central Message of the New Testament", pp. 52-53.

He then goes on to tie this up with the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee (Luke 18:9-14) translating verse 14 - 'I tell you this man went down to his house as one who had found God's good pleasure, and not the other' or even 'I tell you, this man went down to his house as one whose prayer God had heard, and not the other! In this 'soteriological' use of δικαιουν the forensic aspect has been so completely watered down as to be virtually abandoned.

In Paul, too, the use of δικαιουν reaches far beyond the legal sphere. In most cases, especially where he is talking about a past justification (Romans 4:2; 5:1), he sees God's justification as an outpouring of grace.

As in the Psalms, Paul would equate 'God's righteousness' with 'God's salvation'. Jeremias would therefore render Romans 1:17 as 'In the gospel God's salvation is revealed', and not 'In the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed'. His view is that, as in the Pauline letters δικαιωσιν του Θεου must be translated 'God's salvation', so δικαιουσ Θεο must be rendered 'to find God's grace'.

Certainly, this would avoid one of the problems that has always been associated with the Pauline doctrine of Justification. On lexical grounds alone δικαιουν is 'to declare righteous', 'to treat as righteous', 'to vindicate'. The one meaning it cannot have is 'to make righteous'. This could lead to a kind of ethical fiction where someone who is not righteous is said to be righteous.

The usage of δικαιωσιν Θεου*

In classical Greek a man is said to be δικαιος when he has fulfilled his duty to the law. In LXX this state

* cf. D. Hill, Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings, pp. 139-162.

is attained when a man meets the claims¹⁰ which another, especially God, has upon him in virtue of their relationship. Because of their peculiar relationship to God it was necessary for the Jews to attain to righteousness. The necessity of this is emphasised again and again in the prophets, and the method is laid forth in the Law - "It shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments".¹¹ Experience had showed that this was not possible and attention had been focussed on the Age to come for the fulfilment of religious hope and upon divine intervention for the final discrimination between the wicked and the righteous. A new emphasis began to be placed on God's part in justification but the ground for a favourable decision still rested on 'good works' in the shape of full performance of the law. The recognition which was denied God-fearing men now would come to the Messianic Age as part of the promised 'Salvation'. Thus 'righteousness' and 'salvation' became linked in many passages.¹² Thus in LXX δικαιοσύνη is (1) something which can be secured by man's own efforts; (2) a status conferred and declared by God; and (3) an attribute or quality of the Divine Nature which shows itself in the form of 'salvation'.

In the New Testament δικαιοσύνη is occasionally used in its original forensic sense in reference to the Last Judgement,¹³ but usually it denotes the right conduct of the man who follows the will of God and is therefore pleasing to Him.

Matthew 5:6 - A right state before God is the supreme goal of the ἀνθρώποις καὶ δούλοις. Nevertheless, in opposition to the Jewish view of merit, δικαιοσύνη is plainly regarded as a gift which God gives to those who

10. G. Schrenk, "Theological Dictionary of the New Testament", Vol. II p. 192.

11. Deuteronomy, 6:25.

12. Isaiah, 45:25; 51:5.

13. Mark, 16:13-15; Acts, 17:31; Revelation 19:11.

ask for it.

Matthew 6:33 - ζητετε πρωτον την βασιλειαν και την δικαιοσυνην αυτου refers to what brings the disciple into harmony with the will of God. Righteousness is closely linked with God and his Kingdom as a pure gift of God. There is a close parallelism with Paul here, as there is elsewhere when the gospel emphasises the merciful salvation of sinners.

Matthew 6:1 - Used as a title for the various exercises and expressions of piety, δικαιοσυνη is action before and for God. This same meaning of δικαιοσυνη as fulfilment of God's will in an action which is pleasing to him is found in Luke.

In Acts it is emphasised that God seeks such fulfilment even among the heathen (Acts 13:10; 24:25), and that good works done by non-Christians are recognised by God (Acts 10:35).

In I Peter δικαιοσυνη is again the performance of 'right conduct'. I Peter 2:24 - The liberation from sin by the cross is a presupposition of a life directed by δικαιοσυνη. This is underlined in I Peter 3:14 (cf. Matthew 5:10) where he speaks of the blessing that comes to those who suffer for righteousness sake.

John interprets righteousness Christologically, linking right action with Christ as δικαιος. According to John 16:8-10 the resurrection and ascension of Jesus declare His righteous being. In I John 2:29 ποιειν την δικαιοσυνην is an exercise and demonstration of what Jesus embodies as the δικαιος and therefore is a valid sign of being born of God. Its main content is the exercising of brotherly love.

Throughout the New Testament righteousness before God is, above all, the gift of God alone. There is here absolutely no question of merit. The statement in I Peter 2:24, where it is emphasised that this righteousness is made possible by liberation from sin through the cross, can be taken as a summary of the teaching of the New

Testament, with the exception of the letters of Paul and James, on this matter.

It is only when we turn to these two writers that we find any attempt at a formal treatment of how a man can be righteous in the eyes of God. For James δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ means right conduct (1:20). This is its distinctive form given by God, and therefore described as the righteousness of God. What man is expected to do is to follow the norm and demand of God. In the second chapter of the letter James turns to this all important question of the attainment of righteousness. Emphasis is right away placed on man's action. James is against a deadly orthodoxy which speaks of faith but does not take works seriously. In this context 'works' are, of course, not of the law, but rather of love and obedience (as Paul describes them in his list of the fruits of the spirit). Faith is not to be distorted by making it a substitute for works. But in this James has not gone as far as Paul. His statement that Abraham was justified by imputation of a faith which found fulfilment in works is much nearer the Jewish conception of works than that of Paul, especially as there is no contrasting of ἔργα and πίστις Θεοῦ. The meaning of faith is also different from Paul. James is simply engaging in practical argument against the attempt to promote faith as something of value in itself, beside which works are useless. There is here an underlying motif that the only faith worth considering is one which produces the actual fruits of serious action. If these fruits are produced, then this means that a man will find himself 'right with God'.

For Paul again, δικαιοσύνη is not of works or law but is related to faith. In Philippians 3:9, he goes so far as to make careful distinction between the 'Righteousness of God through faith' and the righteousness which is 'mine own, even that which is of the law'. All through the importance of faith in relation to righteousness is emphasised, and while the subject of this faith is not

specifically mentioned, mainly because his purpose is to reject the claims of righteousness based on merit or fulfilment of law, we can understand from the argument of the letters the kind of things he had in mind.

What is justification by faith? By justification, Paul means the gracious action of God in accepting men as righteous in consequence of faith in Christ. Good works no longer enter into it, for this justification is always undeserved. Its sole ground is faith, thus faith replaces works. But then we are confronted with the thought that this faith has become simply another 'work'. Is it not still the case that God is gracious because of an achievement? The answer must be 'Yes', but this achievement is no human one, but the achievement of Christ on the Cross. "Faith is not an achievement in itself, rather is it the hand which grasps the works of Christ and holds it out to God. Faith says : Here is the achievement - Christ died for me on the Cross (Galations 2:20). This faith is the only way to obtain God's grace."¹⁴ The faith of which Paul speaks is not faith in general, not simply faith in God, but faith in God as active in the redemptive ministry of Christ. There is then no question of saying that God takes something imperfect and accounts it perfect by grace. Despite the suggestions of Romans 5:19 ('by one man's obedience many will be made righteous') there is no legal fiction here. Paul is there speaking of a parallelism between Adam and Christ. It is his contention that Christ is all that Adam was not, but should have been. In the terms of the belief of the time Adam had fallen far short of what had been intended, and in him so had mankind. Now in Christ they had been shown that true fulfilment of their role was something that lay within their grasp. For all that he was the Son of God, Christ was still a man, 'in all points tempted like as we are',¹⁵ yet able to fulfil

14. Jeremias, "Central Message of the New Testament", p. 56.

15. Hebrews, 4:15.

all that was expected of him. His obedience made all the difference. It became the means whereby many were made righteous for it stimulated faith. 'Righteousness' was now seen, not as something sought after, yet beyond man's grasp, but as a state in which a man was right with God. There is no circular argument here for justification is not earned by emulation of Christ. Faith is still the key. "It is God that justifies"¹⁶ but not at random and not in reward. While it is true that He justifies the ungodly, they are the ungodly who have faith. It is the presence of faith that makes all the difference.

Again, while Paul uses the terminology of a legal conception of God's relation to man, we must recognise that that terminology "must fail to do justice to the spiritual fact of forgiveness through Christ as it is actually experienced. And such terminology could only be a partially opaque medium for St. Paul's message. He is telling us simply that the man who has faith is now in the right relationship to God; where enmity was, there is peace. To believe in God from the heart is to be pleasing to Him, to satisfy Him, to be right with Him."¹⁷ So, while Paul is interested in the acquisition of righteousness it is not the righteousness of the legal system from which he draws his terminology. That was a righteousness which drew its character from 'doing right' but that which Paul sought was more a 'being right'.

This preoccupation with righteousness can be traced to the ethical character of Hebrew religion at its best. There it was recognised that righteousness was the primary demand of the God of Israel; that only the man who had 'clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, and hath not sworn deceitfully,'¹⁸ could hope to stand before the Lord. Such a scheme of

16. Romans, 8:33.

17. H.R. Mackintosh, "The Christian Experience of Forgiveness", p. 106.

18. Psalms, 24:3f.

things is perfectly valid in the context of the Last Judgement where a man lays before God all that he is and has done. But if the terminology is applied to present experience, 'righteousness' must acquire a new significance. It must, of course, still represent a valuation passed upon man by God, but it can no longer be determined by what has been done, since only the present is relevant. This present state is determined by the response of faith to what God has done in Christ.

At the bottom of it all is faith. It is our attitude to God and what he has done for us in Christ that is all important. It is then perhaps not too daring to say that God's attitude to man in this is coloured by man's attitude to him. The righteousness 'which is of God' is not something that is thrust upon us unwanted. Here, as almost always, man is free to accept or reject. This is the continual choice before him, for justification is not a once-and-for-all thing.

"For this reason, God's justification of the sinner is no dead possession, rather it imposes an obligation. God's gift can be lost. The justified still stands in fear of God."¹⁹ This must be for it is to the believer that God grants His good pleasure. If we would deny the existence of God then, naturally, there is no place in our scheme of things for the righteousness of which Paul speaks. But, on the other hand, acceptance of God's existence does no more than open up the possibility of His conferring of righteousness upon us. The additional condition must still be fulfilled. In the words of C.H. Dodd, "righteousness is no longer quantitative, but qualitative it consists not in a preponderant balance of good deeds achieved, but in a comprehensive attitude of mind and will. At bottom a man is right or wrong according to his relation with the

19. J. Jeremias, "The Central Message of the New Testament", p. 65.

personal centre of reality, which is God, and a man who is in the relation of 'trusting surrender' to God is 'right'. Such trusting surrender is only possible in the light of God's saving work in Christ. Hence, it cannot become another work. By adopting such an attitude we cannot gain any particular merit for we are simply accepting what has been done for us."²⁰ If a gift is offered, it must, of course, be taken, but it is not the taking that is rewarded by the making of the gift. Faith, itself, Paul would argue, is the gift of God, and can furnish no occasion for boasting.

Conclusion

In the New Testament doctrine of Justification by Faith, there is absolutely no place for the notion of merit. The only 'work' remotely involved is the sacrifice made by Christ on the Cross. Through his faith in that event a man puts himself right with God. Linguistically, justification is the acceptance of a man by God, as he is. The one thing δικαιωσιν cannot mean is 'to make righteous'.

20. C.H. Dodd, "The Meaning of Paul for To-day", p. 111.

7. Reconciliation

One theme which we find constantly recurring through the New Testament is that of the attaining of fellowship with God. Christian teaching, like that of Judaism, recognised that men had somehow become cut off from God. They were 'alienated and enemies in their mind through wicked works'.¹ "Man made for harmony with God was actually at issue with him,"² and the problem was how to bring this to an end. The reactions which there had been to the life and teaching of Jesus had shown just how much suspicion and hostility there was to God and his goodness. If this estrangement between man and God was to be removed, some means of bringing about a reconciliation was required.

The barrier that had been thrown up was the result of sin. The problem of reconciliation thus became very closely linked with the far greater one of sin itself. We can see in Paul's approach the beginning of a much deeper and truer concept of sin and it is so because it is more spiritual and ethical. In dealing with reconciliation Paul saw what was required was far more than just 'remission of sins'. That was and only could be, a first step toward reconciliation - the restoration of fellowship.

When we come to look more closely at this concept several questions come to mind. In this reconciliation who is it that is reconciled? Is it a case of God being reconciled to man and man to God, or only man to God? What then is man's part in this and how does the achievement of reconciliation depend upon the attitude of men? And, above all, how has this reconciliation been effected through the death of Christ?

We cannot supply the answers simply from a study of

1. Colossians, 1:21.

2. C.A. Scott, "Christianity According to St. Paul", p. 75.

the usage of *καταλλαγή*. It simply signifies the transformation of a relation of hostility into one of peace and friendship, without any indication of where the move came from. Indeed, this hostility may have been felt on both sides, or only on one and the move toward reconciliation have come from the other. For any kind of answer we have to turn to these passages in which Paul seeks to develop this concept. In an attempt to add to the little information we get from his use of *καταλλαγή* attention has been paid to the word *ἔχθρος*. In this connection three passages in particular are relevant - Romans 5:10; Romans 11:28; and Colossians 1:21. At first they would seem to add to the difficulties rather than solve them. '*ἔχθρος*,' raises the question of man's state before reconciliation. Then we were 'enemies of God'. But is *ἔχθρος* to be taken as active or passive? i.e., is it to be translated by 'hostile' or 'hated'? Before we can say from which side the reconciliation comes, we have to decide if *ἔχθρος* describes the attitude of man to God, or indicates the light in which men are seen by God prior to reconciliation. On this point there is considerable difference. Anderson Scott and Foerster see it describing man's attitude to God, i.e., 'hostile'. Denney goes to the other extreme arguing that the 'Whole connection of ideas in the passage (Romans 5:10f) requires us to give *ἔχθρος* the passive meaning, which it undoubtedly has in 11:28, where it is opposed to *ἀγαπᾷται*.³ Sanday and Headlam see the relation as mutual and that the enmity and reconciliation between God and man are to be found on both sides. Are we then obliged, as Sanday and Headlam contend, to see God hating the sinner? Certainly, it can be argued that in Romans 11:28 the passive *ἀγαπᾷται* demands a passive meaning for *ἔχθρος* to balance it. But grammatical symmetry is the only reason for giving *ἔχθρος*

3. "The Expositor's Greek Testament", Vol. II, p. 625.

such a meaning. It may well be that this is placing too much weight upon it. After all, both phrases refer to the same people at the same time. Could they then be described as both 'hated' and 'beloved'?⁴ Is it not more likely that, although they are 'hostile' yet they are still 'loved'? This idea is in harmony with Paul's thought elsewhere. When we were hostile 'we were reconciled' for 'while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us'. Hostile, yet beloved; that exactly describes Paul's view.

Even so, some would raise the question : are we right to attempt to come down on one side or the other? 'Hated' is perhaps too anthropomorphic, and certainly does not fit in well with the idea of divine love, while, on the other hand, 'hostile' limits the word too exclusively to man's attitude and suggest a colourless relationship of God to man out of harmony with his perfect holiness.⁵ To limit ἐχθρὸς to describing man's attitude means to lose the paradox that we have already seen is part and parcel of Paul's thought. While, and in spite of the fact that God sees men as 'enemies', he reconciles them to himself.

But surely the point is that men were enemies by definition. In so many cases their aims and ideas and efforts were opposed to God and his principles.⁶ If then, men were enemies to God in this way, again by definition, they were hostile to him. Thus, while strictly speaking it is best simply to translate ἐχθρὸς by 'enemies', we must bear in mind it is the attitude of men, and men only, which is described. It is they who are hostile, yet still beloved.

