SOME THOUGHTS AS TO THE EFFECTS OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST

BY DAVID FOSTER ESTES, D. D.

Professor of New Testament Interpretation in Colgate University.

In the "Theological Symposium" on the subject of the Atonement, which was arranged some years since by an English newspaper (1), the following statement may be found from the pen of Dean Farrar (2): "The language of the Augsburg Confession that Christ died 'ut reconcilaret nobis Patrem,' and of our own Fourth Article that 'He suffered, was crucified, dead and buried *to reconcile the Father unto us,*' may be capable of being rightly explained. But this is *not* the language of Scripture, which invariably says that Christ died 'to reconcile (not God to us, but) *us* to God." This view is thus so positively asserted by Farrar, and has been repeated so often by others with equal positiveness, and gains, it must be recognized, such plausibility from the natural suggestions of our English translation, that probably many now suppose that the above statement rightly expresses the doctrine of Scripture. Consequently it may be best, in entering on some thoughts as to what Christ accomplished by dying, first to ascertain the nature of the "reconciliation" which Paul thought and taught to be consequent upon Christ's death.

At the very beginning it is important to inquire whether the significance of the Greek word which Paul used to express the idea under consideration καταλλάσσειν is exactly the same as that of the English word "reconcile." It is certainly possi-

(1) Published under the title "The Atonement in Modern Religious Thought. A Theological Symposium, 1901." The Christian World, 1899-1900.

(2) Page 36. The italics are Dean Farrar's.

ble that, while generally corresponding, words in the two languages may yet be used for different relations and with unlike suggestions, and such is true in this case. When we speak of reconciling one person to another, or of one as reconciled to another, it is perhaps invariably understood that a change of temper and disposition has come to the person chiefly spoken of and to the advantage of another. But careful study of the uses of καταλλάσσειν will show, first, that a change not of temper, but of relation, may be the chief thing thought of: that is, that, like peace in the Old Testament, the reconciliation may be objective and outward, rather than subjective and inward; and, second, that in Greek, unlike the English, the person who is made grammatically the object of the verb in the active and its subject in the passive, is not the one who changes, but is the one in whose favor the change is made.

For example, in the Ajax of Sophocles we read (line 784) θεοῖσιν ὡς καταλλαχθῇ χόλου, words which, if merely "upset" into English, as Paul's have been, would be rendered "to be reconciled to the gods," but which are rightly understood only if taken to mean, as Jebb takes them, "to make his peace with the gods." Xenophon said of Orontes (Anabasis, I:6.1) καταλλαγεὶς δὲ οὕτως Κυρῷ, which Fritzsche well renders into Latin "recuperata Cyri gratia," meaning not "having become reconciled to Cyrus" (which from the Oriental point of view would be absurd), but "having regained the favor of Cyrus." Fritzsche also cites the words of Josephus (A. J., 5, 2, 8) about the man who followed his concubine to her home and won back her favor, καταλλάττεται πρὸς αὐτήν. He also quotes the Septuagint form of the Philistine question about Saul (1 Sam. 29:4) ἐν τίνι διαλλαγήσεται οὗτος τῷ κυρίῳ αὐτου;, unintelligibly rendered into the English versions, "Wherewith should he recocile himself to his master?" for of course it means "How will he get his master's favor except with our heads?" Finally, a moment's thought will show anyone that we do not get the idea of the words in Matt. 5:24 πρῶτον διαλλάγηθι τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου we read them, "First be reconciled to your brother," but only when we see that they signify, "First win your brother's alienated favor back." Certainly,

then, when we take up Paul's teaching we should bear in mind that the "reconciliation" may be, so far at least as the word itself is concerned, a change in relation wholly on the part of God. It is in the sense just suggested that the word καταλλάσσειν is taken by the great majority of great scholars. Thayer merely translates and so approves Grimm in rendering the verb "to receive one into favor," that is, to become favorable. Cremer defines the noun similarly, only more fully and strongly, as "the new moulding of the relation in which the world stands to God, so far as it no longer remains the object of his wrath."

