

THE MORAL ASPECT OF THE ATONEMENT IN  
SCOTTISH THEOLOGY FROM DAVID DICKSON  
TO JAMES DENNEY AND H.R. MACKINTOSH

BY

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TO MY MOTHER AND FATHER

# ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Title of Thesis THE MORAL ASPECT OF THE ATONEMENT IN SCOTTISH THEOLOGY  
FROM DAVID DICKSON TO JAMES DENNEY AND H.R. MACKINTOSH.

The moral aspect of the atonement has a rather specialized meaning arising out of the theology of Principal James Denney. It is not concerned with moral influence theories of the atonement, but with Denney's overriding conception of the moral world. The moral world assumes a moral order in which man is both free and ethically responsible. The work of Christ is consistent with this moral order and is a moral task.

Denney's conception of the moral world found expression in a theology of the atonement which was strongly substitutionary, and gave no positive significance to the incarnation and life of Christ other than in relation to His bearing of the penalty of human sin. The legal-moral strain in Denney was particularly manifest in his suspicion of the doctrine of union with Christ. In Denney's view that union could never transcend the considerations of the moral realm.

The issues which arise from the moral aspect of the atonement in the theology of Principal Denney are deeply rooted in Scottish theology. While the earliest Reformed theology laid great stress upon the saving significance of the incarnation and grounded the believer's justification and sanctification on his union with Christ, the theology of David Dickson and the Westminster period made its fundamental concern the atoning significance of the death of Christ as the penalty due to God's justice for human sin. Dickson, with his contemporaries, Rutherford, Patrick Gillespie and Durham, developed the federal theology, which spoke of a prior covenant of works as being anterior to grace. The covenant of grace was interpreted in the legal framework of the covenant of works, and the concept of justification became increasingly judicial and made less and less place for the natural relation of Christ and His people through a real union with Him. The double predestinarian scheme and the further division of the covenant of grace tended to heighten the substitutionary emphasis in the federal theology. In addition to this, the subjective emphasis of Seventeenth Century rationalistic orthodoxy laid great stress on man's inner knowledge of himself and the moral order and gave less and less place to the primacy of revelation in the doctrine of the atonement.

The moral-legal strain developed in the federal period was not triumphant. Brown of Wamphray and Fraser of Brea both sought to stress the more Christological emphasis of the earlier Reformed theology. The protest against the legal strain was especially evident in the work of Thomas Boston who reasserted the primacy in grace against the abstract and legalistic conceptions of his time. Though the federal view led to the moderatism of the later Eighteenth Century, and though hyper-calvinism long accepted its legal emphasis, there existed along with it what Ralph Erskine termed a "Gospel strain". (over)

## ABSTRACT OF THESIS (CONTINUED)

The most original protest against the legal strain was found in the work of John McLeod Campbell who laid great stress upon the incarnation and the representative work of Christ. This movement away from a purely forensic view of the doctrine of the atonement continued in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century.

It remained for Denney's close friend, Professor H.R. Mackintosh, to see the necessity of moving beyond the legal-moral strain. Religion was a higher realm than ethics, and while he agreed that Christianity could not be less than moral, he did not accept the premise it could not be anything more. In Christ man's relation to God was more than moral. In his view the problems which arise in the moral aspect of the atonement find their origin in those views which separate between Christ and men, and they find their solution in that doctrine which joins men to their Head and true Representative, Jesus Christ. Christ has identified Himself with man in all that He is, and by union with Him, all that He is and has done is reconciliation for men.

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PREFACE

It is assumed by some that the purpose of a thesis in systematic theology is not so much to seek the solution to problems as to create them. At first glance the title of this thesis may seem sufficiently obscure to be included in such a category. The phrase, 'the Moral Aspect of the Atonement' requires explanation. It is not primarily concerned with those theories of the Atonement known as moral influence theories, but has a rather specialized meaning arising out of the theology of Principal James Denney.

The title for this study came from discussions with Professors T.F. Torrance and John McIntyre about Dr. Denney's understanding of the doctrine of the atonement. Denney had reacted strongly against representational views of the atonement, asserting that they had nothing whatever to do with its "moral aspect". The task of this thesis will be first to establish what Denney meant by the phrase, "the moral aspect of the atonement". Then it will be necessary to trace this theme from the Scottish theologian David Dickson, through subsequent Scottish theology to Denney, and then to H.R. Mackintosh, where we find a partial resolution of the problem. The thesis will be related to all of the essential themes of the doctrine of the atonement as they have been considered by Scottish theologians. The introduction will pose the problem from Denney and subsequent chapters will attempt to trace <sup>the</sup> the theme through the various streams of Scottish theological thought.

The primary concern of this work is to trace a theme in the history of Scottish theology, not to attempt to define the influence of one theologian upon another in a more direct way. To attempt the latter would require a psychological analysis of the various influences upon each theologian -- a task far beyond the scope of this thesis, or the ability of the author.

It will also be apparent that, as Scottish theology did not develop in a vacuum, there were many English and European influences upon it. Aside however from cursory attention to such influences where necessary, the fundamental concern will be with Scottish thought. Indeed, when one knows the quality of Scottish theology at first hand, one is conscious of a uniqueness which makes it worthy of greater attention than it has received in the history of theological thought. Scottish theology never arose in the abstract, but was always related to the real life of the Church as it sought to confront men with the Gospel. This is its fascination, for there is a profound consciousness of its concern with the greatest realities.

This study will not however, be an essay in adulation. Proper appreciation requires criticism. The past must be approached with due respect and reverence, and yet without that kind of awe which is the source of an unthinking conservatism. Such awe pays past theologies no truly christian respect, because it leaves them as idols to be venerated, rather than indispensable tools to theological understanding in our own time. This work will attempt to be both critical and respectful.

It remains to thank my supervisors in this work, the Reverend Professor T.F. Torrance, and the Reverend Professor John McIntyre, for their great assistance and encouragement. Their guidance has been invaluable in directing me to the treasures of the Scottish reformed theology.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM OF THE MORAL ASPECT OF THE ATONEMENT  
IN THE THEOLOGY OF JAMES DENNEY

James Denney was a theologian of the first rank, and his influence is lasting and abiding. Denney's voice was listened to in his own time, and it is listened to still. He represents the very best in the Scottish theological tradition. He possessed a high degree of scholarship, both biblical and classical, and had a liberal willingness to learn new things along with a profound respect for the fundamental truth of his reformed faith. In his own person he seemed to symbolize that sanity with which Scottish theology generally preserved itself, in an age of extreme liberalism on the continent, and extreme conservatism in reaction to it. He accepted the valuable insights of the historical critical method, and yet, when many considered that such acceptance meant the acceptance also of all the views of liberal ethical idealism, he was able to speak the truth of the old faith within the framework of the new method. Scottish theology generally followed this course. Yet Denney, of all the Scottish theologians, writing with great clarity and precision, seemed to say it best of all.

He was passionately concerned with the doctrine of the atonement. Everything he wrote had its centre there. His enduring monument is his holding forth of the saving significance of the cross of Christ at a time when many saw it only as the final act of heroism of a great religious teacher. To read Denney's work is to know beyond doubt that Denney has much to teach us in our own time.

But Denney presents problems as well. It is no denigration of his worth to face this. He was, more than many suppose, a man

of his own time. He opposed liberal theology and yet he was not uninfluenced by its attitudes and presuppositions.

His insistence upon "experience" as the source of all christian doctrine was, for example, a presupposition shared with Schleiermacher and nineteenth century liberalism. In his view, "the basis of all theological doctrine is experience, and experience is always of the present."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, his failure to allow for the representative character of Christ in His work, is indicative of the heightened individualism of his time.

His friend William Robertson Nicoll once entered into a considerable correspondence with Denney about his book, "Jesus and the Gospel". Of it he writes to Denney: "I kept on reading in search of an unequivocal statement that Jesus is God. Very likely I missed it, but I did not find it."<sup>2</sup> At the conclusion of the correspondence Nicoll in apparent exasperation writes to Professor H.R. Mackintosh: "There is a singular vein of scepticism in him, for all his apparent orthodoxy."<sup>3</sup>

In a recent study of the theology of James Denney,<sup>4</sup> the author portrays Denney as in every sense orthodox, like P.T. Forsyth, a

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1 James Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1917, p. 199

2 T.H. Darlow, William Robertson Nicoll, Life and Letters, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1925, p. 360

3 Ibid., p. 364

4 John Randolph Taylor, God Loves Like That! The Theology of James Denney, London, SCM Press, 1962

kind of "Barthian before Barth". Yet while the volume very ably sets forth Denney's essential theology, it seems unaware of what Robertson Nicoll called, "that singular vein of scepticism in him." In a sense the theme of this thesis -- his view of the moral aspect of the atonement -- is profoundly concerned with that same "singular vein of scepticism."

One of Denney's basic presuppositions, perhaps the basic presupposition, was his conception of the moral world. It pervaded his teaching in every area, and indeed gave to his writing considerable of its moral passion. The moral world was the realm of "reflection and motive, of gratitude and moral responsibility."<sup>1</sup> It was the realm in which relations were personal because, "personality lives only in a moral world, and... its most intense and passionate experiences are moral to the core."<sup>2</sup> In the "highest form of religion, as we have it represented in the Christian Scriptures, is the existence of a personal God and of personal relations between that God and man. When these relations are interrupted or deranged by man's action, he finds himself alienated or estranged from God, and the need of reconciliation emerges."<sup>3</sup> The heart of reconciliation lies in the restoration of this true personal relation, and this, through the forgiveness of sins.

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1 James Denney, The Death of Christ, London, Hodder and Stoughton, second ed., 1911, p. 306

2 James Denney, Adam and Christ in St. Paul, The Expositor, Sixth Series, Vol. IX, 1904, p. 156.

3 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 5.

The work of Jesus in reconciling man and God is a moral work, and takes place in the moral world of personal relationships. So Denney speaks of "the moral task of Jesus in reconciling the world to God."<sup>1</sup> He is certain of this:<sup>2</sup>

One of these convictions is that from beginning to end the work is carried on in the moral world. The power which Christ exercises in reconciling us to God is a moral power, not a physical or magical one, and in its operation it is subject to the laws of the moral order. This not only means that there is no physical coercion in it, no denial of man's freedom, but that the power itself which reconciles is ethical in quality.

It is with this guiding presupposition of the moral world that Denney formulates his doctrine of reconciliation: "...the whole<sup>3</sup> business of salvation is transacted in the moral world."

He never approaches any of the traditional problems of the doctrine of the atonement without giving place to the significance of this moral aspect. Since he has not written about this in an abstract way, it is necessary to turn to some of the essential questions with which the doctrine of the atonement is concerned in order to see how this moral aspect governed his thought. This will involve his understanding of the relation between the incarnation and the atonement; the problems related to the nature of Christ's work as representative or substitutionary; the matter of the active and passive obedience of Christ; and finally, his concept of "union with Christ".

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1 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 249

2 Ibid., pp. 22-23.

3 Ibid., p. 23.

## The Incarnation and the Atonement:

In his approach to the doctrine of the atonement, Denney betrays a more Lutheran than Calvinist sympathy. Atonement is the basic doctrine and the incarnation is meaningful insofar as it serves to elucidate the central doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

There can be only one fundamental doctrine, and that doctrine for Paul is the doctrine of justification by faith. That is not part of his gospel, it is the whole of it; there Luther is his true interpreter....By its consistency with this fundamental doctrine, we test everything else that is put forward as Christian.

So it is that he begins his last book, his great work on the 'Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation', with the assertion that the "doctrine of reconciliation is not so much one doctrine as the inspiration and focus of all."<sup>2</sup>

In his survey of the Christian thought of the past, Denney is concerned to refute what he calls the conception of Greek theology that the incarnation is in itself the atonement. He contends that all attention is given in an unreal and philosophical way to the person of Christ -- the two natures -- and little attention is given to His work. This he characterizes in the following words:<sup>3</sup>

It is a Logos Christology, determined fundamentally by the idea that the eternal Logos takes human nature into union with Himself in the womb of the

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1 James Denney, Commentary on Romans, The Expositor's Greek Testament, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1917, Vol. II, p. 575

2 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 6.

3 Ibid., pp. 33-34.

Virgin, and by doing so achieves the redemption of the race. In Christ's person humanity is actually redeemed and made one with the divine. The logic of this conception would entitle us to say that the incarnation -- not in an ethical sense, as including the whole manifestation of the divine in the human through the life and death of Jesus, but in a physical or sacramental sense -- was everything, and that the work of man's salvation was accomplished when the Word assumed flesh.

Dealing especially with Athanasius he asserts that this "speculative" theory of the incarnation was the determining factor in all his thought. "The incarnation means for him that the eternal Word assumed flesh in the womb of the Virgin; in doing so, He united the human nature to the divine; and in principle the atonement, or the reconciliation of humanity to God, was accomplished." <sup>1</sup> This Denney characterizes as "an incarnation which, whatever its motive on the part of the Word, can only be called metaphysical rather than moral." <sup>2</sup>

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1 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p.37. It is questionable that his interpretation of Athanasius is justified. Athanasius in his work on the incarnation poses the problem of human sin and then asks: "What, then, was God to do? What else could He possibly do, being God, but renew His image in mankind, so that through it men might once more come to know Him? And how could this be done save by the coming of the very image Himself, our Saviour Jesus Christ?" (p.41) "But beyond all this, there was a debt owing which must needs be paid; ....Here then is the second reason why the Word dwelt among us, namely that having proved His Godhead by His works He might offer the sacrifice on behalf of all, surrendering His own temple to death in place of all, to settle man's account with death and free him from the primal transgression." (p. 49) These quotations from: St. Athanasius, On the Incarnation, English Edition, London, Mowbrays, 1953

2 Ibid., p. 37

While it is impossible to do justice to the doctrine of the person of Christ in this abstract way, apart from His real historical life and work, neither is it right to think of the work of Christ in abstraction from the classical Christology. Denney's rejection of the emphasis upon the person alone, while a proper criticism in itself, has resulted in a doctrine which stresses the work entirely. For Denney, Christ is always the one who can do the work for man. Denney is little interested in the classical Christology and the doctrine of the two natures other than in an experiential way or in a way pertinent to an explication of the work. Such stress is laid upon the work of Christ that His person seems to have only secondary significance.