Taylor would go even further arguing that, if men are enemies, then they must be recognised as such by God for

4. C.A. Scott, "Christianity According to St. Paul", p. 78.

5. V. Taylor, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation", p. 74.

6. Wyld's Universal Dictionary - 'enemy', "One whose aims, interests, ideas and efforts are opposed to a cause or principle. One animated with hatred and malignity towards another."

"is it possible in a mutual relationship for an enemy to exist without our recognising him as such? Even if we rise above all bitterness and every temptation to hatred, can we esteem him as a friend? We may hesitate to apply this reasoning to the relationship of God with men, but the very existence of the command, 'Love your enemies', implies that men can be seen as enemies without sacrifice of ethical values. We can well believe that God sees sinful men as enemies without feeling compelled to say that they are hateful to him."⁷ Perhaps then it is true that Sanday and Headlam have made an unnecessary distinction when they claim that there is frequent mention of the 'wrath of God' directed against sinners, and when that ceases there is surely a change on the part of God as well as man".⁸ But is this in fact the case? Directly or indirectly Paul connects God with the idea of wrath eleven times. In six (Romans 3:5; 5:9; Ephesians 5:6; Colossians 3:6; I Thessalonians 1:10; Romans 12:9) the reference is to The Wrath in the eschatological sense of the Wrath 'in the great longsuffering of God'. The same idea is found in Romans 4:15; Ephesians 2:3 and I Thessalonians 5:9. This leaves Romans 1:18 - 'The wrath of God is being revealed against all ungodliness and wickedness', and I Thessalonians 2:16 - 'The wrath has come upon them to the uttermost'. This is surely rather slender support on which to deduce that Paul saw God as actively hostile to men.

When we turn to some of the other passages dealing with reconciliation it becomes more difficult to resist the conclusion that it is only man who is reconciled. "It is all the doing of God who reconciled us to himself."⁹ In the famous Corinthian passage the verb is used twice in

7. V. Taylor, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation", p. 75.

8. Sanday and Headlam, ICC Romans, p. 130.

9. C.A. Scott, "Christianity According to St. Paul", p. 79.

the active of the reconciling act of God. The idea is not that of the A.V. 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself', where the emphasis is on the incarnation. Nor is the object the 'world that is in Christ'. The significance of the historical revelation in Christ is that here we see God's reconciliation of man to himself, this is God's reconciling action. God, as always is the reconciler, the world, mankind is the object of the reconciliation. The fact is that in the New Testament God is never reconciled, nor even do men reconcile themselves to God. That had been tried by way of sacrifice but had been found wanting. Yet now this reconciliation is brought about by the offer of forgiveness from God, brought by Christ and proclaimed in the apostolic message. The context shows that the reconciling work of God is accomplished in the death and resurrection of Christ (cf. Romans 5:10; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20) to which great importance is attached. The double mention stresses the importance of the apostolic commission to reconcile. The passage is all the more important because it shows man's complementary part. $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\gamma\gamma$ though passive still demands the active co-operation of man. So, although man cannot accomplish reconciliation with God, he can refuse it. His participation is his willing response.

Thus the great dictums of Westcott and Denney are still very much applicable. "Such phrases as 'propitiating God' or 'God being reconciled' are foreign to the language of the New Testament."¹⁰ "The subject of reconciliation is always God and the object is always man".¹¹ This means, too, that reconciliation is not something which is arranged completely independently of man. Certainly the intention was already there when God 'spared not his own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all', but man had the last word. But it is still true that this is a spontaneous expression

10. Westcott, "The Epistles of St. John", p. 85.

11. J. Denney, "The Death of Christ", p. 143.

of the Divine Nature. In a sense then, reconciliation is not something which is doing; it is something which is done. As Paul tells us, "We have now received the reconciliation".¹² Reconciliation is then distinguished as a past stage from salvation, which is still to come. This reconciliation is, too, an act of love for "God showed his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us".¹³ There is then no room for God 'hating' sinners, and so, despite the fact that men, from their own understanding of the nature of God, expected to be regarded as enemies, in fact, they were not. The love of God was something greater than all their misdeeds and nothing they could do could change that attitude of love. John surely grasped the significance of Paul's thought here when he said it was because, "God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life."¹⁴

These ideas are developed in the later letters. In Ephesians 2:16 we read that the primary purpose of the breaking down of the 'middle wall of partition' between Jew and Gentile was that Christ might reconcile them both in one body through the Cross having slain the enmity thereby. Here, as in Colossians 1:20, $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\ \lambda\lambda\alpha\sigma\sigma\omega$ has much the same meaning as $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\sigma\sigma\omega$, but expressing the idea of reconciliation more intensely and decisively. Here too, unlike the other passage, the actual work of reconciliation is ascribed to Christ. But this does not really oppose Paul's fundamental conviction that reconciliation is of God, for such an ascription represents the natural conclusion of a passage where the emphasis is placed on the efficacy of the sacrificial death of Christ. Although the immediate thought is of the uniting of Jew and Gentile,

12. Romans 5:11.

13. Romans 5:8.

14. John 3:16.

the deeper underlying idea is of their common reconciliation to God. The end in view is to 'reconcile them both in one body to God', the peace by which Gentile was reconciled to Jew being at the same time peace with God. This reconciliation is based on the death of Christ and has been accomplished on the Cross. The enmity which is slain is not just racial hatred, but the hostility between God and man as such. How this is done Paul does not say. For him, this is an accomplished fact which he states without explanation. One notable feature of the passage is its strong communal interest. The thought is not only of the reconciliation of individuals to God, but also, by their reconciliation to one another, of the creation of a new divine community, the Church.

This brings us to the consideration of the last question we raised at the beginning - how is this reconciliation effected through the death of Christ? There is, in Paul's thought on reconciliation both correspondence and contrast with the best in Jewish thought on forgiveness. There, sufficient ground for forgiveness was man's repentance, but always the moving cause was the mercy or love-kindness of God. The problem was how to ascertain the presence and reality of repentance. It was only natural to call for some kind of external proof. This was originally provided in the sacrificial system, but later a system of 'good works' came to be evolved. Gradually, these 'good works' came to be substituted for the repentance they represented, but the theory remained the same. Forgiveness was offered on the ground of repentance only. This was in line with the thought of the Old Testament, "Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon."¹⁵ Although the sacrificial system played a great part in the Jewish con-

15. Isaiah 55:7.

cept of forgiveness it would be wrong to see it as the only or necessary ground of forgiveness. We cannot then just assume that Paul would on this basis seek to find an expiatory sacrifice in the death of Christ. But in Paul's views there must have been a tension between his consciousness of sin and his belief in a Holy God. How could such a Being continue to show mercy to men? The whole idea of his holiness militated against such a view. The difficulty was not to believe that love forgave on the simple condition of sincere repentance, but to believe that Divine Love could persist against the hostility and wickedness of men.

It was here that Paul found much of his understanding of the meaning of the Cross. This Cross which pronounced the doom of sin, at the same time revealed, in a startling and dramatic way, the love of God. Such was God's love that there was no limit to the price which he was willing to pay to achieve the reconciliation of men. So he spared not his own Son, but 'He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.'¹⁶

Paul laid great stress on the crucifixion as a symbol. In Galatians 3:1, he tells how Christ had been 'placarded' on the Cross, and his great claim in I Corinthians 2:2 that Christ is the centre of his preaching emphasises that it is Christ crucified that he preaches. It would seem that Paul found his Old Testament analogue for the death of Christ not in sacrifice but in the story of the Brazen Serpent.¹⁷ Certainly the parallelism is clear. As Moses made a figure in the likeness of the Serpent which attacked the people, so now is Christ 'made sin'. The serpent was lifted up on a pole, and, so too, is Christ upon the Cross, and, as those who gazed upon the serpent were healed, so now men are called to behold Christ

16. I Peter, 3:18.

17. C.A. Scott, "Christianity According to St. Paul", p. 82.

crucified and find in Him their healer. Indeed, this was the type, which in the Fourth Gospel, we are told Christ himself chose for his death.¹⁸ What the Cross sought to do was to remove both the hostility of man and his hopeless conviction that he had forever forfeited the love of a holy God. They both had their ground in ignorance, of God, His character, and his attitude to men. Men were 'enemies' only because they thought that God could not but be their enemy and so they despaired of forgiveness because of this ignorance of the nature and power of God's love. But God had 'confirmed and commended his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us'. Above all, the message of the Cross was one of free and unconditional forgiveness. In the Cross and in the whole character of Christ, we are given a revelation of God himself. The suffering and the sacrifice were not his alone but also the Father's 'who gave him up for us all'.¹⁹

Paul saw the effect of this as the flooding of human hearts with the love of God, the disappearance of hostility and the joyful acceptance of forgiveness, i.e., the bringing about of reconciliation.

18. John, 3:14; 13:32.

19. Romans, 8:32.

8. The Atonement

"Ideas change as the atmosphere of life changes and as the outlook of thought and experience varies. Concepts become fashionable, then fade or pass away; systems have their day and cease to be. This is true of all ideas, of all concepts in every range of thought, and of systems in all realms of knowledge. One of the most disturbing features in the progress of knowledge is to discover terms which at one time, fitted the ideas which they sought to express, but which fit them no longer. The atmosphere has changed; life has moved forward leaving the older ideas behind, so that all the vitality and meaning have gone out of the terms. This is, perhaps, more true in the realm of theology than in any other field of knowledge, but it holds in all spheres of thought, even of the latest scientific thought. Dogmas stated in the terms of, and expressing the ideas of, a past age grow old and effete."¹

This is as true of the Atonement as it is of any other of the Church's doctrines, despite the fact that in this case the Church has not, in the past, made any definite, authoritative statement of belief. This means that the Church has constantly to be re-thinking her belief about the Atonement, as about the other doctrines of the faith, if they are to remain intelligible.

In this particular instance, this means that while, as always, we must begin with the New Testament, we must also attempt to re-state what the New Testament says in terms belonging to to-day. It is not enough simply to extract the facts from its pages. Some attempt must be made to clothe these facts in twentieth century images.

1. T.H. Hughes, "The Atonement", Introduction, p. xi.

The Death of Christ in the New Testament

The one thing about which all the New Testament writers are agreed is that the death of Christ somehow removes the barrier that has been built up between man and God, so making reconciliation a possibility. While they would not all have used Paul's words, they would all share the sentiment they express - 'Now in union with Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near through the shedding of Christ's blood in his own body of flesh and blood he has broken down the enmity This was his purpose, to reconcile the two in a single body to God, through the Cross.'²

Each writer makes his approach from his own distinctive point of view. The author of the letter to the Hebrews is influenced by his conception of God to emphasise both the divinity and the humanity of Christ. Like Paul, he sees sin as a barrier to fellowship with God. Somehow, Christ, by his death, tears this down. In this act, Christ is man's representative. In his attempt to give some kind of explanation of all this, the author of the letter to the Hebrews leans heavily on analogy with the Levitical sacrificial system and especially with the ritual of the Day of Atonement. Christ is compared to the faultless victim on whom the sins of the community are heaped, and by his vicarious death he assures God's forgiveness. But, at the same time, Christ is also the eternal sinless High Priest who, because of his sinlessness is assured of acceptance in the sight of God. These two facts taken together, that Christ is the sinless High Priest and also the sacrifice without blemish, guarantee that God accepts him and grants his petition. Having thus atoned for sin, once and for all, Christ remains in the presence of God continually interceding for his people.³

2. Ephesians 2:13-16.

3. Hebrews, 7:25; 9:24.

Peter, on the other hand, uses quite a different imagery to interpret Christ's death. He begins with the concept of the Descent into Hell, which he sees as the final consequence of the incarnation. The idea was drawn originally from the Book of Enoch, where in Chapters 12-16, Enoch is sent to preach to the fallen angels of Genesis 6 the message of God's eternal wrath, that they shall 'find no peace and no forgiveness'. But now Christ has descended with the Good News. Enoch's message was one of the impossibility of forgiveness, but now Christ has opened up the way of salvation, for his message is that 'the righteous one died for the unrighteous'.⁴ His atoning death means salvation even for those who were hopelessly lost.

Both authors are attempting to explain the same thing, but they resort to totally different imagery. This reminds us of the danger of over-estimating the importance of imagery. What matters is what is being said and not just how it is being said. Out of these two accounts there comes to us the one message - the atoning power of Jesus' death is inexhaustible and boundless.

As we might expect, Paul gives this question of the meaning of the Cross a very full treatment. For him, the important point was that this death was 'for us' and his arguments are intended to make his readers understand the meaning of these two words.

Like the author of Hebrews, Paul makes use of the analogy of sacrifice. In Romans 3:25, Christ is compared with the sacrifice offered on the Day of Atonement; in Romans 8:3, with the sin-offering; in I Corinthians 5:7, with the Passover Lamb; and in Ephesians 5:2, with the burnt offering. There are also many references to the 'blood of Christ' - Romans 5:9 'being justified in his

4. I Peter, 3:18.

blood'; Ephesians 1:7 'in whom we have redemption through his blood'; Colossians 1:20 'through him to reconcile all things to himself, having made peace through the blood of the cross'; and Ephesians 2:13 'we have been brought near through the shedding of Christ's blood'. It is not as easy as it might seem to discover the significance of 'the blood' for Paul. While the other New Testament writers would explain the efficacy of the death of Christ by simple analogy with the Levitical sacrifices, there are factors which suggest that Paul has more in mind. One thing that stands out is the variety of functions ascribed to the 'blood'. By it men obtain justification, redemption and reconciliation; they are brought near and peace is made. The efficacy which Paul assigned to the 'blood' goes far beyond the negative scope given to it in Leviticus. For Paul this phrase, 'The blood', stands for the death of Christ in its completeness.

There is, in fact, only a thin analogy with the Levitical system. There, only sins of error and ignorance are atoned for by sacrifice, while sins which were forbidden by the moral law were not touched by sacrifice. It was with this latter that Paul was concerned, for that was what defiled a man and disqualified him from communion with God.⁵

It is, in any case, unlikely that the Levitical system of sacrifice would occupy a prominent place in the thoughts of Paul or his readers. Living, as they did, so far from Jerusalem, the sacrificial ceremonial of the Temple would not have much bearing on their religious life. Its place would be taken by the synagogue and the Law. For them, the teaching of the prophets would take precedence, as Paul's Old Testament references would seem to show. The prophet's theory of forgiveness depended on human repentance and divine mercy and was highly critical of the worth of sacrifice. If, as seems likely, this was the accepted doctrine among Jews of the first century, it is

5. cf. Mark, 7:14-23.

unlikely that Paul would seek to explain the efficacy of Christ's death in terms of a priestly theory of atonement.

There can be no doubt that Paul set the death of Christ at the centre of his teaching about Salvation. He saw it as a sacrifice made voluntarily on behalf of man, in connection with their sins and in furtherance of God's saving purpose. All we can do is to build up a general picture from the various pointers he gives.

1. It was a sacrifice ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν , 'on our behalf' (Galatians 2:20; Romans 5:8, cf. I John 3:16).
2. It was a sacrifice ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν , 'On account of sin' (I Corinthians 15:3), and in connection (νεκρῶν) with sin (Romans 8:3; Galatians 1:4) because those for whom he died were ungodly (ἀσεβεῖς) and sinners (ἁμαρτωλοὶ) (Romans 5:6,8).
3. Its purpose and result was restore or establish a proper relationship of love between man and God.
4. In it Christ is shown as a two-fold representative. He represented God to man, for 'God was in Christ' (II Corinthians 5:19). He also represented man to God, inasmuch as he was the Head of a new humanity, the second Adam. (Romans 5:12f).
5. The prominent feature in the sacrifice of Christ is his obedience. It is singled out as a special characteristic in II Corinthians 10:5 to be imitated by the Christian, and in Philipians 2:8, the Cross is held up as the supreme illustration of that obedience.

The famous passage in Romans 5:13-18 is an exposition of the effect of Christ's obedience on the relationship between man and God. This relationship had been destroyed by sin, in the first instance, by the

disobedience of Adam. As the head of the race, he had, according to the ancient idea of solidarity,⁶ on which the whole exposition depends, involved his posterity in this wrong relationship. Over the years, each individual had endorsed this situation by his own sins. Now Christ had dealt with the situation in his life, and especially in his death of obedience.