According to the greatest commentators on Romans and Second Corinthians since the time of Fritzsche, the course of argument in both passages (3) where Paul presents the thought of "reconciliation" forces the idea of a change on the part of God. Meyer says, "God through Christ causes that sin should cease to be an occasion of wrath against the sinner." Lipsius says (4), "The change indicated by καταλλαγή is primarily and essentially accomplished in God. To the change in men no attention is paid. God gives up his wrath against the sinner." Liddon writes (5), "The reconciliation must be taken passively, not merely or chiefly actively. The reconciliation is accomplished not only in the hearts of men, but in the Heart of God." Sanday and Headlam in like manner hold that the reconciliation is not on the part of man only, but is as much on the part of God, while Denney (6) insists that the "reconciliation" "is not a change in our disposition toward God, but a change in His attitude toward us." "To say that the reconciliation is 'mutual' is true in point of fact; it is true, also, to all the suggestions of the English word; but it is not true to the meaning of καταλλαγή, nor to the argument of the passage." Weiss, in the Meyer Commentary, restates still more forcibly the earlier position of Meyer himself, that the reconciliation is thought of by Paul wholly as a change on God's part; and last of all

(3) Rom. 5:10, 11; 2 Cor. 5:18, 19.
(4) Handcommentar zum neuen Testament.
(5) Explanatory Analysis of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans.
(6) Expositor's Greek Testament on Romans 5:10, 11.

Lietzmann (7) declares, "The καταλλάσσειν signifies primarily a change of mind on God's part—as, to be sure, men have only a passive share in the whole work of salvation—on the part of God, who provides himself the propitiation, something that men of themselves could never do" (8).

The writers on New Testament Theology are as positive as the commentators, and the great ones are as unanimous (9). Holtzman says in reference to God's "reconciling the world to himself," that it means that "The wrong relation [Missverhältniss] existing between him and the world of sinners has been altered by him wholly without aid from the world, without the least thing having happened on the side of men to bring about this reconciliation" (10). Weiss in his latest book (11) says that Paul in Rom. 5: 10 "is not thinking here of a change in our attitude toward God, but of a change in His mind toward us." Pfleiderer says (12) "The καταλλαγῆναι is a change of our relation to God which proceeds from God and not a change of behavior to God which proceeds from us." But, finally, what Stevens says of the teaching of Paul (teaching which it will be remembered that he set aside as untrustworthy) may perhaps appear conclusive as to the character of that teaching. To quote, "The apostle is speaking [Rom. 5:10]of men being 'saved from the wrath of God' (v. 9). They were enemies (ἐχθροί, v. 10) in the sense of being objects of that wrath. The reconciliation, therefore, must have fulfilled the conditions on which this holy displeasure of God might no longer be directed toward sinful man, as well as have secured a change of attitude toward God on man's part" (13). If confirmation is needed that the practically unanimous consensus of the most eminent interpreters of Paul's thought rightly sets it forth, it may be found

(7) Handbuch zum N. T., the radical commentary just coming out.

(8) The only names of commentators of high rank whom I have found dissenting are Lightfoot and Westcott.

(9) Beyschlag alone of New Testament theologians of the first rank dissents from the general view.

(10) Lehrbuch der neutestamentlichen Theologie, II. 99.

(11) Religion of the New Testament, Eng. trans., p. 239.

(12) Der Paulinismus, 1873, pp. 99, 100.

(13) Christian Doctrine of Salvation, p. 414.

in what he says of propitiation and redemption on one hand and of justification and forgiveness on the other. If ἱλαστήριον has any significance at all, it must mean that there has come to be a modification of what without it would have been God's attitude to the sinner, a thought which is also suggested by redemption (ἀπολύτρωσις) So in δικαιοῦν and its cognate words (even in their English renderings, though they are somewhat confusing from the fact that some of these renderings come from the root *just* and others from *right*), we see that something has been done for man which is definitely connected with redemption, as this in turn is connected with the death of Christ (14) (Rom. 3:25). It follows then that in his death, to Paul's thinking at least, Christ really influenced the relation of God to man and essentially modified what would otherwise have been God's action. This change in his relation and action toward man Paul called by the Greek words corresponding to reconciliation, and so it is absolutely incorrect to say that the Scriptures teach no reconciliation on the part of God.

I believe that a detailed examination of the teaching contained in the Petrine Epistles, the letter to the Hebrews, and the Johannine writings, would show that the same view of the effects of the death of Christ which Paul held is more or less clearly and forcibly presented in these other books. The Master's own teaching as to his giving his life in place of many is best understood as a declaration of the vicariousness of his death, and the Supper teaching connects the remission of sins with his death (15). But such a prolonged discussion as

(14) It scarcely needs to be noted that the "blood of Christ" meant his death. Westcott's contention that the blood is in some way his life has everywhere failed of acceptance among scholars of the first rank. The blood of Christ must have meant to Paul what we mean by his death.

