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CONCEPTS OF JUDGEMENT AND SALVATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
THE WORK OF THOMAS ERSKINE OF LINLATHEN, JOHN McLEOD CAMPBELL
AND F.D. MAURICE. By Zillah Anne Warren.

In the introductory section the key concepts of judgement and salvation are outlined, and the problems of holding together these two apparently mutually exclusive functions are noted. Both salvation and judgement are traditional and fundamental features of Christian theology, and the resultant paradox is codified in the creeds of the Church. Basically, the dilemma is found to have a biblical foundation, and is traced back to the different soteriological views which are evident in the New Testament, in particular to the fusion of traditional Jewish eschatology with the concept of the saviour-god.

The individual approaches of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, John McLeod Campbell and F.D. Maurice to the question of salvation are then described, attention being directed towards their treatment of the work of atonement and the eschatological element in soteriology. The systems which they advanced are subsequently evaluated with respect to the degree of success which they achieved in combining the judgemental and salvific aspects of the restoration of man's relationship with God, and the way in which they attempted to present a cohesive understanding of the whole soteriological process. Particular difficulties with either their methodology or the internal consistency of their theories are analysed in terms of the effect they have on the resultant strength of the systems devised.

In conclusion, the problems involved in combining the datum of man's continuing moral accountability with the concept of salvific action by God are recognized and traced to the conflicting biblical evidence. The attempt to relate the various soteriological views of the New Testament is held to be unproductive for the resolution of the problem, and the alternative method of identifying and re-interpreting the main assertions which underlie the contradictory systems is preferred as a more hopeful means of resolving the paradox. Erskine, Campbell and Maurice are shown to have made use of this method in order to deal with the difficulties which are implicit in the doctrines on which they were working, and the extent to which it enabled them to overcome the problems and clarify the issues involved in the Christian view of salvation is assessed.

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WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE WORK OF
THOMAS ERSKINE OF LINLATHEN,
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AND
F.D. MAURICE.

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ZILLAH ANNE WARREN

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CONCEPTS OF JUDGEMENT AND SALVATION

Religions which hold a belief in God as a perfect moral being who is involved with the life of his creation are bound to have an awareness of man's moral accountability to God, and to believe that all man's actions have an abiding significance for his relationship with God. Often such religions are also aware of the question of the imperfectibility of human life, and this poses a problem in the light of what they hold about the fact that man is answerable to God for the way in which he lives. On the one hand there is the idea of a righteous God who makes moral demands on his subjects, and on the other hand there is man, who seems to be incapable, at least by his own efforts, of becoming righteous.

This is the dilemma of any morally heightened religion, and much depends on what is understood to be true of the character of God in the resolution of this problem. If God is held to be a God of love, one who wishes to be in a relationship of love with men, then it is possible to put forward the view that he will take the initiative in restoring the relationship which has been marred by sin, and that man's accountability to God for his wrongdoing will be set within the context of God's saving activity on his behalf. In this case there would exist a tension between man's responsibility before God, and God's saving initiative. The fact that man has moral responsibility implies that he will be subject to some kind of assessment to decide what use he has made of it, yet the presence of God's activity to save man suggests that it is on the action taken on his behalf that his salvation rests.

It is difficult, therefore, to see how there can be a place for judgement in a scheme which aims to resolve the dilemma of a morally heightened religion by introducing the concept of salvific action taken by God.

Christianity is a religion in which this paradox is exemplified. The Old Testament background, with its concept of the covenant relationship between creator and people, testifies to the fact that man is answerable to God for the way in which he lives, and makes it clear that the choices a man makes directly affect his relationship with God. This is carried through to the New Testament, where it is joined by the proclamation that God has restored the relationship impaired by sin through the work of Christ. The barrier of sin is understood to have been removed, yet the threat of judgement is still a reality, and can be seen to be firmly established within Christian tradition. It is difficult to hold together the idea of complete salvation in Christ with that of a future reckoning, unless this judgement is to have no more importance than that of a merely declaratory act vindicating the sufficiency of the work of Christ. If, however, any action taken by God in the matter of our salvation is provisional, then there might be a case for suggesting that man would retain his responsibility, even though the action taken in the process of his reconciliation with God was not entirely his own. Even though man may be pardoned for sins he has committed, he does not automatically at the same time lose his desire for sin, and so he is not fully at one with God. Using the terms of present justification and future judgement, M. Goguel outlined man's position in this way: 'Si le chrétien justifié est devenu spirituel, ce n'est pas encore totalement.

Il continue à vivre dans la chair et à subir sa pression qui le pousse au péché. Il n'est pas devenu incapable de pécher. Il n'a reçu que les gages de l'Esprit et d'une manière telle que s'il manque de vigilance il retombera dans la vie de la chair'.¹

Yet it must be noted that if man continues to bear the weight of his own responsibility, anything that Christ can be said to have done on his behalf must be strictly limited and relative.

If salvation has only been partially won, the question arises as to whether it can be said to have been won at all in any real sense, for it is difficult to evaluate the effect of a partial act of salvation on man's relationship with God.

The idea of judgement, in both its present and eschatological aspects, is central to the Christian tradition, as it is bound to be in a religion which lays so much emphasis on the nature of man's accountability to God, and yet there is also to be found in Christian teaching a great deal of stress on the fact of present justification through Christ. Theories have been advanced to try to explain the work of Christ, but for the most part these have failed to take into account the element of judgement when considering their doctrine of the Cross, and in general it seems to be the case that the idea of judgement has not been related to Christ's saving work, in spite of the fact that it is intrinsic to any framework of salvation put forward within the context of a religion that recognizes moral accountability to God. That both the work of atonement and also that of judgement have a distinctive and established place in any scheme

1. M. Goguel, 'Le caractère du salut dans la théologie paulienne' in The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology, ed. W.D. Davies and D. Daube, Cambridge, C.U.P., 1956, p.327.

of salvation must be conceded if justice is to be done to the twin elements of man's helpless alienation from God and also his moral accountability to God. Theories which lay emphasis on one of these and fail to see the relevance of the other have disregarded important facts of man's relationship with God, and as doctrines of salvation they are deficient and imbalanced.

Much depends on the understanding of the concepts of judgement and salvation in any given system of doctrine, especially with regard to the way in which they relate to each other and affect each other's work, and it is proposed to take the opportunity in this brief introductory section of the thesis to present the key concepts. Both salvation and judgement are capable of being understood in widely differing ways. For example, there is the question of what exactly it is man is to be saved from. Some have taken salvation to mean the cancelling of the punishment justly due to sin, so that man no longer has to pay the penalty of his wrongdoing. Others have objected to this because it appears to be too superficial a view of salvation, which bears little relation to the real nature of moral accountability, which has to do with man's responsibility for his damaged nature, and not simply answerable for the cost of the damage. If salvation is to be understood more in terms of the restoration of man's relationship with God, it is not sufficient to say that he has to pay the price of disobedience. To take the view that the mere fact of the cancellation of any punishment due will of itself reunite men with God is to misrepresent the basic problem of man's alienation from God. Salvation must, in order to recreate the ideal relationship, realign man's will with that of God, and this is something which goes beyond any threat of punishment.

Another issue which needs to be considered is the question of whether salvation is something towards which man progresses until he achieves it (or alternatively, it is achieved for him) and after which point there is no further room for development, or whether it is rather a process within which man progresses. On the one hand it can be seen as a state of being beyond or within which there is no possibility of change, and on the other it appears as something which of its very nature brings about change. Against the former concept it can be argued that it makes salvation a status which has little to do with the developmental nature of man's relationship with God. A relationship is not primarily a status, although it is true to say that it may involve status, and salvation should be considered in relation to the quality of the union between God and man rather than in connection with any resultant status this confers. Also, since any relationship is an ongoing, dynamic thing, this rather precludes any notion of salvation being a static concept. Relationships by nature are not static. There is closeness and distance within every relationship between persons, and if God is to be regarded as personal, this will also apply to the union between him and man. Even though a given relationship may be established and stable, it will certainly undergo changes, however subtle, as it deepens and progresses, or even grows less in intensity. Growing into God, the process of being saved, may be a preferable way in which to look at the question of salvation to those methods which do not take sufficient notice of the relational context in which the operation is conducted.

Another aspect of the problem of salvation that should be alluded to at this point is the time at which man is understood to be

reunited with God. Man can be thought to realize his redemption at any given point in his existence, and some have argued that this occurs during the course of his physical life, whereas others have taken the view that he can be reunited with God at any period of his entire existence, be this here in this world or beyond physical death. Traditionally it has been thought that the condition of man's earthly life determines the condition of his relationship with God after death, and that salvation is something that must be entered into within the bounds of earthly existence or not at all, since there will be no opportunity after death for any new response to God. The parable of Dives and Lazarus has been used to illustrate the fact that there is no chance of re-establishing a relationship with God after death if this has not already been achieved during one's earthly existence, and life after death is seen to be largely determined by the way in which one has accepted Christ here and now. Werner Elert, who takes this view, expresses it thus: 'Death finalizes the difference between earthly existencies. Beyond this boundary there is no longer a possibility for subsequent corrections. As you die, thus you remain. In other words, physical death is God's act of judgement inasmuch as it pins us down irrevocably to the achievements of our earthly life'.² D.Z. Phillips echoes this point of view thus: 'The will of the dead cannot be changed; it is fixed and unchanging. Here, the predicates are eternal predicates. When a man dies, what he is, the state of his soul, is fixed forever.'

2. Werner Elert, The Last Things, St. Louis and London: Concordia, 1974, p.17. Excerpted and translated from the original German Der Christliche Glaube, Hamburg, 1956.

There are no acts of volition, no developments, among the dead. For the believer, his eternal destiny at death is determined by his relationship to God'.³ To revert to Elert's contribution, the reason why he does not allow for the possibility of any change after death is because he refuses to consider the feasibility of any intermediate state after physical death in which one might be cleansed of sins committed in this life. He takes the view that such a state would have to be a bridge between time and eternity, and makes the point that the intermediate state could not have a time-scale of its own because physical death seals off time, and argues that neither can it belong in the sphere of eternity, since an eternal intermediate state is a contradiction in terms. Elert clearly thinks that change in a context of eternity is impossible, and this is why he has to forego an intermediate state for the development of man's relationship with God. This is open to question, as is also his presupposition that salvation is a fixed point at which one arrives, and beyond which one cannot go, since if it were true that spiritual development was an intrinsic part of salvation, inseparable from it, then we should have to think not so much in terms of an intermediate state in which this might take place as of a growth and development that would be co-extensive with our relationship with God.

Clearly, such a concept introduces problems of its own. If we wish to take the view that a relationship with God is an ongoing, dynamic thing which cannot occur in a context in which there is no opportunity of change, we need to ask whether it is possible for this kind of relationship to take place in an

3. D.Z. Phillips, Death and Immortality, London: Macmillan, 1970, p.57.

environment which is timeless, as life after death is held to be. The question before us is whether time is vital for a developing relationship, and whether its absence necessarily implies that a relationship will stay at the same stage for ever. It is difficult to see how change could be observed or measured if there were not the presence of time to help in this. If, however, change is not limited to environments subject to time, or if life after death does after all have a time-scale of its own, then there are possibilities for spiritual development to take place after death, and the restoration of man's relationship with God may be open to him as much after death as before it. I.T. Ramsey drew attention to the difficulties involved in this sphere, and quotes the comments of Professor Kneale on the subject: 'I can attach no meaning to the word "life" unless I am allowed to suppose that what has life acts. No doubt the word "acts" may itself be taken in a wide sense. Perhaps it is not essential to the notion of life that a living being should produce changes in the physical world. But life must at least involve some incidents in time, and if, like Boethius, we suppose the life in question to be intelligent, then it must involve also awareness of the passage of time. To act purposefully is to act with thought of what will come about after the beginning of the action'.⁴ Ramsey points out that Kneale would therefore have to conclude that 'timelessness' and 'life' are two incompatible notions, and remarks that the more we try to remove the temporal reference from the concept of the eternal, the more we drain the

4. W.C. Kneale, Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, (1960-61) p.99, cited by I.T. Ramsey in 'The Concept of the Eternal' in The Christian Hope, S.P.C.K. Theological Collections No.13, London:S.P.C.K., 1970, p.37.

phrase 'eternal life' of meaning. On this view, it would appear that eternal life requires a time-scale of its own if the word 'life' is to have much meaning.

However, it has been noted that 'eternal' need not designate 'endless' or 'without limit of any kind'. Indeed it has been seen that if 'eternal life' means the kind of life which has no beginning and no end, then it would be an impossibility for us, since although we might be able to enter into something which has no end, there is no way in which we can share something which has no beginning, since we are finite beings with a very definite point at which we come into existence. It should also be noted that to look into the question of eternal life in this way gives no indication of its purpose, and as a result such a means of defining eternal life is therefore defective. Many have insisted instead that it should be seen in close connection with the quality of man's relationship with God, whether this takes place in this life or the next. The striving for eternal life could be concerned with the transition from one quality of relationship with God to a more intense form of that relationship, in which a greater degree of harmony is achieved between God and man. These comments must serve to introduce the issues involved in the concept of eternal life. Later it will be shown how various schemes of salvation deal with the different problems and how they explain the stages in man's relationship with God.

When we turn to the issue of moral accountability to God we find that we encounter related problems of understanding what life beyond physical death will involve. If man is to be justly held responsible for his relationship with God it needs to be established beyond all reasonable doubt that the entity one becomes after physical

death - assuming that one does indeed continue to exist at all - is continuous with and identifiable as the person one was before death. Unless it can be said that there is continuity of personality, there is no sense in which a being after death can be rightly held responsible for the life he lived on this earth. It is necessary to be aware of the fact that there are problems involved with asserting that this relationship continues through death and beyond in the light of the difficulty in guaranteeing that man is, in some sense, identical with the being who had a relationship with God in the course of his earthly life. There is a related difficulty in assuming that a being without the physical capacity to sense and respond to his environment would still be aware of the state in which he found himself after death, and would be capable of response. Once again, this will be commented upon and developed later, but for the present it must suffice to outline the fact that there is a problem involved. In addition, it must be said that in the above exposition it has been rather taken for granted that man's salvation is worked out in the context of his relationship with God - this personal connection is difficult to establish or justify, not least because of the difficulty in establishing the personal nature of God. This problem has not been overlooked, but it would not be altogether helpful for the purposes of this thesis to debate the issue at length. It is intended in this study to examine the implications of the traditional features of Christian thought regarding man's salvation; the datum of man's personal relationship with God is accepted as perhaps the most evidently fundamental basis for Christian belief, and as the underlying assumption of many formulated doctrines. It may be that Christian theology proceeds from an illusion,

but this is beyond the scope of this thesis and deserves to be treated as a separate issue, although its relevance for the whole concept of soteriology is recognized, and the contingency of doctrines of salvation in relation to this datum is clear.

To turn to the other concept related to the process of salvation, namely that of judgement, it will be found that, as with the notion of eternal life, there are different elements involved, and that there are several ways of understanding what judgement entails, both for the one who does the judging, and also for the one who is judged. To a very great extent, what one holds to be true of God's judgement will stem from one's image of the character of God, since character determines actions, and a being is bound to express facts about its basic nature through the way in which it acts. It needs to be noted that in speaking about any one of God's functions, claims are implicitly being made about his character at the same time. Perhaps the first thing that one associates with judgement is not actually the act of judgement itself, or the activity of discriminating between sets of evidence, but rather the consequence of that process in the appointing of an appropriate sentence upon the action or state of affairs one is called upon to judge. Judgement is generally thought of in terms of either approval or condemnation, more commonly the latter, and its primary function of discriminating is largely ignored, all the attention being focused on the act of passing sentence, which is in fact the corollary of judgement rather than the act of judgement itself. When this observation is applied to the judgement of God it will be seen that what is of importance is the act of evaluation with regard to the relationship which exists between man and God. Any assigning of penalties is entirely secondary

to this, and may not be the only appropriate response to the discovery that the relationship has not been maintained by man. To assert that God must invariably condemn man for his sin is to presuppose much about God's character, and also to miss the point that there might be other equally effective ways of dealing with the fact of sin. For instance, judgement, with its function of distinguishing between good and evil, could just as easily become a tool for education as a weapon for condemnation. It could be a useful instrument of clarification which could be used to show unambiguously just how things stood between God and individual men.

A related issue is the question of the stage at which any judgement takes place. Judgement does not merely entail the thought of a final assessment that occurs beyond death. Since it is intrinsic to the relational context it may be thought of as the continuous accompaniment to man's ongoing relationship with God. If, however, judgement is to be cast in the role of a final act that freezes at a given point man's relationship with God and evaluates it before assigning an appropriate sentence, then it is difficult to see how such a process could be educative, or continuous with man's present relationship with God. The fact that it is absolute implies that no more acts of judgement follow it, and so it cannot be seen as a stage in man's spiritual development. It effectively marks the end of development, and is therefore forced to declare the man under judgement good or evil. There is no point for absolute judgement in ascribing to man relative goodness or sinfulness, since there is no room for him to do anything to change the situation. Krister Stendahl is one who favours this view. He is of the opinion that: 'one of the aspects of the eschatological crisis is exactly this -

that now there is no grey, there is only black and white'.⁵

He writes further that according to the New Testament, 'one cannot be more or less Christian just as one cannot be more or less holy or more or less justified. One can be "bad or good", but one cannot be "more or less". Here one either is or isn't'.⁶ If, on the other hand, judgement is relative, and is a means by which one's spiritual progress is monitored, then one's state might well be able to be categorized as 'grey', as opposed to the 'black and white' of absolute sinfulness or goodness, and progress from one's state of relative 'greyness' would be a possibility under this kind of judgement.

Allied to this is the question of whether there will be degrees in salvation to correspond with the possibility of degrees in judgement. It may be that some will be involved in a closer relationship with God than others, and will be more 'saved' as a result. This is not an uncommon view, and it is one which finds biblical support. Stendahl, for instance, cites 1 Cor. 3 and Mt. 5.17-20 in evidence for his view that to the New Testament: 'it is not an alien thought that there will be those who just slip in, but there will be glorious heroes around'.⁷

The concept of salvation needs to be seen in its twin aspects of the work of atonement and of judgement, but it does sometimes happen that when theories are advanced to explain how man is reconciled to God, they take no account of the question of judgement

5. Krister Stendahl, 'Justification and the Last Judgement', in Lutheran World, 1961, Vol.8, p.2.

6. *ibid.*

7. *ibid.* p.6.

either in its present or its eschatological form. If, as is the case with some doctrines of the atonement the work of Christ is seen as all sufficient, the status of judgement is reduced to a declaratory act affirming the effectiveness of the Cross, and this does not appear to give due recognition to the fact that it is an established feature of Christian tradition. It will be shown that there is a paradox in holding together the work of Christ and the question of man's continuing moral accountability, and that this difficulty can be traced back to the biblical evidence, so that those theories which fail to reconcile these twin elements of salvation are in fact only perpetuating what is fundamentally a biblical dilemma. It may be that there need not be a clash of interests between theories of the atonement and the implications of the concept of judgement, but in order for these two things to be able to co-exist it may be vital that we adopt new forms of thought about the process of salvation with regard to the questions of how we are reconciled to God, the context in which this occurs, and the fact of our moral accountability. The concepts of atonement, salvation, eternal life and judgement are inextricably linked, and should so be, since they all pertain to our ongoing relationship with God, but it may be that we shall have to give new content to each of these ideas if we wish to see them working together as a cohesive understanding of what images man must entertain when thinking of the process of being reunited with God.

It is proposed that we shall consider these issues mainly in relation to the work of three theologians of the nineteenth century to see whether in their treatment of the work of Christ they recognized the problem of man's moral accountability in the

established concept of judgement, and if so, how they dealt with it. The biblical paradox mentioned above will be examined to see how it can affect the production of a systematic doctrine of salvation, and the concepts of eternal life and judgement will be analysed to see if they can be given a different interpretation which would allow for greater scope in the attempts to re-state the nature of the process of salvation. The alternative systems put forward by Erskine, Campbell and Maurice to try to avoid some of the difficulties encountered in traditional statements of the fact of redemption will subsequently be described, and the degree of success achieved in resolving the problems evaluated.

THE BIBLICAL DILEMMA

It would be a difficult task to present one cohesive doctrine of atonement and eschatology which would cover all the differences of outlook and emphasis which are found in the New Testament, but Christian teaching, as formulated in the Creeds of the Church, brings to light a paradox concerning the subject of salvation. On the one hand there is a statement of belief in a saviour-God who by his death on the Cross makes possible the reconciliation of God and men, and on the other hand there is evidence of a judgement which is to apply to all men. This Christian belief in the judgement of the dead constitutes a fundamental discrepancy relative to the doctrine of salvation through the death of Christ.

The Nicene Creed states this paradox in an easily identifiable form. It speaks of the Son of God who 'for our salvation came down from heaven' and who 'shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead'.¹ The Athanasian Creed also makes apparently paradoxical statements of faith, referring to Christ as to one who 'suffered for our salvation', who 'shall come to judge the quick and the dead', and at whose coming 'all men shall rise again with their bodies: and shall give account for their own works'.² After judgement, 'they that have done good shall go into life everlasting and they that have done evil into everlasting fire'.³ In these statements, Christ appears in two different and seemingly logically contradictory roles, namely those of Saviour and Judge. Unless it can be seen that the functions of being a saviour can be reconciled with those of a judge

1. The Nicene Creed, The Book of Common Prayer.

2. The Athanasian Creed, *ibid*.

3. *Ibid*.

a tension is bound to be felt between the different areas of the work of Christ, and the whole question of man's salvation is going to be confused.

This paradox reflected in the Creeds of the Church is an expression of a biblical dilemma, and it may be that this results from the fusion of different views of eschatology, which were current at the time when the New Testament was being written and compiled, and which are mutually exclusive because of their very diversity. Whereas any one view of eschatology might be expected to function consistently by itself, if it were joined on to another system of thought which was not constructed on the same lines, an uneasy synthesis would result, and the strength of the individual eschatologies would be weakened by their having been combined.

The Jewish background to Christian doctrines of the last things can be seen to have had a tremendous influence on the formation of the Christian eschatology. From the early hopes of an ideal ruler of Israel who would bring into existence a perfect state of affairs within history, the eschatological expectations developed into hopes for a world that would lie beyond history, discontinuous with the present world-order. The inaugurator of this extra-historical world would not be any human descendant of the house of David, but rather the heavenly Son of Man, whose task it would be to replace the existing order. The basic ideas of Jewish apocalyptic writing were that there was to be a sudden catastrophic end to the world as it was known, and that there would be a judgement of all men, at which the oppressors of the Jewish nation would be punished, while the Jews themselves would be vindicated.

It is difficult to determine how in the origins of Christ-

ianity, the different strands of tradition were woven together, but in the Pauline epistles, which are the earliest documents we have, the problem of the eschatological paradox is already acute. As will be shown, there is internal evidence to indicate that there is a tension within Paul's own thought, let alone between his doctrine of eschatology and those found in other writings of the New Testament. It is possible that Paul was being influenced by other traditions, and that he was incorporating into his own system other material which was foreign to it, and which was not readily assimilated by the existing framework of thought or even necessarily related to it. We are denied access to the original teaching of Jesus, since the Gospels were written at a date sufficiently removed from his death to allow for a mixture to form of original Palestinian tradition and thought-forms from contemporary Greek-speaking churches. It is therefore impossible to get a direct knowledge of the earliest form of Christian teaching and belief with regard to the doctrines of salvation and the last things.

Where primitive tradition encapsulating the message of Jesus is concerned, the Gospel of Mark may perhaps contribute something to our knowledge of early eschatological thinking, since it is the earliest of the Gospels, and as such relatively unaffected by Hellenistic influence. It contains a record of Jesus' admonition to the Jews to repent of their sins⁴ in view of the fact that the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand, and this is very similar to the traditional statements of contemporary Jewish

4. Mk. 1.15.

apocalyptic writing. From the Gospel of Mark it would appear as though Jesus was taking the familiar view of the approaching end and the corresponding need to repent. By preaching on the need for repentance, the view could be taken that Jesus was implicitly implying that each man should prepare himself for membership of the kingdom of God by upholding the covenant and keeping the commandments of the law.

Jesus was connected with the establishment of the kingdom of God, as is shown by the question reported to have been put to him before his ascension: 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'⁵ which shows that his disciples associated him with the vindication of the Jewish nation familiar to apocalyptic literature. This expectation is fully expressed in Mt.25.31: 'But when the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations'. This can be seen to correspond closely to the usual vision of the judgement in other apocalyptic writings, and notably that of II Esdras, written in the first century A.D., which contains the following passage.