In this exposition, Paul makes no claim to be the originator of the theory of the two Adams, but rather appeals to it as a commonly accepted opinion. His argument depends on two points, firstly, that Christ was, like Adam, a representative man and secondly, that he performed an act of obedience that cancelled for his followers, Adam's act of disobedience and all its consequences. As it is presented, Paul's argument is complicated by his attempt to show that the effect of Christ's death is greater than that of Adam's disobedience. This interferes, to some extent, with his parallelism. In the conclusion, however, the obscurity is banished and everything is carefully balanced. Thus, in v. 18, the meaning of δικαιωματος is given by the parallelism with παρανομιας and this is confirmed in v. 19 by the correspondence of υπακοης (obedience) with παρακοης (disobedience). Therefore, although in v. 16 δικαιωμα is used in the sense of to declare righteous, i.e., it denotes a kind of sentence of acquittal, here in v. 18, it means to make righteous, it is an act of righteousness. Christ's act of righteousness was his obedience in his sacrificial death on the Cross in accordance with the will of God.

Thus it is clear that Paul saw the Cross as a sacrifice made voluntarily in obedience to God's will, on behalf of men, in connection with their sins and in furtherance of God's saving purpose. But nothing specific

6. See appendix.

is said about the nature of this sacrifice nor of how it is effective. These things seem to belong to the basic knowledge of the faith which Paul assumes that his readers already have. This is not an unreasonable assumption for Paul was writing to the converted, even although in many cases they had fallen by the wayside.

The sacrificial theme does not exhaust Paul's treatment of the nature and effect of the death of Christ. The idea of redemption is to be found, especially in the letters to the Galatians and the Corinthians. Man is a slave to the law (Galatians 3:9) and, because of his inability to fulfil the law, is under God's curse (Galatians 3:13). To redeem him, Christ took his place and became 'the accursed one' (Galatians 3:13). To-day, much of the reality has gone out of the idea, but it must be seen in the light of the conditions in Paul's day when slavery was a very real experience and redemption was the one thing hoped for above all else.

One theme in particular, runs through all Paul's thinking on the death of Christ and that is its vicarious nature. Despite the varying imagery used, the aim is to communicate the basic idea that all this was 'for us'. Paul wants to show that the sinless one took the place of sinners. "He takes the place of the ungodly (Romans 5:6), of the enemies of God (Romans 5:10), of the world opposed to God (II Corinthians 5:19). In this way, the boundless omnipotence of God's all-inclusive love reveals itself (Romans 5:8). Christ's vicarious death is the actualisation of God's love."⁷

When Paul is talking about the Atonement he is at great pains to state what has happened because of the death of Christ, but he is not nearly so concerned with how it came about. The important thing for him is the fact of

7. J. Jeremias, "The Central Message of the New Testament", pp. 38-39.

what has happened and any working out of method is largely incidental. Nevertheless D.E.H. Whiteley claims that Paul did have a theory of the *modus operandi* of the Atonement.⁸ He maintains that "if St. Paul can be said to hold a theory of the modus operandi, it is best described as one of salvation through participation : Christ shared all our experience, sin excepted, including death, in order that we, by virtue of our solidarity with him, might share his life."⁹ Whiteley supports this contention by arguing that Paul understood salvation in Christ against the background of what can be called the 'presupposition of the first fruits'. When, in Romans 9:16, he says, 'If the first portion of the dough is consecrated, so is the whole lump', he means that the sanctification of the first portion does not merely symbolise the future sanctification of the whole lump, but actually accomplishes it. This is the basic idea behind Paul's theory of the working of the Atonement - what Christ did in his own life, he accomplishes for us in ours. So, when he says that 'as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be brought to life' (I Corinthians 15:22), Paul really means it. He takes the view that, as there is this definite unity between Adam and the rest of mankind in that they share human life, which must end in death, there is also a unity with Christ because he shared in human life. In stating this unity between Christ and man two points must be made. Firstly, that there was one side of human life which Christ did not share, in that he knew no sin (I Corinthians 5:21), and secondly, that although we share in his experience, it is he alone who creates it.¹⁰

8. D.E.H. Whiteley, "The Theology of St. Paul", pp. 130-137.

9. D.E.H. Whiteley, "The Theology of St. Paul", p. 130.

10. D.E.H. Whiteley, "The Theology of St. Paul", p. 133.

The idea of participation can also be seen behind three of Paul's great passages on the purpose of the death of Christ, Romans 8:3-4, II Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 3:16.

In Romans 8:3-4 Paul tells us that God sent his own Son "in a form like that of our sinful nature, and as a sacrifice for sin (καὶ ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτίας) he has passed judgement against sin in that very nature". Whiteley argues here that because of his solidarity with the human race and his involvement in the human situation, Christ took upon himself three things :-

1. The ability to suffer physical pain.
2. The ability to suffer, in a non-physical sense, as a result of the sins of others.
3. The strain and agony of temptations brought upon him by the sins of others.

In these three respects, but without yielding to sin himself, Christ took upon himself human nature. He did this and endured the suffering that, by sharing in the complete experience of human life, we might be enabled to share in his, and that what happened in him, the first portion, might also happen in the case of the human beings who constitute the lump, that is the Church.

On the interpretation of ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτίας, Whiteley rejects the conclusion of Sanday and Headlam¹¹ that it refers to the 'sin-offering', pointing out that, while this meaning is found in LXX, it can also mean 'to deal with sin', a meaning which fits the context here.¹² What Paul is really saying is that Christ took upon himself human nature, though without sin, in order to deal with sin.

II Corinthians 5:21 is a verse which is often used to support the substitutionary view of the Atonement.

11. Sanday and Headlam, Romans (ICC), p. 193.

12. D.E.H. Whiteley, The Theology of St. Paul, p. 136.

While such an interpretation is possible, the verse can also mean that Christ took upon himself, in the providence of God, human nature which, though not essentially sinful, is sinful in actual practice. Whiteley claims that this is the preferred point of view because it is in harmony with the thought of II Corinthians 5:14-15, "For the love of Christ leaves us no choice, when once we have reached the conclusion that one man died for all and therefore all mankind has died. His purpose in dying for all was that man, while still in life, should cease to live for themselves, and should live for him, who for their sake, died and was raised to life."¹³

In Galatians 3:13-14, Paul has described the whole human race in terms that are strictly applicable to the Jews alone. He is anxious to show that all human beings are under a curse. But so too is Christ, in that he was hanged on a tree, and in this way is identified with men. Through this identification Christ has delivered us from the curse. Paul does not say how this identification achieves deliverance, but Whiteley suggests¹⁴ that the thought lying behind this verse is that Christ, who is by nature God's Son and free from sin, became what we are by nature, that is accursed, that we might achieve, by grace, the freedom from curse which is his by nature.

The language of participation is also found in several places in Paul's letters¹⁵ and while this idea does not exhaust his thought on the death of Christ, it is the one Paul uses to describe how that death has the effect it does. His other statements are statements of the fact of the Atonement and not attempts at explanation, as these are.

13. D.E.H. Whiteley, "The Theology of St. Paul", p. 137.

14. D.E.H. Whiteley, "The Theology of St. Paul", p. 137.

15. Rom. 6:5; 14:9; I Cor. 15:20-21; II Cor. 8:9;
Eph. 2:15; I Thess. 5:10.

It is clear that Paul bases his teaching on what he had received. This leaves us with a problem, for Paul himself is our earliest written source. It is, however, possible to pick out from what has been handed down to us, part of this older tradition. One of the major problems facing the primitive church at first was how to reconcile their belief in Jesus as the Christ with the fact of his death. The cross was a symbol of ignominy and he who was hanged on a tree was under God's curse.¹⁶ How then, could he whom God had acknowledged in the resurrection, have died under God's curse? Jeremias claims that the answer lies in the archaic confession in I Corinthians 15:3, 'Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures'. He sees in this a reference back to Isaiah 53, "the only chapter in the Old Testament that contains a statement corresponding to 'he died for our sins'."¹⁷ He would support this interpretation with the reminder that none of Paul's references to Isaiah 53 are original. "All without exception are drawn from pre-Pauline tradition", as is shown by style and vocabulary.

This raises the question of whether or not the early Church did find the answer to its problem in the concept of the Suffering Servant. Until recently it was accepted that it did in the early days, although later the title fell out of favour. Now this point of view has been challenged¹⁸ and the assertion has been made that the Servant concept does not appear in the teaching of Jesus nor in the preaching of the early Church.

In support of the traditional view that the first Christians saw in Jesus the fulfilment of the prophecy in the Servant Songs of Deutero-Isaiah it has been argued that Acts gives strong proof of a Servant Christology in the use of the word *παῖς* in 3:13; 3:26; 4:27 and 4:30.

16. Deuteronomy, 21:23.

17. J. Jeremias, "The Central Message of the New Testament", pp. 39-40.

18. M.D. Hooker, "Jesus and the Servant",

The impression given in these passages is that $\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma$ is being used as a title for Jesus. In translation $\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma$ is capable of being rendered 'child', as in A.V., or 'servant', as in RSV. It is accepted, even by the critics of the traditional view,¹⁹ that 'servant' is the correct meaning of the word, but there is divergence of opinion on the significance of this translation.

$\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma$ $\tau\omicron\upsilon$ $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ is the LXX translation of Deutero-Isaiah's term ebed Yahweh. It would seem that here Jesus is being identified with Isaiah's Servant. In arguing against such an interpretation Miss Hooker points out that in Acts the title is first used of David, suggesting that no particular reference is intended.²⁰ The use of the title is intended to emphasise that the Church saw Jesus standing in the succession of David and the prophets. Because of the essential Jewish nature of the title it was one that would naturally disappear with the growth of the Greek-speaking Church. It is admitted that in Acts 3:13 there are other reminiscences of the fourth Servant Song²¹ which could indicate that the servant concept is in mind, but it is argued that it is the use of the title 'Servant' that has suggested the Servant Songs, rather than the identification of Jesus with the Servant leading to the use of the title. On the other side it is argued²² that the use of $\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma$ to describe David simply confirms the meaning of 'servant' as against 'child' and indicates that $\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma$ is a title of honour. Its use in Matthew 12:18, cf. Mark 1:11, and the reference in Acts 3:13ff to Isaiah 52:13ff, are held to show that the servant passages are reflected here. This point of view is also held by Cullmann.²³ He claims that "this is probably the oldest known solution to the

19. M.D. Hooker, "Jesus and the Servant", p. 108.

20. M.D. Hooker, "Jesus and the Servant", pp. 109-110.

21. The use of $\epsilon\delta\omicron\varsigma\alpha\epsilon\varsigma$, $\pi\alpha\rho\epsilon\delta\omega\kappa\alpha\tau\epsilon$, and $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\nu$ see M.D. Hooker, "Jesus and the Servant", p. 110.

22. J. Jeremias, "The Servant of God", p. 86.

23. O. Cullmann, "The Christology of the New Testament", p. 73.

Christological problem." The account of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch²⁴ is held to show that Jesus was at that time explicitly identified with the Servant. Miss Hooker admits that in this story there is a definite connection between the Servant Song in Isaiah 53 and Jesus, but argues that because it is found in the mouth of an unconverted Gentile it cannot be taken as evidence that this passage was central in the Christian preaching of the time.²⁵ It is, nonetheless obvious that Philip was not unfamiliar with the passage and the way that he immediately began to teach the eunuch about Jesus, 'beginning with this scripture', would indicate that Philip found it natural to connect Jesus with the Servant.

It seems most likely that, in the early days, there were those in the Church who did see Jesus as the Servant. In later times this title fell out of favour, very possibly because of its essential Jewish nature which would not have had so much appeal in an increasingly Hellenistic Church. But even this argues in favour of its authenticity. In Acts we find the idea only in the speeches of Peter or in prayers of the Church offered in Peter's presence. It would seem unlikely that Luke, who does not use the word elsewhere in the Acts, would use it in his accounts of Peter's speeches and in the prayers, unless he was drawing on ancient tradition. C.H. Dodd²⁶ has shown that the case can be made that Luke did use ancient material in the compilation of his accounts of the preaching of the early Church. Because the Servant concept appears only in these accounts it is more likely to be genuine.

Since Paul is so concerned with the death of Christ we would expect the Servant idea to be important for him, yet

24. Acts 8:26ff.

25. M.D. Hooker, "Jesus and the Servant", p. 113.

26. C.H. Dodd, "The Apostolic Preaching and its Development", pp 17-20.

there are few actual quotations from the Servant Songs in his letters. But though the actual quotations are few, there are numerous indications of Paul's familiarity with the Servant concept. W.D. Davies²⁷ notes in this connection Romans 4:24-25; 8:3, I Corinthians 11:23ff; 15:3 Ephesians 5:2, and Philippians 2:5ff. He tabulates the parallels between Philippians 2:5f and the Servant passages as follows :-

Isa. 52:13 - He shall be exalted Phil. 2:9 God hath highly
exalted him

Isa. 53:7 - He was oppressed, Phil. 2:8 - He humbled
yet he opened not his mouth himself

Isa. 53:8 - ἵνα ἵς θανάτου (LXX) Phil. 2:8 - ὑπεκτός μέχρι θανάτου

Isa. 53:12 - He hath poured Phil. 2:6 - ἑαυτοῦ ἐκένωσεν
out his soul unto death

Compare also :-

Isa. 45:23 - That unto me every Phil. 2:10- That at the
knee shall bow, every tongue name of Jesus every knee
shall swear. should bow and
every tongue should confess.

In the light of this Davies assumes that Paul identified Jesus with the Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah. Cullmann²⁸ argues from the quotation from Isaiah 53:12 in Romans 4:25, and the reference to the one 'who knew no sin' (cf. Isaiah 53:6) in II Corinthians 5:21, that the concept of the Servant was known to Paul. This is surely confirmed by the idea of vicarious suffering present in the three great Christological passages in Paul's letters - I Corinthians 15:3, Philippians 2:7 and Romans 5:12f.

I Corinthians 15:3 contains an ancient creed which Paul

27. W.D. Davies, "Paul and Rabbinic Judaism", p. 274.

28. O. Cullmann, "The Christology of the New Testament,"
p. 76.

received through tradition. Its first statement lays it down that 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures'. Although it is possible that the 'scriptures' refer to the Old Testament as a whole, Cullmann has no doubt that Isaiah 53 is in mind here. The fact that Paul is quoting an existing confession confirms the existence of a Servant Christology in the early days of the Church.

If, as is likely, Philippians 2:6-11 is a quotation from an ancient hymn of the Church, the existence of the Servant Christology in the early Church is further confirmed.

In Romans, 5:12ff Paul has formulated his own Christological statement. Romans 5:19 shows clearly that he had in mind the Servant of Isaiah. The words 'by one man's obedience many will be made righteous' is a reference to Isaiah 53:11, 'My servant shall make many to be accounted righteous'.

In this way it is argued that Paul was familiar with the Servant concept, although he did not make much direct use of it. Cullmann²⁹ suggests that this is because the title 'Servant' explains primarily the earthly work of Jesus, but that Paul's Christology is more interested in the work which Christ fulfills as the Lord exalted at the right hand of God.