(15) The declarations of Stevens in his greatest work on the New Testament are significant enough to deserve quotation. He says (The Theology of the New Testament, pp. 132, 133), "What could any person familiar with the Old Testament understand by a covenant in Christ's blood, or by the giving up of his life as a ransom, except a sacrificial death?" "It is now generally agreed that the apostolic theology regards Christ's death as directly related to the forgiveness of sins. . . . It thus fulfils a condition of sin's forgiveness. . . . . Is it credible that the first disciples, after hearing his instruction on the subject, should proceed to build up a subjective theory of his death which had no warrant in his own teaching? . . . Where is the subjectivity likely to be greatest—in the interpretation of the eye and ear witness or in the reconstruction of the moderns? Many adopt the former supposition; I cannot help preferring the latter."

might be necessary to prove the statements just made is unimportant for the present purpose. Having seen something of the thought of Paul, it is enough merely to submit for the consideration of the reader that from the pen of no other teacher whose words are recorded in the New Testament is there a single word which is inconsistent with the doctrine of Paul that by the death of Christ God's action as to sinners was rendered favorable—not a single word from the words which John the Baptist spoke of the Lamb of God laden with a world's sin to the words which another John wrote of the Lamb seeming as if it had been slain—so that the most that can be claimed is silence on the subject, and that a silence which is in no way necessarily antagonistic to the teaching in question, but easily explicable in harmony with it, while, indeed, much can in my judgment be naturally and reasonably interpreted only as teaching this doctrine.

Paul, at any rate, as has been shown, teaches that the death of Christ influenced the relation of God to men and his action in regard to them. Let it be our next task to see how much is implied in Paul's teaching on the subject and thus to restate it. I think that we may, that in fact we must, find in Paul's teaching the substance of the following propositions:

1. God is angry with sinners and treats them with disfavor because of their sin.

2. At the same time God treats penitent sinners with favor, and inflicts no penalty upon them, even though in past time this forbearance might have been taken as indifference to sin itself.

3. By virtue of what God does in Christ he provides a basis for the new favorable relation to the penitent sinner, this new relation of not dealing with sinners according to their sins being figuratively styled a reconciliation, which is, as we would say, a reconciliation of God to men.

4. That fact in the career of Christ which furnished the ground for this new relation was his death, his death being figuratively styled a propitiation or propitiatory offering.

5. Whatever else Paul may have recognized as the signifi-

cance of the death of Christ, he certainly taught that in it God had shown that he was not indifferent to sin, that he had made in it a display of his righteousness.

6. At the same time, what God has done in Christ quite as conclusively demonstrates his love, for the whole rested on and grew out of his gracious love to mankind in their sin and in spite of their sins (16).

7. Finally, negatively, in Pauline language and thought the "reconciliation" or propitiation, in modern language the "atonement," is a change on the part of God, not of men, being something which men "receive," already accomplished for them.

Thus Paul set forth, as combined in what he regarded as the fact of the Atonement, these other great facts and truths: the sin of man, the infinite love of a righteous and holy God, the suffering and death upon the cross of the eternal Son incarnate, thus the display of divine righteousness, hence the perfect consistency of the gracious forgiveness of sin, to which should be added that the fact of the Atonement, of love securing and assuring salvation by suffering, was made by Paul the ground of strong appeal to men for penitence and perseverance.

It is generally agreed among scholars competent to judge that, in a manner substantially as it has just been stated, the Atonemen was regarded and presented by Paul at least, and almost certainly by the rest of the original teachers of Christianity. To be sure, the name atonement has of late been used to cover other and quite different conceptions. While all must recognize the hopelessness of attempting to control language,especially the language of not overscrupulous, as not always overintelligent theological controversialists, it seems not unfitting to protest in passing that, if it were a commercial matter, the courts would certainly enjoin the use of the name atonement for any other idea than that which has been connected with it in Scripture and history. We regret while we jest at the use of "Christian

(16) It is, however, to be noted that nowhere does Paul assert, as for that matter no New Testament teacher ever asserts, that in the sending of Christ, in his death, or in any or all of his career the direct object was to show God's love. They do assert that love is demonstrated, but this is done indirectly, not directly.

Science" as a name for what is neither Christian nor scientific: we appreciate the importance of avoiding the use of the term "incarnation" in the discussion of the common indwelling of God in the souls of men: we have seen the confusion wrought by the various uses of the words "inspiration" and "resurrection:" in the judgment of the writer, it is of even more real and serious consequence that, whether we accept and hold to the Pauline and New Testament idea of the atonement or not, we should at all events use the word for that idea exclusively and only.

Throughout the Christian centuries the immense majority of Christians have intended to hold the view presented in the New Testament as to the significance, value and influence of the death of Christ. Yet none should be astonished, however clearly it may appear from the study of the history of doctrine that this doctrine has been misunderstood, perverted, added to; and also it ought not to need to be said that misunderstanding, perversion, or addition are none of them arguments of any weight whatever against this teaching. It ought to be that the Scripture teaching should be weighed and measured for itself alone, and what ought to be in the end will be.