And the earth shall give up those who are asleep in it, and the dust those who dwell silently in it; and the chambers shall give up the souls which have been committed to them. And the Most High shall be revealed upon the seat of judgement, and compassion shall pass away, and patience shall be withdrawn; but only judgement shall remain, truth shall stand, and faithfulness shall grow strong. And recompense shall follow, and the reward shall be manifested; righteous deeds shall awake, and unrighteous deeds shall not sleep. Then the pit of torment shall appear, and opposite it shall be

5. Acts 1.6.

the place of rest; and the furnace of hell shall be disclosed, and opposite it the paradise of delight. Then the Most High will say to the nations that have been raised from the dead, 'Look now, and understand whom you have denied, whom you have not served, whose commandments you have despised! Look on this side and on that; here are delight and rest, and there are fire and torments!' Thus he will speak to them on the day of judgement...(6)

The parallel between this and the Matthean version of Jesus' teaching is clear, although in Matthew the nationalistic element is missing, judgement being passed on individuals rather than on countries. The process of gathering those to be judged and their subsequent division into groups of righteous and unrighteous is, however, present in both writings. In Matthew, the righteous are promised the inheritance of a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world,⁷ whereas the fate of the unrighteous is to 'go away into eternal punishment'.⁸ Judgement is to be made according to the attitude of men to the followers of Jesus, so that service or persecution of such a follower is regarded as being the same as service or persecution of Jesus himself. Man's eternal fate is to be decided on the treatment he metes out to disciples of Jesus, and this is clearly parallel to the grounds on which judgement was held to be made in apocalyptic literature, where it is decided on man's attitude towards and his treatment of the elect people of God.

The judgement is the point where man's eternal life is determined, and it is irreversible, so that it is of vital significance for man's salvation: 'The day of judgement is decisive

6. II Esdras 7.32-39.

7. Mt.25.34.

8. Mt.25.46.

and displays to all the seal of truth'.⁹ It is unable to be affected by any outside influence such as prayer by others, 'for then every one shall bear his own righteousness and unrighteousness',¹⁰ and it seals the eternal fate of those who are judged: 'Therefore no one will be able to have mercy on him who has been condemned in the judgement, or to harm him who is victorious'.¹¹ The Matthean record of Jesus' teaching on the subject of eternal judgement maintains the serious note found in apocalyptic writings in that judgement is taken to be irreversible and determinative of man's eternal life, and as in Esdras, the emphasis is on what man himself does to fulfill the law of God rather than on an intervenient salvation. Blessedness is gained through man's moral achievements, while damnation is the result of ignoring one's moral responsibility to God. In Matthew at this point nothing is said about anything being done on man's behalf to save him; responsibility is cast on the individual, and Christ fulfills the function of a warning prophet.

Other instances can be found to support the view that the fate of man at the Last Judgement depends on the way in which he conducts his life here and now rather than on the mediating work of a saviour. One such example is the advice given in Mt.5.29,30 to dispense with the part of oneself that consistently causes one to sin rather than risk damnation, and the general emphasis on holiness of life which can be found throughout the gospel gives additional support to this view.¹²

9. II Esdras 7.104.

10. II Esdras 7.105.

11. II Esdras 7.45 (115).

12. Mt.5.19-20; 7.21-23; 23.

A similar tradition is attested in Revelation, where the familiar eschatological theme of apocalyptic writings recurs, and there is evidence of a belief that divine judgement will vindicate and avenge the death of martyrs, who are depicted as longing for the punishment of those who persecuted them: 'I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne; they cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?"'¹³ At the end of the world, the elect, who have been persecuted for their allegiance to God, will be separated from the rest of mankind and will be rewarded.

This particular framework of thought illustrated from the Gospel of Matthew and Revelation drew on the traditional Jewish apocalyptic belief that Israel would be vindicated by God and that those who threatened God's people would be subject to punishment. In the early Christian tradition, which was in touch with its Jewish background, Jesus was seen in this context. He was recorded as announcing the imminent end of the world and the catastrophic close of the age, with the corresponding need to repent and prove oneself worthy of admittance to blessedness. Clearly, his followers thought that he would return to fulfil the Messianic role of judgement,¹⁴ and they interpreted his teachings in the light of what was already familiar to them from the expectations of traditional eschatological belief. There seems to be sufficient evidence to

13. Rev.6.9,10; cf. Rev.6.17.

14. See Acts 1.6.

justify taking the view that this was indeed one way in which Jesus was understood.

There was another possible interpretation of eschatology and the fate that awaited man, and Paul's epistles reflect this evaluation of the significance of Christ. Here as much attention is given to the importance of who Christ was and what he did on behalf of men as to what he came to teach. Paul represented Christ as a saviour-God who saved his followers by his own sacrificial death upon the Cross. He made it clear that men could not save themselves by their own merits, since they had none, or by their own efforts, since nothing they could do towards restoring their broken relationship with God would be in the least adequate. Paul's teaching was emphatic on the point that men could be saved only through the death of Christ, and that their own moral endeavour was significant only as a sign that man was indeed in a state of grace. This conflicts with the teaching of Jewish Christianity which maintained the outlook of more traditional eschatology when evaluating the message of Christ. Paul most certainly made it clear that there was every need for Christians to live a holy life, since this signifies that they are filled with the spirit of God,¹⁵ but at the same time he stressed the fact that salvation could only come through Christ, since 'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation, by his blood, to be received by faith'.¹⁶

15. See Gal.5.22-23.

16. Rom.3.23-25.

This tradition held that the Christian was in a real sense incorporated in the risen Christ through his baptism, and that he was living a life of blessedness and justification even though he had not died. If man is able to enter into a relationship of grace while still on this earth, the idea of a judgement after death which might vindicate man and establish him in a relationship of blessedness with God is rendered entirely unnecessary, yet Paul makes references in the course of his writing to the fact of judgement after death, and does not appear to have recognized that such references set up a tension when they are combined with a soteriology that holds that the baptised Christian is already incorporate in Christ.

After the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Jewish Christianity gradually ceased to be an influential force, and Hellenistic Christianity, represented by the writings of Paul, became the normative form of the faith. This meant that instead of casting its eschatology in the form of the traditional expectations known to us through the apocalyptic writings, Christianity focused its hopes of salvation upon a saviour-God, and eternal blessedness was vouchsafed to the disciples through Christ's sacrificial death. It is with this tradition that there is an uneasy tension between the belief in Christ's salvific sacrificial death and the threat of the Last Judgement. If the event of the Cross is taken to be that which unites the followers with Christ and justifies them before God, it will therefore pre-empt the act of judgement, since it will make available to disciples the right of communion with God and blessedness which beforehand was only held to be the result of a favourable verdict at the judgement. Yet a judgement after death cannot be seen

to apply to those individuals for whom justification is claimed as a present fact, even though it is clear from the biblical writings that it is taken to so apply. Paul makes no exceptions from the coming judgement, and according to him it is to relate to all men, irrespective of whether or not they are Christians. In some places Paul specifically states that Christians will be judged.¹⁷ It is this tradition that is behind the wording of the Creeds, in which both the fact of salvation through the death of Christ and also the witness to the judgement of all men are presented as articles of belief. In the Creeds, as has been shown, these two things are stated without any realization of the fact that they are, at least apparently, mutually exclusive, and potentially inconsistent.

The traditional Jewish eschatology did not meet this problem because of the absence of the role of the saviour-God whose death would replace the efforts of men for their salvation. Neither would there have been such a problem if an eschatology with a saviour figure had been understood to function without reference to any kind of last judgement. It was when the familiar pattern of salvation through judgement was used as a basis for a different soteriology that the difficulties occurred. It was only natural that the Christian system should have developed from within a Jewish framework of apocalyptic expectation, but whereas the idea of judgement was vital to the Jewish scheme to allow for the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked, its place in the systems developed by Christianity is not easy to determine. The resulting synthesis is necessarily confused because it aims to

17. See Rom.14.10-12; 1Cor.11.32; 2Cor.5.10.

maintain the idea of a sufficient salvation through the death of its saviour, while still giving credence to a judgement which is believed to be of real significance for believer and non-believer alike.

There is a related problem with the Christian view of eschatology in the difficulty of coming to an understanding of the condition of those who had died in the interval between physical death and the time of the last judgement. The situation is further complicated by the fact that there is some scriptural evidence to support the belief that an immediate judgement takes place at the point of death itself. There is, for instance, the example of Jesus' words to the penitent thief on the Cross that he would be with him that very day in Paradise,¹⁸ which implies that the man would pass through judgement soon after death and that he would then be admitted to Paradise. Also helping to establish this point is the parable of Dives and Lazarus, with its implication that the fortunes¹⁹ of the two men were reversed as soon as they died, which again points to an assessment of position and the passing of sentence at the point of death. Luke's Gospel in particular, therefore, can be seen to give some support to the belief in an immediate post-mortem judgement. In 1336, the Papal bull Benedictus Deus endorsed the doctrine of such a judgement, and it has been a feature of eschatology accepted by some schools of thought since then.

Although the idea of an immediate post-mortem judgement solves the problems related to the state of the dead while they are awaiting the last judgement, it causes other difficulties in so far

18. Lk.23.43.

19. Lk.16.22ff.

as it is hard to see how it could co-exist with the function of a final judgement, since it would appear to make a second judgement superfluous, except in a merely declaratory capacity, which might in any case be deemed irrelevant. Yet given the witness both to the immediate and also the final judgement, a way must be found in any attempt to set out a Christian eschatology to give credence to them both, so that they can be incorporated into a system of thought without compromising each other's significance. Allied to this is the need to recognize the problem that whereas those who live holy lives might be prepared to go straight to heaven, there are many others whose lives are such that they deserve neither outright damnation nor immediate sanctification. This naturally recalls the issue of whether salvation is to depend entirely on the work of Christ, or whether man's own efforts at sanctification are to be an important means by which the decision of judgement is made. This problem is circular, but notwithstanding its difficulty, it is one which it is helpful to recognize if efforts are to be made to interpret Christian eschatology.

As with the issue of the uneasy synthesis made by the conjunction of the doctrine of a saviour figure with the Jewish framework of eschatology so also with the problem of an immediate post-mortem judgement conflicting with the position of a last judgement, the difficulties arise out of the biblical material which is inconsistent when it comes to the statement of the nature of salvation and the last things. In the Bible itself no attempt is made to synthesise the different shades of thought, and the method of letting apparently inconsistent understandings of the scheme of salvation co-exist has been adopted also by those responsible for

formulating the creeds of the Church. It is the task of those who aim to interpret the biblical material and perhaps even attempt to put together a system of Christian thought relating to the issues of soteriology and eschatology to resolve the tensions of the material on which they wish to base their theories. This is not to say that it would be possible to unify all the divergent strands of thought on this subject that can be found in the New Testament, but it must be a task for systematic theology to examine the apparent inconsistencies to see whether in fact the teaching on the work of Christ and man's salvation does incline towards a different direction from the claims of eschatology.

Some have suggested that the difficulties can be resolved if a clear distinction is made between present justification and future judgement, in spite of the difficulties involved in combining these two concepts in a single system. Present judgement could be understood in such a way that it meant that our earthly status is all of God's grace, and that there is nothing we have to do to enable ourselves to develop a right relationship with God, since God has done all that is necessary through Christ. Man only needs to accept in faith the provision already made. In our immediate need we are accepted by God through Christ alone, but at the time of final judgement we shall have to prove by our conduct that our present justification is more than a legal fiction. Jeremias is one theologian who supports this view, as is shown by the following:

Jesus had always clearly distinguished between present and eschatological justification. In the present time he mediates God's forgiveness and release from the burden of guilt to returning sinners, to the lost and despairing, to 'God's beggars' (Mt.5.3). On the other hand, he promises God's justification at the Last

Judgement to the company of disciples when they should have been proved worthy by open confession of him (Mt.10.32f.) and obedience (Mt.7.21,22f.), by readiness to forgive (Mt.6.14f.) and merciful love (Mt.5.7) and by endurance to the end; at the Last Judgement God will look for living faith.(20)

This manoeuvre allows for justice to be done both to the fact of the work of Christ and also to man's necessary participation in the process of his own salvation. It also allows salvation to appear in its true light as something more involved and costly than mere legal justification. Such a method is evident in Campbell's use of the concept of the 'day of grace' which exploits the distinction between present and future justification in an attempt to combine the fact that Christ's work has opened up for man the possibility of salvation with man's continuing moral accountability and the reality of a future judgement. These are all important and irreplaceable aspects of man's relationship with God, and as such demand to be incorporated in some way or other in a system which aims to represent the nature of salvation in both its present and eschatological forms. As will be seen later on, the method of distinguishing between present and future justification is of great use in maintaining the importance of moral accountability and judgement without threatening the viability of the saving work of Christ.

As part of the survey of the difficulties found to be implicit in the biblical writings with regard to the apparently irreconcilable treatment given to the Cross and the Last Judgement, it might be helpful at this point to go on to consider the concepts of justification and salvation as these are found in the New

20. J. Jeremias, Parables of Jesus, London: S.C.M. 1954, p.144.

Testament to see whether in their unapplied form they are capable of being combined in a single system of thought without a resultant tension.

Justification seems to be inextricably linked with a legal framework of thought, and has to do with the acquittal of those who have faith on the basis of God's action taken in the death and resurrection of Christ. This process is largely interpreted as forensic because of the judgement which is executed on sin in the person of Christ, who bears its burden. The Greek *δικαιούσθαι* does have a forensic objectivity which cannot be reduced entirely to terms of experience and of God putting the sinner in a position to respond to his demands and so become righteous, yet the act of justification must be seen to take place within the framework of grace, even if justification implies very much more than the growth of moral quality through good conduct. In contrast to the Pauline use of the concept of justification, the Rabbinic tradition postponed the act of judgement until the final judgement. Paul used *δικαιούσθαι* in the sense of an act of God which relates to man in the present, but as has been noted, he left undecided the question of how this justification fits in with the function of a second judgement. It would seem from his writings that a man is only finally pronounced righteous and legally acquitted when a favourable verdict has been declared on his life at the Last Judgement.

The concept of salvation is given varying interpretations in the New Testament. In the Synoptic Gospels *σωτηρία* is a future event denoting entry into the kingdom of God, yet it also has a relevance to the present. This can be seen in the disciples' question:

καὶ τίς δύναται σωθῆναι; where σωθῆναι refers to the preceding εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελθεῖν. It also has to do with being delivered from the messianic distresses and entry into the messianic kingdom, as is shown by Mk.13.3 and parallels: ὁ δὲ ὑπομείνας εἰς τέλος, οὗτος σωθήσεται and Mk.13.20 and parallels: καὶ εἰ μὴ ἐκολόβωσεν κύριος τὰς ἡμέρας, οὐκ ἂν ἐσώθη πᾶσα σὰρξ. In Lk.13.23 εἰ ὀλιγοὶ οἱ σωζόμενοι shows in the answer the connection between σωζομαι and entry into the kingdom of God already noted in Mark. Lk.19.10 ἦλθεν γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ζητῆσαι καὶ σῶσαι τὸ ἀπολωλός offers an explanation which is related to the act of finding alluded to in Lk.15.4-6,8f.,24,32, where to be lost is equivalent to death, and to be saved is to be given life. The saving and finding is conceived of as taking place in the present: Lk.19.9 σήμερον σωτηρία τῷ οἴκῳ τούτῳ ἐγένετο. It is an activity that plainly has reference to the present, and is something which men can apprehend in this life.

In the Pauline writings σώζω and σωτηρία are strictly limited to the relation between man and God, so that when Paul wishes to refer to deliverance from other situations or dangers he uses a different word, most commonly ῥυόμαι. It is clear from this body of writing that the object of salvation is the whole man. As in the Synoptics, salvation is primarily an eschatological term. For example, in Rom.5.9f. δικαιωθῆναι and καταλλαγῆναι are carefully distinguished from the future σωθήσεται by the use of the word νῦν and the aorist participle. Other examples which support this assumption are 1Cor.5.5 ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου and 1Cor.3.15 αὗτος δὲ σωθήσεται, οὗτος δὲ ὡς διὰ πυρός, but it is made especially clear in Rom.13.11 ἐγγύτερον ἡμῶν ἢ σωτηρία ἢ ὅτε ἐπιστεύσαμεν. Other references which can be seen to use salvation in this way

would include Phil.1.28; 2.12; 1Thess.5.8f.; 2Thess.2.13. It can be deduced from some passages, however, that salvation does extend into the present, so it is by no means an exclusively eschatological term. The present use of σωτηρία can be seen in 1Cor.15.2 (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) δι' οὗ καὶ σώσεσθε and in 2Cor.6.2 ἴδου νῦν ἡμέρα σωτηρίας. In Rom.8.24, although the eschatological content of the word is plain, yet in the use of the aorist ἐσώθημεν Paul may be understood to be looking back to the salvation which has fundamentally come into being with the reception of the Gospel.

Paul develops his concept of salvation along two lines, one negative and the other positive. In its negative sense, salvation is seen in relation to avoidance of the coming wrath of God upon sin, and evidence can be found to show that this was indeed part of Paul's thinking. Passages such as Rom.5.9, 1Cor.3.15, 5.5 and 1Thess.5.9f. can be cited as representative of this view. In its positive aspect, Paul associated salvation with men taking on something of a Christ-like glory. In Rom.5.9f., he could not have differentiated the awaited salvation from an accomplished justification if he had not thought that σωτηρία did have a positive content. In the same way that justification and salvation are distinguished in Rom.5.9, so also in Rom.8.30 Paul makes a distinction between justification and glorification. This passage shows that he intends the positive aspect of salvation to be understood as being related to the process of being glorified, and conformed to the image of the Son of God. Rom.8.29 makes the same point: ὅτι οὓς προέγνω, καὶ προώρισεν συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνας τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ and in 8.24 it is stated that man's hope lies in the promised redemption of his body, while in Phil.3.20f. this is made especially clear:

Σωτήρα ἀπεκδεχόμεθα Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, ὃς μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα
τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ.

Basically it can be seen that salvation is restricted to man's relationship with God, and has to do with the restoration of that relationship through the act of removing the guilt of sin and the barrier of sin itself. Seen negatively it has to do with deliverance from the wrath to come, whereas in its positive aspect it is concerned with the attainment of glory and the transformation of one's nature. Both these aspects appear in varying proportions in the different New Testament writings and are attested throughout. Justification is related to the concept of salvation but is distinguished from it, the idea of judicial acquittal being clearly differentiated from the glorification which is involved in salvation, but both these concepts form part of all New Testament eschatology.

It appears from this that it is justifiable to expound the concept of salvation in terms of man's transformation into the creature he was intended to be, and that salvation entails something very much more than legal justification, however important that may be deemed to be as a necessary preliminary for the process of glorification. We have seen that the term salvation is concerned with the quality of man's relationship with God, and this is central to the issue of man's eternal relation to God. Justification appears to be caused by a mixture of divine initiative and human response, the reality of which is to be tested or proved at the Last Judgement - it has only a provisional nature, and should not be confused with the development of man's sanctification

and glorification, which alone constitutes salvation. It is as though justification puts man in a position from which he may be saved. It does not of itself automatically effect salvation. There appears to be considerable scope for understanding the concepts of justification and salvation so that they do not necessarily undermine one another's function. It may not be the case that belief in a judgement of the dead invalidates the notion of justification through faith in Christ, but much depends on the way in which salvation is understood. Nevertheless, this is a problem which often passes unnoticed when attempts are being made to interpret the work of Christ and outline an expression of Christianity's view of salvation. Since the process of atonement is bound up with man's sin and has an eternal reference to man's relationship with God, it is inextricably linked with the eschatological dimension of salvation, and must be seen in relation to life after death and the point at which there will be a final evaluation of the relationship. There appears to be a better chance than is at first apparent to interpret the concepts involved in atonement and eschatology in such a way that they do not conflict with each other, and this is a positive advantage for the work of reconciling two seemingly divergent doctrines. It provides a possible basis from which a cohesive soteriology may be formulated.

As will be shown in the following sections, the theological systems devised by Erskine, Campbell and Maurice make use of the possibility of varying interpretations of given concepts to enable their theories to work. It must be said in advance that they show no awareness of the problem of aligning the potentially divergent interests of soteriology and eschatology, and it may be the case

that they formed their theories without reference to the need to reconcile the atoning work of Christ with the function of judgement, but even if this is so, in effect their systems achieve a useful synthesis of the separate elements in which there is a latent tendency to be incompatible. In the following sections, the approaches of Erskine, Campbell and Maurice to the question of salvation will be described, and the effectiveness of their work in relation to the difficulties already seen to be apparent in this area of doctrine will be critically appraised.

THOMAS ERSKINE OF LINLATHEN

Thomas Erskine of Linlathen (1788 - 1870) spearheaded the movement of the breach with Calvinism over the issue of the doctrine of the fatherhood of God, which was later to be associated also with John McLeod Campbell, F.D. Maurice and F.W. Robertson among others. Erskine's place in the development of thought in the nineteenth century should not be under-estimated; his influence was far-reaching, and although he did not directly challenge the traditional theology of his church, the result of his work was to bring about a re-interpretation of the current orthodox doctrine, especially with regard to the doctrine of the atonement.

Otto Pflleiderer claimed for Erskine and Campbell that theirs was the most significant theological writing of the period in Britain,¹ and Störr's impression of Erskine's contribution was equally positive. He saw Erskine as the foremost figure in the theological awakening which took place in Scotland between the years 1820 and 1830, and took the view that he had directly influenced the course of theological development in the early part of the nineteenth century.²

In close contact with both Carlyle and F.D. Maurice, Erskine's work had a marked effect in particular upon the formation of the latter's opinions, and Maurice more than once acknowledged his

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1. O. Pflleiderer, The Development of Theology in Germany since Kant and its Progress in Great Britain since 1825, London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1890, p.382.
 2. V.F. Störr, English Theology in the Nineteenth Century, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1913, p.353.

debt to Erskine. He wrote that he had found Erskine's book, The Brazen Serpent, published in 1831, helpful in establishing what a true gospel for humanity should be, and how it should be seen to rest more upon the love of God than on the sinfulness of man.³ He dedicated his own work, The Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament, to Erskine, and in a letter which accompanied the gift of the book he wrote: 'I wished to tell others how much I believe they, as well as I, owe to your books; how they seem to me to mark a crisis in the theological movement of this time'.⁴

As will be shown, Erskine was to insist that dogmas should be transmuted into something which is important for the soul as well as the intellect. Pfleiderer's view was that his work, and also that of Campbell, had transformed the doctrine of salvation from a matter of 'forensic externality into ethical inwardness and a truth of direct religious experience',⁵ and this estimate is supported by Tulloch, who saw Erskine as 'an apostle of the "Christian consciousness"',⁶ who led the movement of reaction against mere formal orthodoxy. Of Erskine he said this:

Erskine's religion was all heart. He did not understand religion without the living fire of faith and love and obedience animating it all through. It must be a light in his reason, a guide in his conscience - a life within his life - a spiritual power glowing in his whole conduct. This was 'internal evidence' - the revelation of Love to love, of Life to life - of God to man, raising him to Divine communion and reflecting upon the Divine likeness. (7)

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3. F. Maurice, The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice, London: Macmillan and Co., 1884, 2 vols, 2nd. edition, Vol.I, pp.108, 121.
 4. Ibid. Vol.II, p.150.
 5. O. Pfleiderer, op.cit. p.382.
 6. J. Tulloch, Movements of Religious Thought in Britain during the Nineteenth Century, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1885, p.138.
 7. Ibid. p.139.