Again these arguments are challenged by Miss Hooker.³⁰ The links with the Servant Songs in Romans 4:25; 8:32, II Corinthians 5:21, and Ephesians 5:2 are rejected on the grounds that the similarity of language is coincidental. The words used by Paul are held to be the natural ones to use and therefore do not have any particular theological significance in the sense that they might indicate that Paul could have had the Servant in mind. As far as I Corinthians 15 is concerned, it is suggested that all Paul is saying is

29. O. Cullmann, "The Christology of the New Testament", pp. 77-78.

30. M.D. Hooker, "Jesus and the Servant", pp. 116-123.

that Christ's death fulfilled the Old Testament scriptures in general. The supposed connection in Philippians 2:6-11 is likewise rejected. It is pointed out that in LXX πᾶς is always used in the Servant Songs, never δούλος, the word here and that there is no linguistic evidence for regarding the words αὐτὸν ἔκρυψε . . . μέχρι θανάτου as a reference to Isaiah 53:11. The general theme of the passage is admitted to sum up the idea of Isaiah 52:53. "This, however, does not mean that the concept is derived from these chapters; for it is both a succinct summary of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and also of the early preaching of the Church as portrayed in the first chapters of Acts. The suggestion has been made that this passage is not originally Pauline, but incorporates an early Christian hymn : This would link it closely with the early community. Whoever composed the passage, however, it is possible to understand it, not as an interpretation based upon Isaiah 53, but as a summary of what actually happened".³¹ Two things can be said here. Firstly, as we have seen above,³² there are grounds for supposing that in the early preaching of the Church, Jesus was seen as the Servant. Secondly, although it is possible that the passage could simply have explained 'what actually happened', it has not been demonstrated that it does. Equally, while it is possible that Paul could have used similar language coincidentally in the various passages, it is also true that he could have had the Servant concept in mind. Miss Hooker's conclusion on Paul's use, or lack of use, of the Servant concept would be acceptable were there not evidence to suggest that the idea was known to the early Church. But, because it was, it is more natural to assume in the light of the evidence that he was familiar with it, and while he did not make great use of it, he was influenced by it.

31. M.D. Hooker, "Jesus and the Servant", p. 121.

32. see p. 72.

Jesus' own understanding of his death

One thing that cannot be doubted is that Jesus gave consideration to the possibility of a violent death. Although much of modern scholarship is critical of the direct announcements of the passion (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33 and parallels), they cannot be treated simply as inventions of the early Church. There is a core in these sayings which antedates the crucifixion and belongs to a pre-Hellenistic tradition. This is confirmed by the play on words which becomes apparent if Mark 9:31 is retranslated into Aramaic.³³ It should also be noted that these sayings always refer back to the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. They are also closely connected with their context. To say that the announcement in Mark 8:31 is invention is to imply the same of Peter's designation as Satan, something which not even the most radical works assert.

As well as these direct announcements there are other indirect references to his death in the words of Jesus.

(a) The Eucharistic Words. The words 'for many', or something similar occur in all the versions of the institution of the Lord's Supper (Mark 14:24 'for many'; Matthew 26:28 'on behalf of many'; I Corinthians 11:24 and Luke 22:19,29 'for you'). It is likely that Mark's 'for many', being a semitism, is older than the 'for you' of Paul and Luke. This, then, is a piece of ancient tradition taking us back to the first decade after Jesus' death since it is likely that Paul received his formulation of the Eucharistic Words at Antioch in the early forties.³⁴ It is likely that there is a reference here to Isaiah 53. 'Many' is the keyword in that passage.³⁵ Jesus' choice

33. J. Jeremias, "The Central Message of the New Testament", p. 43, "God will surrender the man (bar nasa) in the hands of men (b' ne nasa).

34. J. Jeremias, "The Eucharistic Words of Jesus", p. 188.

35. cf. G. Von Rad, "The Message of the Prophets", p. 224,

Note 18. c.k. Barrett, "The Background of Mark 10.45", in New Testament Essays, Ed. A.J.B. Higgins, p 7.

of this phrase 'for many' would seem to indicate that he found the meaning of his death in terms of the Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah.

(b) Luke 22:35-38. Here again, Jesus seems to interpret his death in terms of Isaiah 53. The disciples are warned that the friendship and popularity that they enjoy will soon turn to hatred. Where, before, they could rely on many friends for food and shelter, now they will even have to buy swords for protection. This passage is likely to be original since it shows the disciples' complete misunderstanding of Jesus' meaning. He is really announcing the start of apocalyptic tribulation, but they take it as immediate persecution.

(c) Luke 23:54 "Father forgive them". Although this is an addition to the oldest text,³⁶ it is one that is based on an ancient tradition, as both the form and the context show, (a tradition which goes back to an address to God as Abba). In these words Jesus gives his own interpretation of his death. They seem to take the place of the normal expiatory vow and indicate that Jesus saw the atoning virtue of his death applying, not to himself, but to others. Again this would seem to refer back to Isaiah 53 and, in particular, to v. 12, 'he made intercession for the transgressors'.

(d) Mark 10:45. The saying about ransom. "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." This is the saying which is

36. J. Jeremias, "The Central Message of the New Testament", p. 48, "The Greek New Testament", Ed. Aland. Black, Metzger, Wikgren. Luke 23:43 - ὁ υἱος τοῦ θεοῦ ἔλεγεν, Πάτερ ἄφες αὐτοῖς, οὐ γὰρ οἶδαν τι ποιοῦσιν omit P⁷⁵, X^{avid}, B, D*, W, Θ, 0124, 1241 included (with some textual variation) X*, A, C, D^b, K, L, X, Δ, Π, Ψ, 0117, 0250 p.⁷⁵ (early 3rd Century) is the oldest of these MSS.

normally held to give the strongest indication of the link that Jesus saw between himself and the Servant.

Luke's version of this saying illustrates Jesus' service by waiting at table and not in redemption.³⁷ Because of this difference it has been suggested that Mark's version is not authentic, and that the second half of the verse has been added to a genuine saying of Jesus. There are four basic grounds for doubting the genuineness of Mark's version of the saying about service.

- (i) The second half of the verse, the saying about ransom, is out of harmony with the context.
- (ii) The use of ἡλθεν implies a date after the completion of Jesus' life and work.
- (iii) λυτρεν and its associated ideas are not found elsewhere in Jesus' teaching.
- (iv) The original form of the saying is found in Luke 22:27 and Mark 10:45 has been recast to reflect later Pauline views.

In answer it can be said :-

- (i) If Jesus was going to refer to his own serving as the justification for the rule he has just given to the disciples, then it would only be natural to refer to the self-giving which would be the culmination of his service.

37. J. Jeremias, "The Central Message of the New Testament", p. 46, Mark 10:45 (Matthew 20:28) - 'The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.' Luke 22:37 - 'Which is greater, the one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves.'

- (ii) ἡθεὺς can look back to Jesus' coming from God. It need not imply that his whole life was in the past.
- (iii) Though λυτρον itself does not occur elsewhere, there are other things which convey a similar idea, e.g. in the saying about the cup (Mark 14:36).
- (iv) Luke 22:27 bears the marks of Gentile-Christian influence. There the context has been Hellenised, while Mark 10:45 is strongly Palestinian in expression.³⁸ It is therefore by no means certain that Luke 22:27 is the preferred form of the saying. Indeed, it could be an independent saying altogether.³⁹

As far as any Pauline influence is concerned, Taylor⁴⁰ points out that Lagrange has noted⁴¹ that, not only the redemptive death is known to Paul, but also the thought of service unto death (Philippians 2:7f). He asks if Jesus has furnished the theme for Pauline developments or has Mark summarised in a word the theology of Paul, in order to attribute it to Jesus? He holds that the former hypothesis is the probable one. Further, to deny the genuineness of the saying on the grounds that its ideas are too Pauline, is to forget that Paulinism is rooted in primitive Christianity.⁴²

- 38. Buchsel, TWNT, iv, p. 343. J. Jeremias, TWNT, v, p. 711f. note 474. J. Jeremias, "The Central Message of the New Testament", pp. 46-47.
- 39. C.E.B. Cranfield, "The Gospel According to St. Mark", pp. 343-344.
- 40. V. Taylor, "The Gospel According to St. Mark", p. 446.
- 41. Lagrange, "Evangile selon Saint Marc", pp. 281-283.
- 42. V. Taylor, "The Gospel According to St. Mark", p. 446.

It would seem, on the evidence, that the balance of probability is that the saying is a genuine one. But even if the authenticity of the saying is challenged, it must surely be admitted that behind it, as behind Luke 22:27, there lies a saying in which Jesus spoke of himself as a servant.⁴³

The question is then whether this servant can be identified with the Servant of the Lord in Deutero-Isaiah. The traditional view is very much in favour of this identification. The 'many', for whom Jesus gives his life as a ransom, is again held to be a reference to Isaiah 53.⁴⁴

The word *λειτουργον* is also held to contain a reference to Isaiah 53. In LXX *λειτουργον* usually = *kōper*, but here its meaning is underlined by *'āšām* (= guilt-offering).⁴⁵ *'āšām* is used in Isaiah 53:10 - 'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin. It is possible that Jesus had this passage in mind (the use of *διακονεῖν* could point to a reference to the Servant and, as we have seen *ἀντι πολλῶν* looks like an echo of the repeated *rabbîm* in Isaiah 53:11f.) but it has to be admitted that the meaning of Jesus' vicarious sufferings and his giving of himself as a *λειτουργον* cannot be read off from any Old Testament passage, but must be understood from the actual history of his passion.

Arguing against the traditional view, M.D. Hooker⁴⁶ points out that *διακονεῖω*, which is used to express the idea of service, is not used in LXX, and elsewhere, in

43. J. Jeremias, "The Central Message of the New Testament", p. 46.

44. C.E.B. Cranfield, "The Gospel according to St. Mark", p. 342. J. Jeremias, *TWNT*, vi, pp. 536-545.
V. Taylor, "The Gospel according to St. Mark", p. 444.

45. C.E.B. Cranfield, "The Gospel according to St. Mark", p. 342.

46. M.D. Hooker, "Jesus and the Servant", pp. 74-79.
C.K. Barrett, "The Background of Mark 10.45", in *New Testament Essays*, Ed. R.J.B. Higgins, p. 4.

Classical Greek and in the New Testament, it denotes domestic service. It is, therefore, not likely to be used where the idea is one of service of God. The context in Mark 10:45 is one of worldly rule and service, contrasting the rule of the Gentiles with what is to be the accepted order in the Kingdom, where service will be given by those whom the world would expect to be served. There is no immediate connection between this service and the kind exercised by the Servant of Deutero-Isaiah, who is primarily the Servant of God and not of other men.

Miss Hooker also points out that the service is only linked with suffering in the second, disputed half of the verse, although as we have seen above, its authenticity can be maintained. The important words here are λυτρον and πολυς. The noun λυτρον is only used in LXX in the technical sense of 'purchase money' and never as a sacrificial term. The verb λυτροω is used more figuratively in the sense of the redemption of the people by God, from the bondage in Egypt⁴⁷ and, in the prophets, especially Deutero-Isaiah, of the work which God accomplished for his people⁴⁸ in the redemption from exile, the Second Exodus. The primary thought of God as Redeemer is of his historical activity, either in the past, in the deliverance from Egypt, or, in the future, at the return. There is no thought of the payment of any equivalent in this use of λυτροω. What is important is the result and not the method of God's action.

If, as Miss Hooker admits,⁴⁹ Jesus drew from the language of Deutero-Isaiah in his teaching and understood

47. Ex. 6:6; 15:3; 16, Deut. 7:8; 9:26; 13:5; 15:15; 21:8; 24:18.

48. Hos. 7:13; 13:14, Mic. 4:10; 6:4, Zeph. 3:1, Zech. 10:8, Isa. 35:9; 41:14; 43:1; 43:14; 44:22-24; 51:11; 52:3; 62:12; 63:9.

49. M.D. Hooker, "Jesus and the Servant", p. 77.

a connection between his own mission and the New Era announced by that prophet, then it would seem probable that he would also connect his own death with this source, i.e. the $\lambda\upsilon\tau\rho\omicron\nu$ in Mark 10:45 = 'āšām in Isaiah 53:10. Miss Hooker contends though, that there is no evidence for such a connection, seeing $\lambda\upsilon\tau\rho\omicron\nu$ as the redemption of a person or thing by purchase while 'āšām is the repayment of something wrongfully withheld, together with a guilt-offering by means of expiation. The one is a business transaction, the other a sacrifice for sin. Even so, it is allowed that $\lambda\upsilon\tau\rho\omicron\nu$ can be linked with the general theme of Deutero-Isaiah - the expected redemption of Israel by God. If Jesus was thinking of Deutero-Isaiah when he said that the Son of Man came to give his life as a ransom for many, then he was linking this action with the decisive event which would redeem Israel. This means that, as it is always God who redeems his people, the Son of Man is God's instrument. But since it is always the result of such redemption that is important, to link Jesus with the Deutero-Isaiah concept in this way does not tell us very much about the reason for the redemption nor the method by which it is to be accomplished. This is, then, a much wider concept than the Servant theme, with the emphasis on death and deliverance rather than sin and suffering. Although the idea of the Suffering Servant is included in Mark 10:45 there is much else besides.

$\pi\omicron\lambda\upsilon\varsigma$ occurs three times in Isaiah 53:11f.

- (a) By his knowledge the righteous Servant shall justify many and bear their iniquities.
- (b) The many will be given to him as his portion.
- (c) He bore the sin of many.

Apart from the use of the word itself there is no connection here either in thought or language with Mark 10:45. Although in Greek $\pi\omicron\lambda\upsilon\varsigma$ is an exclusive term, its Hebrew and Aramaic equivalent could be used in an inclusive sense. Therefore in Mark 10:45 $\pi\omicron\lambda\lambda\omega\nu$ is very probably a semitism. But to interpret it in this way need

not mean that we have a reference to Isaiah 53 here. While Jesus might have had in mind the prophetic theme of universalism, such as is found in Deutero-Isaiah, Miss Hooker contends that there is no justification for assuming that he was thinking of the Servant in particular when he used this word.

H. Rashdall also expresses doubts about the link that some would trace between Mark 10:45 and Isaiah 53.⁵⁰ He prefers the Lucan form of the saying as being more in harmony with the context and the rest of Jesus' teaching. Mark's addition of the words about ransom is seen as a report coloured by the later doctrinal teaching of the Church. But even if, as we have argued, the words are genuine, Rashdall would argue that they need not refer to the Suffering Servant. He says, "the chief difficulty in the way of believing that he identified himself in any exclusive way with the Suffering Servant and thought of his death as having any vicarious efficacy, is the fact that this solitary sentence of Mark is the only trace of his having done so."⁵¹ While it is possible that Jesus could have evolved the concept of the Suffering Messiah out of Isaiah 53, Rashdall thinks this is unlikely because :-

- (i) This is the only trace of his having done so.
- (ii) Such an interpretation of Isaiah was unknown at that time.
- (iii) The idea of a Suffering Messiah is absent from the Book of Enoch and the other apocalyptic literature in which the more eschatological critics find the chief source of Jesus' Messianic conceptions.⁵²

50. H. Rashdall, "The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology", pp. 36-37.

51. H. Rashdall, "The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology", p. 36.

52. H. Rashdall, "The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology", p. 52

We have, therefore, to decide whether, in the light of these objections, we can still uphold the traditional view that Jesus did see himself as the Servant of God in terms of the Servant of Deutero-Isaiah. Miss Hooker has given very careful consideration to all the evidence advanced in favour of this theory and as a result has rejected it. While she is satisfied with this conclusion, we feel that all she has done is to show a lack of proof of a definite connection. She is satisfied that without such proof the Servant theory must fall, but it must be noted that, if she has shown that there is no proof of a connection between the teaching of Jesus and the Servant concept, she has not shown that such a connection is impossible. Now, as we have seen,⁵³ it can be argued that the early Church did think of Jesus in terms of the Suffering Servant. We have now to ask ourselves from where this idea was most likely to come? In view of the fact that the Servant concept quickly passed out of favour in the Church, we must ask whether it would have been used at all if there had not been some kind of precedent for its use. And where else could such a precedent have come from than Jesus himself? The likelihood that this was the case is further increased when we remember that the Servant concept was a feature of the preaching of Peter, who, as Cullmann has shown,⁵⁴ was the Apostle who had wanted to hear nothing of the necessity of the suffering and death of Jesus during his lifetime, and yet who, later, made it the very centre of his explanation of Jesus' earthly work. It is most unlikely that he would have done so of his own choice. It would seem that he has been subjected here to outside influences, and from whom else could they have come but Jesus himself?