Of course no great fact or truth can be long held by men without their reasoning about it, and it ought to be so. Given the motions of the heavenly bodies, and the Ptolemaic and Copernican theories successively appear. Given the inorganic universe, and we have physics and chemistry, the atomic theory and the end of it in the theory just developing of ions, a theory unintelligible to many older men. Given Christ's death, securing and assuring forgiveness according to the original documents of our faith, and men must reason about it. If atonement is a fact, there must needs be also theories of the atonement, answers to the instinctive questionings as to the "How?" and "Why?" And so it has been. In more or less consecutive order there have flourished theories that Christ's death was a ransom paid to Satan, that it was the payment of a debt of honor, that it was a governmental expedient, either in the way of an actual transfer of penalty from the guilty to the innocent, or in some

way serving the ends of penalty, even though not itself penalty, or that it was an expression of the nature of God, intended to satisfy the demands of his own nature rather than to serve governmental purposes, and these various conceptions are by different writers most diversely presented and combined. Of course the task of distinguishing and expounding and judging these theories is difficult, but perhaps it may safely be said that the theory which today has the least currency among theological teachers who deserve attention is the "penal substitution" theory, although strangely enough Stevens, in his work, "The Christian Doctrine of Salvation," practically confined his answer to the opposing theories to discussion of the difficulties of this theory.

Suppose that, without discussion of the respective advantages and disadvantages of other theories, some such statement as the following should be tentatively used as a basis for argument, namely: that, alike as the expression of his own intense abhorrence of sin, and also in order that none of his creatures should fail to know that he was not indifferent to sin, God took upon himself in the person of the Incarnate Son suffering even unto death on the cross of Calvary, in consequence of which he now inflicts no penalty on the penitent sinner, but rather receives him into favor, as he could not consistently have done had the Holy One never hung on Calvary.

Let us consider first the possible objections to this view. Perhaps someone will say at once that this theory involves the transfer of guilt and punishment, and that they are not transferable. But, while such an objection would lie against any "penal" theory, and to the mind of the writer would be decisive against its acceptance, yet it is to be noted that in the statement just offered there is no suggestion of the sort. The conception is not that punishment is transferred, but that it is rendered unnecessary. Because such suffering as Christ endured obviated such penal suffering as had been denounced against the sinner's sin, his suffering may reasonably be called substitutionary or vicarious, but the theory under consideration is not a "penal"

theory, but if there must be a name, in default of a better one, let it be called "vice-penal."

But we may be told that it involves the exaction of something from an innocent third party, and that that would be immoral. Now, no one would hold this theory who did not hold the incarnation, and others who discuss it should put themselves in their position. To be sure, if the incarnation were disproved, this theory would fall to the ground with it, but so would the so-called "ethical" theories. The death of Christ should then have no more influence and significance than the death of any other good and well-meaning man. But if we may argue on the basis of the incarnation, then there was no third party at all, but only the great party of the first part over against us sinners, the party of the second part. It can scarcely be called immoral, I take it, for God in his love to assume any suffering which he will in order that he may consistently carry out his purposes of grace.

Sometimes, however, the charge of immorality rests on a different basis, namely, that it is immoral to suggest that any sinner can ever escape any consequence of his sins, for he must himself pay his debt to the uttermost farthing. It should be a sufficient answer to remind ourselves that if Christianity is not a gospel of the remission of some consequences of sin, it is not a gospel of the divine forgiveness, and then it would not be a gospel at all. Surely it is not necessary to prove that forgiveness is not immoral. To deny it, substituting Karma for forgiveness, metamorphoses Christianity into Buddhism.

But it is said, in answer to the representation that there is a wrath of God which it needed the death on the cross to avert from the sinner, that such wrath is inconsistent with his love. No so. The error is on the other side, in holding that wrath must of necessity involve hate, in failing to see that it is perfectly consistent with infinite and eternal love to have the most tremendous indignation against sin which is conceivable and a fixed determination to punish the persistent sinner. Even

though it had been taught by unwise theologians (17), it certainly is nowhere said in Scripture that the death of Christ made God loving. On the contrary, it is constantly taught that it was the love of God which gave the Son to die. At the same time it is asserted that it is because of the death of Christ that it is consistent for the everloving God to act with favor instead of wrath toward penitent sinners. We do not measure the conception of the Apostles fairly until we bring to their words a definition of love which is consistent with wrath against sinners, and a definition of wrath which is consistent with love to sinners. And this is essential to the comprehension of any of the theories of the Atonement. We should recognize that all exalt the love of God (18), even though they may misapprehend the manner of its working. Let no one fancy that it was left for the nineteenth century to discover the love of God. It has been in every age the theme of theologians as well as the song of saints.