Apart from the whole life depicted in the gospels there is no incarnation at all; the assumption of flesh by the Word is a phrase. What has value to God and reconciling power with man is not the incarnation conceived as the taking up of human nature into union with the divine; it is the personality of Jesus, fashioned, as every personality is fashioned, through the temptations and conflicts, the fidelities and sacrifices of life and death; the self which is offered to God as a ransom is the self which has acquired in these human experiences its being, its value, and its power; apart from these experiences and what He earned and achieved in them Jesus is nothing to us and has nothing to offer to God.

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Again:

The reconciling power of what Jesus did and suffered -- its value alike for God and man in the situation in which man is estranged from God by sin and the world is full of divine reactions against that sin -- is not in point of fact dependent on any idea as to the constitution of Christ's person.... The only incarnation of which the New Testament knows anything is the appearance of Christ in the race and lot of sinful men, and His endurance in it to the end. Apart from sharing our experience, that (over)

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1 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 41.

2 Ibid., p. 249.

sharing of our nature, which is sometimes supposed to be what is meant by the incarnation, is an abstraction and a figment. But everything in that sharing of our experience is essential.

Denney seems to feel that any understanding of the incarnation which sees significance for redemption in the sharing of our human nature by Christ is utterly outside the moral realm and therefore to be discounted. Thus:

To speak of this taking of the human nature into union with the divine as the incarnation, and then to argue that the incarnation in this sense virtually contains the atonement, is quite unreal. Reconciliation is not the nature of Christ, but His task. It is not something which is identical with this metaphysical union of the human and the divine, it is something which has to be morally achieved. It is as a member of our race, sharing our nature and our lot, that Christ accomplishes the moral task of reconciling the world to God; but His being is not identical with, nor a substitute for the fulfilment of His task.

Denney's reaction to the incarnational theology was (to so) emphasize the moral task of Christ that the incarnation was viewed as having only preliminary significance to that task. The result is that in Denney's theology the tendency to divide the incarnation and atonement remains, with the result that he does not perceive the inner unity of the incarnation and atonement as both are related to Jesus Christ -- the God-man who accomplishes the work of redemption. Because of this, Denney's theology has some astonishing omissions, not the least of which is his failure to see the representative nature of the person and work of Christ. It is to this we must now give our attention.

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1 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 240



The Representative Character of the Person and Work of Christ:

In the years 1903 and 1904, Dr. Denney entered into a theological dispute with Prof. A.S. Peake on the question as to whether the atoning work of Christ was representative or substitutionary. The dispute began when Dr. Denney, writing in The Expositor, made a rather scathing reference to an article<sup>1</sup> by Prof. Peake on the doctrine of St. Paul:

...no one, he tells us, can do justice to Paul who fails to recognize that the death of Christ was a racial act; "and if we place ourselves at Paul's point of view, we shall see that to the eye of God the death of Christ presents itself less as an act which Christ does for the race than as an act which the race does in Christ." In plain English, Paul teaches not that Christ died for the ungodly but that the ungodly in Christ died for themselves. This is presented to us as something profound,...I frankly confess that I cannot take it seriously."

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1 James Denney, The Expositor, Sixth Series, vol. VIII, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1903, pp. 253-254.

(over)

Fearing for the element of grace which the substitutionary view stresses (in that Christ as our substitute does for us what we could not do for ourselves) Denney labels the view that by the incarnation the race is represented in Christ, as "the fantastic abstraction of a racial act."<sup>1</sup>

Prof. Peake replied to Denney the next year. The niceties which usually accompany theological debate were in this instance dispensed with:<sup>2</sup>

I readily understand that with the hard common sense, that gives so much strength to his treatment of these questions, and his almost fanatical dislike of mysticism, the very idea of a racial act should seem to him a fantastic abstraction. Keen-sighted as he is on many sides, he appears, if I also may practise an engaging frankness, to be colour-blind to one realm of Pauline ideas.

Peake is surprised that Denney, in his 'Death of Christ' has given no great significance to the parallel St. Paul draws between Adam and Christ. The assertion that all have sinned in Adam means more than personal sin. In Paul's mind, the sin of Adam is the sin of all. In this sense then Adam is the representative of the race.

But Denney was perfectly consistent, in that he rejected the representative character of Adam. He could speak of the common sin of the race, and yet his moral (over)

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1 James Denney, The Expositor, vol. VIII, p. 254.

2 A.S. Peake, A Reply to Dr. Denney, The Expositor, Sixth Series, vol. IX, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1904, pp. 48-49.

categories required a place for individual moral responsibility. Paul's Adam, in Denney's words is "simply the abstraction of human nature, personified and placed with a determining power at the beginning of human history."<sup>1</sup> Therefore to draw a representative parallel between Adam and Christ, is to try to relate the Christ whom Paul knew to a non-historical abstraction. But sin is something all are involved in not because of Adam but because: "all adult human beings have identified themselves by free acts of their own with the sin of the world; not only by birth but by choice they are incorporated in a system of things in which evil is omnipresent, and in which God is ceaselessly reacting against it."<sup>2</sup> For Denney Adam's sin is not the sin of all. Every individual, as the moral world requires, stands alone as sinner before God. And this conclusion has profound bearing upon Denney's conception of representation with regard to Christ.

Prof. Peake in his dispute with Denney had spoken of Christ as "our second racial Head":<sup>3</sup>

Over against the weak and sinister figure of the First rises the gracious and mighty figure of the Second Adam. Standing where He does, His acts too, lose their individual and gain a racial significance. In his death the race dies and atones for its sin, is pronounced righteous by God, and therefore the physical death which fell on the race as the penalty of its act in Adam, is cancelled by the universal resurrection of the body."

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- 1 James Denney, Adam and Christ in St. Paul, The Expositor, Sixth Series, vol. IX, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1904, p. 148
  - 2 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 217.
  - 3 Peake, A Reply to Dr. Denney, The Expositor, 1904, p. 53.

To Denney this conception of the "new Adam" remained a fantastic racial abstraction. There was no place for it in the moral order of things. There was only one sense in which Christ was our representative, and that was after the believer responded in faith. Christ fundamentally was our substitute in his atoning work, not yet our representative:

To do justice to the truth here, both on its religious and its ethical side, it is necessary to put in their proper relation to one another the aspects of reality which the terms substitute and representative respectively suggest. The first is fundamental. Christ is God's gift to humanity. He stands in the midst of us, the pledge of God's love, accepting our responsibilities as God would have them accepted, offering to God, under the pressure of the world's sin and all its consequences, that perfect recognition of God's holiness in so visiting sin which men should have offered but could not; and in so doing He makes Atonement for us. In so doing, also, He is our substitute, not yet our representative. But the Atonement thus made is not a spectacle, it is a motive. It is not a transaction in business, or in book-keeping, which is complete in itself; in view of the relations of God and man it belongs to its very nature to be a moral appeal. It is a divine challenge to men, which is designed to win their hearts. And when men are won-- when that which Christ in His love has done for them comes home to their souls--when they are constrained by His infinite grace to the self surrender of faith, then we may say He becomes their representative. (Italics mine)

In Denney then, the contrast becomes clear. The essence of the substitutionary view of atonement is that Christ died for our sins instead of us. Then having done so, by bringing individuals to the moral relationship of faith, he becomes their representative.

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1 Denney, The Death of Christ, second ed., p. 305.

It is questionable that a full doctrine of the atonement can be founded alone on the substitutionary view. The essence of that view, as has been said, is that Christ died for our sins instead of us. The essence of the representative view is that Christ died for our sins on our behalf -- for us. If the whole work of atonement is seen in its full scope; in the whole movement of humiliation and exaltation, in the life, death and resurrection of Christ; then it becomes clear that the representative view is the better one. Christ was born for us, not instead of us. He lived for us, not instead of us. He died for us, not instead of us. He rose from the dead for us, not instead of us. He interceeds for us in the presence of the Father, not instead of us. If the whole scope of the atoning work is seen, one sees Christ, the "new Adam", man's great Representative, doing in man and for man that which is well pleasing to the Father.

It would seem that representation was difficult for Denney to accept because it did damage to his view of the moral world and the moral relation between man and God. If what is needed for the salvation of man is done between the Father and the Son, with mankind represented in the Son; then the whole matter of mankind's moral involvement and response is excluded. Denney contended that substitutionary atonement had made it possible for each individual man to enter into a moral and personal relationship with God. Man would respond to the "moral appeal" of the substitutionary atonement and live the Christian life in gratitude to the One who had taken his place. Only then would the Substitute become the Representative.

The Active and Passive Obedience of Christ.

Reformed theology uses the phrase, "the active and passive obedience of Christ", to describe the whole course of the obedience of the Son to the will of the Father. The active obedience has reference to His life; to that perfect life in which He was obedient to the Father's will in all things, and so sanctified human nature. The passive obedience is related to the sacrifice of Himself in His death; the laying down of His life in accordance with the will of the Father that He should bear the sin of the world. Reformed theology has seen both the life and the death, the active and passive obedience as, each one, a real part of His atoning work.

Denney's fundamental concern is with the passive obedience of Christ:<sup>1</sup>

It is not Christ's sinless life in the form of our sinful flesh by which sin is condemned; it is condemned by God in sending Christ in our nature and as a sacrifice for sin.

What significance then does the life of Christ have for His atoning work? Denney answers:<sup>2</sup>

Instead of saying that Christ's life as well as His death contributed to the Atonement -- that His active obedience (to use the theological formula) as well as His passive obedience was essential to His propitiation -- we should rather say that His life is part of His death: a deliberate and conscious descent, ever deeper and deeper, into the dark valley where at the last hour the last reality of sin was to be met and borne. f d. w. 8

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1 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 249.

2 Denney, The Death of Christ, page 311.

The life of Christ has been "formed and developed, like other moral personalities, through the duties and trials of our common life."<sup>1</sup> But that life finds its redemptive significance in its being a part of the death -- a descent into the sin and suffering of humanity.

There is nothing in Denney of the positive meaning for redemption of the life of Christ. His life is considered a part of His suffering and as such the active obedience becomes but a fore-taste of what He was to endure in His death. But He came not alone to suffer, but to do the Father's will. And this involved the recreation and sanctification of human life. His life was not merely a life of suffering and obedience to the Law, it was a life in which He fulfilled the law in man and manifested it as the holy and loving will of the Father for all human life.

The failure to relate the life of Christ to His death in any other than a negative sense is one of the glaring omissions in the theology of James Denney. It finds its source in his underemphasis of the doctrine of the incarnation and his failure to relate it fully to the atonement. And it has made his theology of the atonement essentially a theology of the passive obedience of Christ. As a theologian of the cross Denney rises to great heights and is possessed of great New Testament insights.

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1 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 23.

If McLeod Campbell can be called the Scottish theologian who brought to men's minds the redemptive significance of the life of Christ; Denney is surely the theologian who saw the redemptive significance of His death:<sup>1</sup>

On the cross the sinless Son of God, in love to man and in obedience to the Father, entered submissively into that tragic experience in which sinful men realize all that sin means. He tasted death for every man. The last and deepest thing we can say about His relation to our sins is that He died for them, that He bore them in His own body on the tree:....

And yet with all his profound insights, as a theology concerned essentially with the passive obedience of Christ, it presents less than a full doctrine of the atonement.

#### Union with Christ.

In his understanding of the doctrine of union with Christ, Dr. Denney is concerned that it should be rooted and grounded in the moral realm. The Scottish theology had historically spoken of union with Christ as a "mystical union." Denney is not content with this. For him the fundamental thing to be said about union with Christ is that it is a moral union:<sup>2</sup>

The New Testament has much to say about union with Christ, but I could almost be thankful that it has no such expression as mystical union. The only union it knows is a moral one -- a union due to the moral power of Christ's death, operating morally as a constraining motive on the human will, and begetting in believers the mind of Christ in relation to sin; but this moral union remains the problem and the task, as well as the reality and the truth, of the Christian life.

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1 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 278

2 Denney, The Death of Christ, 2nd ed. p. 306.



The earlier theology had never thought of the doctrine of justification by faith in abstraction from union with Christ. The righteousness which came when one was justified by faith was not merely a legal fiction. Being justified by faith meant being united to Christ and being given to participate in His righteousness. Justification by faith was not justification by the righteousness of one's own believing, rather it meant being brought by grace to Christ, to share in His righteousness and His life. The whole meaning of justification and sanctification, for the earlier theology, was a participation in the righteousness of Christ.

Denney, in speaking of the union with Christ as a moral union, does less than justice to these themes. He shifts the emphasis from the objective participation in the righteousness of Christ, to the subjective plane of human response. Union with Christ in his view comes with the response of faith. How does this occur? When the believer is confronted with the moral appeal of the cross:

(The atonement)...in view of the relations of God and man it belongs to its very nature to be a moral appeal. It is a divine challenge to men, which is designed to win their hearts.

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Again:

The death of Christ, interpreted as the New Testament interprets it, constitutes a great appeal to sinful men. It appeals for faith. To yield to its appeal, to abandon oneself in faith to the love of God which is manifested in it, is to enter into life.

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1 Denney, The Death of Christ, 2nd ed. p. 305.