Much has also been made of the fact that the concept

53. See above pp. 70-75.

54. O. Cullmann, "The Christology of the New Testament", p. 74.

of a suffering Messiah was unknown in the Judaism of Jesus' day. It must be admitted that the attempts to show that such a concept did exist have not succeeded with any certainty. But, even so, this does not mean that it would have been impossible for Jesus to have thought in such terms. All new ideas have to be conceived, and we cannot say that Jesus could not have been the first to conceive of a suffering Messiah. He did put new and different emphases on many aspects of Jewish thought about the Messiah, for example, seeing him, not as the mighty warrior king, but as the king of the heavenly kingdom. Until it is shown that Jesus could not have thought in terms of the Suffering Messiah we must admit the possibility that he did.

It would seem that the arguments against the traditional view do not really justify the conclusion that it cannot be maintained. It is true that the two sides of the argument are finely balanced, but in the light of the fact that the concept of the Servant was found in the preaching of the early Church, the scales are tipped in favour of the traditional view, and we would seem to be justified in maintaining that Jesus did speak of himself in terms of the Suffering Servant.

In all these instances, the interpretation of the Cross owes much to the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. This leads us to find four reasons for the atoning power of the death of Christ, the Servant of God.

- (i) His passion is voluntary (Isaiah 53:10).
- (ii) It is patiently undergone (v. 7).
- (iii) It is in accordance with God's will (vv. 6,10).
- (iv) He is innocent (v. 9).

In other words it is life from God and with God that is here put to death.⁵⁵

55. cf. J. Jeremias, "The Central Message of the New Testament", p. 49.

It is quite likely that such an interpretation of his death was in his mind, for, as we have seen,⁵⁶ he did see his whole mission as one of service. Jesus' aim and purpose, among other things, was to be God's representative to man so that he could bring forgiveness and be the means of reconciliation. With this idea in mind, it would be only natural for him to turn to the picture of the servant in his teaching to the disciples on the nature of his passion and death.

Traditional doctrines of the Atonement

The New Testament theories of the efficacy of the death of Christ have been the basis of the theology of the Atonement. Out of the basic New Testament material many theories have arisen.

Traditionally, there were four doctrines of the Atonement.

1. Recapitulation. The purpose of the Incarnation is to undo Adam's sin. In this treatment, great stress is laid on analogy. As it was by a woman, Eve, that sin came into the world, so it was by a woman, Mary, that Christ, the Redeemer, came into the world. And, as it was by eating the forbidden fruit that sin entered, so a tree, the Cross, must play a part in its removal. Much criticism has been levelled against this view, mainly on the ground that the supposed analogies are mere fancies.
2. Redemption. On the Cross, Christ had paid a price to the devil to redeem the captives he had acquired through Adam's sin. This idea is certainly Biblical, but where it falls down is in stretching the Biblical point of view too

56. See Chapter 3, 'God's Representative'.

far. All scripture says is that Christ 'gave his life a ransom for many'. There is no indication of to whom the ransom was given. To assume that the devil could demand a ransom is to put God under some obligation to him and to say that God could only free men on the devil's terms. But as Anselm points out, the devil is subject to God, although he may not acknowledge the fact, and therefore cannot acquire any rights over God by tempting a fellow creature to sin.

3. Christ died to show the love of God to men. However attractive this sounds, it still leaves the problem, why did Christ have to show it in this way? It is a fact, though, that most modern theologians do see the Atonement as the supreme revelation of the love of God. If this is so, the problem is why the love of God has to be shown through the Cross.
4. Christ died because it was the will of God. In the last resort, this must be true, but the bald statement must be qualified. We cannot believe that God would will what is unreasonable and, on the face of it, nothing could be more unreasonable than the death of Christ. To accept this view in its simple form means that we are saying that, to satisfy his justice, God perpetrated an act of gross injustice, punishing the one totally innocent person.

None of these traditional views is completely satisfactory. One of the first to try to improve upon them was Anselm. With his legal training, it was natural that his theory was a legal one. Basically, he argued that sin must be followed by punishment or satisfaction, for it is a breach of God's law. Satisfaction is the voluntary offering of compensation; punishment is involuntarily

suffered when satisfaction is refused. As sin is a subtraction from God's honour, equivalent satisfaction must be given or the appropriate punishment meted out. But sin is infinitely grave, therefore infinite satisfaction is required, a thing which no man can offer. The impossible situation is that the debt incurred by sin is so great that only God himself can repay it, but this debt is owed to God by man. Hence a God-man is needed. Thus Anselm explains the need for the Incarnation. Further, the God-man must be born of a virgin to be free from original sin. Being sinless, he does not need to die. Therefore, by his death he acquired merit more than sufficient to repay the debt. This infinite merit must, for the sake of justice, be awarded. But the Son needed nothing and was, therefore, able to transfer the merit, and the reward, to sinful man. So men were enabled to repay their debt to God and receive the reward of being restored to him. Since the merit acquired by Christ exceeds the debt, being infinite, while only a finite number of men were restored, there is something left to be accorded to God as satisfaction.

Two main criticisms can be offered against Anselm's theory. It is hard to see how God could derive satisfaction from the sufferings of Christ if we contend that he is just. Neither can we see how men, even through a super-human representative, can give anything to God that is not already his.

Abelard based his ideas on a religion of indifference. In this God is therefore completely above all the opposition which mankind raises against him. Christ, therefore, did not achieve anything on the Cross, but merely demonstrated, albeit in a dramatic way, how God is disposed to sinners. The Cross is nothing more than, 'an overwhelming announcement of God's love, which in face of sin, under the most terrible suffering because of sin, holds its own as unqualified love and thereby wins our unshakeable confidence.'⁵⁷ The

57. K. Heim, "Jesus the World's Perfecter", p. 85 quoting Althaus.

issue now becomes one of how forgiveness could be made creditable to men. K. Heim,⁵⁸ criticises the idea that Christ died merely to tell and to demonstrate this eternal truth to us. Pointing to the Passion Story in the Gospels, he says that, "one cannot help wondering was this 'baptism' of which Jesus was so afraid till it was accomplished, was this deepest humiliation and dishonouring of the Son of God before all the world really necessary? Why did God need blood if his only concern was to demonstrate something that was already a fact without this blood? Do not all the hints which Jesus gave his disciples before his Passion show that the issue here was infinitely more than a demonstration that here a decision was made in which the destiny of the whole world was at stake? Under the impression of the Passion of Jesus, we are made to realise that, if we sinful men think that the forgiveness of sins is an inevitable consequence of God's essence, and that therefore, the crucifixion of Jesus was only a demonstration of this inevitability, then we have trespassed beyond our competence. After every serious lapse, our conscience tells us that the god of the state of indifference or of the forgiving love, from whom we have deduced the forgiveness of our sins with so much ease, is a product of our own reflection in which our frightened conscience finds no rest. Here again, as in all the forms of the idealistic doctrine of the Atonement, we have ourselves forgiven our own sins indirectly by means of a self-created idea of God."⁵⁹

The fact that such satisfaction as God gained came from the willing surrender of Christ to the will of God gave rise to the Ethical Satisfaction theories, such as that of McLeod Campbell. From the beginning Campbell insists that

58. K. Heim, "Jesus the World's Perfecter", p. 85ff.

59. K. Heim, "Jesus, the World's Perfecter", p. 86.

the Atonement must be seen in the light of what it does. What then does it seek to do? His answer is that it attempts to build a bridge over the gulf between God and men. Christ could do this because of his perfect love for both man and God which made him one with both. It is this love that moves him to intercede for us with that "oneness of mind with the Father, which, towards man, took the form of condemnation of sin" and which "in the Son's dealings with the Father in relation to our sins takes the form of a perfect confession of our sins." Campbell goes on to add that "this perfect confession must have been a perfect Amen in humanity to the judgement of God on the sin of man."⁶⁰ In this way, by making a perfect repentance for sin, Christ bears and absorbs the punishment of sin. The suffering he endures in doing this is vicarious and expiatory, but it is not penal. It is the atonement for sin rather than a punishment of sin. Indeed, Campbell goes further, arguing that it is the holiness and love revealed in Christ's sufferings that save and not the suffering themselves. This, in turn, means that the suffering can no longer be seen as a punishment, but show the suffering of God's heart. The important element in Christ's sacrifice is his obedience. It is this, vicariously offered, which enables God to forgive all sin. The basis of Campbell's theory is vicarious penitence. But how can one person feel penitence for another? Indeed, we have to ask how can a sinless being experience a feeling of penitence at all?

The Atonement To-day

When we turn to the task of attempting to re-state the doctrine of the Atonement in terms acceptable to to-day, there are certain things we must bear in mind. All the theories, both old and new, have one thing in common - they

60. McLeod Campbell, "The Nature of the Atonement", 4th Ed.
p. 136.

have all arisen out of men's experience. It is precisely because they have arisen in this way that they are in some way deficient. We are dealing here with the profundities of God's nature and will, things that can never be fully understood for they go far beyond the capacity of man's finite mind. We must also remember that these experiences which form the ground of the various theories cannot always be expressed adequately in words. Indeed, the whole experience of Atonement is a growing one. "To a Christian the Atonement must mean more in the closing years of life than it did at first experience."⁶¹ The fault of the old theories is not that they are false, but that they are inadequate for us to-day. The theory of the Atonement has to be thought out by each generation in terms of its own concepts and ideas.

Bearing this in mind, we can now turn to the task of attempting to produce a theory which will be acceptable to our generation. It is not generally disputed that the Atonement is the supreme revelation of the love of God. This, is perhaps, the one point on which most modern theologians agree. Where the disagreement comes in is when they attempt to show why it was necessary for the love of God to be shown in this way. It could be argued that, since it is in God's nature to forgive, there was no real need for the Cross to make forgiveness possible. To say this, is to contradict Christian teaching over the centuries. The formulation of an explanation of the need of the Cross must be our central task, even though we can never hope to reach a full understanding of this.

We shall now look briefly at some of the more modern attempts at re-statement of the Atonement.

Aulen In his book 'Christus Victor', Gustaf Aulen grappled with the whole problem of the Atonement.

61. T.H. Hughes, "The Atonement", p. 307.

He recognises three main views :-

1. The objective view. God is the object of Christ's Atoning work and is reconciled to man by the way in which Christ satisfied his demand for justice.
2. The subjective view. By his death, Christ changed the hearts of men and not God.
3. The classic view. God in Christ has won in the Cross a victory over the powers of evil. This view is distinct from the objective view in that in it God himself carried through the atoning work from start to finish. On the objective view, on the other hand, God initiates the action by giving his Son, but he then becomes the object of the action for Christ, acting on behalf of men, brings about a change in God's attitude to them. The classic view differs from the subjective as well for, in it, Christ really does change the situation and not just the individual's way of thinking about it.

Aulen maintains that the classic view was the one held by the church for the first thousand years until it was set aside by Anselm. He contends that the advantage of this view is that it does not separate the Incarnation from the Atonement. The God who became incarnate in Jesus Christ is active in the Atonement and not passive. Our problem to-day is to see how such a victory over the powers of evil takes place and how it could affect us and therefore have meaning for us in our lives. Even if we make allowances for the fact that missionaries have found that it is this element in the Christian faith that has proved most attractive, it is hard to see how this conflict with the demonic powers can have much meaning in the scientific atmosphere of the twentieth century. One major difficulty arises out of the passage to which Aulen turns for Biblical authority for his theory. It is now recognised that there

is a place for 'demythology' in New Testament study. The 'principalities and powers' of Colossians 2:15 (cf. I Corinthians 15:24f.) are more often than not interpreted in a non-mythological way to-day, but it is on a literal interpretation of them that Aulen's theory depends.

Vincent Taylor Dr. Taylor bases his ideas on the Atonement on a study of the Passion sayings of Jesus as they are seen against the background of his teaching as a whole and the Old Testament teaching on concepts such as the Kingdom of God, the Messianic Hope, the Son of Man, the Suffering Servant and Sacrifice. He concludes that Jesus saw his sufferings as fulfilling God's will and that he believed that by his death he would establish a new covenant relation between God and man. He achieved this by identifying himself with men in love and as the Suffering Servant voicing their penitence, obedience and submission to the will of God.

These beliefs of Jesus can also be found in the teaching of the primitive church. At first the death of Jesus was seen simply as the fulfilment of the Suffering Servant prophecy, but later the fact was grasped that in the Cross we have the final revelation of the love of God.

Dr. Taylor goes on to trace the development of Christian thought about the death of Christ in the New Testament letters. He sees Paul approaching from the standpoint of sin and law with the belief that God was active in Christ to redeem. The Cross is the ground of man's justification and reconciliation with God because there God's righteousness is revealed and made effective. In love Christ made himself one with sinners and suffered on their behalf. Here Paul comes near to substitution but all the time he saw Christ as no more than man's representative. John saw the Cross in the light of the incarnation. The

death of Christ is the supreme proof of the love of God and again has sacrificial character.

Christ is seen as our advocate with the Father and himself the expiation for the sin of the world.

From his study of the New Testament evidence, Dr. Taylor draws certain conclusions⁶² which are set out here in full.

1. The Atonement is the work of God in restoring sinful men to fellowship with himself and in establishing his Kingdom; it is the reconciliation of men and the world to God.
2. The Atonement is also the final proof of the love of God, both in itself, as a disclosure of his nature, and in the form it takes for man's renewal and recovery.
3. The Atonement is accomplished in the work of Christ, in that he reveals the love of God in his redeeming activity, and because of his life, death, resurrection and exaltation provides all things necessary for man's salvation.
4. This work of Christ is vicarious; it is wrought on behalf of man, doing for them what they are not able to do for themselves.
5. It is also representative. As the Son of Man, Christ acts on our behalf. He takes our side and becomes one with us, enduring the consequences of our sins, and expressing to the Father the obedience we ought to render, the penitence we ought to feel, and the submission to the judgement of God we ought to make but which, in each case, we are unable to offer.

62. V. Taylor, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation", p. 193-194.

6. Christ's ministry is also sacrificial, not as a sin or guilt offering, but because he poured out his life in willing surrender for men, in order that they may freely consent to all that he does for them, and thus make him the means of their penitent and believing approach to God.
7. The Atonement is consummated when, through self-union with Christ, men accept and embrace all that he has done on their behalf, when they make his self-offering their own through personal trust in him, sacramental communion with him, and sacrificial living in the fellowship of his sufferings.
8. While the Atonement is personal, in that it meets the spiritual needs of individual men, it is also communal, in that it is manifest in the life of the divine society which is the Church, and in the renewed world which it makes possible.

H.R. Mackintosh⁶³ For H.R. Mackintosh one of the important things about the Atonement was that it must have cost something to God. He lays great emphasis on the fact that the Atonement must mean and cost something to God over and above man's offering of penitence. He recognises that God does gain a measure of satisfaction from Christ's sacrifice, which comes from his obedient surrender to his Father's will, but this satisfaction is gained at considerable cost to God himself.

Love is the key to an understanding of the Atonement for it is love which makes it possible. It is because of God's love for men that he must suffer for man's sin is offensive to him. God

63. H.R. Mackintosh, "The Christian Experience of Forgiveness", esp. pp. 168-197.

has his plan for the universe which is frustrated by sin, but such is his love for men that he is prepared to act himself to overcome that sin and open the way for the fulfilment of his purpose. As Mackintosh sees it, there is a kind of spiritual necessity attached to reconciliation through Christ's suffering and death.

The Cross is all important for in it sin is judged and condemned. In the first place, it is condemned in the Cross, for there its true nature is revealed. There, for the first time, the real horror of sin can be seen. In Jesus men were confronted by pure goodness as never before and, by their treatment of him and their reaction to this goodness, their sin was exposed. And secondly, sin is judged in the Cross by Jesus' attitude to it. He did not simply denounce it, but by letting sinful men vent their utmost hate on him, he revealed and condemned sin as the absolute contrary of love.

Given the necessity of the Cross in the Atonement, the problem still remains of how the reconciling work of God in Christ takes effect for us.