It has also been urged that any statement that the forgiveness of our sins is conditioned on the death of Christ is disproved by the fact that we are bidden freely to forgive. As we are bidden in response to confession simply to forgive our debtors, so, it is said, our moral nature forces us to think that God forgives (19). But in this two points are overlooked. One is that in our forgiveness of men, we nowhere and never

(17) It may perhaps be safely doubted that any theologian ever taught any such doctrine in view of the fact that Dean Farrar, in his "Symposium" article referred to above, in gathering all the accessible statements as to the death of Christ which would seem sure to offend the taste of the present day, fails to cite a single assertion which implies the thought that the death of Christ changes the hate of God to love.

(18) Dinsmore, in his suggestive book, "Atonement in Literature and Life," says (pp. 197-8), "Behind the bloodiest and most austere theories of penal satisfaction or legal substitution was the presupposition that it was God who opened the way and provided the means of atonement. Calvin quotes these words of Augustine with entire approval: 'God did not begin to love us when we were reconciled to him by the blood of his Son; but he loved us before the creation of the world.' "

(19) "The only difference between His treatment of offenders and that which He enjoins upon us is one which inevitably springs from the difference between our capacity and His." Tymms, "Christian Idea of Atonement," p. 78.

forgive sins as sins. We may forgive a sinner in so far as there has been any personal offense against us intermingled with his sin, but never the sin itself as sin. The cry of David is in form truer than is often recognized, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned," for sin as sin always is against God only. Consequently, as we can find no safe analogy in our relations because of their entire dissimilarity, to assert how God will deal with sinners, not simply as personal offenders against himself but as sinners, it would be necessary to transcend all human experience and to solve the problem by purely *a priori* reasoning. But, in any case, the difficulty raised is manufactured and wholly unreal, for in every theory it is involved that God makes no demand whatever on the sinner himself or on any other being whatever as a condition of his forgiveness. Whatever may have been essential, he has himself provided. To the sinner comes forgiveness, free forgiveness, simple forgiveness. If we pray, "Forgive as we have forgiven," his answer is "Forgive as you have been forgiven."

But with a slight turn of the kaleidoscope comes the objection that if God provided the means of reconciliation it is absurd to talk of his being reconciled, because, as it has sometimes been put in the hearing of the writer, "A being who is willing to be reconciled does not need to be reconciled." If this were a real absurdity, it would be surprising that with all the thought which has through the centuries been laboriously given to the subject, everybody, apostle, saint, exegete, philosopher, theologian, has till now failed to appreciate it. But if we pass from the figurative presentation of the case as it is found in Scripture, to state the thought in non-figurative language, we shall see, as we have earlier seen, that the word reconcile as used by Paul meant simply and only to modify, not sentiment but relation, not character but action, and so the epigram must be made to read, "A being who is willing to modify his course of action, if on any ground he can do so consistently, does not need any ground for it, but can modify his action without any justifying element," a statement whcih would be manifestly absurd. The epigram loses its force when its terms are defined.

Another objection of a quite different character is that if Christ has so suffered that it is needless for any sinner to be punished, then it would be unjust for any sinner to be punished, for in thus doing God would be exacting double. Having received the equivalent of penalty, God may not then inflict penalty. But while perhaps this objection may fairly be urged against certain ways in which the atonement has been presented, it certainly does not lie against the idea as it is presented in Scripture or as it has been stated in this paper. It will be remembered that no quantitative suggestion has been made: there has been no hint of so much for so much. The thought has been only that Christ's death had in some way so displayed the righteousness of God that in virtue of it he can consistently forgive. But so far as men can see, and as it is in no way absurd to hold, the same display of divine righteousness would be imperative before the sin of a single sinner could be remitted, and yet this display would not be insufficient if the sin of the world, yea, even of the universe, were remitted.

There has also been more or less, in any case too much, theorizing about the atonement which has justified the objection that it was merely mechanical: if not actually immoral, at least unmoral. Crude, hard expressions, however harmful they may be, are as unavoidable as they are regrettable, but of course thinkers should be no more repelled than attracted by the error of superficial talkers. Unreality and unmorality are the twin faults of all mechanical theories, but on the other hand reality and morality are not the characteristics of "moral influence" theories alone. Indeed, any theory which limits itself to an influence upon men for the death of Christ evades some of the great realities, guilt, penalty, pardon, or deals with them in only a partial manner.