2 Ibid., p. 240.

Denney is absolutely insistent upon this. In this moral world, this world of motives and personal relationships, the Gospel must have a moral appeal and that centred upon the fact of the cross:<sup>1</sup>

It is the death of Christ for men, which appealing to them as an irresistible motive draws them into a union closer and ever closer with Himself.

In order for man to respond to this moral appeal, he cannot be utterly dead to God. The conception of the moral universe assumes that even sinful man is essentially a moral creature who has some capacity to discern the goodness of God. In his Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, Denney criticizes the Westminster Divines for having so exaggerated the doctrine of human depravity that they almost exclude the possibility of redemption. They describe man as "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil." Denney comments: "The need of redemption is only too powerfully expressed here, but what becomes of its possibility? What is left in man for even redeeming love to appeal to?"<sup>2</sup>

And so it is that the death of Christ is the moral appeal of redeeming love to sinful man; and sinful man has the capacity to respond. The way of his response is by faith. By faith he abandons himself utterly to the love of God seen in the appeal of the cross. By faith he lives the Christian life. By faith he enters into moral union with Christ.

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1 Denney, Adam and Christ in St. Paul, The Expositor, 1904, p. 153

2 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 199

And what is the mainspring of this Christian life according to Denney? It is gratitude. The believer is so overwhelmed by the greatness of the atoning work on his behalf that of necessity he responds with a life of gratitude:<sup>1</sup>

We are saved by grace, and the correlative of grace is gratitude....And it is the abandonment of the sinful soul to this God in unbounded gratitude which morally unites it to Christ and launches it on all the hopes and joys of the new life.

To the charge that substitutionary atonement opens the way to an antinomian understanding of the Christian life, Denney replies that in honest hearts it produces gratitude, love and devotion,<sup>2</sup> and these keep the believer in his Christian walk.

To the charge that this moral understanding of union with Christ was disastrous in the sphere of the Christian life; that it failed to see the real meaning of the life of the believer in Christ, and Christ in the believer; that indeed it implied that man was thrown back upon his own resources in the Christian life; Denney replied that the Christian life could not be conceived of otherwise than through motives:<sup>3</sup>

But for the simple reason that the Christian life is a moral life, it must be conceived of as produced not mechanically, but through motives. It is not the mechanical outcome of union with Christ; it is the process in which that personal identification of the believer with Christ which alone is the truth of such union, and which is itself a great moral act, is morally expressed and realized. And the all-embracing motive under which it proceeds, and by which it is morally generated, is the sense of obligation to Christ.

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1 Denney, The Expositor, 1904, p. 160

2 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 282.

3 Denney, The Expositor, 1904. p. p. 159.

In his understanding of a "moral union with Christ", Denney has shifted the emphasis from an objective to subjective plane. By defining the union in terms of human response - faith, gratitude, a sense of obligation - he ceases to look to the grace of Christ as the source of the union, and looks rather at the response of man. It may be that this understanding serves the end of respecting the thought forms of the "moral world", but it does not even begin to do justice to the New Testament understanding of union with Christ. It is in Christ's hold upon us rather than our hold upon Him that this union consists.

In his Expositor article on Adam and Christ in St. Paul, Denney regrets that the words mystical and moral stand in a relation of contrast in the matter of union with Christ. Mystical is not a relation transcending the moral, for there is a mystical union of the Creator with the creation, which is less than moral. But though the term mystical can be useful to describe such a relation it is not appropriate when "we ascend from the world of nature into the world of personality."<sup>1</sup> "When two persons, two moral natures, are to enter into union with each other, then their union, no matter how intimate and profound it may be, must at the same time be personal and moral."<sup>2</sup> The act in which one person in trust and love joins himself to another is most purely moral. St. Paul's emphasis on personal identification with Christ is

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1 Denney, The Expositor, 1904, p. 156

2 Ibid., p. 156.

the language of love and moral passion: "...it is the language of moral passion and except as the expression of moral passion it has no meaning and no truth whatever."<sup>1</sup> There is no conflict in Denney's mind between the mysticism of St. Paul and the necessities of the moral world: "The mysticism of Paul stands in no relation of contrast to morality: it is nothing but morality aflame with passion."<sup>2</sup>

In his doctrine of union with Christ Denney again reveals his guiding presupposition -- that of the moral universe and of personal relations between God and man being determined by the necessities of that universe. The essential emphasis is to stress the subjective response of the believer to the moral appeal of the atonement. This creates a relationship of love and gratitude between the believer and Christ which he allows can be described as a "moral union." What Denney has really done is to look at the human aspect of that union in moral terms and to attempt to describe it comprehensibly. What he has utterly failed to do is to look at the divine aspect of that union -- to see how it is that Christ joins Himself to us. In His very incarnation He joins Himself to man by taking upon Himself human flesh. And as Crucified and Risen Lord He imparts His own life, not a new quality to our life, but His very own life to the believer who is united to Him in faith.

Because Denney gives no place to this understanding of union with Christ in his theology, his doctrine of justification remains

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1 Denney, The Expositor, 1904. p. 157

2 Ibid., p. 157.

the imputation in a forensic sense of the righteousness of Christ our substitute, rather than the real receiving into the believer's life of the atoning life of Christ by union with Him. As the study of Scottish theology will reveal, this was not the way of the earlier reformers. Justification meant the real receiving of the righteousness of Christ by being joined to Him in faith.

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We have seen how Denney's conception of the moral realm has governed his thought in certain of the areas with which the doctrine of the atonement is concerned. In each case the moral aspect has been predominant. And in each case he comes to a less than full doctrine of the atonement.

Two observations remain before we pass on to a consideration of moral aspect of the atonement in Scottish theology.

The first is, that though the moral realm is a realm of law, Denney does not operate with an entirely impersonal and static conception of the moral law. It is not possible to speak of reconciliation as being necessary for God. "Salvation is of grace, and anything that impairs its absolutely gracious character raises an instinctive protest in the Christian spirit."<sup>1</sup> Yet there is a necessity in the mode of redemption:<sup>2</sup>

...once the freeness of God's reconciling love has been recognized, a necessity of some kind attaches to the mode of its manifestation. To be real, and to stand in a real relation to the necessities of sinners, his love must appear in a fashion determined by these necessities.

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1 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 230.

2 Ibid., pp. 231-232.

Yet because man has broken the moral law, the mode of salvation does justice to its reality:

It is not Jewish law, in the legal or statutory sense, to which justice is done in the propitiation, though Paul would no doubt have admitted that the propitiation had its due application there; it is law in the large sense of the ethical necessities which determine all the relations of God and man. For law in this large sense Paul had the profoundest reverence. He knew that it could never be treated as though it were not, not even by God, and not even in the act of forgiveness.

The moral law determines the relation of man to God, and stands at the centre of the need for atonement. God's righteousness is "within, and always in harmony with, the constitution of a moral world in which God and man live a common life."

The second observation which must be made is that Denney nowhere gives any significance to covenant conceptions. This is especially astonishing in view of the great place the covenant was given in Scottish theology. The reasons for this omission would seem to be his rejection of the representative nature of Christ's work and his consequent understanding of the atonement as a work done outside of believers which they must appropriate to themselves to avail themselves of benefit. He describes reconciliation in this way:

The work of reconciliation is not a work wrought upon the souls of men, though it is a work wrought in their interests, and bearing so directly upon them that we can say God has reconciled the world to Himself; it is a work -- as Cromwell said of the covenant -- outside of us, in which God so deals in Christ with the sin of the world, that it shall no longer be a barrier between Himself and men.

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1 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 167.

2 Ibid., p. 168

3. Denney, The Death of Christ, p. 104.

Denney lays all his stress upon the dissimilarity of the believer and Christ and emphasizes His work as a work done outside of us.

With his moral view, Denney cannot accept a doctrine in which Christ accomplishes the atonement as the covenant representative of His people. As he sees the atonement, it takes place outside of us and God applies the atonement on an individual basis as men respond in faith. But the atonement in the New Testament does not take place outside of us. If such a thing were possible there is no fundamental purpose in the incarnation. Far from taking place outside of us, the atonement means the total identification of Christ with us in all our humanity and our sin. If the humanity of Christ is taken seriously He is truly man as He is truly God, and consequently one with us. In the heightened individualism of Denney's moral framework, however, the idea of the covenant has no place.

As we saw at the outset, Denney laid great stress upon "experience" as the ground of Christian doctrine. Denney as a man of his time, was steeped in the moral and ethical concepts of the nineteenth century. The very essence of the experience of that century in theology was its inward-looking ethical idealism. Thus it was that "experience" led him to see the Christian doctrine of revelation in moral terms. But beyond this, Denney sought to found his theology upon the Biblical revelation. And it is clear that in the totality of his theology, that Biblical revelation is triumphant.

Having seen something of what Principal Denney meant by the "moral aspect of the atonement," it will now be necessary



to trace that theme and its related issues through the Scottish theology. Thus it will be possible to see how Denney stands in the context of the Scottish theological tradition.

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CHAPTER TWODAVID DICKSON AND THE PERIOD OF THE WESTMINSTER THEOLOGY

The issues which arise from the theology of Principal Denney have concerned Scottish theology from the very beginning of the Reformation period. It will be necessary therefore to look briefly at the original Scottish reformed theology in the light of the development which took place in the Westminster period. For after a survey of the Westminster period has been completed it will be seen that there are two strands in the Scottish theology of the atonement.

The one, taking its form in the Westminster era emphasized the substitutionary character of the work of Christ, was strongly forensic in nature, and regarded the doctrine of union with Christ as of less and less significance.

The other strand was more closely related to the earlier Scottish reformed tradition and it stressed the representative character of the person and work of Christ. Christ was seen as the representative of His people who renews them in His obedient life and death, and brings them to justification and sanctification by uniting them to Himself that they may receive His righteousness and His life. It is with the development and relationship of these two strands that Principal Denney's "moral aspect of the atonement" is concerned in the Scottish theology.

SECTION ONE: THE ORIGINAL SCOTTISH REFORMED THEOLOGY:

The original Scottish reformed theology laid great stress upon the representative character of Christ in His atoning work. He was the One who had wrought the work of salvation in human flesh. His life, incarnate, crucified, risen and present by the Spirit, was the source of Christian salvation. By union with Christ, His people were given to participate in His life and righteousness. Justification and sanctification alike were found in Him.

The Scots Confession of 1560, as the original document of the Scottish Reformation, gives the view of John Knox and his fellow reformers concerning the Headship of Christ to His people:<sup>1</sup>

That same eternal God and Father, who by grace alone chose us in His Son Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world was laid, appointed Him to be our head, our brother, our pastor, and the great bishop of our souls. But since the opposition between the justice of God and our sins was such that no flesh by itself could or might have attained unto God, it behoved the Son of God to descend unto us and take Himself a body of our body, flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, and so become the Mediator between God and man, giving power to as many as believe in Him to be the sons of God: as He Himself says, 'I ascend to My Father and to your Father, to My God and to your God'. By this most holy brotherhood whatever we have lost in Adam is restored to us again.

Further to this strong assertion of the saving significance of Christ's humanity, the Confession holds that Christ "offered Himself a voluntary sacrifice unto the Father for us, ...and that He, the clean innocent Lamb of God was condemned in the presence

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<sup>1</sup> The Scots Confession of 1560, Edinburgh, St. Andrew Press, 1960, p. 64.

of an earthly judge, that we should be absolved before the judgement seat of God." <sup>1</sup> He suffered the death of the cross, enduring for a season the wrath of God which sinners deserved, and in this made full atonement for sin.

In the early Scottish theology it was by union with Christ <sup>that</sup> the atonement became the believer's. In the earliest of Scottish catechisms, <sup>2</sup> that of John Craig published in 1581, we find:

Q. What is the first fruit of faith?

A. By it we are made one with Christ our Head.

Q. How is the union made, and when?

A. When we are made flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone.

He goes on to hold that our justification consists in remission of sins and the imputation of righteousness. Christ's righteousness is imputed to us in His perfect obedience and justice. And then the crucial question is asked:

Q. How can another man's justice be made ours?

A. Christ is not another man to us properly.

Q. Why is He not another man for us?

A. Because He is given to us freely by the Father with all His graces, and we are joined with Him.

Here is a strong assertion of the absolute identification of the believer with Christ in His work. "Christ is not another man to us properly", because we are joined to Him in faith. So it is that His righteousness is properly spoken of as our righteousness.

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1 The Scots Confession of 1560, pp. 64-65.

2 Craig's Catechism, as cited in: T.F. Torrance, The School of Faith, London, James Clarke, 1959. p. 125.

It is through faith that we find our union with Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Q. What does faith work?

A. Our perpetual and inseparable union with Christ.

Q. What does this union with Christ work?

A. A mutual communion with Him and His graces.

Q. What does this communion work?

A. Remission of sins and imputation of justice.

Q. What do remission of sins and imputation of justice work?

A. Peace of conscience and continual sanctification.

Through faith we are joined to Christ and by this union receive forgiveness and the imputation of His justice. Thus our justification and sanctification are found in union with Him. Faith is not a condition of our union with Christ. It is the means of that union.<sup>2</sup>

Q. How do we receive justification?

A. Only by our own lively faith.

Q. Is our faith perfect in all points?

A. No, for it is joined with manifold imperfections.

Q. How then can it justify us?

A. It is only the instrument of our justification.

Q. What does justify us properly?

A. Jesus Christ only by His perfect justice.

Another early catechism which had a great influence in Scotland, is the catechism of John Davidson printed in Edinburgh

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1 Torrance, School of Faith, p. 161.

2 Ibid., p. 125.

in 1602. Davidson, in his catechism puts union with Christ at the very centre of justification:<sup>1</sup>

Q. Can we have no salvation except we have participation, and be conjoined with Christ: so that we must be His, and He ours?