It is not easy to determine what factors had influenced Erskine in the development of such an attitude. Pfleiderer's opinion was that he had based his theology on his own study of the Bible,⁸ but other elements must have prompted his thinking and have had an effect on the way in which he chose to interpret the biblical message. His reaction against the stark understanding of salvation by orthodox Calvinism, which took a forensic view of the work of Christ, and looked upon the atonement as a penal settlement of man's guilt before God, may have been strengthened, if not initiated, by his contact with other writers in whose work there are similar tendencies. Early in his career, for example, he was in touch with John Gambold, and wrote an introductory essay for a collection of his works, in which he spoke well of the simple faith of the Moravians, and showed that he was aware of their experiential theology. Rowell suggested that he may also have been affected by Gerard Noel,¹⁰ with whom he travelled on the Continent, and of whose thinking he had a good knowledge through acquaintance with his sermons.¹¹ These sermons are characterized by the same sense of ethical inwardness that will be shown to be a prominent feature of Erskine's work. The following passage on salvation illustrates this tendency in Noel's writing:

Men often account 'salvation' to be a mere deliverance from the penalties of the law - the shutting of the gate of hell; whereas salvation is a complex term, comprising

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8. O. Pfleiderer, *op.cit.* p.382.
 9. J. Gambold, The Works of the Rev. John Gambold, with an introductory essay by Thomas Erskine, Glasgow: Chalmers and Collins, 2nd. edition, Preface, p.xx, 1823.
 10. G. Rowell, Hell and the Victorians, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974, pp.70,71.
 11. W. Hanna (ed.) The Letters of Thomas Erskine, Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1877, 2 vols, Vol.I, pp.49,53.

deliverance from the multiplied effects of sin, of which the most disastrous are to be found in the sensual and earthly passions of the heart; and hence, the conversion of the heart, the return of the affections to God, is in very truth, salvation. (12)

Noel claimed that the happiness of heaven was the conformity of the mind to God, not a reward conferred on the elect through the merits of Christ, and that sanctification was therefore a necessary element in salvation. As will be seen, Erskine himself was to insist upon the necessity of both justification and also sanctification for salvation, and it may be that Noel influenced him in this direction.

Erskine was also affected by the writings of William Law, of whose work The Spirit of Prayer and The Spirit of Love he wrote favourably in 1827 saying that although their doctrine was not the gospel, they could profitably be read. He was later to develop a theology which tended towards universalism, and this was already a feature of Law's thought.¹³ Although Erskine never stated a doctrine of universal restoration with dogmatic certainty, he accepted it as an implicit part of his understanding of eschatology. It can be seen to underlie his conception of the purpose of life, and is vital to his theory of spiritual education which he thought to extend beyond physical death.

This method of looking at man's relationship with God in terms of spiritual education has been traced back to John Foster,¹⁴ a General Baptist minister, who was a confessed Calvinist, but who came to believe that it was a mistake to dwell on the torments of

12. Cited by Rowell, op.cit. pp.70,74; G.T. Noel, Family Sermons, 'The Return of the Affections to God' 1827 edition, p.9.

13. See A.K. Walker, William Law, His Life and Work, London, 1973, p.222.

14. See H.H. Williams, unpublished Ph.D. thesis 'The Religious Teaching of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen; its Sources, Nature and Influence', Leeds, 1951.

hell, and that this led only to the further disheartening of those already in despair about their chances of being acceptable to God.¹⁵ Foster wrote that the picture of an infinite being demanding everlasting punishment for those who offended him ought to be offset by the realization that even for beings who supposedly continue to sin in hell, eternal punishment would be unjust, since it would mean awarding an infinite penalty for a finite sin, which would be disproportionate.¹⁶ Foster also tended towards a belief in universalism, holding that scripture indicated that there were degrees of punishment, and so allowed for a principle of discrimination, which might also point to a punishment of limited duration.

If it is true that Erskine was influenced by such viewpoints as these, it is not surprising that he can be seen to have developed doctrines of the work of Christ and of eternal life that reflected the realization that salvation was a deeper and more inwardly demanding matter than the forensic penal theory allowed. He rejected the theory of penal substitution, and was noted for his opposition to any such understanding of the atonement. Bishop Ewing wrote of him that 'the notion to which Erskine took emphatic exception was that the sufferings and death of Christ were presented as an offering to Man's Creator and Judge, in virtue of which He was either induced or enabled to bestow His favour and forgiveness on at least a section of the human family'.¹⁷ Erskine disliked the forensic system because it rested on what he regarded to be a

15. See J.E. Ryland (ed.) The Life and Correspondence of John Foster, London: George Bell and Sons, 1882 edition, Vol.I, pp.100,137.

16. *ibid.* Vol.II, pp.232-244.

17. A.J. Ross, Memoir of Alexander Ewing, London: Daldy, Isbister and Co., 1877, p.74.

mistaken understanding of the purpose of creation. His criticism was that such a theory 'supposes that God made men that He may afterwards judge them; I believe that He judges them that He might teach them, so that His judgements are instructions. I believe that God created man that He might instruct him into a conformity with His own character, and so make him a partner of His own life, the eternal life which is His will or character'.¹⁸ Creation held within its purpose the hope that man would be at one with God in his intentions and will, not merely united with him through a legal justification of his position which had no reference to a corresponding growth in holiness.

Erskine also criticised the penal theory because in his view it had developed from a misguided conception of salvation. He was alarmed at the general tenor of religious teaching on the topic in Scotland, which suggested that salvation was the remission of punishment for sin instead of being, as Erskine held it to be, rescue from sin itself. Of the forensic theories he said: 'This idea runs through them all, that the object to be attained is a deliverance from penalties, and an assurance of safety - and that the way of attaining it is by believing or doing something'.¹⁹ He made the point that those who looked at the atonement in this way were merely anxious to escape from the penalties which God would impose, and had no wish to draw near to God in true holiness of life, or to make sanctification a vital part of their justification.

18. Letters of Thomas Erskine, Vol.II, p.205.

19. T. Erskine, Extracts of Letters to a Christian Friend by a Lady, with an introductory essay by Thomas Erskine, Greenock: R.B. Lusk, 1830, p.vii.

For Erskine, such attempts to describe the process of reconciliation between God and man did not go nearly far enough into the problem of alienation caused by sin, and he insisted that man needs to be taken out of his sinfulness, not simply removed from the danger of having to pay for his guilt. 'Salvation', he wrote, 'is not forgiveness of sin; it is not the remission of a penalty; it is not a safety. No, it is the blessed and holy purpose of God's love accomplished in the poor fallen creature's restoration to the divine image'.²⁰ According to Erskine, it is God's will to educate man into righteousness and holiness, and this righteousness consists in man's will receiving and adopting the will of God. True justice must go beyond punishment to the restoration of real goodness, which is more than the outward acceptance of a set of rules or the cancellation of punishment. Even the work of God as judge is not fulfilled by the viewpoint of the forensic theologians, who saw him as one who determines a sentence for sin and organizes the means by which it is to be carried out. It is not true to say that Erskine minimized the function of God as judge, and the appalling sin of man; rather, it might be said of him that he had a deep and far-reaching understanding of the way in which sin had ruined man's relationship with God, and that instead of undermining its significance, he refused to settle for anything less than its eradication through justification and sanctification, while understanding judgement to be the means by which man comes to know the depths to which he has fallen, and the incentive for man to work towards a life of communion with God. God's aim, according to Erskine, is the

20. Letters of Thomas Erskine, Vol.I, p.295.

deliverance of man from sin, not the carrying out of the principle of retribution; the pardoning by God of sin does not fulfil its purpose unless there is a change of character. So he wrote:

'A restoration to spiritual health, or conformity to the divine character, is the ultimate object of God in His dealings with the children of men'.²¹

Judgement, for Erskine, had to be re-cast in the mould of spiritual education, and had to be seen against the background of what he held to be true of the fatherhood and love of God. The whole issue of man's moral accountability to God is examined not in terms of man as culprit with God as the righteous judge demanding retribution, but rather in a context of fatherhood and sonship. Even with their sinful nature, men are children of God, and are called to live up to their vocation as such. God is a God of love, righteousness and justice, but these attributes in him 'mean exactly the same thing, namely, a desire to bring His whole moral creation into a participation of His own character and His own blessedness'.²² Only by realizing the life of sonship can men truly understand their relationship with God and rightly approach the issue of their moral accountability for sin.

It is impossible to have a true confidence in God whilst we feel ourselves in a state of trial; we must necessarily regard Him, not as a Father, but as a Judge, and we must be occupied with the thought how we are to pass our trial...But when we have once realized the idea that we are in the process of education, which God will carry on

21. T. Erskine, Introductory Essay to the Letters of Samuel Rutherford, Glasgow, 1825, Preface, pp.xii, xiii.

22. Letters of Thomas Erskine, Vol.II, p.242.

to its fulfilment, however long it may take, we feel that the loving purpose of our Father is ever resting on us, and that the events of life are not appointed as testing us, whether we will choose God's will or our own, but real lessons to train us into making the right choice. If probation is our thought, then forgiveness or receiving a favourable sentence is our object; if education is our thought, then progress in holiness is our object. If I believe myself in a state of education, every event, even death itself, becomes a manifestation of God's eternal purpose; on the probation system, Christ appears as the deliverer from a condemnation; on the education system he appears as the deliverer from sin itself. (23)

This was something that McLeod Campbell was to develop in his own later teaching, but the foundations of this way of thinking lay with Erskine. The fatherhood and love of God precedes any thought of the work of atonement. What Christ did upon the Cross was not designed to placate an otherwise unloving or unmerciful God, but to be the proof of the Father's love for his children, and of his desire that they should be reconciled to him. Unless man has the assurance that he is loved, he does not himself have the freedom to love in return; his actions are bound to be tempered by a fear of punishment, and if he obeys God, it will be because he wishes to avoid the consequences of disobedience rather than because he truly wants to serve God and submit to his ruling will: 'For a man cannot submit in his heart to God, until he knows himself to be safe in God's, and he cannot know himself to be safe in God's hands until he knows himself to be forgiven'.²⁴

We were created to love God, not to live in obedience through terror of retributive justice, and Christ's mission makes this purpose of God known to us.

23. Letters of Thomas Erskine, Vol.II, p.185.

24. Extracts of Letters to a Christian Friend by a Lady, Preface, p.xiv.

What is God's purpose in giving us existence? The Christian revelation is the discovery of this purpose. Its great announcement is, that God is a Father, and that the purpose of His love, through all his dealings with us, outward and inward, is to train and educate us, as His children, into a participation of His own character, and thus to make us sharers in His own blessedness. (25)

All God's dealings with us stem from his love towards us, and take place within the framework of his own fatherliness towards us.

Given that the love of God is the motivating power behind the work of reconciliation, and that it is not induced by that work itself, Erskine went on to develop his own thoughts on the way in which we come to God. Having taken away from the idea of judgement the limiting and limited associations of the passing of sentence and the corresponding occasion for retribution, it has been said of Erskine that he dismissed the need for the Cross, but in his favour it should be noted that he gave it a positive, if different function in the process of reconciliation. In his view, as has been seen, the love and fatherhood of God precede the action of Christ, but what was achieved on the Cross was the vital manifestation in human terms of what God willed to be done, and it was the means chosen by the Father and willingly carried out by the Son of bringing man back to his rightful place in his life of sonship.

For Erskine, the Incarnation was a divine light, a substantial word from God. He understood by it that God had taken flesh, and that this flesh was human nature in general: 'Jesus had no human personality. He had the human nature under the personality of the Son of God'.²⁶ In taking human nature Christ had become the head of the race, and as a consequence of this Erskine made the

25. Letters of Thomas Erskine, Vol.II, p.402.

26. T. Erskine, The Brazen Serpent, Edinburgh, 1831, 3rd. edition published in 1879, p.53.

following remarks:

In the history of the word made flesh, we have a concentrated history of God's actions towards our nature, our flesh; and thus we have a standard by which we may at all times measure the mind of God towards ourselves and every individual of the nature. For that which the Divine nature did to the human nature in Christ, was done to Him in character of head and representative of the human nature; and therefore is to be considered as indicating the mind of God to every man. (27)

In Christ, the divine pardon of human sin is made clear, and this is the light which the Incarnation sheds on human life. In Christ's life and death we see a forgiving love condemning sin - yet bestowing blessing through penal affliction, and life through penal death'.²⁸

Erskine understood suffering to be necessary because the nature which Christ assumed was a fallen one, and by his suffering he condemned sin in the place in which it had taken root.

He came into it as a new head, that He might take it out of the fall, and redeem it from sin, and lift it up to God; and this could be effected only through sorrow and death, manifesting the character of God, and the character of man's rebellion; manifesting God's abhorrence to sin, and the full sympathy of the new Head of the nature in that abhorrence, and thus eating out of the taint of the fall, and making honourable way for the inpouring of the new life into the rebellious body. Because thus only could there be an open indication given of the holiness and truth of God, against which the fall was an offence; and thus only could it become a righteous thing in God, in consideration of this new Head of the nature - who had, in that nature, and in spite of its opposite tendencies, vindicated the character of God, and fulfilled all righteousness, to declare the race partaking of that nature forgiven, and to lay up in Him, their glorious Head, eternal life for them all, which should flow into each member, just as He believed in the holy love of God which was manifested in the gift and work of Christ. (29)

27. *ibid.* p.32.

28. *ibid.* p.33.

29. *ibid.* p.35.

Erskine was adamant that God takes no pleasure in sufferings viewed merely as penal, irrespective of the manner in which they are undertaken, but that he was pleased with the sufferings of Christ, because by them Christ had declared the truth of the character of God. All Christ's sufferings showed forth to humanity the divine love itself, and they represented a victory over sin and the Devil within the terms of human nature. By suffering for us Christ 'has become a head of new and uncondemned life to every man, in the light of which we may see God's love in the law and in the punishment',³⁰ and through accepting his suffering Christ admitted the righteousness of the punishment of sin. He did this as the head of our nature, and men are redeemed and sanctified by accepting this principle also in the power of his spirit dwelling in them.

The judgement against sin was righteous, and Christ voluntarily underwent the inevitable punishment: 'The sinful nature could only be restored through penal sufferings received in the spirit of holy love, which is just the eternal uncondemned life of God'.³¹ God could not have saved him from this without denying the holiness and righteousness in his own character, to which sin was anathema. Had he punished men for having broken the law, the result would have been hatred for himself and for the law, but when he came in person to endure the claims of the law, he revealed his love and vindicated its holiness. Only in this spirit could men recognize the righteousness of suffering for sin, and it

30. *ibid.* p.48.

31. *ibid.* p.53.

is vital that men should be aware that they are justly punished for sin:

Accepting our punishment is just being of one mind with God in hating and condemning sin, and longing for its destruction. It is submitting ourselves to the process of its destruction, and setting our seals to the righteousness of God in the process. It is the death-pang of the crucified head thrilling through the member, and accomplishing in it what He did in the head. (32)

No man can have fellowship with God again except in so far as he accepts the punishment of sin in the same spirit as that in which Christ accepted it. Human nature, animated by the principle of selfishness, has been crucified in Christ, but this is 'no forensic thing, but a real, substantial personal thing'.³³ No suffering either by ourselves or by another in our stead can put away sin, since sin can only be banished by a return to righteousness. And this righteousness must be ours - we have to become righteous through our fellowship in Christ's own trust in the Father.

He does nothing instead of us; nothing, that is, to save us from doing it; He does things for us that we also may in time have power to do them. He did not die to save us from dying, but that we might, in the power of an endless life, die with Him, that we might by partaking in His death - by surrendering our life as He did into the hand of the Father in loving confidence - be also partakers of His resurrection. (34)

By suffering for us Christ has become 'a head and new and uncondemned life to every man, in the light of which we may see God's love in the law and in the punishment, and may thus suffer to the

32. *ibid.* p.54; cf. pp.63,279.

33. T. Erskine, The Doctrine of Election, Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1878, 2nd. edition, p.205.

34. T. Erskine, The Spiritual Order and other Papers, Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 2nd edition, 1876, p.154.

glory of God, and draw out from the suffering that blessing which is contained in it'.³⁵ Erskine explained further that Christ did not suffer the punishment of sin to dispense with our suffering it, as is implied by the doctrine of substitution, but to 'change the character of our suffering, from an unsanctified and unsanctifying suffering into a sanctified and sanctifying suffering'.³⁶ The work of Christ is designed to have a profound effect on the believer, without which it can be of no saving value. The example of Christ's own suffering is 'fitted to implant...the principles of true penitence and true gratitude, of ardent attachment to the holy character of God, and of cordial devotion to His will'.³⁷

The Cross plays a major role in Erskine's understanding of how man is to be educated to recognize sin for the offence against holiness that it is, and to realize that the way in which to eradicate it is by using 'the discipline of life, the sorrow, the agony of life, as He did, to learn obedience, to learn to find in the will of God, which appoints our path, a union with the mind of God'.³⁸ Suffering can, therefore, in Erskine's view, be a help to us if we use it aright, and interpret it as a just punishment for sin; since if we accept it as such it can be a means by which we can start living according to the divine will.³⁹ Punishment plays a part in God's education of man, and when, through the enabling spirit of Christ, man unites his own suffering with that of Christ, he is conformed to the will of God and sanctified.

35. T. Erskine, The Brazen Serpent, pp.48,49.

36. *ibid.* p.44.

37. T. Erskine, Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the Truth of Revealed Religion, Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 9th. edition, 1829, p.139.

38. Letters of Thomas Erskine, Vol.I, p.321.

39. See *ibid.* Vol.II, pp.59,60.

The purpose of the Cross is to bring the character of man into harmony with that of God, and man is saved by identifying his own life with that of Christ. Erskine's doctrine is an exemplarist view of the work of Christ in that he looked at the issue in terms of what Christ's life and death showed forth of the love of God, and what the Cross elicited by way of positive response from man. For Erskine there was little point in man being justified if he was not at the same time sanctified, since it is in the process of sanctification that man shows that he is being conformed to the will of God. The result of Christ's work is that men now stand in a relationship to God which is one of forgiving love, in the measure according to which Christ is in each man the root of his humanity.

In Erskine's writings there is no evidence of a decisive break between his treatment of the Christian living a life of sonship in this world and the same individual after physical death. The life of sonship continues to develop after death, and there is no lack of continuity as a result of the change of state. Death makes no great difference to character, and there is nothing to suggest that Erskine thought that man's spiritual development ended with the loss of physical life. Our sonship in this life is bound to be imperfect, but this need not mean that thereafter we have lost forever the chance of union with God. Erskine took the view that where our striving to love God is concerned, we may achieve a measure of success, but the full realization of a perfect relationship with God will come only after death. The idea in his work seems to be that what is not achieved by way of spiritual union with God in this life can be safely

carried over to be completed and perfected in the next. The period of man's spiritual education is limitless, as the Father's love is inextinguishable. Erskine was confident that all men will find their way to God, and that physical death will not put an arbitrary end to all their efforts: 'What becomes of the lost (at death)? We are lost here as much as there. The lost will be found. Christ came to find and save the lost'.⁴⁰ In support of this idea, Erskine argued that 'if it were believed that God had created us for education, and that not one in a thousand had really received any education, it would generally be accepted without hesitation that the education must necessarily proceed in the next world'.⁴¹ The following statement also sheds light on Erskine's reasoning:

It is surely most unreasonable to suppose that God should change his manner of dealing with us, as soon as we quit the world, and that, if we have resisted, up to that moment, His gracious endeavour to teach us righteousness, He should at once abandon the purpose for which He created and redeemed us, and give us up to the everlasting bond of sin. (42)

and further, Erskine wrote that 'my belief in the continuation of the process of spiritual education beyond this life relieves me at all events from the agonising thought that twenty-six years of negligence are to fix the eternal condition of the soul for good or evil'.⁴³

There are times of judgement in this world, and Erskine had no doubt that there will be a great judgement in the world to come, but all judgement was, on his theory, subservient to the grand

40. A. Ewing (ed.) Present Day Papers on Prominent Questions in Theology, London: Daldy, Isbister and Co., 3rd. series, 1875, p.50.

41. Letters of Thomas Erskine, Vol.II, p.223.

42. *ibid.* Vol.II, p.237.

43. *ibid.* Vol.I, p.353.

purpose of spiritual education. He felt deeply committed to the idea that no man will eternally escape the love of God: 'I believe that God will persevere in His training until every child of Adam is harmoniously united to Jesus the God-man, the head of moral creation, however long the process may be'.⁴⁴ In the following passage he explains more fully. Speaking of union with God he says:

He has made us capable of this and he will not cease from using the best means for accomplishing it in us all. When I think of God making a creature of such capacities, it seems to me almost blasphemous to suppose that He will throw it from Him into everlasting darkness, because it has resisted His gracious purpose towards it for the natural period of human life. No; He who waited so long for the formation of a piece of old red sandstone will surely wait with much long-suffering for the perfecting of a human spirit. (45)

Entrance into the Kingdom of God is not limited by the scope of life on earth, and physical death does not mark the end of all opportunity to enter. Erskine felt strongly that the loss of one man was an offence against the creative love of God, and that such loss negated the whole purpose of creation itself, the aim of which was to promote a union of love and will between God and men. He therefore developed the idea that there was at least the possibility for man to develop spiritually beyond physical death, and for the process of sanctification, begun in this life, to be brought to completion. For Erskine, salvation was very much a way of life, the life of sonship, of man living in harmony with the will of God to a greater or lesser degree. It was not something

44. *ibid.* Vol.II, p.263.

45. *ibid.* Vol.II, p.242; cf. p.247.

purely external, but rather a matter of inward response, and it was something within which man could grow, as he found himself drawn ever more closely to God through the experiences of suffering and punishment which informed him of his true spiritual state, and which he used as a means of uniting himself with the sanctifying suffering of Christ which alone is the way to God.

Erskine's understanding of man's salvation, set as it was in the context of man's entire existence, both in this world and the next, led him to incline towards the idea of universal restoration. Man's education will not cease until God's purpose has been accomplished. Erskine's belief in universalism rested on two points. The first was a conviction that God desired that all men should be righteous, and that God's purpose could not fail; the second was an assurance that God, who sees the end of the creation from the beginning, would never bring into existence any lives which he knew would finally resist his desire. Erskine was far more concerned with the eternal, inextinguishable love of God than with the possibility of man's final revolt, and indeed it could be said that the idea of man's ultimate refusal to be reconciled to God ceased to be a feature in Erskine's thought. Instead he believed 'that the recorded history of our Lord in the Gospels is the outward and objective manifestation of a great subjective truth, which is going on, and which will go on until every soul of man is brought back to God'.⁴⁶ Erskine felt that if there were to be no universal restoration, then the sovereignty of God would be defeated,

46. *ibid.* Vol.II, p.85.

and the eternal purpose of love would be similarly thwarted, but he could not imagine how the will of man could ultimately withstand the warmth of divine love. Also, he took the view that only final restoration through the redemption in Christ was the adequate goal to correspond with universal sin in Adam.

This meant that Erskine had no belief in the possibility of eternal punishment, since this would not have fitted into his scheme of universal salvation. The idea of eternal punishment implies that God will finally fail in realizing the well-being of his creatures, and Erskine rejected this as inconceivable, since he understood that God's purpose was to love us until he had subdued our rebellion. Victory over evil is not gained by endless punishment or destruction, but by the radical change of evil into good, the desire for sin into a wish for harmony with the will of God: 'The victory of good over evil is the conversion of all evil beings into good beings; it is the making darkness light and crooked things straight'.⁴⁷ At this particular time it seemed as though the Church of England was in danger of committing itself to an uncompromising position on the question of eternal punishment, and F.D. Maurice was being deprived of his professorship over this very issue. It was this kind of dogmatic certainty that had prompted Erskine's first attempts to restate the whole doctrine of salvation. He felt most strongly that the love in which true holiness consists can never be created by frightening men,⁴⁸ and insisted rather on the compelling power of the love of God, which could attract even the

47. *ibid.* Vol.II, p.237.

48. *ibid.* Vol.II, p.81.

most determined heart given sufficient opportunity. Only free and unstinting compliance with the will of God would satisfy Erskine where the salvation of man was concerned, since only in this could Creator and creature be truly united. Erskine's wish for humanity can be seen from the following passage:

The love of God which gave Christ, is the immense ocean of the water of life, and men's souls are as ponds dug upon the shore, connected each of them, in virtue of Christ's work, with that ocean by a sluice. Unbelief is the blocking up of that sluice; belief is the allowing the water to flow in, so that the pond becomes one with the ocean, and man becomes partaker of the divine nature, and has one life with the Father and the Son. (49)

In such a scheme as this, doctrines of eternal punishment have no relevance whatsoever; they would contradict the essential features of Erskine's understanding of the purpose of God for humanity.

A spiritual being can be good only by choosing to be so, and 'those who suppose that this goodness can be created or made, can never understand the spectacle of this world. They think that God might have saved an enormous amount of sin and misery by creating man permanently good at once'.⁵⁰ Erskine's whole theme is the fulfilment of God's purpose by man's trustful response to the divine initiative, and this is something that can only develop within a context of freedom, which is vital to the whole operation of the reconciliation of God and man.