It is sometimes urged that the Godward efficacy of the death of Christ is not "preachable." Did anyone ever hear or read of this as a difficulty on the part of a man who accepted it as true? It is scarcely surprising that a man who does not hold it cannot preach it, of course he ought to find that impossible;

but how is that any real argument against the view in question?

Finally, we hear that the atonement as taught in Scripture is unacceptable to the "modern mind," so that an eminent theologian has been obliged to devote a volume to an attempt to reconcile the two. Granted that the men who bear most strongly the stamp of this age are averse to any theory and to the fact itself of the atonement, what follows? Before we make our message over to suit the prepossessions of those to whom we preach, ought we not carefully to settle which is nearer right, the message or the men? None of us can accurately estimate the influence upon our thinking of the age of which we are a part. It is our intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, bringing us the life-giving oxygen, at the same time filling our lungs with hostile germs. What are some of the characteristics of the half-century which has lately closed? As a result of the work of Biblical critics there has come to be not only widespread uncertainty as to the authority and value of the Scriptures, but even in some cases an apparent prejudice against any conceptions regnant there. As a result of the activity of Ritschl (20) and his many scarcely less able followers, there is a hostility on the part of many who do not even know of Ritschl against any consistent philosophy in religion. As a natural consequence of the discovery of the principle of evolution, this principle has been applied beyond reason and forced into spheres where its application is as impossible as it is unproved. The pendulum has swung so far that the moral character of evil has been obscured in the minds of many; and sin is no longer abominable and hateful in their eyes, but only a step in the development of good, unpleasant to be sure, in certain relations at least, but involuntary and un-

(20) It may also be noted that Ritschl himself, while recognizing the Scriptural basis of the doctrine of the atonement, was peculiarly indifferent or rather hostile to this doctrine. Stalker, in his just published lectures ("The Atonement," p. 122), couples him with McLeod Campbell and says, "Both appear to have been comparatively insensible to the element of sin which we call guilt, and, therefore, they were also unsympathetic to the process by which this is put away."

avoidable. And, again, if I may be allowed the expression, humanity has of late "found itself." This is due partly to evolutionary thought which has emphasized the race relation (21) even at the cost of individuality and responsibility, partly perhaps to the binding of the world together by the many cords which peculiarly unite the nations now, and partly to a fashion of thought which glorifies man to the point of extravagance, which you may trace in tones as unlike as those of Comte and Ingersoll, Walt Whitman and Foster. When all this is taken into account, is it surprising that the offence of the cross has not ceased, but that the atonement is widely unpalatable? In every age there has been antagonism to Christianity on the part of those to whom it was presented; in every age there has been an unconscious warping of the message because they that preached were themselves men of their age; but never till this generation has it been soberly proposed by men claiming to be conscious of light and leading that the message of the cross should be deliberately modified and minified to meet the views of those at variance with the faith which it has heretofore been invariably held was "once for all delivered to the saints."

Rather, over against the drifting current of much, though far from all, popular thought in these days, unified and by some glorified as "the modern mind," and by others as "the Christian Consciousness," there may well be urged as strong argument the long and wide, not to say the continuous and universal acceptance of the fact of the reconciliation of God to men in the dying Christ. This may fairly be considered the true Christian Consciousness, and hailed as what other generations called the *"testimonium Spiritus Sancti."* The promised guidance of the Holy Spirit has been in our day claimed as the cause of every shift in the theological breezes, and they have been many. While the right and duty of private judgment is to be insisted on, is it not most reasonable to expect this guidance to appear in the consensus of the Church as a whole?

The view which was presented above has also the advantage

(21) Cf. Denney, "Death of Christ," p. 306.

that it is Scriptural as well as catholic. Nor is this an element of facile but at bottom unworthy appeal. If it were granted, at least for purposes of argument, that Christian doctrine has been a blunder from the beginning till now, in kernel as well as in husk, it would certainly remain to be shown how it will be possible, if it were reasonable or desirable, to perpetuate under the name of Christianity what has not only broken with its whole historic past, but has at the same time consciously cut loose from its original and basal historical documents.