A. None at all: for seeing the cause of our salvation is in the Person of Christ only, and never in ourselves, but by participation of Him: we can never be partakers of salvation but by our conjunction and union with Him, whereby He becoming one with us, and we one with him, we get through Him the full right of salvation and life everlasting.

Our salvation is in the person of Christ only. Justification is not a legal fiction or a work done out of relation to us. It is our<sup>s</sup> by our participation in Him.

Faith for Davidson is not to be interpreted subjectively but in the context of union with Christ and the covenant relation<sup>2</sup> between the members of Christ and Christ their Head:

Q. How are ye joined with Christ, and so made partaker of Him and of His righteousness?

A. By Faith only.

Q. What is Faith?

A. It is an hearty assurance, that our sins are freely forgiven us in Christ. Or after this manner: It is the hearty receiving of Christ offered in the preaching of the Word and Sacraments, by the working of the Holy Spirit, whereby He becomes one with us, and we one with Him, He our Head, and we his members.

Davidson does separate justification and sanctification and speaks of Christ in sanctification working in believers "by little and little". While the later theology was to almost regard sanctification as a human work, Davidson founds our sanctification upon Christ's work in us.

1 Davidson's Catechism, as cited in, Horatius Bonar, Catechisms of the Scottish Reformation, London, James Nisbet, 1866. p. 33  
2 Ibid., 340.

This emphasis upon union with Christ as the way the Christian actually receives the atoning work of Christ, had a profound effect upon the attitude of the Scottish Church to the sacraments. As Robert Bruce in his sermons on the Mystery of the Lord's Supper<sup>1</sup> expressed it:

Every Sacrament is a mystery. There is no Sacrament but contains a high and divine mystery. Because a Sacrament is a mystery, then, it follows that a mystical, secret and spiritual conjunction corresponds well to the nature of the Sacrament. Since the conjunction between us and Christ is full of mystery, as the Apostle shows us (Ephesians 5:32), it is a mystical and spiritual conjunction that is involved. So doubtless the conjunction between the Sacrament and the thing signified in the Sacrament, must be of the same nature, mystical and spiritual.

It is interesting to note that Robert Bruce did not share James Denney's aversion to the phrase, "mystical union."

In its theology of the sacraments, and the abiding place of the sacraments in the life of the people, we find a lasting impression in the Church today, of the early Scottish emphasis on union with Christ. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Scotland to this day is no mere memorial, but the place where Christ draws especially near to the believer in that mystical union of Himself and His Church.

There is no separation of the work of Christ and the person of Christ in the early reformed theology. His incarnation; His obedient life; His death and resurrection; His ascension; the life-giving presence of His Spirit; all of this was in Robert Bruce's words: "...the whole Christ with His whole gifts, benefits

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1 Robert Bruce, The Mystery of the Lord's Supper, Ed. T.F. Torrance, London, James Clarke, 1958, p. 52.

and graces."<sup>1</sup> The benefits of Christ could not be separated from the Lord who gave them. In giving His benefits He gives Himself. The atonement therefore is Christ Himself, "whole Christ", in all his movement of humiliation and exaltation to work the salvation of man:<sup>2</sup>

I do not call the thing signified by the signs of bread and wine the benefits of Christ, the graces of Christ, or the virtue that flows out of Christ only, but I call the thing signified together with the benefits and virtues flowing from Him, the very substance of Christ Himself....It is impossible for me to get the juice and virtue that flow out of Christ without first getting the substance, that is Christ Himself.

In view of the later theology's emphasis upon the death of Christ interpreted solely in a legal and forensic sense, it is interesting to see Davidson's view of the relation of the death of Christ to His resurrection:<sup>3</sup>

Q. How redeemed He you?

A. By His bloodshed, death, and passion, and by rising again from the dead the third day.

Again, he joins the resurrection to the cross as the second of two parts of the perfect work of salvation:<sup>4</sup>

Now, as for the price wherewith he redeemed us. It was not corruptible things, as silver and gold, but His own precious blood, as of a lamb undefiled and without spot, when he suffered under Pontius Pilate, redeeming us thereby from everlasting death and damnation. And by His powerful resurrection from the dead the third day, restoring us to righteousness and life eternal; .... For performing of which two parts of a perfect Saviour, in suffering and overcoming, it behoved Him to God and man in one Person.

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1 Bruce, op. cit., p. 45.

2 Ibid., pp 45-46

3 Davidson's Catechism, op. cit., pg. 336.

4 Ibid., p. 335.



It was not alone the death, but also the rising again of Christ which perfected the work of salvation.

In all of this brief glimpse at certain aspects of the older Scottish reformed theology, it can be seen that the representative view of the atonement was the dominant one. Christ as our Head and Brother, manifests His righteousness in our humanity and by His death brings the forgiveness of sins. As the Scots confession put it: "By this most holy brotherhood whatever we have lost in Adam is restored to us again."<sup>1</sup> And Christ Himself is ours, His atonement and His righteousness, by union with Him.

The early Scottish theology had laid great stress upon the original gracious promise of God that man should be redeemed in Jesus Christ. This "covenant of grace" finds its positive expression in Chapter IV of the Scots Confession entitled "The Revelation of the Promise":<sup>2</sup>

We constantly believe that God, after the fearful and horrible departure of man from His obedience, did seek Adam again, call upon him, rebuke and convict him of his sin, and in the end made unto him a most joyful promise, that 'the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent,' that is, that he should destroy the works of the devil. This promise was repeated and made clearer from time to time;...and so onwards to the incarnation of Christ Jesus....

This promise finds its fulfilment in the New Adam, Jesus Christ.

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1 The Scots Confession of 1560, p. 64.

2 Ibid., p. 62.

The earlier theology, while it had spoken of this covenant of grace, had not set it forth in any relation to a covenant of works. It was in the work of Principal Robert Rollock of Edinburgh University, that the doctrine of the two covenants, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, was first introduced. This theological scheme became known as the "federal theology", and gained great currency among continental as well as Scottish calvinists. It was to have immense implications for the future of Scottish theology and to Rollock's development of it we must now give our attention.

In his "Treatise of our Effectual Calling" first published in 1597, Rollock sets forth his concept of the two covenants of God with man. God's relationship with man is always to be understood as a covenant relationship. "...all the word of God appertains to some covenant; for God speaks nothing to man without the covenant."<sup>1</sup> The covenant of God is generally a promise under a certain condition, and is twofold; the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. He defines the covenant of works;<sup>2</sup>

The covenant of works, which may also be called a legal or natural covenant, is founded in nature, which by creation was pure and holy and in the law of God, which in the first creation was engraven in man's heart. For after that God had created man in His own image, pure and holy, and had written His law in his mind, He made a covenant with man, wherein He promised him eternal life, under the condition of holy and good works,....

In Rollock's mind the Old Testament covenant was a repetition of the covenant of works: "For this cause, when He was

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1 Robert Rollock, Select Works, vol. 1, Edinburgh, Wodrow Society, 1849, p. 33.

2 Ibid., p. 34.

to repeat that covenant of works to the people of Israel, He first gave the Law written in tables of stone; then He made a covenant with His people, saying, Do these things, and ye shall live."<sup>1</sup>

This covenant of works had no need of the Mediãtor, for it was grounded in the goodness of man's essential nature in the first creation:<sup>2</sup>

Therefore the ground of the covenant of works was not Christ, nor the grace of God in Christ, but the nature of man in the first creation holy and perfect, endued also with the knowledge of the law. For, as touching the covenant of works, there was no mediator in the beginning between God and man....

The Mediator was not needed as there was no breach between God and man and God could deal with man " as one friend doth with another."<sup>3</sup>

The underlying conception is one of an original identity or relation between man and God in which Christ plays no role. Man in his essential being does not need to be reconciled with God. The reconciliation has its necessity in man's failure to keep the law, and is moulded and shaped by the legal presuppositions of the covenant of works. Redemption therefore is superimposed because of the breach of law, upon the original relation of man in his nature to God. This concept of an original relation between man and God apart from Christ, cuts at the very heart of the Biblical understanding of election in Christ. The Biblical revelation testifies that the whole meaning of man's creation is found in Christ. A doctrine which suggests that man has so frustrated the purpose of God by His sin that God must enter into

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1 Rollock, Op. Cit., p. 34.

2 Ibid., p. 34.

3 Ibid., p. 35.

another kind of relation to man in His Son, undercuts the essential unity of the purpose of God in creation and in redemption. Both creation and redemption find their meaning for man in Jesus Christ.

There is implicit in the thought of the covenant of works made without the Mediator, a conception of man created with a natural relation to God as a creature. When man sins against God he stands in need of atonement. And the atonement when provided does not so much establish a new natural relation to God as to repair and perfect the defect in the old. Thus redemption viewed in the light of the covenant of works is superimposed upon an original relation, defective, but existant. And because that redemption does not relate to the totality of man's relationship to God in his nature, the federal theology sees it as essentially legal or forensic -- having to do solely with man's guilt which he occasioned by his breach of the law.

Rollock holds that there is an essential righteousness in man in his very being at the creation. In this sense righteousness in man was not the end but the ground of the covenant. But in the covenant of works there is also a further righteousness which man will earn by doing the will of God. This he calls his second righteousness, or justice;<sup>1</sup>

The second justice is that which was to follow the good works of nature in that integrity, and might be called the justice of works; for after that man had lived godly and justly, according to God's law in that integrity, then he might be said to be just again...by his good works....

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1 Rollock, Op. Cit., p. 35.

In his conception of the covenant of works man has two righteousnesses; the first static and inhering in man by nature; and the second dynamic and dependent on the works of that nature.

We might ask whether the work of the Redeemer restores the first righteousness or only the second? In view of what has been said above it seems that he does not assume a need of reconciliation in nature, but only in the area of the "second righteousness" -- man's failure to earn the favour of God by his own obedience.

Again, one might ask if the active obedience of Christ relates to the second righteousness only or to the first as well? Does Christ come among men to re-create their natures by bringing to them His own perfect life? Or does He come to make up for that want of obedience which man failed to give in his "second righteousness"?

Rollock himself would seem to answer that Christ's obedience is necessary to answer for the failure of man's second righteousness<sup>1</sup> only:

But you will say, that the good and holy works of Christ our Mediator have wrought some part at least of that satisfaction, whereby God's justice was appeased for us, and some part of that merit whereby God's favour was purchased for us? I answer, these works did serve properly for no part of satisfaction or merit for us: for that to speak properly, the death of Christ and His passion only did satisfy God's justice, and merited His mercy for us."

The obedience of Christ which justifies is His passive obedience. There is no place in Rollock's scheme for the active obedience of Christ save in the sense that by it He is worthy to suffer in our place.

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1 Rollock, op. cit., p. 54.

It would seem that his concept of salvation relates fundamentally to man's failure to keep the law, rather than to a total breach between man and God which required a re-creation of man's very nature. And the root cause of this view is that the concept of the two covenants of works and of grace requires that the very nature of the second covenant be understood within the legal framework of the first.

Rollock sets forth his understanding of the covenant of grace as having its ground in the Mediator— Jesus Christ in His death. The virtue of His death is twofold:<sup>1</sup>

The first serves to satisfy the justice and wrath of God for our sins, for the breach of that covenant of works. The second is, to purchase and merit a new grace and mercy of God for us.

The condition of the covenant of grace is faith, but faith which stands "with Christ and with God's free grace."<sup>2</sup> The condition of the covenant is "not faith only nor the object of faith only, which is Christ, but faith with Christ, that is the faith that shall apprehend Christ."<sup>3</sup>

With Rollock the federal theology is introduced into Scottish thought, along with a scholastic intellectualizing of the understanding of faith. This was to have a profound influence upon the course of Scottish theology.

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1 Rollock, op. cit., p. 38.

2 Ibid., p. 40.

3 Ibid., p. 40.

SECTION TWO: DAVID DICKSON AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
FEDERAL THEOLOGY

Any attempt to seriously and sympathetically assess the theology of a former age must involve an appreciation of the thought forms of the time. Dickson's period is the time of the so called Second Reformation, when the fresh and vital doctrines of the Reformation underwent a scholastic moulding at the hands of the succeeding generation. In the world which followed the Reformation and the Council of Trent, it was impossible that this should not be so. Disputes about the nature of the faith with the Romans, Arminians and Socinians, led to a further definition of Calvinism. This more defined theology laid increasing emphasis on predestination, understood in a determinist sense, and on an increasingly legal interpretation of the atonement and the Christian life.

David Dickson is representative of the new Calvinism of his time. He was a graduate of Glasgow University and minister at Irvine for twenty-three years. By the time of the Nation<sup>al</sup> Covenant of 1638 he was a leader of the church. Moderator of the Assembly in 1639, he became Professor of Divinity in Glasgow in 1641 and later Professor of Divinity in Edinburgh. He refused the oath of supremacy at the Restoration and died in 1662 before the persecutions of the reign of Charles II would have most surely involved him.

His greatest contribution to Scottish theology was in his Biblical exposition. James Walker, in his Theology and Theologians of Scotland, holds that "the true glory of Dickson was his devotion

to Biblical studies." <sup>1</sup> His theological work had a profound influence on the Scottish theology and he is primary as a representative of the new Scottish federalism.

To understand Dickson one must see him both as the child of his own time and as a faithful Biblical expositor. His deterministic philosophy presents him as a child of his time. Consider this exposition of the tenth chapter of the Book of Job: <sup>2</sup>

We see God is marvellous in afflicting those on whom He is pleased to show His power, as a judge, according to His wisdom, devises exquisite tortures to torment those whose life he would have kept in. Yet the wisest man's wit is short to devise tortures, but God is marvellous; for He can by touching one of the veins, make a marvellous torment; or by a little stone in the kidneys, or by some humour in the joints, or by a fever, or by a megrim in the head, or by a fester in the foot, He can make a torment inexpressible. And if God can do so by way of fatherly chastisement, what shall it be when He exercises His wits to torment the damned in hell.