As has been shown, Erskine thought of life beyond physical death as being set in terms of spiritual education. The doctrine of the future life was for Erskine closely linked with, and was

49. Extracts of Letters to a Christian Friend by a Lady, Preface, p.lxviii, lxix.
50. Letters of Thomas Erskine, Vol.II, p.225.

virtually reduced to, man's participation in the life of God in the present. The life of sonship is what constituted eternal life, in his view, irrespective of whether it is lived out in this world or the next. He understood the word 'eternal' to refer to man's essential or spiritual state, and not to a limited length of time or any infinite period of duration. He insisted on seeing the concept of eternal life in qualitative rather than quantitative terms. This is not without its problems, but Erskine did not go into them, or even give the appearance of having realized the implicit difficulties in his thinking. Instead he simply stated his meaning thus:

I do not believe that the Greek word rendered 'eternal' and 'everlasting' by our translators, really has that meaning. I believe that it refers to man's essential and spiritual state, and not to time either finite or infinite. Eternal life is living in the love of God; eternal death is living in self; so that a man may be in eternal life or eternal death for ten minutes, as he changes from the one state to the other. (51)

Only union with God can give to man's life the dimension of eternity, and this is something that is achieved to a greater extent at some times than at others. One's 'progress', if it may be called that, in 'eternal life', is therefore necessarily somewhat uneven and unpredictable. There is no one moment at which man enters eternal life never to leave it again, until the time at which sin is entirely eradicated from his being. There is thus no sense in which man can be said to be saved in any ultimate degree, at least while he is on this earth. While he is in a relationship with God he can instead be said to be in the process of being saved. Man's salvation is continuous with and dependent upon his sanctification, and at

51. *ibid.* Vol.II, p.240.

times he may be more holy, and therefore more saved, in that he is living a life of eternal quality, than at others. This process of salvation extends throughout the span of man's existence, be it physical or non-physical, and one's progress within it does not determine the quality of one's life after death except in so far as it sets down the pattern of one's relationship with God which will be continued beyond death and developed in any way that is necessary to bring one into union with God. One is not debarred from a life of sonship after death by the fact that one has persistently refused such a relationship in this world. The spiritual education will continue to bring men into eternal life after death just as it has been at work during their earthly existence to bring them into sympathy with the will of God.

Erskine's way of assessing the issues related to man's salvation and eternal life is very unified, in that he has no great dividing lines which threaten to keep his treatment of soteriology and eschatology apart and unrelated. He looked at the entire span of man's relationship, with God in terms of the process of being saved, the continuous and almost infinite development by which man gradually unites himself with Christ and allows the experiences he undergoes to shape and sanctify his own will. For Erskine, salvation is first and foremost a matter of sanctification, and everything in the economy of reconciliation is related to this, even judgement, which he takes out of the mould of condemnation and recasts to serve the purposes of education.

If there are tensions in his theology, they are not the same ones that tended to force a split between treatments of the doctrines of salvation and life after death in the schemes of the forensic

theologians. Erskine provides us with a smooth transition from the issues of soteriology to those of eschatology, and this achievement is impressive, especially in view of the fact that he was one of the first to pioneer such a method. His thought was to some extent developed by John McLeod Campbell, to whose work we shall now turn, but it finds echoes also in the theology of F.D. Maurice and F.W. Robertson. Erskine's contribution to the formation of the doctrines of the work of Christ and of eternal life, and to the necessary task of reconciling these two aspects of salvation in a unified system was to be an important and noteworthy stimulus to the development of nineteenth century theological debate.

JOHN McLEOD CAMPBELL

Another significant contribution to the development of the doctrine of salvation was made by McLeod Campbell (1800 - 1870). Early in his life he advocated the claims of progressive theology, and opposed the static conception of doctrine. With the publication of his book The Nature of the Atonement in 1856, he made what Storr has seen to be the most important English contribution to dogmatic theology in the first sixty years of the nineteenth century.¹

This book was certainly a liberalizing influence upon the thought of the day, in that it challenged the legal and forensic view of the doctrine of the atonement which was then current. Campbell saw a danger to theology in the concentration on its purely technical side, and advocated instead an approach which would allow the academic discipline to be in close touch with the religious experience of the soul. Campbell's thoughts had been developing for a considerable number of years before the publication of his definitive work, and already in his necessarily short-lived ministry in the parish of Rhu he can be seen to have taken a stand that was to be characteristic of his later theology. In 1831, he was excluded from the ministry of the Scottish church for his denial of the Calvinist doctrine of limited atonement. Motivated by a desire to give hope of salvation to all men, and to allay the fears of those who could not find within themselves the marks of election, which alone could give them assurance of salvation, Campbell developed a doctrine of

1. V.F. Storr, English Theology in the Nineteenth Century, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1913, p.424.

the atonement which was to prove a formative influence on subsequent thinking.

Campbell reacted particularly strongly against the stern form which the doctrine had assumed under the influence of Owen and Edwards, but he also opposed the basic tenets of the Calvinist view of the atonement, seeing in all penal language a denial of the truth that the love of God must be prior to the atonement, rather than its consequence. Of this he wrote:

An atonement to make God gracious, to move Him to compassion, to turn His heart toward those from whom sin had alienated His love, it would, indeed, be difficult to believe in; for, if it were needed, it would be impossible. To awaken to the sense of need of an atonement would certainly be to awaken to utter and absolute despair. But the Scriptures do not speak of such an atonement; for they do not represent the love of God to man as the effect, and the atonement of Christ as the cause, but - just the contrary - they represent the love of God as the cause, and the atonement as the effect. (2)

In The Nature of the Atonement, Campbell criticised Owen and Edwards in particular for misrepresenting man's relationship with God through Christ; they had concentrated on the legal aspects of man's justification, and had substituted this for an understanding of the reconciliation in terms of fatherhood and sonship. Campbell saw things very differently, as is shown by the following statement that 'not a legal standing, however high and perfect, but a filial standing, is that which is given to us in Christ'.³ For Campbell, the love of God was the motivating power behind the whole process of reconciliation, and this was the one thing that appeared to him to be lacking from the Calvinist presentation of the work of Christ.

2. J. McLeod Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement, London: Macmillan and Co., 3rd. edition 1869, p.20.

3. *ibid.* p.69.

He took the view that 'so presented the atonement ceases to reveal that God is love'.⁴

The first demand which the gospel makes upon us in relation to the atonement is, that we believe that there is forgiveness with God. Forgiveness - that is, love to an enemy surviving his enmity, and which, notwithstanding his enmity, can act towards him for his good; this we must be able to believe to be in God towards us, in order that we may be able to believe in the atonement...If God provides the atonement then forgiveness must precede atonement; and the atonement must be the form of the manifestation of the forgiving love of God, not its cause. (5)

Campbell rejected the whole forensic framework within which the church of his day sought to understand Christ's work because it was inadequate in what it implicitly taught about the nature of the God to whom man was to be reconciled.

...the legal reference to man in which alone the atonement has been viewed, has caused that neither Christ's sufferings for our sins, nor his own righteousness, reveal anything of God by what they are in themselves beyond what the law testifies - being, simply, the meeting of the demands of the law; the former an awful, the latter a glorious seal put to the law by the Son of God, and no more. (6)

Campbell criticised Edwards in particular for the way in which he thought that the atonement had to work. He understood Edwards to hold the view that 'God could not be just to Himself without this vindication unless there could be such a thing as repentance, humiliation or sorrow for this proportionable to the greatness of the majesty despised'.⁷ Out of this Edwards developed the idea that there has to be 'either an equivalent punishment or an equivalent sorrow and repentance',⁸ but he had concluded that sin had to be

4. *ibid.* p.64.

5. *ibid.* p.18.

6. *ibid.* p.75.

7. *ibid.* p.136.

8. *ibid.* p.136.

punished with an infinite punishment and thereby assumed that the alternative of an 'equivalent sorrow and repentance' was not even worth consideration. Campbell argued against this so:

But, upon the assumption of that identification of Himself with those whom He came to save, on the part of the Saviour, which is the foundation of Edwards' whole system, it may at least be said, that the Mediator had the two alternatives open to His choice, - either to endure for sinners an equivalent, or to experience in reference to their sin, and present to God on their behalf, an adequate sorrow and repentance... But the latter equivalent, which also is surely the higher and more excellent, being a moral and spiritual satisfaction was, as we have now seen, of necessity present in Christ's dealing with the Father on our behalf. (9)

It was this that Campbell was to make the typical feature of his own thought, and so his split with the orthodox Calvinism of his day was to prove a creative influence on the formation of his own doctrine. Grensted held that his work was made the more influential than it otherwise might have been through the persecution of Campbell himself, and through his eventual exclusion from the Calvinist Church.¹⁰ However, it was not until 1856 that his main treatise on the atonement was published, and it was the result not of hurried reaction to those who were opposing him, but rather of considered and developed thinking. As far as his views on the wider issues of salvation, judgement and future life are concerned we have to consult his earlier thinking as found in his sermons and lectures,¹¹ since there is little attempt made in The Nature of the Atonement to correlate the doctrines of soteriology and eschatology.

9. *ibid.* p.137.

10. L.W. Grensted, A Short History of the Doctrine of the Atonement, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1920, p.349.

11. See J. McLeod Campbell, Sermons and Lectures, Greenock: R.B. Lusk, 3rd. edition, 1832, published in 2 volumes, and also Notes of Sermons, Paisley: J. Vallance, 1831, published in 3 volumes.

Campbell's own teaching on the atonement was influenced by his belief that the various forms of the Satisfaction theory, especially that of orthodox Calvinism, were not so mistaken in their idea that God's justice and holiness demands a satisfaction, as in the nature of the satisfaction which they thought necessary to meet that demand. Campbell's theory did examine Christ's work in the sense in which it reconciled God to man, but it made the point that the God with whom man deals through Christ is not only just, but also loving. Campbell advanced the idea that what Christ did was to offer a perfect penitence for sin, this being a perfect acceptance of God's hatred of sin and an admission of the fact that God's wrath against sin was entirely just.

There is a very strong transactional element in Campbell's thought. He did not regard the Moral theory as efficient in itself to describe Christ's work on behalf of men. Repeatedly he stressed the 'dealing with God' that was such a large part of what Christ came to do. As a preliminary to outlining this retrospective aspect of his theory, Campbell's understanding of man's position in relation to God will be examined.

Campbell's analysis of the human situation was rather less pessimistic than that of his opponents, but he clearly understood that man, as a sinful being, was estranged from both a holy and righteous God, and also from himself. Man cannot understand his humanity aright apart from his relation to God. Campbell put it thus: 'What it is to be a man, what we possess in humanity, we never know until we see humanity in Him, who through the eternal spirit offered Himself without spot to God'.¹² Because we fail to

12. The Nature of the Atonement, p.170.

live as sons in relation to a Father we lose touch with the real foundation of our being, which is God, and so in consequence we find ourselves alienated not only from God, but also from what is most deeply human. We are in the position of being orphaned, a state which is the 'ultimate contradiction to the original law of our being'.¹³ We cannot be as fully human as it was originally intended we should be, since although man had the potential for living the life of sonship in relation to God, this capacity has been diminished by sin and alienation from God, and can only be restored by means of a relationship with Christ, who is the archetypal man, a being in full communion with the Father.

Campbell was quite clear on the point that man depends totally on Christ for the realization of his own humanity, and said that 'this high capacity of good pertaining to humanity, is not indeed to be contemplated as belonging to us apart from our relation to the Son of God'.¹⁴ Christ alone achieved perfection within the human state, since he alone maintained unbroken the relationship of sonship with the Father. For Campbell, moral perfection and perfectly obedient sonship implied unity of being, which was for him that which constituted salvation.

Left to himself man does not realize the horror of sin; he does not feel the force of his alienation from God or the magnitude of his offence against the holiness and righteousness of God. Neither does he recognize the fact that his sonship has been jeopardized, which is the most crucial rejection of the love of God,

13. *ibid.* p.345.

14. *ibid.* p.160.

and which blocks his access to the Father, since 'neither otherwise than as coming in the spirit of sonship can they in spirit and in truth draw near to Him'.¹⁵ This, then, was how Campbell understood man's position with regard to God, and he addressed his theory of the atonement to cope with this situation.

Campbell held that Christ had offered a perfect penitence for the sin of humanity, which showed that he had united himself with God's own hatred of sin:

That oneness of mind with the Father, which towards man took the form of condemnation of sin, would in the Son's dealing with the Father in the relation to our sins, take the form of a perfect confession of our sins. This confession, as to its own nature, must have been a perfect Amen in humanity to the judgement of God on the sin of man. Such an amen was due in the truth of things. He who was the truth could not be in humanity and not utter it, - and it was necessarily a first step in dealing with the Father on our behalf. (16)

In this acceptance of God's judgement on sin was the acceptance of death as the consequence of sin. Christ died a penal death as a perfect response to what he knew to be the truth of the sin of man's alienation from God.

As our Lord truly tasted death, so to Him alone had death its perfect meaning as the wages of sin, for in Him alone was there full entrance into the mind of God towards sin, and perfect unity with that mind... The tasting of death in full realization of what it is that God who gave life should recall it, holding it forfeited, was only possible to perfect holiness... We can see the fitness of the presence of this element in Christ's cup of suffering, and that His perfect realization of the relation of death to sin naturally connected itself with the confession of the righteousness of the divine condemnation on sin... Had sin existed in men as mere spirits death could not have been the wages of sin, and any response to the divine mind concerning sin which would have been an atonement for their sin could only have had spiritual elements;

15. *ibid.* p.190.

16. *ibid.* p.137.

but man being by the constitution of humanity capable of death, and death having come as the wages of sin, it was not simply sin that had to be dealt with, but an existing law with its penalty of death, and that death as already incurred. So it was not only the Divine mind that had to be responded to, but also that expression of the Divine mind which was contained in God's making death the wages of sin. (17)

It was certainly true of Christ that he suffered at the presence of sin in mankind because he felt the Father's own sorrow for sin, and that his sufferings were the expression of the divine mind regarding our sins. But there was more to it than that. Christ also had to undergo the punishment with which he was in sympathy, and thereby bear the brunt of sin. This was the corollary of his perfect confession of sin - when he allowed himself to be affected by sin and was moved to present an attitude of penitence, he involved himself inextricably with the consequences of sin, and so suffered its penalty.

Yet it was not so much the fact that suffering wrought the atonement as the depth of the penitence that was involved and which was effectual. Submission to the will of God, which led Christ to make the confession, was the heart of the work done throughout his life, up to and including his death: 'Let us then receive these words, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God", as the great key word on the subject of the atonement'.¹⁸ Christ's confession of sin was sufficient reparation. Campbell appears to have had as strong a transactional element in his theory of the atonement as orthodox Calvinism, but it derives not from penal substitution but from representative confession which issued in suffering. In Christ

17. *ibid.* pp.302ff.

18. *ibid.* p.124.

humanity offers a perfect penitence to God for its own sin. The 'dealing with God' of which Campbell speaks is vicarious, but it also demands from man an identical response without which it cannot take effect in his soul. There is a difficulty in understanding how Campbell meant man to be identified with Christ further than sharing his confession of sin, and the impression his book can easily give is that Christ simply made an offering of repentance in our stead. This flaw is illustrated by Campbell's treatment of the cry of dereliction from the Cross. He assumed that it could not mean that Christ was actually deserted by God since he was at that very moment in the process of offering a perfect confession of sin on man's behalf, which was designed to effect a reconciliation, so Campbell preferred to interpret the cry in the light of later verses of Psalm 22 which express confident assurance rather than despair. Campbell felt it impossible that Christ could ever have been separated from God, yet if he did not suffer this alienation it is questionable how far he can be said to be representative of our situation, or to what extent his work has a reference to our separation from God.

Campbell's theory has been understood to be one of vicarious substitutionary repentance, but there is some doubt as to whether this is an accurate description of his position. A critic, writing in the National Review for April, 1856, asked: 'Is vicarious contrition at all more conceivable than vicarious retribution?' To this Campbell replied thus:

Had I represented what Christ felt and confessed to the Father as a substitute for repentance in us in the same way as Christ has been represented as bearing the punishment of our sins as a substitute to save us from

punishment, the reviewer's question would have been apposite, and a fatal objection to my whole conception of the atonement. But this is not my teaching; and all that I have represented as the atonement remains untouched by the question. (19)

This almost suggests that there is no transactional element in Campbell's thought, and Bewkes²⁰ argued that this was indeed the case; but it would not be true to say that Campbell reduced the atonement to mere moral example, since he clearly realized the limits of the Moral type of theory and regarded it as insufficient in its own right to bring about the reconciliation between man and God. Perhaps it would be fair to say that this point of view comes across more clearly in his earlier thinking as found in his sermons than it does in The Nature of the Atonement, but there are many occasions in the later work when he dwelt on the objective fact of the reconciliation that can only be traced to the work of Christ, and so any such criticism seems to be unfounded. He stressed that man receives from Christ that which he is unable to do for himself, and that man has no choice but to personally appropriate Christ's work if he is to be saved. He made the point that pride is often a barrier to viewing Christ's achievement aright:

Pride would be willing to pay a price for glory, but not to receive as a beggar, that is, for nothing. It will not receive a free gift, and therefore refuses God's unspeakable gift. This His best gift, is the most unwelcome to pride, because to receive this gift is to receive God as God, and to know ourselves, that we are nothing. (21)

Campbell was adamant that there was something which Christ did on our behalf quite apart from anything we might subsequently do

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19. *ibid.* p.341 (found in the appendix of all editions after the first).
20. E.G. Bewkes, unpublished Ph.D. thesis 'John McLeod Campbell, theologian; his theological development and trial, and a new interpretation of his theory of the atonement', Edinburgh, 1924.
21. Sermons and Lectures, Vol.I, Sermon XVI, p.388.

as a part of our response to his work. Of God's reaction to the death of Christ he said:

...and God, in acceptance of this sacrifice, this holy offering of Christ, did remove absolutely, unconditionally, without waiting for us to say whether we desired it or not, the barrier between Himself and us; and gave to us Christ, on the ground of whose work the barrier was removed. to be to us a living way of access, having the Holy Spirit for us, for that end; so that He is revealed to us, as one in whose strength we are to draw near to that God to whom we are free to come. These are the facts concerning the work of Christ for all and every human being. The humble and the contrite man, is the man who knows these facts. (22)

and further:

As to the knowledge of our nothingness, the fact that a man has nothing at all to do in this great work of removing the sentence of exclusion, and bringing himself into the condition of having free access to God - that this has been entirely the work of God in Christ, is enough to teach it. It is impossible for any man to see what the history of this work is, and think of meddling with the matter, or having any share in the work. (23)

There is nothing that men have to do before they can approach God with absolute confidence of forgiveness. As Campbell put it, 'it is all done already'.²⁴ Christ's work was not something which we can imitate with our own individual acts of atonement. Indeed, Campbell specifically denied that this was the case, taking the view that 'the relation of our participation in the atonement to the atonement is radically a different thing from what the words "following an example" suggest!!'²⁵ He used the analogy of branches being dependent on the parent plant for their life, and made the point that 'these reproductions of the original

22. *ibid.* Vol.I, Sermon V, p.101.

23. *ibid.*

24. *ibid.* Vol.I; Sermon VI, p.124.

25. The Nature of the Atonement, p.330.

plant in its branches are not individual, independent, self-reliant plants'.²⁶ Our participation in the atonement is not in itself an atonement. The mere fact of our sharing in what Christ did through our appropriation of it does not bring about our reconciliation - it just opens the way for what Christ did to be efficacious for us.

This surely makes it apparent that Campbell's thought was conformed to the general form of a satisfaction theory, and that he was supplementing the usefulness of the Moral theory with something much more substantial. Yet it remains true that without his own effort of response to Christ, man will not be saved.

From this point we must consider Campbell's treatment of man's contribution of response which alone makes it possible for the work of Christ to be relevant to his relation to God. It is perhaps in this respect that Campbell gave the impression that he advocated a view of the atonement which relied to an unacceptably high degree on the fact of man's response as a constitutive factor in the process of atonement. Of Christ's perfect contrition for our sin he said that 'the confession of our sin, in response to the divine condemnation of it, must, when offered to God on our behalf, have contemplated prospectively our own participation in that confession as an element in our actual redemption from sin'.²⁷

He expanded this to explain further:

...what is offered on our behalf is so offered by the Son and so accepted by the Father, entirely with the prospective purpose that it is to be reproduced in us. The expiatory confession of our sins which we have been

26. *ibid.*

27. *ibid.* p.152.

contemplating is to be shared in by ourselves: to accept it on our behalf was to accept it as that mind in relation to sin in the fellowship of which we are to come to God. (28)

Campbell was quite clear that Christ's action on our behalf works for us only in so far as we appropriate it and try to identify with it. The atonement is not something purely external to us, which works for us, but without reference to our reaction to it. Campbell's warning was this, that 'nothing in God's outward dealing with us, nothing that He can give or we can receive, nothing that is not included in the state of our own spirits towards God, and the response in our hearts to that which is in His heart towards us, can be our salvation'.²⁹ The atonement which Christ wrought for us will work in so far as we align ourselves with the spirit of his confession - 'we get near to God just in the measure in which in the spirit of Christ we thus livingly adopt his confession of our sins - in this measure and no further'.³⁰ What Campbell was arguing for was a moral and spiritual atonement which consists to a great extent in the right response from humanity to the divine mind concerning sin.

Christ enables man to come to the Father. 'In the faith of God's acceptance of that confession on our behalf, we receive strength to say Amen to it - to join with it - and, joining with it, we find it a living way to God'.³¹ Campbell summed up his thinking in the idea that 'righteousness is not the fact of legal obligation discharged, but the mind of sonship towards the Father'.³² This brings him very close to Erskine's insistence that sanctification

28. *ibid.*

29. *ibid.* p.180.

30. *ibid.* p.182.

31. *ibid.*

32. *ibid.* p.174.

must accompany justification, and that the most important issue in the reconciliation of man to God is his restoration to a state in which he is at one with the mind of God. This is what the life of sonship meant to Campbell, and this becomes apparent most clearly in his treatment of the function of repentance, to which we shall now turn.

The life of sonship is in a sense a necessary preliminary to repentance, since 'unless their sins had been forgiven them, they could not cherish towards God the feelings due to Him as a Father. Had they been placed in any other condition they would have been shut out from the possibility of cherishing any feeling of delight in the Lord'.³³ Like Erskine, Campbell realized that in order to be able to respond freely in love through repentance to God, man must know that he is accepted by God. 'But what is repentance?' he asked. 'Is it not the heart turning to God and putting trust in God and glorifying God as God?...Can any man rejoice in God as God who does not see in that God his own friend, his own Redeemer, his own forgiving and loving Father?'³⁴ Christ's work has removed the barrier of sin, and we are now free, as never before, to follow his lead into a life of sonship in communion with God. Yet we still bear responsibility for our sin; Campbell gave full weight to human responsibility for sin, and held that man is to be judged on his response, or the lack of it, to the Gospel, and on his subsequent sanctification.

33. Notes of Sermons, Vol.I, Sermon I, p.19.

34. The Whole Proceedings before the Presbytery of Dumbarton and the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr in the Case of Rev. John McLeod Campbell, edited by D. Campbell, Greenock: R.B. Lusk, 1831, p.187.

Judgement featured prominently in Campbell's thought, in his sermons, if not in The Nature of the Atonement. He did not believe that man is saved unconditionally, since his own response to the work of Christ is vital for his reconciliation to God and growth in the life of sonship. Campbell saw man's position thus:

The circumstances are, a present condition of forgiveness, and a prospect of future judgement - a present state of things, in which God is not imputing sin to man, and a future state of things, in which God shall separate men according as they are on God's side or against Him - a present state, in which men's sins are not charged against them, and a future state, in which God will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ. (35)

and further, Campbell made the comment that

...the present condition of the human race is, that God has forgiven all men their sins - not as a permanent and eternal condition of things, but as a preliminary state - preliminary to a day in which He shall judge men according to the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or whether they have been evil. This is what I conceive to be implied in a day of grace. This is what is implied in the tares and the wheat growing together till the harvest. (36)

Campbell thought that because of Christ's work, men are now living in a 'day of grace', and that the purpose of this was God's aim of 'inducing their returning to Him'.³⁷ Only through the Cross can men have the confidence and the command to return. Yet this does not mean that there is no threat of condemnation left. The fact that men now have the opportunity to be reconciled does not necessarily mean that they are reconciled, and they still have to face a reckoning as to whether or not they have followed up Christ's initiative and applied themselves to their own task of repentance.

35. Sermons and Lectures, Vol.I, Sermon VI, p.119.

36. ibid.

37. ibid. p.120.