Another strong reason for holding that the sufferings at Calvary sustained a peculiar, a unique relation to the sins of men, is found in the manner in which they were regarded and undergone by Jesus himself. Long before the end, when approaching the steep ascent to Jerusalem, he was so manifestly and strangely affected that his disciples in awe, the throng in fear, fell back from him and left him to walk the road alone. While still in the Temple his perturbed spirit wrestled with the thought of praying to the Father to save him from the coming hour. In Gethsemane the prayer that the cup might pass was offered in such distress of mind that it drove the blood through the pores of the skin. Upon the cross, after hours of silence which doubtless veiled such agony of soul as we may not imagine, he at last burst into the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Now to hold that fear of dying, anticipation of physical suffering, however acute or prolonged, disappointment at being seemingly deserted to his enemies, any or all of these or similar emotions, could have resulted in what is told of Jesus is simply incredible. If, with Sabatier (22) we say of what he calls "The drama of Calvary" (the phrase is noteworthy and suggestive) that "Whatever the grandeur and sublimity of this drama, it was not . . . isolated, . . . it takes its place among all the successive acts of negation and all the martyrdoms inspired by the same feeling and tending toward the same object. . . . . There is not a single victory of good but demands its victims, nor a single progress but the ransom must be paid for it. The work of Christ ceases, then, to be isolated"—

(22) "Atonement," pp. 130-1.

if we speak thus, must we not explain why Jesus did not meet even death itself, as so many of his followers have met it, with a smile of faith and a song of triumph? This view puts the Master on a plane of fortitude and faith far below innumerable heroes and martyrs, "men and boys, the matron and the maid," who have gone to the rack, the stake, the very cross itself undaunted and cheerful. That Jesus should have shrunk from it, obliges us to search for something unparalelled in its nature. May we not hold that, surrounded by sinners, himself the victim of sin, the sinless one entered by the power of sympathy fully into the moral condition of men his brethren, lived over the sin of sinners, appreciated as only one who had not sinned could appreciate its vileness and foulness, felt its heinousness, saw how it had forfeited the favor of God and set at nought even his love, until the spirit of Jesus thus bearing the sin of the sinner, of all sinners, of the world of sinners, saw as none other ever had seen or could see the horror of the position of one on whom rests the wrath of God, and, absorbed in this alone, cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" This conception of the suffering on the cross would go far to explain what else seems inexplicable, namely, the shrinking of horror with which Jesus regarded and endured it, and at the same time it becomes plain that such suffering may serve we know not fully what purposes in the will of God, in which will we are sanctified by Christ's sacrificial offering of himself.

Indeed, not only is the attitude of Jesus toward his death inexplicable unless it was a making of him who knew no sin to be sin that we might be the righteousness of God in him, but also the fundamental fact of the Incarnation becomes equally inexplicable and incredible. Great as is the value of words such as were spoken by him who spoke as never man spoke, great as is the significance and power of the perfect example, yet when we measure, so far as it is possible to measure them, the unspeakableness of the Father's gift, the tremendousness of the "Kenosis," the depth of the humiliation involved in manhood, servitude, death, yea, upon the cross, we cannot see the reasonableness of it all, unless it was that he might taste

death for every man that God might justly justify the believer. And this conviction that without the atonement the incarnation becomes inexplicable is confirmed by the further conviction drawn from study of church history, that the thought of Christ as divine does not long abide after the thought of Christ as atoning has been banished (23).

The thought of Christ suffering to atone peculiarly exalts the love of God. Strangely enough the opposite is often asserted, and it is held that God's love is exalted if it is held that a loving God would find it simple consistently to forgive, and that his pardon cost him nothing. In answer it needs only to be urged that, while we would not dare to imagine obstacles to forgiveness in order to exalt the love which yet forgives, still it should need no proof that love overcoming obstacles is seen as mightier according to the greatness of these obstacles. We have a measure for love when we see that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, and that in Christ on Calvary divine love was dying to save men. It may be added that unless this is seen love is not really seen. To suffer but to suffer, to suffer merely to show love, does not show love. There must be a worthy purpose, there must be a correspondent accomplishment,—it must be fact, not "drama"—or the attempt to display becomes mere display, theatrical and false.

While thus the love of God is exalted, at the same time in the shadow of the cross the greatness of sin is seen as nowhere else. Where sin is not regarded as exceedingly sinful, the atonement is of course not accepted even in theory. It is to be feared that where the atonement is denied the sense of sin lessens. Is it not almost with a chill at heart that one reads such words as these from an honored theological teacher (24), "We may be sure that the Father in heaven will not unduly con-

(23) After the above had been penned the following confirmation was noted in Denney's "Death of Christ," p. 320: "It is a common idea that Socinianism (or Unitarianism) is specially connected with the denial of the Incarnation. It began historically with the denial of the Atonement. It is with the denial of the Atonement that it always begins, and it cannot be too clearly pointed out that to begin here is to end, sooner or later, with putting Christ out of the Christian religion altogether."