And yet his Christian faith was fastened upon the great reality of Christ. <sup>3</sup> On his deathbed he summed up his life in this way:

As for myself, I have taken all my good deeds, and all my bad deeds, and have cast them together in a heap before the Lord; and have fled to Jesus Christ, and in Him I have sweet peace.

This tells us much about Dickson, the Christian man who was imbued with the thought forms of his own time. In the examination of his theology these two strands will be apparent: Dickson

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<sup>1</sup> James Walker, The Theology and Theologians of Scotland, 2nd. ed., Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1888, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> David Dickson, Select Practical Writings, Edinburgh, Assembly's Committee, 1845, pp. 60-61

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., (Introduction) p. 1.



the scholastic calvinist working within a deterministic and forensic framework of the atonement; and Dickson the scholarly Biblical expositor seeking to make the Word of God heard and honoured in Scotland.

Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of Dickson's theology was his interest in the Christian's inner experience and life. His great concern was to look within, to the problems and "diseases" of the conscience. In this there is a shifting of emphasis from the Reformation attitude. The Reformers looked away from self to the reality of Christ.

To Dickson the conscience was a means of man judging his own faith and obedience as well as the faith and obedience of others. In the beginning of his last work, the Therapeutica Sacra, subtitled, the "Method of Healing the Diseases of the Conscience", he defines conscience in this manner:

It hath pleased God, the Sovereign Lord and Judge of all men, in the creation, to put in man's soule a natural power or faculty, whereby He might not only understand the revealed will of God...but also, might judge of his own faith and obedience, whether performed, or not performed; yea and might also of the faith and obedience of others, in so far as evidences may be had of their conformity unto, or disagreement from, the revealed rule of faith and manners. This power of the soul of man... we call it by the name of Conscience.

The subjective interest is also manifest in the emphasis he places upon man's fulfilment of the covenant

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1 David Dickson, Therapeutica Sacra, second ed., Edinburgh, James Watson, 1697, p. 6.

of grace: <sup>1</sup>

The sum of the Gospel is propounded under this most sweet condition, viz. If thou applyest with sincere affection to thyself the redemption procured by Christ, and manifested in His Resurrection by the power of God, and studiest to glorify Christ with a sincere confession, without doubt thou shalt obtain salvation....

As Dickson's theology is developed it will be seen what a strong governing character this subjective interest had. Indeed, in the "personal covenanting with God" so prevalent in Dickson's time, there was an increasing emphasis given to soul searching, and salvation tended to become less a matter of what God had done in grace, and more a matter of what man did in response. This subjective interest profoundly influenced his strong federalism in the doctrine of the covenants. It is to this we now turn.

The Westminster Confession of Faith was the first of the Reformed Confessions to give any place to what has come to be known as the "federal theology". This federal or covenant theology is usually spoken of as having its antecedents in the writing of the continental theologian Coccejus, but it was prominent in many of his teachers. Robert Rollock, as we have seen, was responsible for introducing this scheme of theology to Scotland, and by Dickson's time it had received general acceptance among Scots calvinists.

The Westminster Confession contains a moderate federal theology. In Chapter Seven it speaks of God's relating of Himself to His creatures by means of a covenant.

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1 David Dickson, An Exposition of all St. Paul's Epistles, London, Francis Eglesfield, 1659, p. 26 (falsely labelled 16)

The first covenant He made with man was a "covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience."<sup>1</sup> Then God made a second covenant with man when man because of the fall made himself incapable of the first covenant:<sup>2</sup>

Man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the Covenant of Grace: whereby he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.

Dickson and the theologians of the period provided a considerable elaboration to this moderate federalism of the Confession. In Dickson's scheme, the two covenants have become three. The covenant of works remains as made between God and Adam on the condition of obedience. But the covenant of grace is further divided. There is a covenant of redemption made between the Father and the Son, in which the Father promises the salvation of the elect, and the Son promises to become incarnate and fulfil the broken covenant of works and pay the price or penalty of man's sin. The third covenant, styled the covenant of grace or reconciliation, is made between Christ and the elect. In this covenant Christ offers to the elect all the benefits of His passion, and they fulfil the condition from man's side, which is faith. This covenant applies the covenant of redemption.

In describing these three covenants, Dickson first relates

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1 The Westminster Confession of Faith, Edinburgh, Johnstone, Hunter and Co., 1878, p. 35.

2 Ibid., p. 35-36.

the covenant of works to man's natural relation to God in the creation. The covenant of works may be called the covenant of nature, for it is founded upon the light of nature which was man's in his first creation. Indeed even after the fall, man retains "certain remnants of the light of nature...and the Eternity, Power and Divinity of God, with the rest of His Attributes...are apprehended by the light of nature."<sup>1</sup> In the covenant of works therefore, and even after the fall, man has a certain knowledge of God grounded in the fact of creation.

The second covenant, the covenant of redemption, he sets forth in this manner:<sup>2</sup>

It is a bargain, agreed upon between the Father and the Son designed Mediator, concerning the elect...wisely and powerfully to be converted, sanctified and saved, for the Son of God's satisfaction and obedience (in our nature to be assumed by Him) to be given in due time to the Father, even unto the death of the cross. In this bargain or agreement the Scripture importeth clearly, a selling and a buying of the elect.... The seller of the elect is God; the buyer is God incarnate; the persons bought are the Church of the elect; the price is the blood of God, to wit, the blood of Christ, who is God and man is one person.

The third and last covenant concerning man's salvation is the covenant of grace, made between God and man through Christ as Mediator. It is founded upon the prior covenant of redemption between God and Christ. The condition of the covenant of works was the giving of perfect obedience to the Law, but the condition of the covenant of grace is the believer's receiving of Christ by faith.<sup>3</sup> He defines the covenant of grace thus:

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1 Dickson, Exposition of the Epistles, p. 3.

2 Dickson, Therapeutica Sacra, p. 38.

3 Ibid., p. 126.

The Covenant of Grace is a contract between God and men, procured by Christ upon these terms, that whosoever in the sense of their own sinfulness shall receive Christ Jesus offered in the Gospel, for righteousness and life, shall have Him and all the benefits purchased by Him, according to the Covenant of Redemption; and that God will be his God, and the God of his children....

The conditions of this covenant are three-fold: <sup>1</sup>

The first condition required of the man who desireth to enter in the Covenant of Reconciliation, is the acknowledgement of his sins; ....As for the next, the condition of the Covenant upon which the man is received,.... it is his consent to receive the grace offered, even Christ with His benefits, as He is holden forth in the Gospel; or, the condition of the Covenant is faith, receiving Christ for righteousness and eternal life. As for the third, the condition required of the man now entered in the Covenant, for evidencing the truth and sincerity of the faith which the covenanter professeth,....is the covenanter's up-giving of himself to Christ's government, and obedience of His commands....

This scheme of the three covenants was set forth by Dickson and his friend James Durham in the "Sum of Saving Knowledge, which has long been printed together with the Westminster documents. C.G. M'Crie in his book, "The Confessions of the Church of Scotland" has this comment to make on Dickson's scheme set forth in the "Sum of Saving Knowledge": <sup>2</sup>

At the same time, it will readily be admitted that federalism, as developed in the Sum, is objectionable in form and in application. Detailed descriptions of redemption as a bargain entered into between the First and

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1 Dickson, Therapeutica Sacra, p. 144.

2 C.G. M'Crie, The Confessions of the Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, Macniven and Wallace, 1907, p. 72.

Second Persons of the Trinity, in which conditions were laid down, promises held out, and pledges given; the reducing of salvation to a mercantile arrangement between God and the sinner...-- such presentations have obviously a tendency to reduce the gospel of the grace of God to the level of a legal compact entered into between two independent and, so far as right or status is concerned, two equal parties. The blessedness of the mercy-seat is in danger of being lost sight of in the bargaining of the market-place; the simple story of salvation is thrown into the crucible of the logic of the schools and it emerges in the form of a syllogism.

But the federal theology does not offend only in its terminology. Aside from the astonishingly inappropriate nature of such language, the concept of the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son, in which each assumes legal obligations in return for promises fulfilled, is dangerous to any right doctrine of the unity of the Holy Trinity. God is One God and His decision for man is one decision in grace. The God who creates and redeems the world is, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit at one in His redemptive purpose. The federal scheme calls in question this fundamental unity of purpose. It really assumes that there are two conflicting attitudes or attributes in God, His Justice and His Love. It portrays the Father as concerned more with His Justice, and the Son more with the expression of His Love. The compact between the Father and the Son becomes the means of reconciling the two attitudes of God to man. In the deepest sense, then, the federal theology is concerned not with the reconciliation of God and man, so much as the reconciliation of God with Himself.

The problem of atonement with which the federal theology is

concerned, has to do with the reconciliation of God and man, not with some assumed inner conflict within the Nature of God which requires a contractual reconciliation within the Trinity.

In the Biblical faith we have to do with the Triune God who has revealed His one purpose for man in His Son, Jesus Christ. His one covenant with man is His covenant of grace, expressed both in the work of creation and redemption. The federal theology raises a fundamental question about this covenant of grace as the eternal expression of God's will toward man. The federal theology assumes God is of two minds in His purpose, and these two minds reflect His law and His love, manifested in His covenant of works and His covenant of grace.

This inner concern of the federal theology has immense significance for the doctrine of the atonement. For wherever the two aspects of Law and Grace are worked out as if they were conflicting attributes in God, the inevitable result is a doctrine of the atonement which speaks more about what God had to do, than about what He has done. Accepting the assumption of a natural knowledge of law or moral order, founded upon the creation, the temptation is to construct a theology of the atonement founded upon man's own conceptions of what God must do. Thus the act of redemption comes to be interpreted not in the light of revelation, but in the light of an assumed natural knowledge of the moral order in the creation.

The result is a "natural theology" of the atonement in which

even God is bound by external necessities. The Law is no longer conceived of as the Will or Command of a Holy God to men, so much as an immutable abstraction which binds even God Himself in all His dealings with men. The whole work of redemption is thus seen in the framework of a humanly conceived understanding of the moral world.

Thus it is that the federal theology tends to shift the whole of the meaning of God's grace in Christ to a secondary status. It is as if the grace of God in Christ were an afterthought which became necessary when man's original natural relation to God foundered. This becomes especially apparent when it is seen that the federal theologians had no place for the Mediator in the covenant of works. In Dickson's words:

No Mediator was in this covenant; for the party on the one hand, was God, and on the other hand was Adam and Eve, our common parents, standing upon the ground of their natural abilities, representing and comprehending all their natural offspring.

Though Christ has no place in the covenant of works, yet it can be seen that since the covenant of works is the first covenant postulated, it becomes the framework upon which the whole concept of the covenants of redemption and grace are presented. The obvious result is an unchristological framework in which to present the covenant of grace.

The essential error of the federal scheme is its man centredness. The whole movement of salvation begins with man and works itself out in (over)

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1 Dickson, Therapeutica Sacra, p. 113.



relation to man and his predicament. The Biblical picture, on the other hand, represents creation and salvation as having their meaning in the Father's gracious decision for man in Christ. God's whole relation to man is in the Mediator. The movement of salvation rather than beginning with man and his predicament, begins with God and His gracious way with man. Karl Barth holds that the conception of the covenant of works is the means by which man can develop a self-centred understanding of the history of salvation:

...biblical exegesis had been invaded by a mode of thought in which this history, however extraordinary the course it took, could only unfold itself and therefore only begin as the history of man and his works, man who is good by nature and who is therefore in covenant with God-- a God who is pledged to him by virtue of his goodness. To this mode of thinking it became more and more foreign to think of the history as conversely the history of God and His works, the God who originally turns to man in grace, and therefore as from the very first the history of the covenant of grace.

e/ Again, the whole tendency to think of redemption solely in forensic terms results from moving to the covenant of grace from the covenant of works, and conditioning the whole character of the covenant of grace by the presuppositions of the covenant of works. Man is supposed to have a natural relation to God. When spoiled by sin he is enabled to approach unto God in the Mediator. The result is a division between man's essential being and his being as a sinner. Man is<sup>n</sup> his essential being can have a natural relation to God and has no need of the Mediator. But man when

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1 Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, ET, Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1956, vol. IV:1, p. 62.

he sins, and only when he sins, has a need of the Mediator. Thus the federal scheme tends to regard Christ's work as dealing only with the transgression of man in a legal sense: a dealing with that aspect of man's relation to God which is spoiled by sin--not a dealing with man's essential and natural being, which is assumed to be related to God in the creation. The result of this is that God's dealing with man in Christ is interpreted in a legal way, and does not play the creative role that the Biblical message assigns to it. That aspect of the incarnation and atonement which sees man being brought to sonship in Christ has no meaning in the federal scheme.

The federal theology then, destroys the fundamental unity of creation and redemption in Christ, and obscures the essential meaning of the covenant of grace found in God's very act of creation. It interprets the atonement in a legal context and fails to see the positive character of the relation of God and man in Christ, the lifting up of men to be sons of the Father, and joint-heirs with Christ.

Having in mind the essential framework of Dickson's federalism, it is interesting to see how this worked out in his own approach to the doctrine of the atonement. The incarnation had its necessity in that it was proper that the same nature which had sinned<sup>1</sup> should be punished:

For the justice and wisdom of God required that in the human nature, which had sinned, sin should be punished; and therefore required that the Redeemer of men should be truly man.