Campbell understood the position thus:

Their situation is changed, not by God's considering them as different from what they really are, but by giving them a favourable footing for worshipping Him, which they could not otherwise have had. But, placed on that footing, they cannot be called righteous - they cannot be regarded by God as in the place where He would have them be, so long as they, in their own hearts, are running counter to this constitution of God - so long as they are not conformed to it. (38)

To imagine that God will admit to his kingdom any man who has not united himself with Christ's contrition and been duly sanctified, is to hope falsely, since 'to suppose that any thing that hurteth, and defileth, and maketh a lie, may enter there, is to suppose that God will give the reward of the inheritance to sin'.³⁹

Campbell was sure that judgement would bring condemnation on some, saying that 'the fact that there is no condemnation I do not hold to be a fact concerning every human being, because it is not a fact concerning every human being that he is "walking not after the flesh, but after the spirit" '.⁴⁰ He made it quite clear that 'there is a judgement of God upon the gift of Christ, a condemnation arising out of our being forgiven...a wrath which has reference to our being forgiven'.⁴¹ It is worth quoting Campbell in full at this point, and letting him explain in his own words the thinking that lies behind this.

I know well, that as long as a man thinks no one can go to hell whom God loves, it will be difficult to rouse his conscience, because he has a secret feeling that God has some good will to him; and he flatters himself, that if none are lost whom God cares for, he is safe. Ask many of their hope for eternity, they will say they are trusting to the Lord. Ask on what ground are they trusting? They have come through many trials, and God, who has

38. *ibid.* Vol.I, Sermon XV, p.356.

39. *ibid.* Vol.II, Sermon XXI, p.58.

40. *ibid.* Vol.I, Sermon XIV, p.329.

41. *ibid.* Vol.I, Sermon XIV, p.333.

supported them hitherto, they think will support them still. That is, they have experienced good from the Lord's hands; and hence they infer, judging of God by the partialities of men, that He is too kind and gracious to allow them to perish. But if God's love implied safety, then none would perish at all. But God's love does not imply safety. One great thing that we are taught by the Cross of Christ, is this, that there is a judgement which love will not keep back - that God can punish sin even while he loves the sinner. Let no man mistake, then, as if pardon was to save him as a matter of course: pardon is not salvation, even in the sense of safety. But the pardon being believed, the sinner is saved in this way, that, being sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb, he is reconciled to God, and becomes an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ, and so has boldness in the day of judgement, because as Christ is, so is he in this present world. (42)

By no means did Campbell teach a condition of security from the wrath to come. Man is to be judged according to his appropriation of Christ's confession of sin, and it is entirely just that he should be liable to judgement after the coming of Christ as Saviour.

If it is right in God to hold man accountable for that first life which He gave him in Adam, and to punish him for his sins in respect of that gift, so is it right in Him to hold him accountable for that second life which is given to him in Christ, and to punish him for his sins in respect of that other gift. (43)

God has not ceased to hold us responsible for that which he freely bestows upon us,⁴⁴ or to demand that we be sanctified.

We are to be judged according to our works under the new dispensation of grace, which makes it possible for us to respond freely in love to God.⁴⁵ God cannot cease to be a judge of sin:

42. *ibid.* Vol.I, Sermon VIII, p.185.

43. *ibid.* Vol.I, Sermon XIV, pp.332,333.

44. *ibid.* Vol.I, Sermon XIV, p.334.

45. *ibid.* Vol.I, Sermon IV, p.87.

It is utterly impossible that God can give up His right to judge. Were God to do so, He would cease to be good, for the stability and well-being of the universe depends upon this, that God who is good also reigneth; and therefore if God were to say, I forgive sin, and I shall no longer visit sin with my righteous punishment; then God would be casting from Him the reins of government, and be suffering His creatures to go on without any control over them. (46)

Campbell commented further:

Why is the judgement a comfort? Because, if I anticipated no judgement, but conceived of God as throwing up the reins of government, and letting sin and holiness take their course, then there would be no security, no comfort, as to the interests of goodness in the universe. But when I see God putting away men's sins, that they may return to Him, and judging them afterwards, according as they have, or have not returned, then I see a glory to God in His whole plan - then I see great blessings for those who do return, and glorify God on their behalf; and I can also say, Thou art righteous, O Lord! in these judgements which thou wilt afterwards pronounce on these who shall have rejected thy mercy. (47)

Judgement can therefore be seen to be an integral part of Campbell's eschatology. Unlike Erskine's understanding of the function of judgement, Campbell's was very much concerned with the righteous condemnation of sin. He did not see it as something which could educate men into a more spiritual way of life, and which he could use to his advantage, but as a point at which his life of sonship was to be measured, and a verdict made as to its consequences. Unlike Erskine too, Campbell did not see that there was any possibility that man might at some stage after judgement be restored to grace. Frequently in his sermons he warned that the judgement was at hand, and that any condemnation would be of lasting effect.⁴⁸ There would be destruction for any who had

46. *ibid.* Vol.I, Sermon XIV, p.328.

47. *ibid.* Vol.I, Sermon VIII, pp.181,182.

48. See *ibid.* Vol.I, Sermon XVII, p.409; Vol.II, Sermon XXIX, p.275.

rejected the gospel while they had the chance to accept it. No repentance after death would avail for anyone who had missed his chance in this life - 'for when it has come to pass that there is no longer space for repentance...when the day is come in which matters are fixed for eternity even the day of the righteous judgement of God, then it is no longer "Repent" it is "Depart ye cursed" '.⁴⁹ For Campbell, the day of judgement was a day of division, and the separation that was made between good and evil was an eternally binding separation.⁵⁰

Campbell did not follow Erskine's lead into the doctrine of universalism, being unconvinced that all men will eventually be drawn by the love of God, and dispensing with Erskine's scheme of spiritual development after death and his understanding of the judgement as a part of the process of education. Yet Campbell too found a way in which the work of Christ and the possibility of a last judgement could be held together in one system and their consequences for the life after death given equal weight.

Campbell stressed the need for man to respond to Christ, and held that he will be judged on the measure of his response. Yet in this response, which must necessarily be variable, since each will respond in a different measure, there seems to be implicit in his theory the idea that there might be degrees of salvation. There can be no certainty for the man who in all good conscience is trying to live a life of sonship that he has responded fully enough to the work of Christ. He might still face condemnation,

49. Notes of Sermons, Vol.II, Sermon XXVII, p.32.

50. See ibid. Vol.I, Sermon VII, pp.5-10.

in that he might not be sufficiently holy. Campbell does appear to recognize this difficulty, for he made the comment that 'the judgement of God is just according to the opportunities of knowing, and loving, and glorifying God, which men have enjoyed; and that to whom God has committed much He shall ask the more'.⁵¹ This suggests that the judgement ought perhaps to be more flexible than Campbell seems to allow. There can be no certainty for man that he will be found worthy at the last judgement, and Campbell's theory is not one of the most reassuring for any one who is in doubt of his salvation, even though this had been Campbell's motivation for trying to re-state the doctrine of the atonement. However, it does have the advantage in that what Campbell had to say about the work of Christ does lead on well to what he later wishes to say about eschatology, and this means that he achieves a unified presentation of the problems of soteriology in its widest sense. For the present it must suffice to say that he did some notable work on the consequences for eternal life of a theory of the atonement, and that he did not compromise the eschatological element which is so vital a part of any treatment of the process of salvation.

51. Sermons and Lectures, Vol.II, Sermon XXII, p.64.

F.D. MAURICE

Calvinistic orthodoxy in the first half of the nineteenth century was not only to be challenged from within the Scottish church. An impressive contribution to the issue of salvation came from F.D. Maurice, a thinker who was a close friend of Thomas Erskine, and who involved himself with the problems on which Erskine was working. Maurice, like Erskine, expounded the need for theology to be counter-balanced by an inner appropriation of the truth of dogma, and he thought the mistake of the age to be 'that we talk about God and about our religion, and do not confess Him as a living God; Himself the Redeemer of men in His Son; Himself the Inspirer of all right thoughts'.¹ Maurice had a desire for unity, wholeness and reconciliation of theological thought, probably kindled by the religious differences in his own home, which may have made him tend towards the belief that theology is not speculation, but rather reflection on the relation of man and society to God. He wrote that 'the desire for unity has haunted me all my life through; I have never been able to substitute any desire for that, or to accept any of the different schemes for satisfying it which men have devised'.² It was not Maurice's aim to construct an alternative system, or to suggest a compromise, since he realized the partiality of every theological view. He was of the opinion that every party had some truth,

1. F. Maurice (ed.) The Life of F.D. Maurice, Chiefly Told in His Own Letters, London: Macmillan and Co., 2 vols. 3rd. edition, 1884, Vol.II, p.359.

2. *ibid.* Vol.I, p.41.

but that this can only be partial, and that to believe it to be the whole truth, or to deny truth to others was to promote sectarianism. Maurice felt that every system necessarily led to exclusion, and so to new parties and divisions, yet he was not in favour of the point of view that opinions in religion were of no account, nor with a liberalism which tolerated all beliefs.³ The method which Maurice himself used in his theological work he ascribed to Plato. It was from this source that he conceived the alternative to constructing a thought-system: 'Not to frame a comprehensive system which shall include nature and society, man and God, as its different elements, or in its different compartments, and which therefore necessarily leads the system-builder to consider himself above them all, but to demonstrate the utter impossibility of such a system, to cut up the notion and dream of it by the roots, this is the work and the glory of Plato'.⁴ Maurice utilized the Platonic method of seeking for principles, since it indicated to him that 'there is a way out of party opinions which is not a compromise between them, but which is implied in both, and of which each is bearing witness'.⁵

Maurice was not attached exclusively to any one school of thought, and it is wrong to associate him with any one tradition in particular. He has, however, been linked with the Broad Church movement, which stood for dislike of dogma and indefiniteness of belief, but such a view of Maurice rests on a mistaken evaluation of his position, since apart from his dislike of sectarianism he was

3. *ibid.* Vol.I, p.184.

4. Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy, 2 vols. 1882, Vol.I, pp. 218, 150-151, cited by C. Welch, Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century, Vol.I, 1799-1870, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974, p.244.

5. Life, Vol.I, p.56.

he was himself intolerant of the spirit 'which was ready to tolerate all opinions in theology'.⁶

Maurice's work has been variously assessed, and has provoked different reactions in those who read it. James Martineau, for example, wrote of him that 'for consistency and completeness of thought, and precision in the use of language, it would be difficult to find his superior among living theologians'.⁷ Yet Benjamin Jowett, one of the characteristic writers of the Broad Church, complained that Maurice's thought 'was misty and confused, and none of his writings appear to me to be worth reading'.⁸ Such varying responses to the significance of Maurice's work do not make an accurate evaluation of his influence at all easy, and the diffuse character of his writings prevents an exact analysis of his thought, but his contribution to the debate on the nature of salvation will be seen to have provided a useful stimulus to contemporary thinking.

Influenced strongly by Erskine and Campbell, Maurice laid great emphasis on the need to conceive of God as a Father, and of the atonement as an act brought about through love. Maurice himself worked from the standpoint of the Moral theory, and criticised the attempts to state the doctrine of the atonement in penal terms, substituting for the orthodox framework an entirely different understanding of man's relationship to God and of the nature of salvation. Maurice's theories, especially those which relate to the issue of eternal life and judgement, were to prove no more acceptable to the authorities of his day than Campbell's had been, and in 1853 he lost his chair at King's College, ^{London!} Cambridge, for teaching

6. *ibid.* Vol.I, p.183.

7. As cited by V.F. Storr in English Theology in the Nineteenth Century, p.340.

8. As cited by A.R. Vidler in Witness to the Light - F.D. Maurice's Message for Today, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1848, p.4.

doctrines which were held to be unsettling for the majority of Christians, since they were thought to encourage an attitude of laxity towards necessary endeavour.

Maurice's own positive thought on the matters of atonement and judgement is not so clearly defined as his criticism of the defects of the penal systems, and as will be shown, the position he claimed for himself is an ambiguous one, but since his reaction against the contemporary methods of understanding the atonement forms the background to his own original and developed thought, it is necessary as a preliminary step to clarify his objections to an analysis of the work of Christ in predominantly penal terms. Maurice rejected the theories of penal substitution for various related reasons. First, he suspected that they inherently denied that perfect love is the true expression of God's unchangeable nature and of his will for mankind. This objection is similar to those made both by Erskine and Campbell, who insisted that the work of atonement was motivated by the love of God, and should in no way be seen as an instrument by which an otherwise wrathful God could be propitiated. Secondly, Maurice held that such theories made Christ's sacrifice a contingent act which occurred only because of the existence of sin; and thirdly, he felt that they excluded any understanding of Christ's sacrifice as the manifestation of his eternal life with the Father. These last two objections rest on assumptions which are peculiar to Maurice, and which do not appear in the work of Erskine or Campbell. Since they need to be fully explained, they will be more fully treated in the relevant sections below. It will be seen that they involve Maurice's own theological

framework and his whole understanding of the economy of the Trinity, and of man's position in his alienated state before God. Further, Maurice thought that the idea of penal substitution rested upon an un-biblical conception of God, since it presupposed 'a Divine justice delighting in infinite punishment'.⁹ It appeared, according to Maurice, to view God as an offended sovereign power, since it regarded men as having broken God's law, and gave the impression that God was an avenging deity who demanded the death and destruction of man.

Maurice thought that to introduce the notion of Christ's sacrifice into this kind of a system would be to make selfishness the guiding factor in man's relation to God, since man would sacrifice, or identify with the sacrifice of Christ, in order to save himself. In this case, the purpose of the sacrifice would be to propitiate the deity and make it serve the wishes of men. Such a system as this was bound, in Maurice's view, to endorse man's selfishness, and encourage him to seek deliverance not from sin itself, but rather from punishment from sin. This method is at fault because it takes too superficial a view of salvation, overlooking the point that what is needed is the restoration of the harmony of will between God and man, and not merely the removal of a penalty for wrongdoing. Maurice's recognition of this is reminiscent of Erskine's and Campbell's characteristic insistence on the need for sanctification as an essential feature of salvation.

Maurice also pointed out that if Christ is regarded as one who gives up his life as the only sacrifice that will satisfy God's

9. F.D. Maurice, *Theological Essays*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1853, p.140. (This quotation is limited to the first edition). Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent references to this book will be to the 5th. edition of 1891.

vindictive wrath, then he cannot be seen to lead men to God, since it would rather be the case that he protects them from the will of God, bringing about, through his penal death 'the deliverance of man out of the hand of God, the procuring a change in His purpose or will'.¹⁰ Maurice preferred to think of sacrifice as something which emanated from God, and which would work in accordance with his will rather than against it. Such a sacrifice should be 'one which proceeds from His will, and not ours; one which fulfils His will and not ours'.¹¹ Of the mistaken concept of penal substitution Maurice had this to say: 'We may build up for ourselves a notion of some one who has come to offer a great and gorgeous present to the Lord of all, which has changed His mind towards His creatures; we may unawares thrust into our Christian faith these heathen notions of sacrifice...'¹² Against this, Maurice took the view that: 'If there ever were such a righteous man, if he ever did offer himself as a sacrifice, must not that sacrifice, in the strictest and most eminent sense, be the sacrifice of God? Must He not, in some wonderful way, prepare it, originate it, offer it?'¹³

Maurice made it clear that the idea of God being compelled by Christ's sacrifice to relinquish his right of punishing and condemning man involves a conflict in God's own nature between justice, which has a claim that right shall prevail and sin be punished, and mercy, which forgives sin. Christ can no longer be seen as the one who does God's will, since his task, through sacrifice, is to induce God to give up his justice and be ruled

10. F.D. Maurice, The Doctrine of Sacrifice, London: Macmillan and Co., 2nd edition, 1893, p.139.

11. *ibid.* p.140.

12. *ibid.* pp.97,98.

13. *ibid.* p.101.

by his mercy, which will ensure the forgiveness of men:

All notions respecting a conflict in the Divine mind between the claims of justice and mercy; all notions of the Son winning from the Father that which did not proceed from His own free gracious will; all notions which substitute the deliverance from punishment for the deliverance from sin; all notions which weaken the force of the words, or make them anything less than the classical words on the matter, 'Lo, I come to do thy will, O God', are it seems to me, of this kind, subversive of the Divine Revelation, Rationalistic in the worst sense of that word, not to be countenanced or tolerated. (14)

Before an evaluation of Maurice's own positive teaching on the nature of sacrifice is made, it is important to see how he understood man's alienation from God and his subsequent position before God. It is this that provides the background to his criticism of the penal theory's inference that Christ's sacrifice was contingent upon sin, mentioned above, and only by examining this will it become clear what Maurice thought needed to be remedied through the life and death of Christ. First, Maurice objected to the method of regarding Christ's work as 'a provision that is contingent upon human events and human will'.¹⁵ He opposed this because it presupposed that man's sin had completely destroyed the relationship between God and man, thereby making it essential that there should be a new act of salvation to restore that which man had rejected through sin and as a result, forfeited. Maurice was adamant that nothing, not even man's sinful will, or the work of the Devil, was able to frustrate the purposes of God. It is not man who takes the initiative as to what shall regulate the relationship between himself and God, but God. Man is totally unable to damage the divine order of things. He might reject the love of God, but he

14. Theological Essays, 5th. edition 1891, p.139.

15. Doctrine of Sacrifice, p.108.

can do nothing to alter the fact that if God chooses to establish a relationship between himself and man, then this relationship will stand intact, with or without man's active participation. It is in this sense that Maurice understood sin to have no absolute power to separate men from God. He admitted that it does have an exceptionally strong hold on man, and that it may lead him into a false knowledge of God and his relation to creation, but it does not have the ability to change existing reality according to its own desires. It cannot effectively thwart God's purposes or limit his acts or attitude of love towards men. Maurice aimed to show sin as a force which effectively cut men off from God, and so led them into death, but he also maintained that its effectiveness was limited with regard to God's sovereignty since it is incapable of destroying the divine order. All that lies within its scope is to delude man as to the nature of God and creation; its power is only relative, not absolute.

The background to this thought has been noted to be drawn from Platonism, and in his analysis of Maurice's position, Christensen¹⁶ held that he had used the Platonically conceived idea of the split between the spirit and the flesh in order to be able to say that sin need not jeopardize the reality of man's unbroken fellowship with God. Maurice's basic understanding of God was as He who is. In this concept he merged the Platonic idea of reality with that of God as perfect love, and held that what God decreed through his love must of necessity be. He thought that to

16. T. Christensen, The Divine Order - A Study in F.D. Maurice's Theology, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973.

believe that sin introduces a separation between Creator and creation, and influences the world to such an extent that its basic nature is altered to one of evil rather than good, is to believe that the decisions of God's creatures have constitutive significance, even though they act only within the changeable world of time and space. The presupposition of Maurice's theory was that God alone is ultimate and unchangeable reality, and that creation is nothing in itself and only a contingent reality. From this position Maurice could be expected to take the view that anything that man achieves on his own account is unreal, in the Platonic sense at least, and quite unable to affect God, who is supreme reality.

Maurice's view of the function of revelation was coloured by this framework of thought, as was his entire doctrine of salvation and eternal life. He held that the role of revelation was not to create a new reality or to cause a new state in the relationship between man and God, but rather to impart knowledge of the unchangeable reality which constitutes the life of creation. Any specific events that might occur in history, which may be part of revelation, are only indications of what is eternally true - they do not in themselves inaugurate a new situation. Again, there is evidence here of a Platonic cast of thought in Maurice's belief that man should pass beyond that which is concrete and particular in revelation so that he learns to recognize the universal and the permanent reality. Revelation is an illumination and explanation of man's existence, not a regulative factor of it. Maurice was opposed to any interpretation of the Cross as a constitutive or unique event. At all costs he wanted to repudiate the idea that as a divine act of redemption it was in any way unique, and instanced the fact that

the Biblical history of salvation was the manifestation of an eternal reality, so that the Cross was only indicative of something that was true of God's attitude towards man from eternity.

Maurice's own doctrine of the atonement centred on the nature of sacrifice, but he interpreted Christ's sacrifice in the light of the ongoing sacrificial life of the Trinity. The penal theory had implicitly affirmed that by the virtue of his sacrificial death, Christ had gained a different position in the divine economy from that which he had eternally occupied. Rather than an act of obedience to God's will, his sacrifice must be seen as an attempt to avert God's wrath, and Christ no longer lives by God's will but claims an independent status because of merit acquired through his sacrifice. Dissatisfied though he was with this, Maurice still maintained that the doctrine of sacrifice was the key to the atonement, and managed to avoid the pitfalls into which the penal theory had fallen with its understanding of the concept of sacrifice by restating it to mean something very different from what it had traditionally signified. Maurice held the doctrine of sacrifice

...to be the doctrine of the Bible, the doctrine of the Gospel. The Bible is, from first to last, setting forth to us the meaning of sacrifice. If we cannot preach that that meaning has been accomplished, that the perfect sacrifice has been made for the sins of the whole world, that God has made peace with us by the death of His Son, I do not see that we have any gospel from God to men. (17)

17. Doctrine of Sacrifice, taken from the dedicatory letter, p.xliii.

and further:

...our preaching will be good for nothing if the main subject of it is not the atonement of God with man in Christ - if we may not proclaim His sacrifice as a finished work; if we may not ground all our sacrifices upon it; if we stop short of the Eucharist proclamation that God of His tender mercy hath given us His Son to be a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. Any notions, theories, practices, which interfere with the fulness of this Gospel deprive men, it seems to me, of a blessing which has been bestowed upon them and to which they have a right - deprive them of the only effectual foundation for social and individual reformation. (18)

These passages show the importance which Maurice attached to the concept of sacrifice. It was fundamental to his understanding of the work of Christ, but his use of it was very different from that previously made, in that he divorced it completely from any penal implications. Christ's death was not penal - on this point Maurice was adamant:

We can forgive a fellow-creature a wrong done to us, without exacting an equivalent for it; we blame ourselves if we do not; we think we are offending against Christ's command, who said, 'Be ye merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful' if we do not. We do not feel that punishment is a satisfaction to our minds; we are ashamed of ourselves when we consider it is...Are these maxims moral, or are the opposing maxims moral? If they are moral, should we, because God is more righteous than we can imagine, or understand, suppose that His acts are at variance with them? Should we attribute to Him what would be unrighteousness in us? (19)

Maurice asked: 'How then, can we tolerate for an instant the notion of God which would represent Him as satisfied by the punishment of sin, not by the purity and graciousness of the Son?',²⁰ and made the comment that all 'orthodox schools have said, that a

18. Life, Vol.II, pp.364-5, 2nd edition, 1884. (Hereafter all quotations from this work will be from this edition unless otherwise stated).

19. Theological Essays, p.118.

20. ibid. p.125.

perfectly holy and loving being can be satisfied only with a holiness and love corresponding to His own; that Christ satisfied the Father by presenting the image of His own holiness and love, that in His sacrifice and death all that holiness and love came forth completely'.²¹ This was by no means accidental - 'it must belong to the root and essence of divinity'.²²

This is the basis of Maurice's own doctrine of sacrifice. He felt that sacrifice was a fundamental characteristic of the nature of God, and also the true principle of man, made in God's image. Christ's sacrifice vindicates this principle and restores it as the main directive of our lives. Maurice said that there was:

...a ground of sacrifice in the divine nature; in that submission of the Son to the Father, that perfect unity of Purpose, Will, Substance, between them, whence the obedience and fellowship of all unfallen beings, the obedience and fellowship of all restored beings, must be derived, and by which they are sustained. (23)

Sacrifice, therefore, in Maurice's view, constitutes the life of the triune God. In that the Father eternally lives with the Son in the spirit of love he is always sacrificing himself for the Son, and in the same way the Son is always sacrificing himself for the Father. God's very nature is one of self-sacrifice, and the creation is grounded in the sacrificial life of the Trinity. Since man is created in the image of God he is called by the very ground of his being to sacrifice himself for his creator and for his fellow men. It was Maurice's contention that sacrifice is the law of human life, and this was a reason why he insisted that it is not existence of sin that makes it necessary for man to sacrifice his

21. *ibid.*

22. *ibid.*

23. Doctrine of Sacrifice, p.109.

life. Even if sin were not a fact of human existence, sacrifice would still be a vital part of his relationship with God and other men.

Maurice illustrated this by pointing to the Old Testament sacrifices, which, he said, should not be thought of as a means of propitiating a God who would otherwise punish man because of his sin. Rather, they were an indication that sacrifice was a part of the being of God, that it was this self-sacrificing love that had created Israel, and that man's true life consisted in the same self-sacrifice. The visible acts of sacrifice are outward signs of the fact that man is in a loving relationship with God: 'Trust in a righteous and life-giving Being was in his (Noah's) case, as much as in that of Abel, the meaning of his offering'.²⁴ Yet the Old Testament sacrifices impart an imperfect revelation, and because of this they kindle a hope of a more definite manifestation of the self-sacrificing nature of God, and of the fact that self-sacrifice is the constitutive factor of the universe.