(24) Bowne, "Atonement," p. 100.

cern himself about the debt of the past when his prodigals return to their Father's house"? As for love so for sin, a measure is needed. Measure it by the facts that it cost man the averted face of the loving Father which it cost the Son the flesh and the cross to do away with, then sin is seen to be exceedingly sinful. Yet

"While his death my sin displays
In all its blackest hue,
Such is the mystery of grace—
It seals my pardon, too!"

It remains to be urged, lastly, that this doctrine is more ethical than the theories sometimes called "ethical." Those who hold that the death of Christ conditioned the action of God according to his own wise and loving plan do not deny that the death of Christ exerts a moral influence over men. Nay, rather, we assert it, we emphasize it, we use it, we claim that we strengthen it. The choice is not between asserting an influence over men only on the one hand, or over God only on the other, for no one holds the latter position. The choice is between holding that Christ in dying has power over men only, or holding that he, dying, has power both with God and with men and has prevailed.

The view of the atonement which is at once Scriptural and orthodox (25) is built upon the experiences and convictions of the holy men of old in whom it is generally recognized that the Spirit peculiarly wrought: it answers to the aspirations which sacrifice universally expressed: it is buttressed by the intuitions, the fears, the hopes embodied in those masterpieces of literature in all the ages which have dealt with the trage-

(25) Stevens says: "Paul wrought out a definite theory on the subject of the relation of the death of Christ to the forgiveness of sins and the orthodoxy of all ages has been a reproduction, with variations, of that theory." "Christian Doctrine of Salvation," pp. 106-7.

dies, the tragedy of sin (26): it is confirmed by the reasonings of the greatest philosophers and theologians: it dries the tears of penitents: it has inspired the most impassioned songs of our hymnody: it has filled to overflowing the rapt visions of mystics: it constantly incites saints to greater saintliness: it comforts heart and soul not in life only, but even in death's dread hour: in all this the thought of Christ reconciling God and the world by bearing the sin of the world on the cross proves its ethical power to be incomparably great.

No element in the propititiatory view of the atonement weakens the manward dynamic of the cross. Faith is no less spirit-

(26) Dinsmore in his book, "Atonement in Literature and Life," has shown what confirmation the thought of the vicariousness of Christ's death has received at he hands of the masters of literature, using among others Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, George Eliot, Hawthorne, and, in part, he sums up his work by saying: "It has often been charged that the theologians have woven their theories of the atonement out of distorted views of God, poor exegesis, and mistaken conceptions of the nature of the divine government. Doomed by their unnatural origin, these dogmas are malformed and unworthy children of the brain, unfit to be domiciled. On the contrary, it can be shown that every interpretation of the cross which has entered vitally into the life of the Christian church rests upon a principle which has received recognition by some world-famous mind in literature" (p. 173). The whole passage is extremely significant, but only the following may here be quoted in addition: "The evidential value of this fact is of superlative importance. It proves that the chief expositions of reconcilement between God and man have come out of the burning heart of humanity, and are not unwarranted conclusions of minds still in the twilight of religious knowledge" (p. 174).

On the other hand Clow, in his late extremely suggestive book, "The Cross in Christian Experience," acutely shows how it is the lack of the redeeming cross which makes the hopelessness of "The Scarlet Letter." "The strange thing about that book is that Hawthorne does not seem to have heard of the Cross. The fatal flaw on the story, even as a work of the imagination, is this, that he depicts a preacher of an evangelic gospel who does not seek healing in the Cross. But he is true to the sombre fact that Dimmesdale finds no healing otherwise at all. He is driven by the agony of his conscience to open confession at last. But his confession alters nothing, atones for nothing, and Hawthorne has no refuge from the dilema in which the sinner is placed, except death. Whether this claim of the Cross be resented or not, this remains clear: that to reverse the effects of sin [one of the chief of which, in Dimmesdale's case, was the sense that God was estranged] it is the one and only power" (pp. 125-6).

ual and transforming, if through faith we receive the propitiation which God set forth in Christ's blood. The love of God is, as has been said, only exalted and thus intensified as a motive by the thought of love's sacrifice to death. Christ is no less an example of patience when we think of him as suffering silently, the just for the unjust. Duty is not narrowed when we hold that one died for all that they who live should live no longer for themselves; nay, rather, it is broadened by the thought that even the Son of Man not only lived to serve, but died as a propitiation for the sins of the world. And, finally, what other warning could rival in impressiveness the thought that the Christian sinning willfully has trampled under foot the Son of God and has accounted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, a defiled thing? If the thought of the manward power of the cross is ethical, still more ethical is the added thought of its Godward efficacy. If anywhere the single thought of the influence upon men of Christ dying has seemed to work greater things than the larger thought of power both manward and Godward, believe me, the part is not greater than the whole; if that has moral power, this more.