Mackintosh approaches this by viewing the Cross as a sacrifice, in which, by faith, we partake. In Jesus the self-giving of God to man and man's self-giving to God meet and absorb each other. This sacrificial self-giving is an absolute surrender to the will of God. It is made effective by Christ's utter self-identification with sinful man, which can be seen in his baptism and which came to a head in his death. Through faith, we confirm this identification and take his confession as our own, confirming his acceptance of the righteous will of God.

In his treatment Mackintosh puts the initiative in the whole matter with God; insisting that from eternity God had Saviourhood in his being. This follows from the fact that God is love, for love is the motivating force behind the Atonement.

A Personal View

In the New Testament the basic idea behind the Atonement is that of reconciliation, the re-forming of the relationship between man and God which was broken by sin. Depending on how we look at sin, our views on how this reconciliation is to be brought about will vary. If we see sin as a breach of law, then, naturally, forensic and legal ideas of redemption come to mind. If, on the other hand, we see sin as some kind of debt, then the commercial aspects of deliverance will be stressed. In other words our conception of the Atonement depends on our idea of sin. It is here that so many of the inadequacies of the older theories arise - their authors had an inadequate view of sin.

Sin is basically an offence against love; disunion is its result. Therefore Atonement is basically the removal of this disunion, "The breaking down of the dividing wall of hostility".⁶⁴ This is achieved by reconciliation. The idea of reconciliation underlies many concepts in the New Testament. Justification by faith is a step towards its attainment, propitiation suggests it, expiation is the removal of an obstacle in the way of reunion and redemption is the buying back of one who is lost so that he might re-enter the old fellowship.

When we treat sin in this way, as a matter of personal relations, we can understand more fully its consequences. These are many, but the most disastrous is the separation from God that it entails. When we look at sin on the human level we see that it can, and does, produce a real physical separation. This is brought about by a feeling of guilt which makes us unable to feel at ease in the presence of someone we have wronged. This is equally true in the spiritual realm. Sin produces

64. Ephesians, 2:14.

estrangement from God, just as much if not more so, as from our fellows.

As a result of his sin, man cuts himself off from God. He can no longer feel at ease in the fellowship of God's presence, and so he attempts to run away. But herein lies the great difference in the situation between God and man from that between man and man. We can run away from other men, but no matter how hard we try, no matter how far we run, we can never be physically (or spiritually) cut off from God. As the Psalmist says :- "Whither shall I go from the Spirit? or, Whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there Yea the darkness hideth me not from thee; But the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."⁶⁵

We may try to cut ourselves off from God, but he will never cut himself off from us. No matter what we do, the free flow of God's love is never interrupted. The enmity which causes the estrangement is purely on man's part; God still loves the sinner. The result is that God sent his Son to save us while we were yet sinners. The wonder of it all is that God takes the initiative in the process of Salvation, even though it is against him that men have sinned.

The core of the problem about the Atonement is how this estrangement can be removed. This is done by the bringing about of a new and free flow of love between God and man and, what is more important, between man and God. Forgiveness from God, and its acceptance by man achieves this end.

Why is the Cross necessary to secure this forgiveness for us? If God forgives freely, why was the work of Christ necessary? This is the question that every

65. Psalms, 138:7-12.

generation has to try to answer for itself. We recognise that by sin men had become cut off from God. Like McLeod Campbell, we recognised that, in love, God wanted to build a bridge over the gulf between men and himself and this he does by the Atonement. In his love, he was prepared to go to any length to accomplish this and to reunite mankind to himself. Thus, he sent his Son to show the way back. But men rejected Christ and his teaching. They refused to follow in the way that he showed and, in a sense, by so doing, forced God to go to the ultimate limit, to make the ultimate sacrifice to win them back. If Christ had not died on the Cross, it would have been tantamount to God saying that there was a limit beyond which his love could not or would not go. But, in fact, there is no such limit. God was, and is, willing to pay the ultimate price to win men back. Thus, in the Cross, we see the supreme revelation of the love of God. Men did their worst when they crucified Christ, but it was not enough to quench the fires of God's love. The purpose of the Cross is to show that there is no sin bad enough to be beyond God's forgiveness, provided his conditions are accepted.

When we reach this stage, and have accepted and, perhaps partly understood, the necessity of the Cross, we find one problem still confronting us. If we see the Cross as a revealing of God's love and nothing more, it becomes not a message of hope, but a ground of despair. We are immediately made aware of our total unworthiness of this love. We have to recognise also that the Cross reveals God meeting all the conditions of reconciliation. The divine activity on our behalf is clearly to be seen in the Incarnation, in all that Jesus was and did. It is to be seen even more clearly in his death, his final victory over evil. "All this is love Divine, but it is not the fullness of divine love. In its entirety the love of God is manifest only as Christ goes all the way in meeting the cost of reconciliation, in his voluntary acceptance of the consequences of human transgression, in his bearing of the

sin of men, and in his willingness to be the means of their penitent approach to God. 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins'."⁶⁶

What makes the Atonement possible is the way in which his love leads Christ to become one with sinful man. He was made sin on our behalf⁶⁷ and for us he became a curse.⁶⁸ The absolute reality of this unity becomes abundantly clear when, on the Cross, we see him plumbing the depths of utter despair, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me".⁶⁹ The important thing is that he comes through showing that this is not the end. Our hope comes from the fact that, after the cry of despair, comes the shout of triumph.⁷⁰ The victory has been won, the battle is over. In short, the simplest and best understanding of the Atonement is the literal one, it is indeed at-one-ment. It works because, in Christ, man and God have been made one.

As we have seen, the ultimate need of men to-day, is forgiveness from God and the problem is how this is to be attained. It is the purpose of Christianity to show that this forgiveness is open to all on the acceptance of the conditions laid down by God. The inner strength needed to fulfil them can be gained from the Risen Christ. The key to the Atonement is faith. If we truly believe, then we accept all that Christ has done on our behalf and have all our spiritual needs met, finding what we are looking for. In his life, death, resurrection and exaltation, Christ provides all things necessary for man's salvation and reconciles all who totally commit themselves to him as Lord, to God once and for all. In the end, total commitment is the one condition which subsumes all others and makes Atonement possible.

66. V. Taylor, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation", p. 209.

67. II Corinthians, 5:21.

68. Galatians, 3:13.

69. Mark, 15:34.

70. John, 19:30.

9. Forgiveness

The commonest word for forgiveness in the New Testament is ἄφεσις . The noun is not found in the Fourth Gospel, but is a favourite work of Luke's, nine out of its sixteen occurrences being in Luke and Acts. It is also found once in Matthew, twice in Mark and four times in the epistles. The references are as follows (in the New English Bible translation) :

- Matthew 26:28 For this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.
- Mark 1:4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness proclaiming a baptism in token of repentance, for the forgiveness of sins.
- Mark 3:29 But whoever slanders the Holy Spirit can never be forgiven.
- Luke 1:77 And lead his people to salvation through knowledge of him, by the forgiveness of their sins.
- Luke 3:3 And he went all over the Jordan valley proclaiming a baptism in token of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
- Luke 4:18 He has sent me to proclaim release for prisoners to let the broken victims go free.
- Luke 24:47 In his name repentance bringing the forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed to all nations.
- Acts 2:38 Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins.
- Acts 5:31 He it is whom God has exalted with his own right hand as leader and Saviour, to grant Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins.

- Acts 10:43 It is to him that all the prophets testify, declaring that everyone who trusts in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.
- Acts 13:38 It is through him that forgiveness of sins is now being proclaimed to you.
- Acts 26:18 I send you to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, from the dominion of Satan to God, so that, by trust in me, they may obtain forgiveness of sins.
- Ephesians 1:7 In Christ our release is secured and our sins are forgiven through the shedding of his blood.
- Colossians 1:14 In whom our release is secured and our sins forgiven.
- Hebrews 9:22 Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.
- Hebrews 10:18 And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any offering for sin.

The verb ἁφίημι is found about fifty times in the New Testament. Where the noun or verb is used the thought of sin is either implied or expressed. What is forgiven is variously described as sin, debt, trespass or iniquity.

One point which ought to be noticed is that ἁφίσις is only used once by Jesus meaning forgiveness, in Mark 3:29. Elsewhere, he used the verbal form. The majority of the occurrences are found in the Acts and the Epistles, emphasising, perhaps, the important place that the message of forgiveness had in the apostolic preaching (cf. Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38). In all these cases the phrase used is ἁφίσις ἁμαρτιῶν

Even if ἁφίημι and χαρίζομαι are included, the number of key passages is not greatly increased. This adds for us :

- Acts 8:22 Repent of this wickedness and pray the Lord to forgive you.
- Romans 4:7 Happy are they whose lawless deeds are forgiven.
- James 5:15 Any sins he may have committed will be forgiven.
- I John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is just, and may be trusted to forgive our sins.
- I John 2:12 I write to you, my children, because your sins have been forgiven for his sake.

The verb is also used in Mark 2:7, in the scribes' question, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?", and in Mark 4:12, "Otherwise they might turn to God and be forgiven".

Many of these passages are quite general and do not contribute much to our understanding of forgiveness. In this connection the important passages are, apart from the sayings of Jesus, Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 5:31, 10:43, 13:38, 26:18; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; James 5:15; I John 1:9, 2:12.

One fact stands out at the beginning. In none of these passages is forgiveness shown as the remission of penalty. What is remitted is sin. Indeed, there is no reason that forgiveness must imply remission of penalty for our human experience shows that there are times when forgiveness is offered and accepted but justice still demands payment of a penalty. Something once done cannot be undone, and although it may be blotted out as a barrier to fellowship, its consequences can still be seen. In forgiveness love reaches out, over and around the consequences, to embrace the culprit.

Some¹ would seek to challenge this view of the extent of forgiving love, arguing that it is unscriptural. It

1. V. Taylor, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation", pp. 1-28.

is pointed out that, "It is significant that forgiveness is not presented as an equivalent of reconciliation, or as the restoration of fellowship between persons."² It is then argued that, "At most it can only be described as action directed to the removal or annulment of some obstacle or barrier to reconciliation. This obstacle, or to speak more precisely, the object of forgiveness, is variously described as 'sins', 'trespasses', and 'the thought' of 'the heart'. Everywhere it is implied that, if this object is removed, covered, or in some way adequately dealt with, the forgiveness is accomplished. Forgiveness, therefore, in these passages cannot be identified with reconciliation; it is a stage antecedent to reconciliation; it is that which makes reconciliation possible."³ This assertion runs counter to the claims of theology to-day which tends to play down any distinction between forgiveness and reconciliation, and indeed at times to wipe it out completely. It is therefore something which must be considered very carefully, for, as has been said already,⁴ we must be prepared to accept what we find, and not attempt to read into everything our own ideas.

In these sayings concerning forgiveness there is no explicit mention of reconciliation or restoration of fellowship, but in some cases at least the context does admit of the possibility of the idea of reconciliation being present. One of the features of the Apostolic preaching, as it has been isolated by C.H. Dodd⁵ is its emphasis on the Holy Spirit in the Church as the sign that the new age of fulfilment has begun. In this age, the Church is called to new life as the 'Israel of God'. This must surely imply reconciliation with God, and as forgiveness

2. V. Taylor, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation", p. 3.

3. V. Taylor, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation", p. 3.

4. Introduction, p. 4.

5. C.H. Dodd, "The Apostolic Preaching and its Development", p. 25ff.

is what makes this new life possible, it certainly makes reconciliation possible. The point is, does it only make it possible? or does forgiveness achieve something more? It is difficult to be clear on this last point, for the apostles were not particularly concerned with this distinction in their preaching. All that they sought to do was to set forth the Good News as it has been handed down to them, and by its presentation offer to all the possibility of reconciliation with God. They did not stop to consider whether forgiveness made reconciliation possible, or actually achieved it for, to their minds such consideration was irrelevant. All that mattered was the achievement of the condition. Paul, perhaps, gives us the best clue as to how they thought about this. In Ephesians 1:7⁶ he speaks of the Christian being accepted "as his sons through Jesus Christ ... For in Christ our release is secured and our sins are forgiven". In Colossians 1:14 he writes of being, "brought away into the Kingdom of his dear Son, in whom our release is secured and our sins forgiven". In both cases the release from the barrier that prevents us from being sons, or from belonging to the kingdom, is separated from the forgiveness of sins. It would appear that, the barrier being removed, the forgiveness of sins is what actually secures the fellowship of sons and membership of the kingdom. If this is, in fact, the case, then the view that forgiveness has nothing to do with the actual act of reconciliation, but merely makes it possible, is seriously undermined.

So far our discussion has taken no account of the teaching of Jesus himself. If we lay aside the various parallel versions we find that we are left with five sayings - on blasphemy (Mark 3:29) on forgiving others (Mark 11:25), on repeated forgiveness (Luke 17:3), the words from the Cross

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6. This assumes Pauline authorship of Ephesians and Colossians. But even if this is denied, these epistles must still be held to represent the Pauline point of view.

(Luke 23:34) and the petition in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:12) - and the references to forgiveness in the Story of the Paralytic (Mark 2:1-12), the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-35), and in the story of the Woman who was a sinner (Luke 7:36-50). Again forgiveness is related to a specific object variously described as sins, trespasses, blasphemies or debts. In three of the sayings, Luke 17:3, 23:34 and Matthew 18:35, the verb is used alone and implies definite action. The other sayings of Jesus do not tell us much of the nature of forgiveness, but rather deal with the conditions which are necessary for it. Just as the disciples had little time for, what was to them, trifling distinctions, so Jesus had little time here for definition. To his way of thinking, forgiveness was something to be experienced, not defined. But before it could be experienced certain conditions had to be fulfilled and therefore his concern is to make them clear. The nature of these conditions is considered in the chapters on the Lord's Prayer and 'The Conditions of Forgiveness'.

There is one other body of material to be considered before we can come to any conclusions, and that is Jesus' teaching on forgiveness contained in the parables.

Detailed consideration is given to many of the parables elsewhere, but here we are concerned to see what light they throw, if any, on the relationship of forgiveness and reconciliation.

In the parable of the Unmerciful Servant, forgiveness is described as the bestowal of mercy and the cancellation of indebtedness, without which restoration of normal fellowship is impossible. Thus here again we see that there is the closest possible link between forgiveness and reconciliation. Taylor argues, though, that true fellowship is lacking. "So little is it present that the servant can take his comrade by the throat and cry, for the sake of a paltry sum : "Pay what thou owest". And

yet he has been forgiven!"⁷ . It is true that fellowship between the two servants is lacking and clearly the servant is unforgiving. But is it right to go on to say that he is forgiven? His debt has certainly been remitted and counts no more, but in the light of what Jesus teaches elsewhere⁸ are we justified in saying that he is forgiven? Is it not rather the case that forgiveness has been offered to him, but in his greed he has rejected it, and with it has also rejected fellowship with his Lord? So that, instead of the inescapable conclusion being 'that Jesus is speaking of a stage antecedent to reconciliation when he applies the teaching of the parable in the sombre words : "So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not everyone his brother from your hearts"⁹, it is rather that Jesus is warning that although forgiveness is freely offered to us by God, we will lose the gift unless we accept with it the conditions on which it is offered and show ourselves to be worthy of fellowship with God.

The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:10-14) is also of interest because of the statement, "I say to you - This man went down to his house justified rather than the other" (Luke 18:14). While we are not entitled to read in here Paul's doctrine of justification, we are getting close to it. The sinner has to be declared righteous and therefore restored to the fellowship of God. In short, he has been accepted by God for what he is. The Pharisee claimed fellowship with God as a right, because of what he was, but was rejected because fellowship and love cannot be bought. The implication is that forgiveness cannot be bought either, for it goes hand in hand with fellowship with God and would seem to be the means whereby this fellowship is achieved.