It was clear to Maurice that these expectations had been fulfilled by Christ. Through his perfect obedience Christ had revealed the Father's nature, and when he sacrificed his life, he thereby revealed the Father as self-sacrificing love. In the life, and especially in the death of Christ man sees God as he really is, and his false idea of God as a vindictive tyrant is banished. Christ's act of self-giving, however, is eternal, and his death upon the Cross was only a sign of something that is eternally true. From eternity Christ has sacrificed himself to

24. *ibid.* p.35.

the will of the Father, and the Father has always accepted this sacrifice. Also, because Christ's sacrifice and life are the foundation of man's existence, God has always considered man good and holy. God and man are eternally reconciled in Christ's eternal sacrifice, of which fact the Cross was a concrete sign:

He has appeared in our world, in our nature; He has sacrificed Himself. In that sacrifice we see what He is - what He always has been. His acts here, plain and palpable, done among men, done for men, have shown forth that perfect filial obedience to the Creator of all things, that entire filial union with the Eternal Father, which is the ground of the universe and the ground of our humanity. (25)

Maurice's concept of the nature of Christ's representative function perhaps needs to be outlined here. The central idea is that the crucified Christ is the head of humanity because he alone creates and sustains it. It is therefore entirely natural that Christ should act for man. As Christ, by God's eternal decree, is the ground of the being of every man, God can only regard man through the Son. This made it possible for Maurice to say that Christ's righteousness could be imputed to every man. As the head of humanity, Christ always represents man before God and acts on man's behalf, and so all mankind is included in whatever he does, not least his life of self-sacrifice. God is ever satisfied with his sacrifice, and is therefore eternally reconciled to mankind.

There was another aspect of Maurice's theory of the atonement, and it is one which can be misleading, since it appears to contradict the basic assumptions of some of the previous conceptions, Maurice at times talked of Christ's death

in language that seems almost to suggest that he saw it as a decisive and all-important act in God's plan of salvation, and by speaking of the Cross in terms of the defeat of sin and death he gave the impression that he thought that Christ had thereby liberated man from a force that had thwarted God's purpose for him. Maurice has been believed to be an exponent of the Classic doctrine of the atonement, but to hold this about him is to misrepresent his thought. Most of the confusion centres round what Maurice thought about man's bondage to sin, and what he thought man needed to be freed from, and since he is not always clear on the matter of sin, it is not surprising that his thought has been misunderstood. Basically it seems justifiable to take the view that Maurice saw bondage to sin and alienation from God to consist for man in a false knowledge of God. Any corresponding redemption would then need to take the form of a liberation of men from misguided thinking, so that they come to see clearly what the nature and will of God are for them:

Do you not know that there has been an oppression on your conscience, a tyranny which you could not shake off? Do you not know that this oppression arose from a sense of separation from God, of being at war with Him? Do you not know that, while you have that sense, you cannot pray to Him as a Father, you cannot serve Him as a living God? And can any one emancipate his own conscience from this bondage? (26)

Bondage consists in a false knowledge of God, and any redemption needs to amend men's thinking. The Cross proclaimed God to be a self-sacrificing Father who loves his children, and only thus assured can men have the confidence to approach God 'in the faith

that He had owned them, accepted them, delivered them'.²⁷ Man was delivered because Christ 'lifted you out of your miserable subjection to visible things, out of your dark and slavish notions concerning God, out of your dread and horror of Him'.²⁸

In the Theological Essays, Maurice wrote that Christ 'became subject to death "that he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the Devil". Here are reasons assigned for the Incarnation and the death of Christ. He overcame death, their common enemy, by submitting to it. He delivered them from the power of the Devil'.²⁹ Maurice's concept of the Devil is of one who misleads men about God and their own relation to him:

'The Accusing Spirit...misrepresents the mind and will of God towards us, the acts and dispositions of our fellow creatures, our own moral condition. He leads us to suspect an enemy in our Father, an enemy in every brother, an enemy in our own heart'.³⁰

By making it clear what was the case concerning God's attitude to and relationship with man, the Cross answered such blatant falsehood, and 'the answer is a complete one...the moment we accept it, his chain is broken for us: because God has in truth broken it for our race'.³¹

Similarly, on the Cross Christ broke the power of death. Man's distrust of God had created fear of death, but Christ manifested the true nature of death and thereby proved that man's horror of it was without foundation. 'Death is utterly horrible as long as it is linked to that distrust of God which is Sin, and the root of all sins; so long as it keeps that up in our minds;

27. *ibid.* p.122.

28. *ibid.*

29. Theological Essays, p.37, 1853 edition.

30. Doctrine of Sacrifice, p.224.

31. *ibid.* p.236.

so long as it teaches us that our safety is in flying from His presence'.³² Yet the Father and the Son were perfectly united in death, and it is 'made the pledge of their eternal union; the pledge of their infinite satisfaction in each other',³³ and what is more, 'that union is shown to be the ground of every other'.³⁴ Christ had transformed death from something to be feared into a sacrament of fellowship with God, and we can now answer the Devil's misrepresentation:

We know what death is, for Christ has died. We know that His death is the proof of eternal love, the pledge that He has reconciled the world to Himself; the encouragement to draw nigh to Him; the assurance that a new and living way is opened into His Presence, and that in that Presence is fulness of joy. (35)

It is in this sense that Maurice believed Christ to have been victorious over sin, death and the Devil. He understood the victory to be in terms of the correction of wrong ideas and as the subsequent liberation of man from his misguided thinking and its damaging consequences for his relationship with God. Maurice was eager that man should realize his sonship of God, and that he should come to see that there was nothing preventing him from living as a son of God. He was concerned that man should become what he really was, as opposed to being limited by hindrances which have no right to pull man away from his true relationship with God. It was this thinking that prompted Campbell to comment that for Maurice 'all sin is reduced to ignorance', for 'there is nothing real in the nature of things answering to this sense of guilt in man's experience'.³⁶ Maurice's son repudiated this

32. *ibid.* p.239.

33. *ibid.* p.237.

34. *ibid.*

35. *ibid.* p.240.

36. D. Campbell (ed.) Memorials of John McLeod Campbell, 2 vols., London: Macmillan and Co., 1877, Vol.II, p.343.

accusation, and argued that it was a misrepresentation of his father's thought,³⁷ but it may be that Campbell's criticism does point to an inherent weakness in Maurice's system, in so far as it exposes what could be said to be a very insubstantial view of the reality of sin, and of its crippling effect on man himself. However, to make a brief defence of Maurice at this point it must be noted that if he questioned the reality (in the Platonic sense) of sin, he did not underestimate its power as an alienating force, and one which could work havoc in man's life, and he held that Christ's victory over sin and death was an effective, rather than a hollow one.

At this point we shall turn to a consideration of Maurice's treatment of the concepts of judgement and eternal life. For him, the significance of eschatology was that it deals with the ultimate form of man's relationship with God. He was not concerned to develop an elaborate scheme, nor was he aiming to piece together a cohesive doctrine, but his thoughts on the subject are important, and can be seen to focus on three main beliefs. The first of these was that eternity is independent of duration; the second that the power of repentance is not limited to this life; and the third that it is not revealed whether or not all will ultimately be saved.

Concerning the first point, Maurice unequivocally insisted that eternal life and death must be understood in qualitative terms, and be seen entirely in relation to man's relationship with God. He interiorized the concepts of eternal life and death to such an extent that they became two aspects from which one may

37. Life, Vol.II, pp.537-40.

look at Christian experience. Eternal life was entered into by the man who acknowledged and grew into his relationship with God, while eternal death was the consequence of failing to live as a son of God or to realize the full potential of human nature grounded in God. 'Ah, blessedness - oh! when shall we understand this? - consists in the acknowledgement of that which is; all misery and damnation in the denial of it.'³⁸ For Maurice, God had to be the starting-point for any discussion of the meaning of eternity. Wherever the word is used he thought that it ought to be considered in reference to God,³⁹ and in view of this he held that it had no relation to time in the sense of endless time, but had to do rather with a definition of quality with respect to the being of God. Maurice argued that God's eternity denoted his perfect, unchangeable being. Eternity stands for that which is unchangeable, permanent and perfect, and it is therefore generically different from time, which signifies all that is changeable, transient and imperfect. The eternal world of God is the ground of being of the world we know, since it imparts life and meaning to it. Eternal life and death, on this basis, should not be thought of as future states, but as fellowship with, or separation from God. The fact that they are called eternal implies that their connection with God is their distinctive character, and although they can be lived in within a context of time, they are in no way dependent upon their context for their existence:

We feel that we are under a law of change and succession; that we live in days, and months, and years. We feel also that we have to do with that which is not changeable, which cannot be represented by any divisions of time...

38. F.D. Maurice, Lectures on the Apocalypse, or the Book of the Revelation of St. John the Divine, London: Macmillan and Co., 1861, pp.414-415.

39. See Theological Essays, p.381.

We experience the utter vanity and emptiness of chronology as a measure of suffering, of thought, of hope, of love. All these belong to another state of things. We perceive that Scripture is speaking to us of that state of things; that it is educating us into the apprehension of it. The more we attend to the New Testament, the more we find to confirm the witness of our reason that eternity is not a lengthening out or continuation of time; that they are generically different. (40)

Maurice found that Scripture could validate his findings. Again he said: 'Scripture...illustrates and makes clear our own thoughts about Life and Death. It teaches us to think that the healthy activity of all our powers and perceptions, and their direction to their right object, is the living state; that the torpor of these, or their concentration on themselves, is a state of death'.⁴¹

Man's rebellion leads him into eternal condemnation in that it separates him from God, while by the same token his obedience admits him into a relationship of eternal life. Man's disobedience is not something that can be eradicated by force, and God's method of dealing with it, according to Maurice, was to educate man into a new attitude by making him feel the consequences of rebellion. God makes man's sin and misery the means by which he leads him to the conclusion that he is powerless in himself, and cannot live without God. Punishment shows men the misery of their situation and acts as an incentive for them to turn to God, and it destroys their complacency about their sins. Maurice's concept of time and eternity drew criticism from those who were aware of the underlying difficulties, and an acknowledgement of these will be included at a later stage.

40. *ibid.* p.366.

41. *ibid.* p.367.

When we turn to Maurice's treatment of the concept of judgement, we find that, in seeking to understand it, he used the method he had employed in making his analysis of the idea of eternity, and saw judgement in relation to the true relationship between man and God. He understood it to be a feature of man's present earthly life quite as much as of his future existence. He reacted against the popular ideas about judgement because he found them 'not exactly ideal, but exceedingly fantastic, figurative, inoperative', and he set out to 'ascertain whether Scripture does not give us the hint of something more practical and substantial'.⁴² He perceived that those who argued that the doctrine of a last judgement provided a useful form of moral check on behaviour did so in the light of an inherent belief in an ongoing judgement: 'I do not conceive they would have derived the least support from the anticipation of standing before Christ in some distant day, if they had not believed they were standing before Him in their own day'.⁴³ Maurice commented further: 'Whatever light they have thrown on the Scripture doctrine of a judgement to come has proceeded from the light in which they were continually walking'.⁴⁴ Christ is the standard by which all their acts are evaluated,⁴⁵ and the fact that we may not be aware of this ongoing judgement does not mean that it is not a reality: 'This exclusion of Christ from the eyes of sense is not, as men fancy, an interruption of that judgement which He, as Lord of their spirits, is continually pronouncing; they are not less in His presence,

42. *ibid.* pp.263,264.

43. *ibid.* p.249.

44. *ibid.*

45. See *ibid.* p.250.

open to His clear, all-penetrating vision, now, than if He were walking in their streets'.⁴⁶ Maurice was against restricting the judgement to some future time since this would imply that the creation was not in the meantime being judged.

...the tribunal of Christ is one which is not to be set up for the first time in some distant day, amidst earthly pomp and ceremonial, but that it is one before which we, in our own inmost being, are standing now, and that the time will come when we shall know that it is so, and when all that has concealed the Judge from us will be taken away. (47)

Maurice understood judgement to be an ongoing process, continuous and co-extensive with man's relationship with God, and thought that it was inseparable from the eternal care of the Creator for his creation.

Judgement for Maurice involved the sense of distinction and discrimination between what is true and what is false. He thought Christ judges by imparting a perfect knowledge of reality, and that his judgement reveals what originates in God's will and what is due to sin. In support of this, Maurice claimed this of the biblical record:

Everywhere the idea is kept before us of judgement, in its fullest, largest, most natural sense, as importing discrimination or discovery. Everywhere that discrimination or discovery is supposed to be exercised over the man himself, over his internal character, over his meaning and will. Everywhere the substitution of any mere external trial or examination for this, is rejected as inconsistent with the spirit and grandeur of Christ's revelation. (48)

At the final judgement, Maurice thought that man will be shown in his true state, without the benefit of disguise for his real condition:

46. *ibid.* p.251.

47. *ibid.* pp.256,257.

48. *ibid.* p.254.

A time will come when it will be clearly discovered to all men what their state was while they were pilgrims in this world; that they were in a spiritual relation just as much as they were in relation to those visible things of which their senses took cognisance. That which has been hidden will be made known; the darkness will no longer be able to quench the light which has been shining in the midst of it, and seeking to penetrate it; each man will be revealed as that which he actually is, that every one may receive the things done in the body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. (49)

This is more important than any function of assigning penalties.

Maurice saw the latter as entirely secondary to the main purpose of the judgement, which is to 'justify the true and honest

purpose which may have got itself bewildered in a variety of complications and contradictions...here is, indeed, a sphere for the exercise of that judicial faculty which we all esteem so highly'.⁵⁰ The final day of judgement will be a day of salvation for the whole creation, rather than the beginning of a declaration of condemnation. Maurice hoped for the world that a time would come when Christ would 'reveal Himself completely as its Conqueror and King, and would bring all men to see that His universe was built on truth and righteousness'.⁵¹ He longed for the vindication of the true foundation of the world, and understood judgement to be a means by which this could be brought about.

Although Maurice was unwilling to be too dogmatic about the possibility of universal restoration, preferring to say that it has not been revealed whether or not all men will be saved, the restitution of all things under the sovereign rule of God seems to be the necessary outcome of his teaching about judgement.

49. *ibid.* p.256.

50. *ibid.* p.253.

51. *ibid.* p.258.

He did not mean to imply that all men will be saved in their disobedience, since this would mean that God would overlook or condone the fact of sin, which is impossible, for on Maurice's view it is only when man has rejected his sin that he can turn to God and be united with him. His essay on eternal life and death in Theological Essays proved to be controversial, suggesting as it did that those who were impenitent might not be destined for eternal loss. When man is in a state of sin, God strives to win his obedience, and Maurice thought that this effort could well continue after death:

I dare not pronounce, what are the possibilities of resistance in a human will to the loving will of God. There are times when they seem to me (thinking of myself more than others) almost infinite. But I know there is something which must be infinite in an abyss of love beyond the abyss of death...More about it I cannot know, but God knows - I leave myself and all to Him. (52)

On the doctrine of eternal punishment, Maurice made some important comments, although these were to bring him into disfavour with academic and church authorities. Those who supported the doctrine as it was traditionally stated held that it was a useful deterrent to bad behaviour, and that it safeguarded and encouraged moral endeavour, but Maurice objected strongly to this way of thinking, not only because it inferred that salvation was the avoidance of punishment for sin as opposed to freedom from sin itself, but also because he thought it was inconsistent with the teaching of Christ. He made this comment:

52. *ibid.* pp.405-406.

The doctrine of endless punishment is avowedly put forward as necessary for the reprobates of the world, the publicans and the harlots, though perhaps religious men might dispense with it. Now, I find in our Lord's discourses, that when He used such words as these 'Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell?' He was speaking to religious men, to doctors of the law; but that when He went among publicans and sinners, it was to preach the Gospel of the kingdom of God. Does not this difference show that our minds are very strangely at variance with His mind? Ought not the discovery to make us think and to make us tremble? (53)

In this way Maurice undermined the contemporary view of the question of whether or not there can be said to be an eternal punishment for those who do not repent. His own concept of a continual judgement throughout man's life did, in his view, provide a far more rigorous incentive to righteousness since it made clear the fact that man lives as a son of God and is responsible for everything he does.

The main point that comes through all Maurice's writings is his insistence on the fact that man was created to live a life of eternal quality in relation to God. This is reminiscent of what both Erskine and Campbell were also working towards, although they proceeded from a different understanding of the problem of the alienation caused by sin. Not only did Maurice dispense with the traditional ideas of sacrifice and penal substitution in favour of his own re-statement of these concepts, and with the familiar understanding of judgement, but he also made a fresh analysis of the basic question of man's relationship with God, bringing in the Platonic conception of reality to aid him in his

re-evaluation of the power of sin. In his attempt to describe the way in which salvation comes about, he set the whole process in a relational context, making everything subservient to man's response to God, and he related the sense of present participation in eternal life to the concept of judgement without involving an uneasy transition from the notion of salvation to the possibility of condemnation. His is an interesting re-appraisal of the scheme of salvation in which full attention is paid to the presence of an eschatological dimension and the tradition of the concept of judgement.

AN EVALUATION OF THE SUCCESS OF THE SYSTEMS
ADVANCED BY ERSKINE, CAMPBELL AND MAURICE.

The nature of the continuous conviction about man's relationship with God is difficult to describe because of the problems involved in coming to an understanding about the presence and activity of God. It may be the case that all our conceptions of God are no more than figments of our own imagination, since it would appear to be true that a transcendent being can never be available to us or directly knowable by us except in so far as he chooses to reveal himself to us. If man is to come to a reasonably full understanding of God it will only be because God has in a sense come to man - knowledge of God could not be affirmed other than on the basis of such a revelation, and man can know of the nature of God only as he is acted upon by God. Given that character and activity are correlative, action taken by God and observed by man will be indicative of his nature, but clearly there is a parallel problem involved in establishing the link between any given action and its origin in the purposes of God. It cannot be established beyond doubt that God is at work within his creation, since although certain activity may be observed as taking place, there is no guarantee that this can be rightly attributed to God, since there are no objective criteria for determining what sort of activity is consistent with the character and will of God. The problem is circular: we cannot know God unless he manifests himself to us, yet we have no way of identifying a disclosure as divine in view of the difficulty of establishing what is divine. Any attempt to assess a theological system must take these

basic difficulties of the subject as a whole into account, and recognize the inbuilt limitations. It is not the intention of this thesis to push the theories which are being examined further than they can reasonably be expected to go. The work of Erskine, Campbell and Maurice will be analysed in terms of its internal consistency and general helpfulness in relation to the resolution of the problems connected with the judgemental and soteriological aspects of the Christian faith. This alone will be the criterion of assessment.

Christianity makes far-reaching claims, some of which form the basis of much Christian theology. The theories with which we are concerned took over several such assumptions without examining their viability; for example, they each made considerable use of the idea that God is a God of love who is involved in a reciprocal relationship with his creation, which is understood to be morally accountable to him. The concept of the love of God was the motivating force which dominated their efforts to produce a theory of the atonement, and which influenced the way in which they looked at the issue of the eternal relationship between God and man, especially with regard to the question of judgement. Whether they were justified in selecting this concept upon which to base their own work cannot easily be established in view of the difficulties outlined above, but it is not our task to examine this question here. We shall proceed from the starting point chosen by them without examining the viability of this as a basis for theology. Attention will be paid instead to the consistency of the developed theories with their initial presuppositions, and to whether in fact they

then develop their views of the work of salvation and the process of judgement so that both issues are fully treated without losing their true character or appearing to undermine the function each has in the Christian view of soteriology.

It is not easy to determine why Erskine, Campbell and Maurice should have been so affected by the concept of the love and fatherhood of God, but its effect on their theories is marked. To some extent their own study of the Bible may have influenced the basis from which they worked to construct a theory of the work of Christ; certainly Pfleiderer believed this to be true in the case of Erskine and Campbell,¹ and it would appear that Maurice too was motivated to formulate his theory in the light of what he understood to be true from the Bible, since he criticized the idea of penal substitution for presenting an un-biblical conception of God,² which rendered it to his way of thinking unacceptable. As has been seen, all three writers were strongly convinced as to the inward nature of religion, and of the need for salvation to be seen as a process by which man is brought into harmony with the will of God and sanctified. As they saw it, a relationship of love could not possibly be adequately represented by a doctrine of salvation through legal justification, and forensic terms were inappropriate to express the weight of moral accountability which man has to bear. Working from within the framework of the concept of the love of God they inevitably made of salvation a matter by which man is transformed into the creature he was meant to be.

1. O. Pfleiderer, The Development of Theology in Germany since Kant and its Progress in Great Britain since 1825, p.382.

2. See Theological Essays, 1853 edition, p.140.

Nothing less than this could satisfy them or do justice to the relationship of fatherhood and sonship which they held to exist between God and man. Salvation through remission of penalties for sin does nothing to bring about a positive reunion of God and man, and it was the restoration of harmony that Erskine, Campbell and Maurice were severally interested in. For all of them, salvation was not primarily a process that saved man from something, such as punishment for sin, but rather a means by which he was enabled to live in harmony with God, since nothing less than this could satisfy a creator who wished to be in a relationship of love with his people. Their view of salvation can thus be seen to be entirely consistent with their initial preconception of the nature of God, and although it may not be easy to determine whether or not such a view of either the love of God or the subsequent work of atonement can be verified, these theories are consistent at least as far as their understanding of God and of his probable activity goes.

Another aspect of the effect the initial idea of God had on their work can be seen in relation to the treatment they gave to the doctrine of eternal punishment. The notion of an everlasting punishment of sin implies that God will finally fail in realizing the salvation of some of his people, and Erskine and Maurice in particular reacted especially strongly against such a possibility. Again, the concept of a loving God can be seen to have influenced them in their decision to counter any doctrine of eternal punishment. Erskine's view was that God's purpose was to love men until he had subdued their rebellion, and he made the point that the battle against sin cannot be won by punishment or co-ercion, but by the

transformation of evil into good. A scheme which allows for the possibility of endless punishment involved, as Erskine saw it, a contradiction of everything he understood to be true of God's purpose for mankind, the spiritual progression and development of true holiness in the individual being a response to the love of God shown forth in Christ.

The idea of the love of God similarly affected Maurice. Like Erskine, he was in favour of seeing salvation in terms of freedom from sin itself, and thought that fear of reprisals ought not to be a determinative factor in man's relationship with God. Also in accordance with Erskine he took the view that man would finally be unable to resist the compelling power of the love of God, and although he did not commit himself to a doctrine of universal restoration, he maintained a belief in the far-reaching effects of God's love on even unrepentant sinners.³

Campbell, on the other hand, did not dismiss the idea of endless punishment. A contemporary evaluation of his teaching on this noted the difference between him and Erskine: 'He differs from Mr Erskine in one respect, feeling it possible that a free human being may eternally escape the divine longings, which Erskine feels incredible'.⁴ In his earlier writings Campbell laid great emphasis on the fact that man will be justly condemned for not responding to the work of Christ, and throughout his sermons there are many instances to be found of his insistence on the reality of the condemnation and wrath for the impenitent.⁵

3. *ibid.* pp. 405, 406.

4. A.J. Ross, Memoir of Alexander Ewing, London: Daldy, Isbister and Co., 1877, p.448.

5. See especially Sermons and Lectures, Vol.I, Sermon XVII, p.409; Vol.II, Sermon XXIX, p.275.

This does not come through so clearly from The Nature of the Atonement, and it may be that Campbell's views grew less rigid on the threat of punishment as the years went by, but on this subject he appears to have been influenced more by an awareness of the over-ruling justice of God than by his notion of God's love. Even though he realized the inadequacy of the legal analogy to explain the work of Christ he still maintained in his own system a very definite emphasis on the cost of rejecting Christ. Unlike Erskine and Maurice he did not envisage a way in which men could continue their spiritual progress after death, so for him it was imperative that they should come to accept the Cross of Christ during their earthly lifetime. Campbell held that there would come a time when man would have to answer for the state of his relationship with God, and that the verdict given as a result of the judgement would determine the quality of his future existence. The concept of God's judgement in Erskine and Maurice, on the other hand, is limited to an insistence that sin will be destroyed, and that it will not be tolerated by God. Neither of these two writers have any doctrine of retributive justice, while for Campbell this possibility is distinctly important in his theology. He does not appear to have found it necessary to excise the notion of condemnation even though he is primarily motivated by a belief in the love of God to frame a theory which takes that into account. For him the need to assert the love of God did not compel him to maintain the idea that the opportunities for entering into that love were endless, and he developed a theory which allowed for the possibility of condemnation and punishment accordingly. The effect

which this had on the internal logic of his position will be evaluated later.