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1 Dickson, Exposition of the Epistles, p. 188

Dickson gives no consideration to the positive character of the incarnation, but thinks of it entirely as being necessitated by man's failure to keep the covenant of works. This subtle shifting of emphasis reflects the man-centred interest of the federal theology.

Dickson's view of justification, conditioned by the legal framework of federalism, is essentially forensic with little said of any real or substantial union with Christ:<sup>1</sup>

...Christ the innocent Mediator, and pure from sin, by His consent and agreement with the Father in a judicial manner, is accounted guilty of our sin...that we believing in Christ may be made partakers of Christ's righteousness judicially by imputation....(Italics mine)

Justification is invariably referred to as judicial. Commenting on the sin of man as set forth in the latter part of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, he states that God gave them up "judicially" to their own affections.<sup>2</sup> So it is that the Mediator comes to judicially represent man and bear his sin. Dickson speaks of our being engrafted into Christ by faith and of His obedience and righteousness being made ours, but he refers to this as "our judicial union with Christ."<sup>3</sup> So also antinomianism is impossible because of union with Christ, but again he speaks of that union as a judicial one.<sup>4</sup> It is apparent that Dickson diminishes the significance which the older Scottish theology gave to union with Christ, by referring to it as a judicial union.

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1 Dickson, Exposition of the Epistles, p. 80.

2 Ibid., p. 3.

3 Ibid., p. 80.

4 Ibid., p. 14.



Dickson's essential interest is substitutionary rather than representative. Christ as Mediator accomplishes the atonement in His uniqueness as God and man. Believers are related to His work not in any real way, and certainly not because of a common humanity (for that was only necessary in order that the offending nature might be involved) but solely in a legal and judicial way. What Dickson means by this seems to be: God regards the work of Christ as if He did it in our place. This comes close to making imputation a legal fiction, and is far from the view of the earlier Scottish theology expressed so clearly by John Craig that Christ is not another man to us properly because we are truly united with Him.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless there is a retention in Dickson of the earlier representative view, but he speaks of it as judicial in order to relate it to the framework of the new federalism:<sup>2</sup>

As whatever Christ did or suffered in our name and place is reckoned ours in God's account, so whatever Christ received in our name and place is reckoned ours also: Therefore in the Resurrection of Christ, by the Covenant of Redemption, the Redeemed did also rise with Him judicially, or in a judicial way. In Christ's ascension into heaven the Redeemed judicially ascend with Him; In Christ's sitting, or glorious possession of eternal life, the Redeemed in a judicial way do sit and are placed with Him.

In this forensic framework what relation does the incarnation and life of Christ bear to His death? Here again Dickson tends to shift the emphasis from the stress of the earlier reformed theology upon the active as well as passive obedience of Christ.

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1 Craig's Catechism, as cited in Torrance, School of Faith, p., 125.

2 Dickson, Epistles, p. 113.

At first sight, he appears to accept the traditional calvinist position concerning the active obedience of Christ. It is necessary, he tells us, that Christ's active obedience as well as His passive obedience be imputed to us:<sup>1</sup>

Because whole Christ was given to us, with all His benefits: otherwise, if only His passive obedience were imputed to us, it would follow that half Christ only were given; viz. Christ suffering, but not Christ doing those things which pleased the Father; taking away our sin and saving from death only, but not bringing righteousness. But Christ was not given and born for Himself, but for us, that He might bestow Himself wholly upon us, by doing for us what we could not do, and by suffering for us what we could not suffer.

In this he is true to the emphasis of the older theology. Yet there is an uneasiness about the positive character of the active obedience:<sup>2</sup>

Christ's holy life was a part of His obedience to the Father: but His obedience in suffering for our sins, was obedience in a higher degree.

In the 'Therapeutica Sacra' he defines the active obedience wholly in terms of suffering:<sup>3</sup>

His active and passive obedience are but two notions of one thing; for, His incarnation, subjection to the Law, and the whole course of His life was a continued course of suffering, and in all His suffering He was a free and voluntary agent, fulfilling all which He had undertaken unto the Father, for making out the promised price of redemption and accomplishing what the Father had given Him command to do.

This interpretation of the active obedience in terms of suffering serves the forensic interest of federalism. The incarnation and life of Christ become a part of His suffering and as such have

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1 David Dickson, Truth's Victory Over Error, Glasgow, John Bryce, 1764, p. 75.

2 Dickson, Epistles, p. 233.

3 Dickson, Therapeutica Sacra, pp 56-57.

atoning virtue. But again, the whole positive aspect of the active obedience in which Christ sanctifies and perfects our human nature is given little place.

It is interesting in view of the great importance which McLeod Campbell was to give to the vicarious nature of Christ's life of obedience, that Dickson in a sense both anticipated and rejected Campbell's contribution. Dealing with repentance, he holds that the antinomians err who hold that Christ in our stead<sup>1</sup> has repented for us. He refutes this contention:

Because repentance, being a turning from our sins and evil ways, and a turning to God; and Christ being without sin, could not be capable to repent in our stead;....

Here again is Dickson's emphasis upon the difference between Christ and ourselves in His work, and his failure to see the radically representative nature of that work. For Dickson, repentance is a work of each individual man. Like faith, it is part of that response which must come from man's side as a condition of the covenant of grace.

Since he sees justification in a totally forensic manner, and because he interprets union with Christ in the same judicial sense, he does not relate justification and union with Christ in such a way that the righteousness of Christ actually becomes the believers by union with Him. Consequently Dickson fails to see that as the justification of the believer is in the righteousness of Christ, so also is his sanctification.

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<sup>1</sup> Dickson, Truth's Victory. p. 105.

Dickson tends to separate justification and sanctification and to think of sanctification as an on-going process which depends upon the sincerity and faithfulness of the believer. Thus he speaks of sanctification as an endeavour:<sup>1</sup>

Justification by faith, or absolution from sin, is accompanied also with the upright endeavour of sanctification, for of the justified man it is said, blessed is the man in whose spirit there is no guile.

He sees sanctification as a fruit of the grace of Christ in directing believers in the way of sanctification. He does not interpret this as the believer's continuous participation in the righteousness of Christ, but as Christ giving leadership to assist in the believer's own endeavour.

The Law has a considerable role to play as the guide to the believer's process of sanctification:<sup>2</sup>

But a true Christian first studieth to be clad with the righteousness of Christ, and to have his sins pardoned in Christ, and after that he is justified freely by His grace, without the works of the Law, he laboureth to give evidence of the soundness of his faith, by making conscience of obedience as well inwardly as outwardly, not unto any one only, or some, but to all the commandments of the Law, studying to make progress in sanctification all the days of his life.

This understanding of the use of the Law in sanctification was to issue in an increasingly legalistic interpretation of the Christian life. Indeed Dickson concludes the passage on sanctification by asserting that: "except a man study to outstrip the Pharisees and Scribes both in respect of imputed righteousness and inherent righteousness also, he shall not be saved."<sup>3</sup>

1 David Dickson, A Brief Explication of the Psalms, Glasgow, John Dow, 1834, vol. one, p. 166.

2 David Dickson, A Brief Exposition of the Gospel of Matthew, Third Edition, London, Ralph Smith, 1651, p. 49.

3 Ibid., p. 49.

Dickson sees sanctification, unlike justification, as involving an element of human cooperation with grace. This is made clear by his comment that it is an antinomian suggestion "that those who are justified are sanctified only by the imputed holiness of Christ".<sup>1</sup> While justification is wholly a work of Christ imputed judicially to the believer, sanctification is a work of response in and by the believer. It is also a means of testing the validity of one's own election and justification.<sup>2</sup> Dickson expresses this in this way:

...whom Christ has gripped to draw to salvation, that man will grip Christ to win to sanctification. Wouldst thou know if Christ has gripped thee to salvation? Thou shalt know it by this-- if thou be gripping Him for sanctification.

The way in which Dickson deals with sanctification indicates again his subjective interest referred to above. Sanctification is not so much a participation in Christ's righteousness by a real union with Him, as it is a response in the believer to the grace of justification. Though Dickson would hold that Christ leads the believer in this work of response, there is no relation between the believer's sanctification and the obedience of Christ by which in His own person He sanctified human life.

Dickson's view of the federal theology and his whole forensic scheme is profoundly related to his great emphasis upon the concept of double predestination. In this he is true to the scholastic

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1 Dickson, Truth's Victory, p. 96.

2 Dickson, Select Practical Writings, p. 189.



Calvinism of his time. Christ "did not buy with His blood all and every one, but His Church called out, and severed from the world...."<sup>1</sup> Indeed at the beginning of the age of exploration it seemed a self evident thing for a European to hold:<sup>2</sup>

So far is it from God's purpose and Christ's to redeem all and every man, that He hath not decreed to give every nation so much as the external and necessary means for conversion and salvation.

This strong dualism of election and reprobation evident in the Westminster Confession of Faith and in Dickson and his contemporaries, was integrated into the federal theology with its two covenants. The reprobate were under the covenant of works and the elect were under the covenant of grace. These two covenants were co-existent, representing God's two ways of dealing with man.

The earlier federalism had spoken of the two covenants in a more strictly historical sense or sequence. The covenant of works was God's original intention, but when man sinned it was superseded by the covenant of grace. But by Dickson's time it is evident that the two covenants stand side by side. God is of two minds in His relation to man: The covenant of grace pertains only to the elect, and the reprobate remain under the covenant of works.

Indeed, for Dickson the covenant of works has even come to have a use to the Christian because the law of the covenant of works serves to lead the elect in the way of sanctification:<sup>3</sup>

...all the precepts of the Moral Law belong to the Law of Nature, naturally engraven upon

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1 Dickson, Therapeutica Sacra, p. 54.

2 Ibid., p. 55.

3 Dickson, Truth's Victory, p. 139.

the hearts of men, which cannot be abrogated, but oblige all men perpetually, and necessarily from natural reason itself....all the precepts of the Moral Law are repeated in the Gospel and enjoined to all believers by Christ....

Dickson sees the Law in the context of the covenant of works rather than in the context of grace. The Law, as part of that first covenant abides forever, and Jesus came "only to abolish the cursing part of it, but to establish the obeying part of it." <sup>1</sup> (Italics his)

This removal of the Old Testament Law from the area of grace led to an increasing legalism with regard to the Christian life. Coupled with the subjective interest of the time, it served to turn the believer in upon himself to determine whether he was truly of the elect. A doctrine of double predestination put forth as insistently as it was in Dickson's time, was bound to cause men to question whether or not God had chosen them. The new legalism led them to seek their answer within, from the evidence of a Christian life in obedience to the Law, rather than to look to the objective reality of the grace of Christ.

In sum then, it can be seen that Dickson interpreted the atonement in a judicial and legal way and as having reference only to the elect under the covenant of grace. He stressed the substitutive aspect of the work of Christ, and though influenced by the earlier theology did not have a fully representative view of Christ and His work. Justification was imputed to the elect and the union of Christ with the believer was merely a judicial one. The covenant of grace required a response from man as his condition of entering into the covenant. This response was faith, (over)

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<sup>1</sup> Dickson, Select Practical Writings, p. 119.

and faith was accompanied by repentance and obedience to the law of nature. This law of nature is forever binding upon the Christian, and indeed for Dickson, it is in the light of its demands that the whole work of salvation has its necessity.

The substitutionary emphasis; the emphasis upon the necessity of the atonement in the light of the moral order; the stress upon the response from the side of man in faith and obedience; these things are the essentials of that understanding of the atonement which Principal Denney called its "moral aspect".

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SECTION THREE: THE THEOLOGIANS OF THE COVENANT, RUTHERFORD,  
DURHAM AND GILLESPIE:

Samuel Rutherford, called by James Walker perhaps the greatest of the second Reformation divines, was first Minister at Anwoth and in his days of greatest influence, Professor of Divinity at St. Andrews. He was one of the six Scottish Commissioners to the Westminster Assembly. While his devotional writings, most especially the "Letters", have had a profound influence upon Scottish piety, he was a theologian of the first rank, recognized as such in England and on the continent, as well as in his native land.

He was deeply devoted to his theological work. He could even see his theological work carried on in the world to come:

There is a general assembly of immediately illuminated Divines round about the throne, who study, lecture, preach, praise Christ night and day."

Rutherford stood in the tradition of the federal theology and the hyper-Calvinism of his time. Yet his original mind and his wide scholarship gave him a uniqueness which in some degree served to modify some of the more rigid aspects of the federal theology as set forth by David Dickson.

This uniqueness was most evident in his view that the atonement had no necessity save in the free decree and decision of God. Walker comments that this doctrine "absolutely possessed him." He denied that there was any necessity for God to give His creatures eternal

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1 Samuel Rutherford, Christ Dying and Drawing Sinners to Himself, London, Andrew Crooke, 1647. p. 3 of introduction. (b) 3

2 James Walker, The Theology and Theologians of Scotland, p. 68.

1

life in return for obedience;

It is not written in the heart of man by nature, that God should promise life eternal to man upon condition of obedience.

God is utterly free in His grace to man. There is no place for any conception of human merit, even in the covenant of works.

2

In creation God is free:

For a natural conscience may, and does know, that God doth freely create the world, and that He might not have created it, that He doth good freely to His creatures; Will it follow by any logic, that God creates the world by any natural obligation? And because ...we know that God is good and bountiful to His creatures in giving and doing good to them, we cannot therefore infer that actual beneficence is so essential to the infinite Majesty, as He should not be God if He did not extend that goodness to them.

3

Again, there is no necessity in God to punish man for sin, save in His own will to do so:

(As this extension of goodness is not essential to God) so neither is the actual punishing of sin essential to God, but free. Though Adam apprehended God would punish his eating of the forbidden tree; yet if he apprehended that He should not be God, if He did not punish it, his apprehension was erroneous.