7. V. Taylor, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation", p. 16.

8. Matthew, 6:12.

9. V. Taylor, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation", p. 16.

The great parable of forgiveness, is, strangely enough, one in which the word never occurs. The parable of the Prodigal Son primarily attempts to illustrate a father's love. In so doing, it is inevitable that both forgiveness and reconciliation should appear. The picture of reconciliation is given in vv. 22-24 where the son is treated as though he had never been away and is given his rightful place in the household. But that is really the result of reconciliation. That is what is achieved. The actual reconciliation comes earlier in v. 20 with the meeting of the father and the son : "But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, fell on his neck, and kissed him." This is also forgiveness, for the sins of the son are completely forgotten, as were the sins of the publican, and are not allowed to stand as a barrier between the father and the son. It is enough that the son has come home, as it was enough that the publican had gone to God to ask for mercy. To try to make any distinction between forgiveness and reconciliation is to split hairs.

It is hard in the light of our discoveries to maintain that forgiveness is but an antecedent of reconciliation. To do this is to reduce this rich concept to a shadow of itself, and is to confuse forgiveness with mere remission of sins. The two are not the same, for a debt may be remitted, and that is, incidentally, the basic meaning of ἀφίημι¹⁰, but not forgiven. Forgiveness is the taking of the next step, the offering of fellowship. Often it is hard to distinguish between the two for the separation is very small, and most of the time is insignificant, for it is true that in forgiveness love reaches out, over and around the sin, and so blotting it out, to embrace the

10. ἀφίημι ἀμαρτιῶν does not = 'forgiveness of sins'.
 The correct translation is 'remission of sins'.
 cf. Redlich, "The Forgiveness of Sins", p. 108.
 C.A. Scott, "Christianity According to St. Paul", p. 54.

sinner in a new and lasting fellowship.

There is little point in attempting to maintain any kind of distinction between forgiveness and reconciliation for, even if we were to accept that forgiveness was but a first step involving only the cancellation of sin, it would soon come, by natural development, to extend its meaning to cover the whole process. Indeed such a process of development has taken place, for in Jesus' teaching we have the basic material which Paul, for one, has taken and used to produce his own ideas. There is no reason why this process should stop with Paul, always providing of course, that the development is a natural one and in harmony with the original teaching.

Apart from the linguistic arguments of New Testament usage, a case has been made by Dr. Taylor for his view that forgiveness and reconciliation are two quite distinctive things.¹¹

- (1) We retain the marked emphasis upon the necessity, as a first step to reconciliation, of cancelling sins and offences.
- (2) We preserve a useful terminology which distinguishes successive stages, discernible in thought if not always in experience, in what is certainly a complex and not simple process, namely forgiveness, justification and reconciliation.
- (3) When we have worked out our modern conception of forgiveness in relation to the death of Christ, we are protected against the embarrassment of discovering that, so far as the term of forgiveness is concerned, it entirely lacks foundation in the teaching of the New Testament.

11. V. Taylor, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation", p. 25.

- (4) We possess a complete answer to theologians who remind us that Jesus never taught that forgiveness was the purpose of his death, and that the sole conditions of forgiveness, on which he insisted, were repentance and amendment."

Certain things must be said in answer to these points :-

- (1) If we have awareness at all of the real nature of reconciliation we must, in any case, be aware that the cancelling of sins and offences is a first step in the process, but this cancelling of itself, is not forgiveness.
- (2) There seems little point in attempting to maintain distinctions in thought which do not exist in actual practice and it is such linguistic casuistry which brings theology into disrepute.
- (3) Discussion of this point will be deferred until the relationship of forgiveness to the death of Christ has been investigated later.
- (4) We can say here that, as will be shown later, we make no claim that forgiveness is in any way dependent on the death of Christ.

Two final points make the attempt to maintain any kind of distinction between forgiveness and reconciliation undesirable. In the first place, it would be unfortunate, to say the least, to talk of only the first stage in the process of reconciliation as forgiveness, for this would mean giving the word a special theological meaning out of accord with its normal usage. Secondly, religious language is by its very nature, organic and not static. But an attempt to maintain a distinction of this nature would be to deny this very fact, for then we would be seeking to freeze the natural development which must take place in our understanding of the concept.

Thus, we cannot to-day restrict the meaning of forgiveness to the cancelling or the remission of sins. Forgiveness is, and can be nothing else than, a full restoration to fellowship with God, as we have attempted to show in the chapter on the Atonement.

The relationship of forgiveness and the death of Christ

In view of the seeming importance that is placed now on the relationship between forgiveness and the death of Christ, it is perhaps surprising to note how small the connection is in the New Testament. Nowhere is there the direct statement that Christ died that men might be forgiven. The association is indirect. Paul, perhaps, comes nearest to this kind of statement in Ephesians 1:7 where he speaks of 'sins forgiven through shedding of his blood'. The author of Hebrews, too, is familiar with this idea, for speaking of the sacrifice of Christ, he states, "Now that there has been a death to bring deliverance from sins committed under the former covenant, those whom God has called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance".¹²

An interesting point comes to light when we examine the preaching of the early Church on this point. In the Acts, preaching forgiveness is not associated with Christ's death at all but with the whole 'Christ-event'. Forgiveness is associated with Christ as the Risen Lord and Saviour. Baptism is offered 'in the name of Jesus Christ unto remission of sins' (Acts 2:38). It is 'through his name' (Acts 10:43) that forgiveness is received. It is the Risen Lord of whom the Apostles are speaking and thinking. It is only when we turn to Paul's own special preaching that we begin to find any mention of the death of Christ in this connection. He is quite adamant that Christ died 'on our behalf' (Romans 5:8; Galatians 2:20) and that it was for our sins that he suffered (Romans 8:3;

12. Hebrews, 9:15.

I Corinthians 15:3; Galatians 1:4). Paul's concern was with the death of Christ and its purpose and it is largely from his teaching that our understanding of the relationship between forgiveness and the death of Christ has come. But this difference is more apparent than real. In the Acts preaching Christ is presented as the Suffering Servant (Acts 8:32-35) and this, in the light of Isaiah (53:5), implies death for our sins. It would seem to be the case that Paul is stating explicitly what Acts implicitly says. Paul's preaching centres on the Cross, especially in Galatians, while in Acts the Resurrection is the centre of events. "But the discrepancy is only apparent. The Crucifixion and the Resurrection are never severed in Paul's thought."¹³ Bultmann, too, speaks in this way of the Death-and-Resurrection-event,¹⁴ visualising a complete process beginning with the death and completed by the Resurrection. We cannot have the one without the other, To say that Christ died for our sins is to imply that he rose again from the dead as well. "The Resurrection showed that the Crucifixion was a sin, and that Jesus was approved of God. Christ crucified is the Saviour, because God raised him from the dead."¹⁵ Perhaps in language Paul does change the emphasis, but the thought and the meaning are not changed at all. He is expressing the same ideas as are to be found in the Acts preaching that it is through the Christ-event that men receive salvation.

While then forgiveness is only indirectly associated with the death of Christ, it is nonetheless clear that the Apostolic preaching did associate the message of forgiveness with the Crucified and Risen Lord. When we

13. Blunt Galatians (Clarendon Bible), p. 94.

14. R. Bultmann, "Theology of the New Testament", Vol. I, pp. 292-306.

15. Blunt, Galatians, p. 94.

turn to the teaching of Jesus himself we again find this absence of direct connection. The one apparent connection in Matthew 26:28 must be ignored for the phrase 'unto remission of sins' is an addition of the Evangelist. At no time does Jesus attempt to define the meaning of his death. This does not mean that it had no significance for him, nor does it mean that we can assume that he saw no connection between his death and the forgiveness of sins. In fact, from what Jesus does say about his death, it is fairly obvious that he understood it in the light of the Suffering Servant. In that concept the shedding of the sacrificial blood is inseparably connected with the forgiveness of sins.

If we accept, as we almost certainly must, that Jesus himself thought in terms of the Suffering Servant, then we must also accept that he understood his death as bringing in some way forgiveness and reconciliation. While it is extremely difficult to enter into the self-understanding of Jesus, we can say that, in all probability, he saw his task as one of bringing reconciliation between man and God.

We have to accept, therefore, that the New Testament does not teach that Christ died in order that sin might be forgiven, although it does include forgiveness among the signs of the expected Messianic salvation. In many ways, it is perhaps as well that the definite statement is avoided for this might well have tended to place limits on the efficacy of the death of Christ. The effects of the death of Christ are such that no limits can be put on their length and breadth, height or depth. There is, however, one positive point that can be drawn from the lack of a definite statement. Because the New Testament does not say that Christ died in order that sins might be forgiven, we are at liberty to affirm that the death of Christ was not necessary to enable God to exercise his forgiving power. The answer to the problem of the necessity of the death of Christ does not lie in the realm of forgiveness. To simply say that Christ died that we might be forgiven is to

beg the question, for the two things do not necessarily go together.

But in actual practice there is a very close connection between the death of Christ and forgiveness, though this is not causal. It is out of this connection that the theology of the Atonement is born.

We can, therefore, say two things about the teaching of the New Testament on forgiveness. Firstly, it shows that there is a very close link between forgiveness and reconciliation and that the two are virtually indistinguishable, and secondly, although the death of Christ was not necessary to secure forgiveness there is, in practice, again a close link between the two.

The Johannine Concept of Forgiveness

Like Paul, John finds the central message of Christianity in salvation. For John this implies the gift of eternal life, which is the supreme gift of God brought to man by Jesus Christ. Jesus is seen as the revealer of truth showing men the true nature of God.

John's attitude to sin is clearly set forth in the first epistle. Sin is 'lawlessness' (I John 3:4); 'all unrighteousness is sin' (I John 5:17). Jesus' mission is indicated in general terms, "Ye know that he was manifested that he might take away sins" (I John 3:5).

There are four key passages which help to explain the writer's attitude here.

I John 1:9 "God is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

I John 1:7 "The blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin."

I John 4:10 "God loved us and sent his own Son as an ἱλασμός for our sins."

I John 2:2 "Jesus Christ, the righteous, is
the ἱλασμος for our sins."

One of the basic ideas in the epistle is Fellowship in the Life Eternal. God is light, therefore to have fellowship with him one must walk in the light, that is, be pure from sin. All are sinners, but the teaching of the Gospel is that all who believe are under a dispensation which deals effectively with sin.

The basic fact is that God is a forgiving God. The human desire for fellowship in the confession of sin, finds that God is always faithful to himself. That God is faithful to himself and therefore trustworthy is fundamental to both the Old and New Testaments.¹⁶ He is consistent and can be relied upon. God is also just. It is upon these two qualities of God that John bases his view of divine forgiveness. He sees no opposition between the justice of God demanding punishment and the mercy of God granting forgiveness. For John, mercy is rather a function of righteousness than its opponent. Indeed, forgiveness is only possible because God is trustworthy, for then his attitude towards us is not altered by our sin.

According to the Gospel, sin is dealt with in two ways.

1. Christ not only died for our sins, he also lives to intercede for us as our παρακλητος. Etymologically it means 'someone called in to help'. It is therefore generally translated 'helper', 'supporter', but in time a more special usage developed and it came to be popularly used for someone called in to help in a law suit, an advocate. John's choice of the word, 'paraclete' for Christ as the intercessor may have been influenced by Philo,

16. cf. Deuteronomy, 8:9; Psalms, 26:5; I Corinthians, 1:9, 10:13; I Peter, 4:19.

but however it did come about, the use of this word meets one of the great needs of ethical religion. As man's understanding of God as holy and righteous grows, his sense of guilt is deepened and a barrier is set between himself and God. Yet, all the time, his need to approach God is becoming greater. An escape from the circle is provided if there is in God something sympathetic to our case and which pleads our cause. This the Gospel would claim we have in Jesus Christ. Thus through Christ man is able to make the approach to God he desires.

2. The heavenly advocate is himself the ἱλασμος for our sins. ἱλασμος is not propitiation as it is understood to-day. The basic derivation is from the verb, 'to placate, pacify or propitiate', for example an offended deity. But there is no thought of this here. In LXX the verb is used for the removal of that which makes approach to the holy God impossible. As it was natural to think of evil as some kind of taint which had to be cleansed and which was removed by ritual, the verb came to mean expiation of guilt. In LXX the verb is also used, with man as the subject, to refer to the sacrificial rites. Where God was the subject, the meaning became almost indistinguishable from 'to forgive'.¹⁷
This is indeed the case for, in the last

17. W.F. Howard, "Christianity According to St. John", p. 99, cf. C.H. Dodd J.T.S. xxxii (1931) pp. 342-360; The Bible and the Greeks, pp. 82-95; The Johannine Epistles, pp. 25-26; The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, pp. 54-55.

resort, the defilement of sin can only be removed by divine forgiveness. It is possible that in the context of I John 2:2 'Propitiation' could fit. If our guilt requires an advocate before God, we might logically expect to need to placate his righteous anger. But the wider context is that our forgiveness is not won by placating God, but is given because 'he is faithful and just'. The work of Christ is one of expiation and not propitiation and as such affects the whole human race. It is directed at them and not God. He does not say how this works, for, like Paul, he is merely concerned to state a fact of experience.

But John is not simply speculating. Christ did act in a typical human situation and there became involved in the conflict with sin and evil. In the conflict he acted to show God's attitude, uncompromising towards evil, unceasingly benevolent towards those who wrought the evil. He was finally left utterly alone and suffered the totality of what human wickedness could inflict. This only gave him an occasion to show God's continued favour to man. Christ's return from the dead to the disciples who had failed him was a clear act of forgiveness and this provided the message of the early church. God in Christ had done what was needed to cleanse men and had done it in love by making available his forgiveness and re-uniting them to himself.

Although they use very different language, almost all the New Testament writers are agreed on the basic message of forgiveness. However they may express it, they are all concerned to show that God's forgiveness is open to all through grace. While Paul may talk in terms of justification, John may speak of propitiation and the synoptic evangelists may talk more directly of forgiveness, they are all seeking to proclaim the one message of man's

acceptance by God. This is the essence of the Christian message of forgiveness.

Here we have the answer to the question that men had been asking for centuries - "How can we reach God?". The Christian answer is so simple that no one ever thought of it till God himself revealed it through his Son. It is that we do not need to ask God for, in love, he seeks us. By his forgiveness he removes all the barriers and enables us to come to him. This is the gospel of forgiveness, and it is the same gospel, no matter who preaches it.

10. Conclusions

I - The relation between Forgiveness, Reconciliation and Justification

When we attempt to maintain a distinction between forgiveness and reconciliation we find that another problem is immediately forced upon us. If the two are not the same, in what relationship to each other do they stand? Is the one the condition or the result of the other? In other words, has man to be forgiven before he is reconciled, or must he be reconciled before we can say that he has truly been forgiven? From a mere human understanding of the situation much can be said on both sides. We find it hard to say how it might be possible for someone to be reconciled without being forgiven and yet can there be real forgiveness if there is no reconciliation? Our own human experience points to the seeming impossibility of maintaining any distinction between the two. All we can say is that if they are separate they must occur at precisely the same moment. We must ask then if such a distinction is worth maintaining when the two things are so intimately bound up with one another.

Here we seem to be the victims of the paucity of the English language. We only have the one word 'forgiveness' which has to be used to describe the two concepts of the removal of sin as a barrier between man and God, and of the establishment of fellowship. While we cannot argue that the two are necessarily identical, neither can we argue that they are unrelated. Thus it is possible to explain just why 'forgiveness' and 'reconciliation' have some to be so closely related, even to the extent that they have been virtually identified with one another.

Certainly this identification has been upheld by many. It is recognised in the old Lutheran formula, 'Forgiveness = justification = reconciliation.' Criticism has rightly been levelled at this view, for it is an oversimplification.

Like all such formulae it has an element of the truth in it for there is undoubtedly some kind of relation between these three things, but it is not the whole truth.

The meaning of justification, in the Christian sense, is 'to be in a right relationship with God'. From our understanding of the teaching of Jesus and the apostles it seems clear that we can only be in such a right relationship when our sins are forgiven, so that they no longer stand between us and God and when, as a result, we are reconciled to God. If we must try to express things in the form of an equation, it would be better to say that justification = forgiveness and reconciliation.