Before the ways in which Erskine, Campbell and Maurice developed their concepts of judgement are examined, some comments will be made about the issue of moral accountability as this is apparent in their work. The idea of man being morally accountable to God presupposes a personal relation between them, so that man has a sense of being responsible to God for the way in which he lives, and that an awareness is present in him that it matters how he spends his life. It also takes for granted the fact that man will be aware of the demands God is making upon him, and the things he himself will have to do to satisfy those demands. It is surely meaningless to hold a man responsible for his actions if he does not know that he is answerable for them, and if he does not see that his behaviour offends against the law of a superior power who has the right to make moral demands on him. If there is to be a datum of moral accountability, there must be a correlative disclosure by the governing power of the demands that are to be made, and in addition, there must be a reasonable chance that the individual will be able to fulfil his responsibility, either through his own efforts, or with the help of others, if the fact of his accountability is to be at all realistic. There is no justice in making man responsible for demands of which he is unaware, or which he has no chance of meeting. The Christian doctrine of revelation understands that there has been an adequate disclosure through the fact of the Incarnation and the witness to God's claims on man in Scripture for all to be aware of their moral

accountability to God, and furthermore it makes the claim that it is entirely reasonable that man should be responsible for his life since the work of Christ is freely available as an enabling force to help him achieve what he is intended to achieve.

All three of the writers with whom this thesis is concerned firmly acknowledge the fact of man's responsibility to God for the way in which he lives. Erskine in particular examined the whole issue in a context of fatherhood and sonship, which contrasts with the other methods then current, notably that of seeing man's accountability in terms of God as the righteous Judge demanding retribution and man as the culprit. Erskine made the point that God's love, righteousness and justice are all working towards the same object, namely 'a desire to bring his whole moral creation into a participation of His own character and His own blessedness'.⁶ It is this participation, known by Erskine as a life of sonship, that alone gives man the clue to the nature of his relationship with God, and the necessary understanding to assess the issue of his moral accountability. Erskine's exemplarist doctrine of the work of Christ aimed to explain how man can know of God's demands, and how, through a spirit of free loving obedience, they can be fulfilled. Campbell, like Erskine, also understood the problem of moral accountability in terms of the fatherhood of God and the sonship of man, in which context alone responsibility is made the corollary of an awareness of a relationship of love, which necessarily dictates the character of man's behaviour. Maurice too, although he did not use the same terminology to express the idea, had a keen sense of the need to stress the fact that man's

6. Letters of Thomas Erskine, Vol.II, p.242.

responsibility to God stemmed from the fact that sonship of a loving Father entailed certain demands as well as rights. All three writers chose to look at the issue of man's accountability in such a way that the judicial aspect was of minimal importance, and stressed instead the need for free, unstinting obedience that could only occur in a relationship of love in which the threat of punishment was not a factor influencing behaviour.

The question must be asked, however, whether a doctrine of moral accountability necessarily entails the concept of a fixed time at which man's life is to be evaluated. It would seem inevitable that if there is to be any reality in the notion of accountability, then there must be a corresponding idea that a time will come when the way in which man has exercised his responsibility will be assessed, and it is difficult to see how responsibility can have any serious consequences for man unless he is to be examined on the way he has used it. Just to drift on being in some vague manner answerable to God is a meaningless idea unless there comes a time when one is asked to present one's case and actually take the consequences for it. Otherwise, accountability is being used as a euphemism to describe the fact that what happens in a relationship between God and man counts for something, and that what man does can affect it. Such a position has little to do with moral accountability as such, although it does have much to say about the reciprocal condition that exists between God and man, and about the fact that the goodwill of both is vital to the continuance of the relationship. Campbell would appear to have recognized this distinction in view of the fact that he maintained

a strict doctrine of the assessment of man's life and his use of responsibility in his response to Christ. His emphasis on the impelling need to respond to Christ before the chance is lost illustrates his awareness that man will be called upon to answer for his life. If the strict sense of the concept of moral accountability is applied, it seems that out of the three writers being studied, Campbell alone takes into account the corresponding fact of judgement. Erskine in particular, but Maurice also to a great extent, seem to be guilty of missing the point where this is concerned. Erskine has an interesting idea which describes the fate of man to be one of continual development in sanctification both in this life and the next, but by implication this means that man is never judged or assessed. He may gradually and ideally respond ever more positively to God, but he cannot rightly be said to be accountable if in fact he is never called to account. It must be questionable, if this is the case, whether Erskine can be said to have a doctrine of moral accountability. It would seem that he substitutes for it a vague, if impassioned, sense that what happens to affect the relationship between God and man is of crucial importance, and that it matters deeply if man fails to respond to God's will and love. What Erskine was trying to encourage was that man should aim for the kind of life that would ensure that he was in harmony with the will of God. Certainly no outward compulsion can produce such a desire - Erskine was quite right in making the point that man cannot freely respond until he is relieved of threats of punishment, and that the quality of the sonship achieved through the process of education

will be far better than that which he enters through fear of what will happen to him if he does not. As far as Erskine's theory goes, however, it would appear that it is of no consequence if the desired quality of sonship is never achieved in the sense that there will be no penalties for failure. It is just taken to be a good thing for man if he happens to achieve a high degree of sanctification, and apart from the quality of existence he will enjoy if he does attain this, it matters little whether or not he responds to God. Erskine could not conceive of God punishing sinners for failing to respond to his love, since he believed in the compelling power of God to attract all men, and hence had no need to introduce a concept of punishment to explain the fate of those who rejected God. Yet in putting forward this scheme he could justly be accused of having failed to take into account the datum of moral accountability. It seems from what he says that God would have no right to determine an acceptable stage in man's spiritual development and sanctification.

As will be seen, Maurice did not face this dilemma in such an acute form because he gave more meaning and place to judgement as a means by which man's relationship with God was continuously monitored, and which helped to make clear just what the nature of it was. For Maurice, judgement appears to be a way in which the reality of a given situation can be disclosed, and as such it fulfils the function of the evaluation of the way man's moral accountability has been accepted. However, as with Erskine, there appears to be nothing which acts as a reprisal for man having failed to reach the required standard, and there is no place

for endless punishment in Maurice's system. By interpreting the judgement as something which reveals God as lord over his creation and which brings all men to a position from which they can recognize his sovereignty and their own relation to it, Maurice rendered his idea of an ongoing judgement of little value as a means of evaluating man's relationship with God. As an instrument of clarification regarding the state of this relationship judgement may fulfil a useful and instructive function, and it may enable men to realize more fully the truth of their responsibility to God, so Maurice cannot be accused in quite the same way as Erskine of failing to recognize the importance of man's moral accountability. He appears to occupy a position half-way between Erskine and Campbell, and to offer the advantages of a compromise in so far as he takes some account of both the need to establish that man requires to be able to respond freely without threat of punishment if he is to participate in an authentic life of sonship, and also to the issue of outlining a realistic view of accountability which is subject to at least some kind of assessment.

With regard to Maurice's view of judgement as something that is co-extensive with man's relationship with God, and which is a constant feature of his life whether or not he is aware of it, it is difficult to see what possible effect such a judgement could have on man, except in so far as he may be aware that he is under scrutiny, and that his actions are being noted by God. This may have a certain value in that it does introduce a semblance of assessment, which was entirely absent from Erskine's system,

but even so there is no possibility of condemnation involved, and the whole enterprise is reduced to a mere observation of what goes on in any individual's life. If at first sight Maurice's theory does justice to what is involved with personal accountability for sin, a deeper examination suggests that it may be no more satisfactory than was Erskine's.

Campbell, on the other hand, was adamant that God could not relinquish his function of judgement - judgement being interpreted in its traditional sense which involves not only the discrimination between right and wrong, but also the passing of sentence with a corresponding acquittal or condemnation. Unlike Erskine or Maurice, Campbell emphasised that judgement was very much concerned with the righteous condemnation of sin and the subsequent punishment of the individual who has committed it. He did not see it as something which could usefully educate man into a more spiritual way of life, but rather as a point at which his life of sonship was to be evaluated and a verdict arrived at as to its consequences. Campbell was drawn to this point of view as a result of his belief that only judgement could be a means of safeguarding the interest of goodness in the universe and of making an end of sin. He thought that if God relinquished the right to judge he would thereby throw away his government of the world, and that there would no longer be any guarantee that right would prevail.⁷ The absence of punishment threatens the existence of good, and the stability of the world depends on God exercising his prerogative of judgement. As has been noted above, Campbell was very clear on the point

7. Sermons and Lectures, Vol.I, Sermon VIII, pp.181,182;
cf. Sermon XIV, p.328.

that a forced submission to the will of God is of no value whatsoever, and he emphasised the need for a free and positive response to the work of Christ, yet at the same time he maintained a firm dictum of judgement, and taught that men must expect to face the consequences of their actions at a given point beyond which there will be no further opportunity for development or for repentance. Perhaps of the three writers he alone can be seen to have done justice to the concept of moral accountability.

If one wished to take the view that is implicit in Erskine's and Maurice's teaching, that man is deeply affected by sin, and that it damages his relationship with God, but that there will never be a time at which he will be called to account for it, there might be a way of safeguarding the meaning of responsibility by looking at the situation of man's sin in the following way. If it can be seen that one does answer for one's sin by way of bearing its consequences in a marred relationship with God, then it might be justifiable to say that one condemns oneself by one's own actions without there being a need for there to be an external judge evaluating one's life. Maurice seems to have recognized clearly the fact that man does have to take the consequences of his life,⁸ and so perhaps after all it would be fair to say that the approach that he takes does not totally reduce the datum of moral accountability, even if it to some extent weakens the notion. As far as Erskine is concerned, his theory does not seem to take into account the fact that man will have to live with the consequences of his sinful life. His view of limitless education

8. Theological Essays, p.256.

and of judgement as a means by which man can further his spiritual progress certainly appears to dismiss the idea of moral accountability. Yet surely it must be the case that the way in which man conducts his relationship with God in this life will determine his capacity of responsiveness to God and so set limits to what he can achieve through further education. Although neither Erskine nor Maurice appear to have taken this into account, it would seem to be the inevitable corollary of their theories.

F. W. Robertson⁹ put forward the view that man's relationship with God after death must be conditioned by the state of that relationship in this life. As he saw it there is a sense 'in which every man's future position depends upon himself. Each place is regulated according to the way in which each man has fitted himself for it. What you are here, that by a most righteous regulation, you will be hereafter'.¹⁰ Robertson firmly taught that men will have to face the consequences of their sin in terms of a damaged soul, and a reduced capacity for responding to God: 'Every sin must be paid for: every sensual indulgence is a harvest, the price for which is so much ruin for the soul'.¹¹ Some men will be better fitted to enjoy the life of heaven than others simply because they have adapted themselves for it during their life on earth.

Robertson explains it thus: 'Just because here on earth there has been produced in some a more exquisite meetness for the enjoyments which are found there, and a more enlarged vision, and a stronger

9. Robertson was a contemporary of Erskine, Campbell and Maurice, and was a representative of the thinking of the Broad Church movement. He was the pastor of Trinity Chapel, Brighton, 1847-53.

10. F.W. Robertson, Sermons, Fifth series, Sermon II, p.35; published in London by Kegan Paul, Tench, Trübner and Co. Ltd., 1890.

11. *Ibid.*, First series, Sermon XIV, p.211.

power of love, therefore one soul may be drawn, as it were, more closely to God, and consequently to blessedness, than another can'.¹² Unless each man can enjoy heaven with the same intensity there will be no equality in heaven.¹³

Such an idea would have been anathema to Erskine's system in which all, by implication at least, come to realize a perfect relationship with God, and yet surely Robertson's theory that the quality of each man's union with God will be different is more realistic and does more to preserve the individual nature of a personal relationship with God, which must necessarily vary from person to person. Robertson argued that his theory of there being, as he called it, degrees in glory, was entirely consistent with the principle of the universe. There are levels of attainment and achievement as well as differences of potential on earth, and although 'this does not prove that there will be degrees in heaven...it makes it exceedingly improbable that there will not',¹⁴ since 'if in heaven there were anything like universal equality, it would stand out as an exception in God's universe'.¹⁵ This means that on this view there will be a 'peculiar nearness to Christ',¹⁶ and a corresponding distance from him which depends entirely on the way in which man has fitted himself for a relationship with God, so that in a very real sense what he is now he will be after death. This system has the merit of remedying the deficiencies of a type of theory which does not take sufficient account of the

12. *ibid.* Fifth series, Sermon II, p.30.

13. *ibid.* See p.29.

14. *ibid.* p.27.

15. *ibid.* p.26.

16. *ibid.* p.28.

fact of man's answerability before God. It would also seem to be more realistic an assessment of the various ways in which men come to God and the different relationships they establish with him.

When the problem of relating salvation through Christ to the idea of continuing moral accountability is examined, several approaches to this question become apparent in the work of Erskine, Campbell and Maurice. Erskine appears to have worked with an exemplarist doctrine of the atonement, and although at times he gave the appearance of trying to make the work of Christ seem efficacious in terms of forensic justification, his main emphasis was on encouraging men to adopt a Christ-like life and unite themselves with the will of God. Erskine reduced the matter of justification to one of sanctification largely because of his disillusionment with the value of forensic language to describe what was for him the heart of salvation, namely union between God and man through the work of Christ, which could not be achieved by any legal manoeuvre. Erskine's view of the suffering of Christ held that it can educate man to recognize sin for the offence it is against holiness, and he taught that suffering could be used to teach obedience to the will of God. The Cross is therefore an example of how man is to achieve union with the love of God, and in so far as man responds to what Christ has done with a similar submission through suffering he will be saved, or can at least be seen to be entering upon a life of sanctification, which for Erskine appears to be the equivalent of salvation. As far as this theory is concerned, there is no conflict between man being justified

before God and still accountable morally (albeit in a weakened sense). For Erskine, justification is entirely conditional upon sanctification, and that is a process which extends beyond death. Christ's work proved the love of God and his goodwill towards men, and made it clear that the way was open for them to be forgiven for the sins they committed if they repented. On Erskine's view, then, justification is an ongoing process conditional upon sanctification, and continuous with man's relationship with God. It has been seen that this theory has a weakened concept of moral accountability, and this, coupled with the fact that there is no strict understanding of forensic justification, means that Erskine's system avoids the problems of maintaining that man is justified through Christ and yet is still responsible for his life to God. By taking the concept of salvation right out of the context of forensic justification, and replacing the legal framework of atonement with an emphasis on growth in sanctity, Erskine was able to avoid the dilemma of the penal theory in particular, and although his own system introduced other problems, he did at least attempt to put forward a theory in which the present and future elements of salvation were taken into account, and this effort was a much needed departure from the contemporary accounts of the work of Christ and the response of man. It must be noted, however, that if there is no conflict in Erskine's theory between Christ's work as saviour and his function as judge, this may only be due to the fact that Erskine rigorously redefined the categories of saviour and judge, and whereas he succeeded in giving the former some realistic content, he dispensed entirely with the latter. By doing this he did not have to face the problem of relating the two

divergent (at least so far as traditional interpretation has it) roles of Christ. If the attempt to solve the problem by reinterpreting the terms used can be seen to be a valid and useful method, the content with which Erskine invested his terms does seem to be deficient, and his theory is less successful as a result.

Campbell dealt with this problem in an entirely different way. Although like Erskine he laid great emphasis on the need for man to adopt as his own Christ's perfect life, and especially his confession of sin as a necessary part of the work of atonement, he nevertheless made it very clear that there was a strong transactional element involved in Christ's work, and that without this man would be unable to establish a relationship with God. Repeatedly he stressed that Christ came to 'deal with God' just as much as his purpose was one of influencing men, and as has been seen, he developed a theory of Christ offering a perfect penitence to God for the sin of humanity. Campbell made it plain that man's salvation depends on his acceptance of Christ's act on his behalf, and that although it is vital that he should himself adopt Christ's confession of sin, his salvation occurs through what Christ did on his behalf, not on his imitation of Christ's work. Campbell held that man would be judged entirely on whether or not he had accepted Christ, and he therefore presents the problem of reconciling the idea of present justification with that of a future judgement in an acute form, but he appears to have recognized the resulting tension and to have taken steps to resolve it. He developed the idea of the 'day of grace' to explain the fact that although man is at present being given the opportunity

to repent and turn to God, there will come a time at which he will be judged according to whether or not he has taken advantage of the chance he has been given through Christ. Campbell, as has been shown above, thought that it was quite justified that God should call men to account for the use they have made of the favourable position in which Christ's work placed them. In fact, he understood their responsibility for response to be all the more weighty because of the advantages they have been given. Men are to be held justly responsible for that which is freely bestowed upon them. Campbell's theory therefore avoids the problem of reconciling present justification with the threat of future judgment by taking a different view of justification. He refused to use the penal framework of thought, and subsequently he did not expound the effects of Christ's work upon man in terms of forensic justification. Instead, he used the idea of man's position being objectively altered by the achievement of Christ's perfect penitence, so that man was put for the first time on a footing from which he could truly respond to God. He is not justified in the legal sense of the word, but rather enabled to serve in obedience. Campbell made it clear that pardon would not be automatic, and that man would still have to account for the use he has made of his new opportunities. As with Erskine's theory, Campbell's identifies justification with sanctification, and demands that man's efforts in response to the suffering of Christ and his adoption of the confession of sin made on his behalf are determining factors in his salvation. Campbell thus uses the same method as Erskine, namely the re-interpretation of the key concepts

to solve the problem, but in this he has the greater degree of success. His concept of justification coupled with his understanding of the 'day of grace' enables him to put forward a viable system which can encompass both the demands of salvation and also of judgement, and this is a considerable achievement.

Maurice employed yet another method to approach this problem. His view of the Cross was that it unequivocally manifested that which was eternally true of the nature of God and his relation to man, and that it did not actually change man's position before God except in so far as it informed him of the fact that God's love was there for him as a child of God, and that he should follow Christ's example of self-sacrifice and thereby unite himself with the principle of the life of the Trinity. Christ's victory over the misconceptions about the power of sin and death to separate man from God provides the liberation from sin, and knowing the truth about God and his relation to him, man can become the child of God that he essentially is. Justification as a concept is foreign to Maurice's framework of thought - he simply takes the view that man will be affected by the degree to which he has adopted the principle of self-sacrifice and that his salvation will depend on this. Like Erskine, Maurice appears to have dispensed with the notion of present justification in its forensic sense, and to have reduced it to a state from which man is able to respond freely to God. Whereas he has every chance of developing his relationship with God there is no guarantee that this is what he has already achieved in the present, or will go on to achieve in the future. Maurice's conception of

judgement, examined above, depends upon a considerable re-interpretation from its usual meaning of discrimination between good and evil and subsequent sentence, and this plays a part in easing the tension involved in maintaining the saving quality of Christ's work and also the continuing fact of moral accountability, as it does in Erskine's theory and to some extent in Campbell's, but the same criticisms apply to Maurice as to Erskine. In addition to this it has been said of Maurice that his theory rests on an inadequate understanding of the seriousness of sin, and of the lasting effect of the Fall on man's position. This has been commented upon above, and it may be that Maurice can be acquitted of this charge since he does appear to take account of the damage sin does to man's relationship with God, but if it is agreed that he does not represent man's alienation from God in realistic terms, then his theory of redemption will necessarily be seen to fail, in that it offers inadequate measures to deal with what is a situation of radical sinfulness and separation.

All three writers have a very fluid concept of salvation. Each rejects the idea of salvation as being a status of legal justification because they all sense the inadequacy of such a notion to express the vital process of man coming into union with the will of God, and his subsequent growth in obedience and holiness which alone unite him with God. Salvation for man is his participation in the divine will and his transformation into a creature freely at one with God, sharing in his blessedness. For Erskine and Maurice in particular, salvation is emphatically not freedom from punishment; on the one hand neither of them has

any real doctrine of punishment except in so far as it is educative and leads to a life of more complete union with God, and on the other hand they prefer to see salvation in terms of deliverance to a given quality of life in relation to God rather than a means by which something unpleasant can be avoided. For Campbell alone salvation entailed as part of its meaning the more negative connotation of deliverance from punishment, but his emphasis on the importance of sanctification brought him very close to Erskine's position. Both Erskine and Maurice believed that man's growth into a relationship with God might prove to be something that continued after physical death, so that man's salvation was a quality of existence in relation to God which was an ongoing and continuously developing process co-extensive with man's existence. It was not something that one achieved at a given point and beyond which there was no room for further development, but something that was inextricably linked to the quality of one's relationship with God, and perhaps by implication a state of being the nature of which would at times be more intense than others. All three writers recognized that salvation in these terms was available to man in this life in so far as he united himself with Christ, but Campbell alone developed the idea that there would come a time when one's eternal relation to God would be determined, and that an everlasting union with God would be dependent upon the degree to which one had responded to the Gospel in this life. He seems to entertain the possibility that salvation will be a fixed state of beatitude where man's relationship with God after death is concerned, but

neither of the other two theologians appears to have held such a notion, preferring to see salvation in terms of a continuously developing process. To take the view that there comes a time when a relationship ceases to develop, and is 'frozen' at the stage it had reached under a given set of conditions, would appear to contradict the whole understanding of what a relationship entails in terms of response and reaction to the action taken by the other partner, and it cancels the possibility of reciprocity, which appears to be so important for a personal link with another being. The idea of an unchanging relation between God and man after physical death is unsatisfactory as a doctrine of salvation which purports to be concerned with the state of a personal relationship. On this basis, Erskine and Maurice offer a more attractive system than does Campbell, but as has been previously noted, there are problems involved with an idea of salvation which follows the pattern which they used owing to the difficulties entailed in maintaining the possibility of change in an environment generally understood to be timeless, and hence without the means by which change could be measured or even occur.

Both Erskine and Maurice fall into this problem, Maurice perhaps more noticeably in view of the detailed attention which he gives to the concept of eternity and eternal life, but Erskine nonetheless because of his notion of the possibility of spiritual development after death. Neither of them appears to have recognized the difficulties into which they were getting by arguing for a developing relationship between man and God after death, but Maurice provoked criticism from Mansel, who clearly saw that there

was a problem involved in such a concept of salvation and drew attention to it.¹⁷ He took the view that time is the condition of man's consciousness, and that without its existence man would be unaware of any development or change in his quality of life or surroundings even supposing that they could occur. Mansel pointed out that if eternity is the opposite of time, it can only denote a form of consciousness that is not subject to succession, and that clearly this would be a fatal difficulty to any theory that held the notion of development after death. Succession is vital to the concept of development, since only the fact of succession makes it possible for change to occur and to be observed as having occurred. Furthermore, Mansel criticised Maurice's understanding of eternity as a consciousness out of duration as something of which we can have no conception, and he made the point that Maurice was not justified in using his non-temporal idea of eternity to criticise and re-interpret the biblical concepts of everlasting life in heaven and endless punishment in hell, in view of the fact that we are in no position to frame a clear notion of eternity, and hence have no objective grounds for re-interpreting Scriptural symbolism. According to Mansel, eternity is something of which we can have no immediate perception, and to which we have no direct access.¹⁸ Such criticism undermines Maurice's approach to the whole question of establishing the character of man's relationship

17. Mansel was Waynflete Professor of Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy at Magdalen College, Oxford, from 1855, and Dean of St. Paul's after 1868.

18. See Don Cupitt, 'Mansel and Maurice on our knowledge of God' in Theology, Vol.73, 1970, pp.301-311.

with God beyond physical death, and calls into question Maurice's method of re-interpreting the concept of eternity, so important for the development of his understanding of salvation. If Maurice's attempt to re-define eternity in qualitative as opposed to quantitative terms is disallowed, then his system must be seen to fail.

Even if Mansel was right in taking the view that Maurice did not have a sufficiently firm basis from which to develop an alternative concept of eternal life, this is no reason for resolutely holding to the biblical scheme, since this is much affected by man's inability to have an objective knowledge of the nature of eternity, and can therefore provide no certainty that the understanding it puts forward is correct. In view of this, Maurice's endeavour to arrive at an alternative view of man's eternal life was not necessarily doomed to failure, although it must be noted that anything he might have wanted to suggest could not be objectively validated. In his favour, however, it can be said that the same would apply to any effort made by man to describe something which was so far beyond the scope of his perception, and that much theological theory is subject to exactly the same limitations.

There appear to be greater problems with the effort to maintain the possibility of change and development in a timeless environment, and unless a way can be found to allow for some semblance of succession, any theory of development will fail. The one thing that might resolve the difficulty would be the establishment of a time-scale for eternity, but this would seem

to be a contradiction in terms, and so cannot easily be seen to provide a means by which the problem can be eased. If Maurice and Erskine are to be regarded as having given a deficient account of eternal life, it will largely be for this reason.