Rutherford's fundamental concern is that the necessity for atonement should be founded in the Will rather than in the Nature of God. He goes so far as to contend that salvation could have been accomplished by God simply by a free act of pardon without any satisfaction:

4

...God, if we speak of His absolute power, without respect to His free decree, could have pardoned sin without a ransom, and gifted all mankind and fallen

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1 Samuel Rutherford, The Covenant of Life Opened, Edinburgh, Robert Brown, 1655, p. 21.

2 Ibid., p. 21.

3 Ibid., p. 21.

4 Rutherford, Christ Dying, pp. 7-8.

Angels with heaven, without any satisfaction of either the sinner or his surety; for He neither punisheth sin nor tenders heaven to men or Angels by necessity of nature, as the fire casteth out heat, and the sun light; but freely.

While salvation has no necessity in God's Nature it does have a necessity in His Will freely expressed in His decrees. He has decreed that there should be punishment and that sinners should be redeemed and because this is so, "the Lord could not but be steady in His decrees; yet this is but necessity conditional and at the second hand."<sup>1</sup>

John MacLeod in his "Scottish Theology", says of this aspect of Rutherford's theology:<sup>2</sup>

The tendency to lay what looks like an undue burden on the absolute Sovereignty of God was one in which a daring thinker like Rutherford indulged.

MacLeod goes on to assert that the corrective of John Owen and in the nineteenth century of William Cunningham, was necessary in order to show that punitive justice was not rooted in the "bare will of God", but in the "very nature of God."<sup>ts</sup>

Nevertheless, it is clear that in his view of the freedom of God in His way with man, Rutherford had hold of an earlier insight which was bound to condition his approach to the federal theology. While he stayed within its framework, and zealously maintained the distinctions between the covenants of works, redemption and grace, his view of the freedom of God in election provided an interesting modification of the federal scheme in the interest of the doctrine of grace.

The first modification provided to the traditional federal view

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1 Rutherford, Christ Dying, p. 8.

2 John MacLeod, Scottish Theology, Edinburgh, Lindsay & Co., 1943, p. 70.

was his strong assertion of the priority of the free decision of God in the whole work of salvation. Federalism had by its stress upon the covenant of works, tended to begin with the sin of man rather than with the grace of God. And the covenant of works had, as we have seen, become the frame of reference for the covenant of grace. Rutherford insists that even the covenant of works must be grounded in the prior free decision of God:<sup>1</sup>

And therefore though Divines as our solid and eminent Rollock, call it a Covenant natural, as it is contradistinguished from the supernatural Covenant of Grace, and there is good reason so to call it; yet when it is considered in the positives thereof, it is from the free will of God, and though it be connatural (sic) to man, created according to the Image of God, yet the Covenant came from the Lord's wisdom and free-will....

He refers to this prior will or decision of God as the "love of election".<sup>2</sup> It is prior to anything on man's part, even before the Mediator and the shedding of His blood; "We are loved with an everlasting love before all these."<sup>2</sup> Faith is the condition of the covenant of grace and Christ is the Mediator of it; His blood is the seal of it; and the Spirit must write it in human hearts: "But the love of election is a complete, free, full love, before our faith, or shedding of blood, or a Mediator be at all."<sup>2</sup>

While it is unfortunate that Rutherford's predestinarian view did not allow him to see that election cannot be separated from Jesus Christ -- and so he speaks inappropriately of God's love of election apart from Christ -- yet he rightly asserts the priority of God's election to the sin of man and anything from man's side.

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1 Rutherford, The Covenant of Life Opened, p. 20.

2 Rutherford, Christ Dying, p. 477.

This tendency to modify the federal theology to allow for the priority of God's free election is evident in other ways. He seems to wish to restore the covenant of works to an historical setting. He is aware of the way in which the federal theology had postulated the co-existence of the two covenants, that of works for the reprobate and grace for the elect, yet he seems to be yearning for the older view that the covenant of works was fleeting and done away in the covenant of grace. Certainly he contends that this is so for the elect, (Unlike Dickson who held that the law of the covenant of works guided the sanctification of the elect.) "It is apparent that God intended not a Law-dispen-<sup>1</sup>sation in Paradise to stand forever." "The Lord had a further design to lay aside the transient Law-dispensation and to set up<sup>1</sup> Christ." If the covenant of works was fleeting what was its use?<sup>2</sup> He answers:

For the Lord had in the Law-dispensation a love design, to set up a theatre and stage of free grace. And that the way of works should be a time-dispensation, like a summer-house to be demolished again.

But this interest in the historical sequence of the two covenants is unable to overcome his predestinarian dualism. So the covenant of works still has power over the reprobate. While the Law is turned into Gospel for the elect, "to the reprobate the Law remains the Law, and Gospel is turned into the Law, for all conditional promises to the reprobate, though in terms evangelic, yet are Law to them...because God by grace fulfills not the promise<sup>3</sup> in them."

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1 Rutherford, The Covenant of Life Opened, pp. 13-14.

2 Ibid., p. 3.

3 Ibid., p. 198.



Because of Adam's disobedience, the elect and the reprobate alike must die, yet for the elect, God, who was to send a Saviour had another end in view. And therefore in warning man of the dire consequences of disobedience, "the threatening was mixed, partly Legal, partly Evangelic; according to the respective person, that the Lord had in His eye: He had therefore in His heart both Law and Gospel."<sup>1</sup>

Though Rutherford is profoundly aware of the grace of God's free decision of election, he is confounded by double predestination. Thus he must seek in his federalism to reconcile the fact that God has in His heart both Law and Gospel. The Law speaks to the reprobate and the Gospel to the elect. God has two attitudes to two different orders of men, and these are manifested in the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. The essential problem of Rutherford at this point is his unchristological exposition of the free election of God.

Nevertheless, this doctrine of the freedom of God's election which so dominated his theology, does enable him to see that the covenant of works has a gracious aspect, and that Christ has a place in it. Unlike Dickson, he never states that the covenant of works has no need of a Mediator:<sup>2</sup>

Q. What room or place hath Christ the Mediator in the Covenants?

A. He hath place in the Covenant of Works as satisfier for us. 2. As a doer and an obedient fulfiller thereof in all points. And He is Mediator and Surety in the Covenant of Grace.

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1 Rutherford, The Covenant of Life Opened, p. 3.

2 Ibid., p. 225.

And he strongly asserts that there is a gracious aspect to the covenant of works. "In all pactions between the Lord and men, even in a Law-Covenant, there are some out-breakings of grace."<sup>1</sup> He holds that it is a gracious gift of God to bestow on Adam His own Image.<sup>1</sup> The covenant of works itself is an undeserved condescension of God. Even "the Law is honeyed with love", and "it is a mercy that for our penny of obedience, so rich a wage as communion with God is given."<sup>1</sup>

2

God then never loved to make any Covenant, yea, even that of Works, without some acts and outgoings of grace....

When Rutherford comes to the matter of faith as the condition of the covenant of grace, his concern for the sovereignty of God leads him to guard against the subjective tendency seen in Dickson and his contemporaries. With the most thoroughgoing federalists he can say:<sup>3</sup>

Faith is the condition of the Covenant of Grace, and the only condition of Justification, and of the title, right and claim that the Elect have through Christ to life eternal.

Yet he interprets faith as a gift of grace which does not contribute to the atonement in the sense that it completes the covenant agreement. There is no "sufficiency in His death from the worth of believing. And the reason why He accepts it for Peter and not for another, is the election of grace."<sup>4</sup> Faith is weak in itself;<sup>5</sup>

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1 Rutherford, The Covenant of Life Opened, p. 35

2 Ibid., p. 22.

3 Rutherford, Christ Dying, p. 263.

4 Rutherford, The Covenant of Life Opened, p. 12.

5 Ibid., p. 17.

...but faith rests upon the connection (if thou believe thou shalt be saved) and it stays upon the connection, as made sure by the Lord, who of grace gives the condition of believing, and of grace the reward conditioned, so that faith binds all the weight upon God only, even in conditional Gospel-promises.

Indeed he is so concerned to provide for God's freedom in His dealing with man, that he contends that God if He chose might have made something other than faith the condition of the covenant of grace:<sup>1</sup>

Nor is it imaginable to say that any act of obedience or believing can perfect the satisfaction of Christ, and make it sufficient, yea, or causatively make it ours. For God, by no necessity of Justice, but of His own free pleasure, requireth faith as a condition of our actual reconciliation; for beside, that He might have required any other act of obedience, as love, He might have accepted the Ransom without requiring any act of obedience on our part....

In this Rutherford again preserves the objectivity of the work of Christ as being not dependent upon man's response, but upon God's own free decision of grace. Yet in saying that God could have required something other than faith, he seems to regard faith as something less than what the New Testament means by faith. In the New Testament faith is never faith alone, or faith as a human quality, but it is faith in Jesus Christ. Faith comes when one is united to Christ. Faith in the context of union with Christ is not an extraneous condition of the covenant of grace, but is as God's gift, at the very heart of our participation in the life of Christ. While Rutherford seems more aware than his contemporaries of the danger to the objective character of the atonement of exalting faith as a condition from man's side, he does less than justice to a full Christian understanding of faith.

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<sup>1</sup> Rutherford, The Covenant of Life Opened, p. 12.

It can be seen then that Rutherford's passionate concern for the freedom of God introduced a corrective element into the federal theology. Nevertheless, Rutherford was unable to escape from its essential legal framework. He might strive to introduce an historical element into the relation of the two covenants; he might see a gracious aspect in the covenant of works; and he might seek to preserve the objectivity of the covenant of grace; yet in it all, the moulding of the theology of redemption by the natural theology of the covenant of works remained his essential emphasis.

As we have seen, the doctrine of double predestination forced Rutherford to think out his objective doctrine of the free grace of God in election, in terms of the traditional dualism. In chapter four of his work on the 'Covenant of Life Opened', he deals with the conception that Christ's death is sufficient for all men. He refutes this not from the value of the death, but from the fact of election and reprobation. But he will not hear of any doctrine which speaks of the death of Christ as if it were only the possibility of atonement. The death of Christ accomplishes the atonement for the elect. It is their actual, though legal, redemption. If His death is only a "mere possible reconciliation, and a salvation to His people standing only in "a may be" or a "may never be"; then Christ is a Gospel-King without a Kingdom of Grace...He is a Redeemer and a Saviour; but His people all are eternally lost...." <sup>1</sup> But Christ's death was the actual death of the elect. In that act

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<sup>1</sup> Rutherford, Christ Dying, p. 398.

their atonement was completed and became a finished work. So far as the elect are concerned Christ is their representative in His death in a real, but legal way. Consider his answer to the objection that Christ could not die for or represent generations yet unborn:

1

In physical actions there is required the real existence of the worker. Not so in legal actions, for as we had no being, who now believe, when Christ died, so our sins had no being. How then could our sins, that were not, deserve punishment? Yet I believe that Jesus Christ 'His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree. And (as) the child in the womb, when the father is absolved from treason is really and in Law restored to his father's inheritance; So we legally in Christ satisfied, our nature in Christ was crucified, and we, though not born, did satisfy and suffer satisfactory punishment in Christ.

Salvation is found in the union of the elect with Christ, though that union with Him is a legal one. But with all this objective emphasis, the atoning work applies only to the elect:

2

Now sure salvation is purchased with an efficacious intention in God to apply it to those only who shall be saved, and the smallest part of mankind.

It would seem that Rutherford was not too optimistic about the number of the elect: they are "the smallest part of mankind". Thus the atonement for the elect is not just the possibility of salvation if applied to them. It is the salvation. They were represented by Christ and in Him did all He did.

Rutherford found it necessary to carry his predestinarian dualism into his doctrine of the church. It was obvious that many in the Church were not of the "elect", yet they had the external

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1 Rutherford, The Covenant of Life Opened, p. 257.

2 Rutherford, Christ Dying, p. 378.

benefits of the covenant of grace. How was it to be seen that they had no real benefit in the death of Christ, since that death was for the elect only? The reprobate in the visible church are externally under the covenant of grace and the promises of the Gospel are given to them in a visible and external sense. However their election is the determinative factor:<sup>1</sup>

So the Lord promiseth life and forgiveness shall be given to these who are externally in the covenant, providing they believe, but the Lord promiseth not a new heart and grace to believe to these that are only externally in covenant. And yet He promiseth both to the Elect.

It is not therefore in the proclamation of the Gospel of what God has done that the believer can find any assurance, but rather in the evidence within that God has really given him a new heart and grace to believe. In this Rutherford is true to the increasingly subjective concern of Dickson and others of his contemporaries to find the evidence of election within, rather than in the work of Christ on man's behalf.

The conception of the two Churches, the visible and the invisible, serves the interest of the predestinarian dualism. The visible Church contains the elect and the reprobate, while the true and invisible Church contains the elect only. His interest is strongly personal and individualistic at this point. Personal covenanters cannot fall away, but national and external ones may. This individualistic emphasis was to increase in the Scottish theology, particularly as piety emphasized soul-searching within. The result was the ultimate rejection of the idea of Christ

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1 Rutherford, The Covenant of Life Opened, p. 94.

2 Ibid., p. 118.

as the head of a covenant people. . . By the time of Principal Denney, nurtured in the tradition of individualistic piety, the concept of Christ as a "racial Head" clearly seemed a "fantastic abstraction:"

The division between the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace served to further diminish the representative character of the work of Christ. Christ was alone in His agreement with the Father in the covenant of redemption. Only in the covenant of grace is Christ seen as Christ, "mystical", Christ the Head with His people. Speaking of Christ as the "seed" of Abraham in whom all the nations would be blessed, he holds that "this seed is only Christ, not mystical Christ, head and members: for neither are we blessed in Christ mystical, nor was Christ mystical the Church made a curse for us: Nor did the Church mystical pay a price of satisfaction to offended justice for us." <sup>1</sup> Nevertheless Christ remains a "public person" for the elect in the covenant of grace.