But despite the seemingly close relationship that exists between the three ideas there are those who would seek to maintain a definite distinction between them. Vincent Taylor takes the view that forgiveness in the New Testament is equivalent to simple remission of sins. Sanday and Headlam equate forgiveness and justification, while Anderson Scott sees this as only an approximation to the truth. For him the real equivalent of justification is 'remission of sins'.¹ Because he recognises forgiveness as a restoration of fellowship he comes to the conclusion that forgiveness is justification and reconciliation. Thus we find ourselves in the awkward position that four prominent New Testament scholars put forward three completely different views of the relationship between forgiveness, reconciliation and justification. Each, in his own opinion, has a perfectly satisfactory argument, but it is obvious that at least two must fall down somewhere. It may well be that Mackintosh is right after all when talking about the possibility of a distinction between forgiveness and justification, he says, "In theory this distinction may be possible"; but "It has not

1. V. Taylor, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation", p. 3
 Sanday and Headlam, ICC Romans, p. 37
 C.A. Anderson Scott, "Christianity according to St. Paul", p. 74.

the slenderest bearing on experience".²

This certainly seems to be the case. Discussion of this nature tends to be very academic and has little or no bearing on actual experience. We perhaps ought to be asking here what difference it would make if we accepted any one of the suggested relationships at the expense of the other. Our answer then would seem to be 'none'. However we define forgiveness its effect is still the same. If we allow ourselves to be bogged down in this kind of debate we are wasting our time, for we will never be able to reach a conclusion satisfactory to all. But we can all perhaps agree on the practical results of being forgiven, which is our complete acceptance of God, an acceptance we have because we trust in him explicitly.³

Such debate on the relation of forgiveness and reconciliation seems to be quite unnecessary. As we have tried to argue in the chapter on forgiveness,⁴ the supposed distinction between them is not necessarily scriptural. If there are passages which suggest that the two are quite distinct, there are many more which would show the close relationship they have with one another. Not only is it impractical to maintain the distinction between them, scripturally, it is not warranted.

There is then a sense in which it is true that when we speak of forgiveness, reconciliation and justification, we speak about a unity. To some extent each is contained in the others, and none can be isolated. We need not concern ourselves greatly about the nature of the relationship between them. It is a relationship in which such distinctions as there are cannot be adequately expressed in words. We can recognise that the three concepts are not identical, but we cannot say exactly where the difference lies, or where the one ends and the other begins.

2. H.R. Mackintosh, "The Christian Experience of Forgiveness", p. 2.

3. See Conclusions III.

4. "Forgiveness", pp. 112-114.

II - The Conditions of Forgiveness

In the Old Testament the condition, though not necessarily the assurance, of forgiveness was repentance. When we turn to the New Testament and the teaching of Jesus, we find that another condition seems to have been imposed. Not only must repentance be shown, but the sinner must also have a forgiving attitude to his fellows.¹ Jesus lays it down very definitely that human and divine forgiveness go hand in hand. It is not necessary to think of this relationship being conditional in the sense that human forgiveness must precede divine forgiveness in time. After all, the forgiveness of God is the model on which all human forgiveness must be based. Unless it has been experienced how are we to know what forgiveness really is?

However we look at it, we cannot avoid the conclusion that there is an essential link between human and divine forgiveness in the teaching of Jesus. This link is the same as that between the love of God and the human love. We would not say that one has to love before one can be loved by God, but the experience of the love of God arouses love in our hearts, a love which sheds light on its incomparable source. The relation between the forgiveness of God and the forgiveness of men lies in the same plane. The forgiveness of man for man is a condition of divine forgiveness in that the forgiveness offered by God can never be complete until it finds expression in a forgiving spirit.

It has been questioned whether this is a new condition at all. As we saw earlier,² Redlich argues that the forgiving spirit is an essential part of repentance as we find it in the teaching of Jesus. He bases his view on the connection he sees between the parables of the Prodigal

1. Matthew, 6:12, cf. Matthew, 6:14, Mark, 10:25, Luke, 2:4.

2. "Repentance in the New Testament", p. 3.

Son and the Unmerciful Servant, a connection which is not particularly obvious. He claims that, "Repentance, as generally defined, does not include the element of forgiving-ness on which our Lord laid peremptory emphasis. *Metanoia* must include love for God and for all men, be they those whom we have wronged or those who have wronged us. If repentance is thus defined, there is only one condition of forgiveness from God."³

In support of his argument Redlich quotes from Temple's 'Christus Veritas'. "It is indeed misleading to say that Christ proclaims forgiveness on the sole condition of repentance unless we remember how inclusive a term repentance is God's forgiveness is restoration to intimate fellowship with God; but fellowship with God is fellowship with self-forgetful and selfgiving love, of which forgiveness is a necessary outcome. If we do not forgive, we are not in fellowship with God. The repentance, which is a condition of God's free forgiveness, is a turning away from our selfish outlook and the adoption of God's outlook, from which forgiveness necessarily proceeds."⁴

We can agree that repentance, as generally defined, does not include the element of forgiving-ness, and that it is misleading to say that Christ proclaims forgiveness on the sole condition of repentance. The points at issue are whether repentance ought to include this element of forgiving-ness, and whether Christ does in fact name repentance as the only condition of forgiveness.

One fact must be noted immediately. Nowhere does Christ say, "Repent and be forgiven". His command is always much more positive, "Repent and believe". Repentance is never the end of the matter for Christ; there is always something more. This surely makes it unlikely that he ever did think of repentance as the only

3. E.B. Redlich, "The Forgiveness of Sins", p. 129.

4. Temple, "Christus Veritas", p. 264, in Redlich, "The Forgiveness of Sins", p. 129.

condition of forgiveness. Always repentance is the accompaniment of something else.

Much of the argument for the inclusion of the forgiving spirit in repentance is based on a supposed connection between two seemingly unconnected parables of Jesus. Certainly both the parable of the Prodigal Son and the parable of the Unmerciful Servant deal with forgiveness. But the parable of the Prodigal Son is a parable of love, seeking to show that there is nothing that can keep us from the love of God, and so, incidentally, from his forgiveness. The parable of the Unmerciful Servant surely teaches another lesson, namely, that without a forgiving spirit the forgiveness of God can never truly be our's. The change of attitude of the servant comes from fear and not sorrow, a fact that is made clear by his attitude, when the threat is removed. There does not seem to be the kind of connection between the two parables which would justify us taking them as complementing each other in their teaching on repentance. Much as it is an attractive proposition to see repentance including the forgiving spirit, we cannot in all honesty maintain this on the Biblical evidence.

In the New Testament we have two conditions which must be fulfilled before the forgiveness of God can be received. Both repentance and a forgiving spirit must be shown. It is when we recognise this that we can begin to understand the reason for Jesus' emphasis on forgiving others. This receives so much of the emphasis, while repentance is only mentioned in the passing, because this was the new element in Jesus' teaching. The part of repentance in the process of forgiveness is taken over by Christianity from Judaism. But the Old Testament never taught the necessity of forgiving others. Although the idea begins to appear in later Rabbinic Judaism,⁵ it was Christ who first worked out

5. "The Lord's Prayer", p. 3.

its full implications.

We are forgiven by God on the two conditions of repentance and forgiveness for others. There is then no such thing as the unforgiveable sin for nothing is beyond repentance, but there is such a person as the unforgiveable sinner, for he will not, or cannot, show repentance and has no room in his heart to forgive others.

Repentance, like faith, is the gift of God, and so too, in its way, is the forgiving spirit. It is the product of the love of God which makes us aware of our own inadequacy and can thus lead us to some understanding of the other person. It is out of this sympathy for the other that forgiveness is born. But, of course, if the gift is refused, if the love is rejected, the unforgiveable sinner becomes more than a theoretical possibility, he becomes a reality. But this is no ground for arguing a kind of predestination. The sinner has only himself to blame. He would still be accepted by God, if he would come to him. No one is excluded by God from his great gift of forgiveness, for "God sent not his Son into the world that the world might be condemned, but that the world through him might be saved."⁶ The forgiveness of God is freely given to all men, through Christ, on the twin conditions of repentance and a forgiving spirit.

We should note here that inasmuch as the gifts of repentance and forgiveness are appropriated on the ground of faith,⁷ we really ought to add a third condition to the list. To be strictly accurate, we ought to say that the forgiveness of God is made freely available on the three-fold conditions of faith, repentance and a forgiving spirit.

6. St. John, 3:17.

7. The call to repentance is nearly always coupled with a call to faith, cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 2:39. We must also remember that the promises of God are to all, but they are only fulfilled in the presence of faith.

But as faith is the condition behind all the promises of God turning them into reality for us, and which here underlies the other two conditions and, indeed, without which they can hardly exist, we can say that in the teaching of Christ this third condition is always assumed, and so he sets down the two conditions of repentance and the forgiving spirit for the forgiveness of men by God.

III - The Two Great Questions

There are two main questions which must now be answered. How is forgiveness effected? What is its effect?

To answer the first question we need a theology of the Atonement to give a general understanding of the process, but then we must produce something much more intimate and personal. The trouble about the kind of understanding we get from a doctrinal statement, such as any theory of the Atonement must be, is that it is too remote from our personal experience. This is natural for there is a sense in which we must look on the Atonement as something which has been accomplished and which is therefore not altogether relevant to our present needs. At the same time, of course, it is true to say that the Atonement is an ongoing process and does have something to say to us to-day.

In the first place, the Atonement is a demonstration of love. It must, of course, be more than that, for a mere demonstration alone can only bring despair by highlighting our total inability to respond to it adequately. But it is a demonstration of love. Without a knowledge of the love of God, there can be no hope of forgiveness and no possibility of reconciliation.

Yet there must be more. This love of God so clearly shown in the Cross must somehow become ours. This is the real problem of the Atonement. This love is freely offered through the grace of God, and it can be just as freely accepted for the essential message of the Atonement is, as we have seen,¹ that no one need be without hope, that no one is beyond the pale, that no one is unworthy enough to forfeit the right to acceptance by God. The fact that the Atonement underlines is that only man himself can blot out the love of God from his life.

1. "Atonement", pp. 80-83.

It is here that we begin to move into the more personal sphere. To know how forgiveness is effected we have to know how the individual becomes open to the love of God. Quite simply, the barriers have to come down and, although they are of self-erection, their destruction requires more than self-power. What is needed is the power of God made available through faith. As in everything concerned with Christian belief, faith is the key. Without it the whole thing is reduced to a meaningless charade. With it we can begin to see even though it is through a glass darkly.

Forgiveness is effected when, through the preaching of the Gospel, faith is awakened in us and we begin to see things as they are. It is only then that we can recognise the possibilities and compare them with actuality. Realisation then brings us to our knees before our Maker. Through our faith, however imperfect it may be, we are enabled to begin to acknowledge the magnitude of our debt to God. Through faith we come into a state where we begin to fulfil the conditions God has set down for forgiveness and immediately forgiveness lies in our grasp.

Forgiveness itself is effected when what we are, and what we have been and have done, no longer stands between us and God. That happens when we realise that God never allows them to stand between him and us. In his eyes there is no barrier. Forgiveness comes when we see this as a fact. This is something that can only be appreciated in faith. Truly, therefore, faith is the key.

Having said that, we find that the second question has answered itself. The effect of forgiveness is to bring us into a state of true fellowship with God; into a state where we realise our true standing as children of God. We are then no longer in fear of judgment for we know that we have been accepted by God and are truly, in the Pauline sense, justified. One thing which does not

follow from this is that we are freed from the consequence of sin. We are freed from sin and from its power, but its consequences remain and have to be faced up to in life. But this becomes something that is in our power to do because we receive power from on high, the power of the Holy Spirit, through which all things become possible for us.

If this is not borne out in our experience, as perhaps all too often it is not, the fault lies with us, for it means that we have not fully accepted the gift of God which is forgiveness. It means that our faith has not stood the test and it is not God who has been found wanting, but us.

Faith then, must be carefully nurtured, for it is only through it that we can hope to know the forgiveness which is acceptance by God.

The Cross has its part to play for it convinces us of the possibility of acceptance and forgiveness and so prevents faith becoming a mockery and a legal fiction. We are not playing with words here. The forgiveness of God is a very real state of mind and life, where man is truly made one with God.

Acceptance by God is the goal we seek. Forgiveness, which blots out sin and pulls down the barriers, is the way of it. And it is effected by man faithfully fulfilling the conditions laid down by Almighty God; in faith acknowledging his shortcomings, seeking to start afresh and showing to others something of what he seeks to receive, as far as he can understand it.

APPENDIX

The idea of national solidarity, which lies behind Paul's argument in Romans 5, is one which seems very strange to the modern mind. We find it difficult to understand how Paul can argue that all have sinned in Adam. To our minds, even if the sins of the fathers are to be visited upon the children, this is carrying things too far. But to primitive man this was the natural way of thinking.

The Jew, especially, never thought of himself as an individual, but always as a member of a family and nation. It seemed to him that, apart from the family and the nation, he had no separate existence. His only existence was as a unit in society. This is reflected in the fact that, if a Jewish girl married a Gentile, from that day she was as good as dead as far as her family was concerned. She had ceased to be a Jew, so she had ceased to exist.

The idea of tribal solidarity is found to this day among the more primitive peoples of the earth. Amongst them an injury to one is a slight to the whole tribe. Any revenge is not taken by the individual, but by the tribe and the whole matter becomes one which no longer concerns individuals but tribes.

Paul finds his scriptural authority for his claim that all are involved in Adam's sin in the story of Achan in Joshua 7. Because Achan sinned by disobeying God's command that all the spoils taken at Jericho were to be destroyed, the siege of Ai did not succeed. When Achan's sin was discovered, and it was realised that the whole nation was being punished for it, then Achan and his whole family were executed. The act of disobedience had been the act of only one man, but the consequences were shared by all, and so they were all involved in the sin.

And so it is with Adam's sin. All men are involved in his sin because all men are descended from him. In a sense they are all part of his family, and therefore, like the family of Achan, are involved in his sin.

$\varepsilon\varphi \overset{\circ}{\omega}$ in Romans 5:12

While the point of Paul's argument in Romans 5 is clear enough in itself, the language he uses does raise a problem, particularly in terms of the meaning that should be given to $\varepsilon\varphi \overset{\circ}{\omega}$ in v.12. Paul's concern here is to present Christ as the antitype to Adam. As Adam was, in Paul's eyes, the bringer of death, so Christ is the bringer of life. Since then, as Bultmann points out ¹ "in this context the only thing that matters is that Adam brought death into the world, the supporting sentence 'because all sinned' ($\varepsilon\varphi \overset{\circ}{\omega} \pi\alpha\upsilon\tau\epsilon\varsigma \zeta\mu\alpha\rho\tau\omicron\nu$) is actually superfluous", for the verse begins by placing the responsibility for death on the sin of the one man, Adam.

Although, in itself, $\varepsilon\varphi \overset{\circ}{\omega}$ can bear the meaning of 'on the basis of this' or 'through whom it was caused' as well as 'because', for it to bear the former meanings in this context Adam would have had to be mentioned before. Despite the difficulties raised $\varepsilon\varphi \overset{\circ}{\omega}$ must be translated here as 'because'. ² St. Augustine expanded this somewhat, and understood Paul to mean that all sinned in Adam "because they were all in him when he sinned". ³ In favour of this view it can be argued that after the time of Adam men did not 'sin', though they did wrong, until the law was given through Moses, for when there was no Law there was no Sin in a formal sense. But nevertheless, at that time, death was in the world, and this Paul attributed to the sin of Adam.

Even although Paul's language here does bring with it many problems, they are problems of detail. The main thrust of his theme is still clear - as Adam brought death into the world through his sin, so Christ, by his death, brought Life.

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1. R.Bultmann, "Adam and Christ according to Romans V" in "Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation", Ed., Klassen and Snyder, p.153.
 2. R.Bultmann, "Adam and Christ according to Romans V", Ibid., p.153.
 3. D.E.H.Whiteley, "The Theology of St. Paul", p. 50.

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