In Maurice's particular view of eternity, another problem exists in his logic concerning the nature of its quality. One of his main points when dealing with the issue of God's eternity was the fact that it denoted his unchangeable being, and he argued that eternity stands for that which is unchangeable and perfect as opposed to those things which are subject to change and are necessarily transient.¹⁹ Yet at the same time he can be seen to be arguing for a definition of eternal life which is essentially developmental and hence subject to change. He does not appear to have noticed this inconsistency and the resulting tension which is caused by combining the two concepts, one of which is characterized by its very changelessness and the other which is necessarily transient. Thus in addition to the difficulties which arise from Maurice's system due to his concept of an ongoing developmental relationship after death, there is also a distinct problem where the internal logic of his system is concerned.

As has been noted above, there are problems involved with the need to establish identity of personality through the event of death so that however moral accountability is construed, the individual after death can be identified as, and is continuous with, the person he was before death. Yet this is a matter

19. See Theological Essays, p.366.

that is entirely taken for granted by Erskine, Campbell and Maurice. They all assume that man's relationship with God continues unbroken through death, and that there is no reason to suppose that there is any break in the continuity of personality even taking into account the great change in the mode of existence that is involved in the transfer from earthly life to life beyond physical death. None of them gives any indication that he had come to an understanding of how it was possible for man to maintain his personal identity and characteristic nature while losing his physical form and sensory apparatus which seem so involved with his capacity to apprehend the situation around him and respond to it. There is a dual problem here. First there is the difficulty of guaranteeing that an individual who has died is identical with his pre-death self, and secondly there is the problem of establishing a means by which a person who lacks physical sensory apparatus could be aware of his environment and respond to it, or continue to partake in a relationship with God that is primarily reciprocal and which would demand from him the ability both to initiate communication and also to respond to that coming from God. These are crucial difficulties for all three theories, but they cannot be met by counter-arguments from any of them, since the problem appears to have gone unrecognized. This is a weakness in each theory, but Erskine, Campbell and Maurice are by no means alone in failing to take this question into account, since the issue of personal continuity through death and the dependence of man on his physical environment and sensory apparatus for his capacity of response was not one that received attention until later.

The three theologians with whom this thesis is concerned constructed theories which were to some extent similar in content, and which looked at the problems involved in salvation and judgement from a particular understanding of the primacy of the love of God and a realization that the language of the penal theory was inadequate to express the positive sanctifying nature of salvation. They all appear to have taken into account the fact that man's present relationship with God has consequences for the continuing state of that relationship in the life after death, and as a result of this they make every effort to relate the two spheres of Christian life, which is important if salvation is to be seen to apply to man throughout his existence. In different ways these writers largely avoided the clash of interests between their views of the work of Christ as saviour and his function as judge. Their efforts to re-define the concepts of salvation, judgement and eternal life may in some respects be deficient, but it is important to note that they did at least allow for the construction of systems in which a cohesive understanding was achieved of the process of man's reunification with God. Erskine, Campbell and Maurice can all be seen to have linked what they held to be true of the atonement to the related concepts of eternal life and judgement, and this is an advantage in any theory of salvation which encompasses not only the present effect of Christ's work on man's life, but also the future aspects of that work, since both elements are crucial to man's relationship with God at one stage of his existence or another. It is not certain whether or not any of them recognized the dilemma involved

in maintaining salvation and judgement in a single system of thought, but in different ways they all appear to have avoided the difficulties and to have produced a comprehensive view of salvation which takes at least some account of the factor of man's continuing personal responsibility for his relationship with God. It would appear that their theology was formulated as a result of an awareness of the need to maintain a creative tension between the efforts of God on behalf of man, and the necessary response to the work of Christ by man, but in paying attention to this concern, they also constructed theories which managed to overcome to a significant degree the problems of reconciling salvation and judgement. This is an important achievement, and if there are faults in the systems they produced, they are nonetheless to be commended for their efforts to frame theories which take into account the various and conflicting aspects of the whole issue of salvation.

CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE PROBLEMS INCURRED BY A CHRISTIAN
UNDERSTANDING OR REDEMPTION WITH REFERENCE TO THE CONTRIBUTION
MADE BY ERSKINE, CAMPBELL AND MAURICE TO THE SOLUTION OF THE
PROBLEMS.

As has been seen, the presence of varied schemes of salvation and eschatology found in the New Testament is not helpful when it comes to the need to define a cohesive Christian doctrine of soteriology. It has been shown that the existence of a dual pattern of thought concerning the fate of man after death gives rise to a complicated tension between the vindication of God's people and the work of a saviour whose sacrificial death alone brings about the salvation of those who follow him. These two concepts are sufficiently alike at several points to allow for a fusion of their thought, but the resulting unease causes what appear to be contradictions in the whole scheme of eschatology. As well as the difficulty of attempting to combine two different and divergent patterns of eschatology and framing a doctrine of salvation that takes into account the main factors of both, there remains the problem of the internal tension within one of the systems, namely the maintenance of the concept of a saviour-God with that of judgement. The inconsistencies involved in such an exercise have been illustrated above, and have been seen to lead to considerable difficulties in the formation of an understanding of the whole question of redemption. What is essentially a biblical dilemma has been perpetuated in the belief of the Church as this is codified in the Nicene and Athanasian creeds, and has led to confusion in the formulation of Christian

doctrine in the spheres of soteriology and eschatology.

It would appear that any attempt to systematize such divergent traditions, and to construct a doctrine of salvation from all the patterns of thought present in the New Testament would be inadequate or self-contradictory, owing to the conflicting material it would have to encompass. If the Bible were to be dispensed with as a document from which doctrine had to be extrapolated, it would perhaps be easier to avoid some of the difficulties which arise from the biblical writings, but in so doing valuable source-material for Christian belief would be lost, and the resulting theories would be unable to claim that they were distinctively Christian as opposed to theistic, since the Bible as interpreted by the Church is an important, if not the only, basis for Christian doctrine. It may be that in order to do justice to the scriptural material an attempt will have to be made to deduce the key affirmations about salvation and judgement which lie behind the conflicting eschatologies. If it is agreed that in order to present a system as Christian in character it is necessary for there to be recognizable contact with biblical teaching, but that as this stands any effort to systematize the given material is bound to fail, it becomes clear that an alternative method must be found to take into account the demand for consistency in approach and also faithfulness to the biblical record.

If in addition to taking into account other factors when doctrines are formulated an attempt is made to identify the main assertions of the Bible, it may be found that these may

legitimately be extrapolated from the confusion of conflicting schemes of salvation and eschatology, and may be used as a basis for constructing a system of redemption. One of the most important aspects of scriptural teaching is that God is active on man's behalf in the matter of his salvation. The point is firmly made that by his own efforts man cannot repair the damage done to his relationship with God. Certainly in the repair of something as personal as a relationship both partners are responsible for its successful restoration, but inevitably there is something that lies outside man's control when it comes to resuming a relationship or attempting to make amends for actions of his which have injured someone else, since he has no means of knowing just how much damage he has done, and it is not up to him to say what should be acceptable as reparation - perhaps only the person wronged can know the true cost of the injury. This applies particularly to man's relationship with God in view of the fact that it is not apparent to us how our sin affects God. If the marred relationship between God and man is to be restored, then at least some of the action taken towards its repair must come from God, whatever man may subsequently do. In testifying to the activity of a saviour-God, the New Testament is safeguarding this notion, and it is this maxim that any theology must endeavour to represent in its soteriology.

Another key factor that can be seen to be intrinsic to the biblical material is the idea that in the process of salvation man's active participation is essential, and that irrespective of anything that may be done on his behalf, he retains his moral

accountability to God. It has been thought that the activity of one partner in a given procedure would render superfluous the participation of the other, and that if the primary action is seen as belonging to one person, the secondary response to that action would be of little value in actually accomplishing the process. The Bible appears to reserve to God the entire initiative and efficiency in the matter of man's salvation, and yet man is still involved, and from him an active response is demanded, with remaining responsibility for that response. On the face of it, such a scheme appears to be inconsistent, but it is nevertheless an accurate reflection of any relationship in which both partners are mutually responsible, and which is characterized by the datum of reciprocity. Erskine, Campbell and Maurice all attempted to give due weight to the fact of man's involvement in the process of his redemption. They refused to accept it on the level of an automatic transfer of a status of righteousness, and demanded that God's forgiveness should be met with a response of repentance and a growth in sanctity. Only such an approach can be seen to do justice to the reality of a personal relationship such as exists between God and man. In framing a doctrine of salvation it is vital that this is recognized despite the difficulties involved in appropriating primacy of action to one partner while giving importance to the response of the other in the efficiency of the action. The confused testimony of the Bible on this question gave rise to the debate about the relative efficacy of faith and works in the accomplishment of salvation, but what comes across most distinctly from the Bible is that it

is not a case of 'either...or' but of 'both...and'. Only such an approach can be valid in the context of a personal relationship, and it is this that must determine the way in which any theology copes with the problem of reconciling the activity of God with the active response of man in its account of the atonement.

Another important factor in the biblical record is the insistence that salvation is related entirely to man's relationship with God, and that outside this context it has no meaning or reality. This demands that the process of salvation be looked at in terms of reciprocal relation, and underlines the need to allow for the activity and response of both partners in the restoration of the relationship between them. The maintenance of the concept of salvation in relation to that of judgement is one means by which the activity of God and man is safeguarded. Despite the problems of relating the two processes in any one system it is important that they should be kept together because of their value in testifying to the personal nature of the process of redemption and to the need for man to contribute his own activity as a response to the work of Christ. Moral accountability must be a constant factor if mutual responsibility is to exist between God and man; unless such concern is shown between the partners, the notion of a personal relationship is rendered impossible. The datum of moral accountability is a vital factor in maintaining the personal nature of the link between God and man, and must be safeguarded at all costs. It is not at variance with the concept of salvation since it is intrinsic to the personal relationship which constitutes salvation. This appears to have been taken into account by

Erskine, Campbell and Maurice, and incorporated into the systems they developed, but this is not the case with all theories even though such a fundamental issue demands recognition in any system of soteriology.

A Christian doctrine of salvation must take these key affirmations into account when efforts are being made to explain what being involved with God entails for man both with regard to his earthly existence and also his life beyond physical death. The theologians with whom we are concerned have been seen to have grappled with these issues and to have constructed theories which achieve a considerable degree of success in reconciling the potentially divergent elements. They each maintained the necessity of examining the question of salvation in the light of a belief that it was fundamentally concerned with man's personal relationship with God, which has been shown to be of crucial importance. This enabled them to combine the fact of God's activity with man's response in a single system. The extent to which they took into account the final implications of the existence of moral accountability is perhaps less than might be desired, although Campbell and Maurice may be seen to have been more successful than Erskine in the way in which they allowed for the reality of the fact that man will be affected by his conduct of the relationship between him and God.

It has been demonstrated that the biblical concepts of judgement, salvation and eternal life are sufficiently flexible to allow for considerable latitude in interpretation, and that by manipulating their traditional meaning it is possible to

re-align them in a single system without too much tension becoming apparent as a result. This was the way in which Erskine, Campbell and Maurice all approached the problem, and although criticisms of the content they chose to give the traditional concepts have been made, their attempt to re-formulate the doctrines of atonement and eschatology using this method is an interesting departure from contemporary work, and is to a large extent successful. They do not appear to have been limited by the nature of the problems they were confronting, and they did some useful work towards the clarification of the issues involved. Their systems have the added advantage of being relatively consistent within themselves, and compatible with the pre-supposition about the character of God from which they choose to proceed. This was possible because they selected key points from the mass of conflicting biblical material and developed them along their own lines without entirely losing touch with the original intention of the elements they used, and without being unduly selective and thereby giving a misrepresentation of the biblical matter. Their achievement in formulating systems which take into account the biblical data and yet maintain their internal consistency and logic is considerable. Identification of the underlying concepts is vital in an exercise of outlining a biblical understanding of salvation. In this all three writers were extremely successful, and their work justifies the further use of this method to clarify the apparently divergent patterns of thought found in Scripture. They also made considerable progress in bringing together the present and future aspects of the process

of salvation, and thereby succeeded in constructing theories in which the soteriological and eschatological phases of redemption were united, and this is an important accomplishment, given the fact that man's present and future relationships with God are inseparably combined.

Another contribution that might be agreed to have been made by the systems which have been investigated rests in the area of the corporate nature of salvation. One of the main affirmations of the New Testament concerns the fact that the situation in which each man finds himself with regard to God is shared by all men. There is great emphasis on the fact that all are affected by sin, and that their responsibility for it somehow goes deeper than their answerability for their own individual sins. Sin is understood to affect the whole of mankind, and to correspond with this vast fact of alienation from God the only thing that would seem at all adequate would be the eventual salvation of all. In theories of the Fall attention is generally paid to the oneness of humanity, and yet as a rule this realization that sin has primarily a corporate reference is not applied to the subsequent treatment of eschatology. If men are to be regarded as united in their situation of alienation from God, it is difficult to see how the perfect salvation of any can be supported without the redemption of all. The lost and the saved cannot be altogether dissociated from each other since there is a moral relation between them. Perfect blessedness of some cannot be harmonized with the ultimate loss of others.

In this sphere Maurice made a substantial contribution.

His concept of the kingship of Christ allowed him to develop the theory that Christ was the true root of mankind, and that he alone is its proper constitution. Maurice therefore had as a result of this a clear understanding of the unity of men in Christ.

He grounded his idea of their unity and reconciliation in the unity of the Trinity, since for him the Trinity was primarily a doctrine of oneness, testifying to a living being in whom there is an eternal communion, out of which come creation and reconciliation. He held that man's social nature is grounded in the social nature of God, and that the restoration of man's relationship with God rests on the eternal reconciliation of the Trinity. For Maurice the Trinity is the foundation on which the existence of all men is based.¹ Maurice therefore came to understand man as essentially a social being, and as a consequence he regarded redemption as a concept with a primarily social reference. He held that a Christian view of man was necessarily social, and that socialism was a proper expression of existence in love.

Such an attitude affected more than Maurice's attitude to social theory. It influenced the formulation of his view of eschatology, and also his understanding of the nature of salvation. He took into account the oneness of men in relation to God both in their sinfulness and also their need for redemption. Both these issues were for Maurice primarily social concepts,

1. Theological Essays, p.348.

and were seen by him in relation to the unity of men in Christ. Maurice transferred the transactional element of his theory of atonement back to the eternal self-sacrificing life of the Trinity, and held that God's relation to men was eternally conditioned by this, so that all men are, as a result of the ground of their being, reconciled to God. Men are at one in Christ because he is the constitutive factor of their being, and God's relation to them is conditioned by the eternal self-sacrifice and reconciliation of the economy of the Trinity. Salvation for Maurice had therefore mainly a corporate reference in as much as it applied to all men, and was the necessary basis for his subsequent ideas on the importance of individual response to God. This was an advance on the work done by Erskine and Campbell in this sphere. The transactional approach used by Maurice had the virtue of explaining just how men were affected by something achieved on their behalf, and in this there is a marked improvement on the difficulties of the other approaches to substitution then current. Since Christ is the constitutive factor of his existence, man's relation to God is always seen in the light of his union with Christ, and hence with regard to the reconciliation of the life of the Trinity. This is something that applied to all men, irrespective of their awareness of their life of sonship in Christ, and it therefore provides a basis for a corporate system of eschatology. It is an impressive answer to the universal fact of sin and the social need for redemption.

The system designed by Erskine approached the question from another angle. Although his theory does, at least by implication,

allow for the final restoration of all men in a relationship with God, it is characterized by a marked individualism.

Erskine saw the need for a universalist solution to be dictated not so much by the fact that man is corporately alienated from God and therefore stands in need of a corporate salvation, as by the idea that it is inconceivable that God's love should fail to attract any individual in the final analysis. He appears to have had no understanding of the corporate nature of the process of salvation except in so far as he envisaged a collection of individuals all gradually developing a union with God. His theory of spiritual education after death made it unlikely that anyone would ultimately be lost, and so it can be seen to deal with the need for all things to be reconciled in God, but it lacks the awareness of Maurice's theory of the corporate nature of the problems of alienation and redemption. However, it must be said in favour of Erskine's work that it does take into account the need for the universal fact of sin to be balanced by the final restoration of all men.

Campbell, in contrast to Erskine, had a more highly developed awareness of the transactional element involved in the work of Christ. His theory was that in our response to Christ's confession of our sin we are included in the effects of his repentance, but he did not attempt to work out the implications of this for the union of man with Christ. He paid a great deal of attention to the fact that man is entirely dependent upon Christ for the work of reconciliation, yet he gave no indication of the manner in which he understood man to be identified with Christ or with

other men affected by the atonement wrought on their behalf. Campbell's system demands the establishment of this identity because of the use made of the concept of substitutionary repentance, which relies for its plausibility on the union between the one who acts and the one who is acted upon, and it is this respect that Campbell's theory is deficient and must be seen to fail. Although using the notion of substitution, Campbell did not define the way in which he understood man to be identified with Christ. Had he had a firmer understanding of the unity of Christ and the believer, his use of the concept of substitution could have been more convincing, but as it is, it was ineffectively applied and cannot be seen to be successful. Substitution is a difficult concept to work with because of the fact that it can so easily be seen to threaten the identity of one of the parties involved - if personal identity is to be understood as irreplaceable, non-exchangeable being, it is hard to see how there could be any substitution without the uniqueness of the person involved being compromised. Not only did Campbell use the concept of substitution in a weakened sense, but his theory was affected by the traditional difficulties with which the concept is associated, so he introduced a double problem into his work. He could perhaps have avoided some of the difficulties had he opted either for a substitutionary theory supported by an adequate provision for man's incorporation in Christ, or selected a theory which explained the union between God and man in terms of individual personal response. As it was, Campbell tried to combine both approaches, and the resulting fusion is inconsistent and disappointing. Erskine had

avoided the problems of maintaining the plausibility of substitution since he paid more attention to the unity of intention and will than to man's incorporation in Christ, so that what his theory lost in terms of recognition of the corporate aspect it gained in internal consistency. Although he was influenced at several points by Erskine, Campbell's theory shows no reliance on his work in this respect, and it is to the detriment of the success of the eschatological aspect of his theory.

Systematic theology has generally held, on the evidence of the New Testament, that God desires the complete eradication of sin, and in consequence theories of eschatology have often aimed to balance the damage of the Fall, so that the one evil will be matched, if not superseded by, a greater good. Anything less radical than this calls into question either the sovereignty of God or his will that good shall prevail. Both Erskine and Maurice did some useful work on this issue, and constructed systems which took account of the problems involved. On the whole, however, it would appear that Maurice's theory is to be preferred to Erskine's because it is more evidently theocentric, and because it roots the entire process of salvation in the economy of the Trinity, which provides a guarantee of its reliability and reality. Maurice also succeeded to a greater extent than either Erskine or Campbell in the way in which he related the Christ-centred activity to the whole of mankind. Erskine's predominantly exemplarist approach carried with it no assurance of salvation, since so much depended on the sanctification of each individual, and his adoption of the principles of the life of Christ for the strength of the

his union with God. Campbell went a stage further than this in that his theory was transactional, and advocated the idea that Christ had done something to objectively change the situation in which man found himself, but as was noted earlier, this afforded no certainty of salvation either, since men could never be sure that they had made Christ's confession of sin their own, and that the transference of intention was complete and therefore strong enough to bear the weight of salvation. Campbell had started out with the intention of framing a theory of the atonement which could give assurance of salvation to all men, but in this he cannot be regarded as having been successful in view of the problems outlined above. What he effectively did was to develop another theory of limited atonement in spite of the fact that this was what he had reacted against so strongly in the work of his Calvinist opponents. The difference between his theory and theirs was that in his system the limit was determined by the degree to which man aligned himself with Christ, whereas in theirs it was dependent upon the will of God and his election of some men to salvation. Campbell could perhaps have avoided this difficulty had he developed a more workable concept of substitution, but as it was he failed to do this, and the understanding of it which governed the working of his system was not sufficiently realistic to cope with the situation of man's alienation from God. In contrast to this, Maurice's concept of Christ as the constitutive factor in every man's life provided a much more satisfactory method by which the issue of man's unity in Christ and the final salvation of all could be apprehended.

The relation of the datum of moral accountability to universal restoration is as crucial as its relation to objective justification, since it raises many of the same problems. Maurice removed the issue of man's answerability to God from the framework of achieving salvation. He based all the initiative and efficiency for the process of redemption on the inner life of the Trinity, yet he maintained the need for man to live a life of free and responsive sonship in relation to God, and he concentrated on the quality of this relationship. By no means did he think it immaterial what state this relationship fell into, and in so far as he stressed the desirability of a life of active sonship he cannot be accused of banishing all traces of the datum of moral accountability, although as it is used by him this is subject to a considerable re-interpretation. Erskine's theory likewise reconciled the two issues only by re-defining the nature of accountability. He had a less clear idea than Maurice of the continuing factor of man's responsibility, but if his theory of spiritual development were to be supplemented by the recognition of the fact that one's relationship with God, however secure, was affected by the capacity of response that man had developed during the course of his earthly existence, due account would be taken of the demands both of a universal redemption and also moral accountability. The contribution of F.W. Robertson on this issue was noted above, and might be seen to provide a way forward in this area. Both universalism and human responsibility are crucial to the development of an understanding of man's redemption, and each factor deserves to be incorporated in any

system purporting to give an account of the totality of salvation. Maurice's achievement in this respect is more impressive than the attempts of Erskine or Campbell to encompass the different elements in their theories, but the work done by all of them assists in the recognition of the component issues in the process of atonement and its effects on the relationship which is open to men with God after death.

It has been seen that the biblical paradox of salvation and judgement directly affects the production of a systematic doctrine of redemption, and the theories which have been examined can be commended for the ways in which they acknowledge the problem and seek to overcome it. The issue of man's redemption is complicated in that there are several areas which must be taken into account if a true representation of the whole process of salvation is to be achieved. It is fatally easy for the various elements to get out of balance, and start to dominate the way in which the atonement is seen to work. God's activity on man's behalf must be related to man's own participation in the relationship which exists between him and God, and the demands of a personal union make it imperative that he retains responsibility for the relationship even though he may not be the one who initiates and sustains it. There are also problems involved in recognizing the fact that the union between man and God is something that goes beyond the category of time and the environment of this earth. The difficulties encountered in any attempt to take all these things into account in any theological system have been documented, and the degree to which the three writers whose work

has been examined have coped with these problems has been evaluated. If they failed to solve the issues before them, it must be said in their favour that their theories go a long way towards doing so, and that they highlighted important characteristics of the nature of man's relationship with God and the way in which this is affected first by sin, and then by the process of atonement with its joint aspects of divine and human participation, so that finally God's purpose is vindicated and man achieves a responsible union with him. All these things are fundamental to any investigation into the claims of soteriology and eschatology.

The concepts of atonement, judgement, salvation and eternal life need to be related in any theological system since they all have to do with man's relationship with God, which is the basic affirmation from which all subsequent statements about the operation of the atonement must proceed. It is to the credit of Erskine, Campbell and Maurice that they severally succeeded in confronting these different concepts and presenting a unified doctrine of salvation which paid attention to the various elements involved. This is no mean achievement, and if these theologians are subject to criticism for the limitations of their theories, they are nonetheless to be congratulated on the fact that they had a considerable degree of success in the matter of presenting theories which catered for the interests of soteriology and eschatology and offered a cohesive scheme of salvation. Their systems, although in some respects similar in approach, were successful at different points, but perhaps none of them can be

seen to be ultimately triumphant in the way it presents and re-interprets the Christian understanding of redemption so that the intrinsic tensions are erased. It may be fair to take the view that Maurice achieved more in terms of the internal consistency of his system and the way in which his theory resolved the problems that have been examined, but the contributions of Erskine and Campbell should not be dismissed as insignificant. The deficiencies of their work are perhaps as helpful and formative as their more positive achievements with regard to the problems involved, in so far as even a failed approach helps to clarify an issue under investigation and opens up the question for further work to be done on it. In favour of all three writers it must be said that they appear to have worked on the issue of redemption from a sufficiently flexible basis to allow them to take into account all the related concepts so that their resulting theories could give a balanced treatment of the whole process of salvation. They achieve in different ways and with varying degrees of success a unified presentation of the problems of the Christian understanding of salvation with regard to the claims of the eschatological dimension, and in this, despite the deficiencies in their work, they represented a useful and formative challenge to the methodology of their day.

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