The covenant of redemption, which is the prior covenant between the Father and the Son alone, has no place for Christ with His people. In this Rutherford's emphasis is highly substitutionary. And as far as the representative element remains, Christ <sup>2</sup> represents the elect in a legal not mystical way:

Christ and all His, legally were crucified and died, and Christ and all His were not destroyed under death, but Christ lived all all His with Him.

With regard to union with Christ, he sees it as a three-fold union which creates a fourth union. Faith presupposes these

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1 Rutherford, The Covenant of Life Opened, p. 311/.

2 Rutherford, Christ Dying, p. 543.

three unions: Natural, Legal and Federal. The natural union is not with mankind as a natural species, but it is with the humanity of the elect. For Christ is of the same flesh as the elect and is not ashamed to call them brethren.<sup>1</sup> The legal union between Christ and believers is founded on the fact that God has made the debtor and the surety one in law insofar as He laid our debts upon Christ.<sup>1</sup> The federal union comes when God makes Christ our surety, and He willingly agrees to become our surety and to make our cause His cause and to suffer the penalty due to our sins. These three unions bring to pass the union of faith, which Rutherford confesses is difficult to describe:<sup>2</sup>

And our faith makes a fourth union betwixt Christ and us, whether natural, as between head and members, the branches and the vine tree, or mystical, as that of the spouse and beloved wife, or artificial, ...or legal, between the surety and the debtor, or rather a union above all, is hard to determine, for these are but all comparisons, and this Christ prays for, 'I in them and thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one.'

The natural relation of the humanity of Jesus to the humanity of the elect is a part of the union, but the essential aspect of the union is legal and federal. For Rutherford, the full content of the older view of the union with Christ awaits its consummation in the world to come: "It is a union of fruition, for Christ in some measure is enjoyed in this life, yet the fruition is in part, not complete and full in degrees as it shall be in the life to come...."<sup>3</sup>

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1 Rutherford, The Covenant of Life Opened, p. 208.

2 Ibid., p. 208.

3 Rutherford, Christ Dying, p. 354.



Thus, while Rutherford retains certain of the terminology of the earlier view of union with Christ, he interprets it as being essentially legal and federal in this world (but with mystical aspects) and only fully "mystical" in the world to come.

In sum we can say that Rutherford's stress upon the freedom of God serves as a corrective to federalism, but he is unable to escape from its legal framework. Even in the doctrine of union with Christ, the legal aspect is the most prominent. Nevertheless in the area of his devotional writing, Rutherford rises to a more Christ-centred understanding, and the believer's participation in Christ is set forth with great power. This aspect of Rutherford reflects the concern of the older reformed theology and shows that its influence remains, even though set forth in the atmosphere of the new federalism and the dualistic concept of predestination.

#### JAMES DURHAM AND THE SUBJECTIVE INTEREST OF THE TIME:

James Durham of Glasgow was Dickson's collaborator in the writing of the 'Sum of Saving Knowledge'. Though he was only thirty-six at his death, his preaching and writing had a great influence upon his contemporaries. He stands in the same federal tradition as Dickson, though he represents even more strongly the subjective tendency of the theologians of the Second Reformation.

He gives much attention to the duties of the inward life of faith:

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1 James Durham, The Blessedness of the Death of those that Die in the Lord, Glasgow, John Hall, 1754. p. 68.

There will be endeavouring to make our calling and election sure by well-doing; for though our justification before God depends not on our clearness in this, yet much of our comfort and confidence depends on it, and it is no doubt our duty to labour to make it sure.

This concern was to lead to a legalistic interpretation of the Christian life. In Durham's view the life that is lived has a bearing upon God's grace:<sup>1</sup>

'Tis true, as I have often said, that God may pluck some by a miracle of His grace out of the broad-way at their death, but they are very few with whom He deals so, ... usually as men live, so they die; if they live wickedly they die accursedly and fall into perdition, hence is that Proverb, 'such a life, such an end'; ....

This emphasis was to lead directly to the moralism of Scottish moderatism in the latter part of the Eighteenth Century.

Durham does not give any consideration to the active obedience of Christ, and generally interprets the atonement in commercial terms arising out of the covenant of redemption. That Christ has paid the debt and got a discharge of the believer's obligation to God under the covenant of works -- that is the ground of the believer's confidence.<sup>2</sup>

His exposition of the Song of Solomon, a book long influential in Scotland, gives insight into the allegorical method of Scriptural interpretation prevalent at the time. The Song is not to be taken literally but is to be understood "spiritually, figuratively and allegorically, as having some spiritual meaning contained under these figurative expressions."<sup>3</sup> (over)

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1. Durham, The Blessedness of Death, p. 88.

2. Ibid., p. 153.

3. James Durham, Clavis Cantici, or An Exposition of the Song of Solomon, Aberdeen, George King, 1840, p. 27.

He holds that the Song tells of the "soul's union with Christ, under the similitude of marriage."<sup>1</sup>

In his exposition of the Song, he has much of the stress of the older theology. He speaks of the union of the believer and Christ being a union in one flesh as are man and wife. "It is a real and not imaginary union (though it be spiritual and by faith) and it makes and transfers a mutual right of the one to the other and hath real effects."<sup>2</sup>

Durham however introduces a new element into the understanding of union with Christ. The Song of Songs relates mostly to the invisible Church and not to the visible. Therefore the union of which it speaks is the sole possession of the invisible and true Church of the elect. The members of the invisible Church have real and not only professed union with Christ, as distinguished from the outward professing of the visible Church.<sup>3</sup> This strong emphasis upon union with Christ as real only in the invisible Church, tends to spiritualize the doctrine. It becomes something which takes place in another realm away from the world of sense and reality. It also relates to Durham's subjective interest in that the believer is to test the sincerity of his own profession in order to determine whether or not he is truly of the invisible Church. With regard to the invisible and visible Church Durham categorizes them not just as the Church of the elect and the Church of both elect and reprobate, but rather as the Church of those who are sincere in their profession and of those who are insincere. Thus:<sup>4</sup>

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1 Ibid., p. 30.

2 Durham, Clavis Cantici, p.153.

3 Ibid., p. 37.

4 Ibid., p. 90.

God reckons believers not by the degree of their progress, but by the kind and nature of their walk, if it be sincere or not; that is, if they be straight as to their ends, motives and manner in duties, or not.

Here again is the increasingly subjective emphasis.

It is in Durham's emphasis upon conscience as God's deputy that the seeds of the moralism of the next century and the genesis of the philosophy of the enlightenment are clearly seen. Durham defines the conscience as "a power wherewith God hath endued the soul of man to take notice of all his thoughts, words and actions."<sup>1</sup> "Conscience then in this respect is a man's knowledge of God's will and of himself as compared with it."<sup>2</sup> Everyone possesses a conscience, even though in the elect the conscience is "much cleansed".<sup>3</sup> [Conscience being God's Deputy, taketh orders from Him, and when God will not vouchsafe a word of reproof on a man, neither will it...."<sup>4</sup>

Durham holds that the conscience is so clearly God's deputy, that it assumes an almost mediatorial function in the Christian's sanctification:<sup>5</sup>

If so be that conscience speaketh for God and is appointed by Him as His Deputy, to be a remembrancer of duty and a refrainer from sin, then the awe of God and love to Him will make a man that is tender, walk according to the directions of conscience....

Indeed, the conscience becomes the instrument of God within man,<sup>6</sup> complementing the Word of God without:

There are two great counsellors that God hath given to all them that live within the visible Church, to wit, His Word without us, and our Conscience within us; that by them we may be helped clearly to know what is pleasing to Him, and profitable to ourselves....

1 James Durham, Heaven upon Earth, Edinburgh, Andrew Anderson, 1685, p. 4

2 Ibid., p. 6.

3 Ibid., p. 2.

4 Ibid., p. 12.

5 Ibid., p. 19.

6 Ibid., p. 131.

In the earlier reformed theology the Word was never simply external, but the Word came within as the believer was united to Christ and shared in His enlightening and life-giving presence. Durham rejects this aspect and speaks of conscience as a natural God-given means of inner enlightenment which exists apart from the Word. Indeed, Durham so exalts the place of conscience in the Divine order that one wonders if it does not displace the work of Christ and of His Spirit in the inner life of the believer:<sup>1</sup>

When Conscience, as the great and sovereign God His Deputy, sits on its Throne (as it were) it hath a Divine Authority, and Majesty, whereby it scattereth all these evils that haunt the heart; so that they cannot endure and stand before it, but must flee away.

Conscience here is no mere negative awareness of guilt, rather it has a positive character which enables it to scatter evil within.

This emphasis upon conscience as a source of inner light, when coupled with the federalism that reasoned out salvation not from God's grace but from man's awareness of the moral order, was to lead to the theology of the enlightenment. Though Durham and the theologians of the Second Reformation had all the trappings of orthodoxy, their subjective emphasis led them to find something of the Divine naturally implanted in man. Thus through his conscience and his own inner light, man could have a self-awareness which could compliment the Divine revelation in Jesus Christ. From this position it was possible to so exalt the self-awareness and so underrate the revelation that the theology of the Enlightenment was the result.

This stress upon the role of conscience as the guide to the well being of the inner life was also to lead directly to the moralism of much of eighteenth century "moderate" Scottish preaching.

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1 Durham, Heaven upon Earth, p. 219.

Since the conscience was God's deputy within, it was right and proper that preaching should centre on moral and religious duties, and that hearers should test their own obedience and life by "God's deputy" -- conscience.

This subjective emphasis produced an increasing legalism in Durham's doctrine of the Christian life. Man was utterly dependant upon grace for justification, but in sanctification his conscience and his natural awareness of the moral law were a means of growth in grace.

As for the moral law, it had a perpetual obligation. He distinguishes between the moral, ceremonial and judicial law and maintains that the moral law "concerns manners and the right ordering of a Godly conversation; and because these things are of perpetual equity and rectitude, the obligation of this law, as to that, is perpetual." <sup>1</sup> Concerning the moral law, he distinguishes between things "naturally moral" and "positively moral": <sup>2</sup>

Naturally Moral, that is such which have an innate rectitude and holiness in them, which cannot be separate from them, and things positively moral, that have their obligation by a special positive super-added sanction; so that their rectitude flows not from the nature of the things themselves, as in the former.

The essential moral law is therefore found innate, in the very nature of things. The Will or Command of God is related to things positively moral and therefore is in a lesser category and is subject to change. The natural and essential moral law is therefore binding upon all because of its innate rectitude and holiness. This view which tends to set up the moral law as binding even for God, though

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1. James Durham, The Law Unsealed, or, a Practical Exposition of the Ten Commandments, Edinburgh, Andrew Anderson, 1676, p. 6

2. Ibid., p. 7.

it was anathema to Samuel Rutherford, received general acceptance in Durham's time.

Brief notice must be given to William Guthrie's book, 'The Christian's Great Interest'. Guthrie shares the same inward-looking subjectivism of his contemporary, Durham. Perhaps more than any other single work it has had a profound influence on Scottish evangelical piety. The book is divided into two sections. The first deals with the trial of a saving interest in Christ, and the second half is concerned with how to attain a saving interest in Christ. He states his purpose in this way:

I shall speak a little respecting two things of the greatest concern: the one is, How a person shall know if he hath a true and special interest in Christ, and whether he doth lay just claim to God's favour and salvation? The other is, In case a person fall short of assurance in this trial, what course he shall take for making sure God's friendship and salvation to himself?

There are marks of a saving interest in Christ. One must look within to see if they are present in one's life. If they are not found it is one's duty to close with Christ:

If men do not find in themselves the marks of a saving interest in Christ, spoken of before, then it is their duty, and of all that hear the Gospel, personally and heartily to close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus and this will secure their state.

Men find a saving interest in Christ by faith. Faith is the condition required on man's part under the covenant of grace. But faith is not simply an intellectual acceptance of truths such as that one is elect, or that Christ died for him, "for then it were simply an act of the understanding: but true (over).

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1 William Guthrie, The Christian's Great Interest, Glasgow, William Collins, 1828, p. 62.

2 Ibid., p. 165.

justifying faith, which we now seek after as a good mark of an interest in Christ, is chiefly and principally an act of work of the heart and will....<sup>1</sup> And later he holds that even Devils can believe that Christ died and is risen as a satisfaction for man's transgression, but to be true faith, it must be believed "with the heart".<sup>2</sup> There is great truth in this insight, but its danger is that "belief with the heart" is often considered to be "sincere" belief and as such dependent upon a quality of earnestness within man rather than the objective grace of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

There is also a very strong personal note in Guthrie:<sup>3</sup>

Believing on Christ must be personal; a man himself, and in his own proper person, must close with Christ Jesus... unless a man, in his own person, put forth faith in Christ Jesus, and with his own heart be pleased and acquiesce in that device of saving sinners, he cannot be saved. I grant, this faith must be given unto him by Christ; but certain it is, that it must be personal.

Personal covenanting, as a way to be sure of one's interest in Christ, is for Guthrie the scriptural way to assurance. The way of the older reformed theology--to look to Christ and the certainty of His saving work--has been supplanted by the look within to see if the faith is "of the heart" and "sincere" and "personal". This soul-searching was to play a great role in Scottish piety in the next centuries.

Finally Guthrie, like his fellows, seems to have had a dim view of the visible Church of his time.<sup>4</sup> At the conclusion of his book he asks: "Have not all the members of the visible Church a

1 Guthrie, The Christian's Great Interest, p. 105.

2 Ibid., p. 116.

3 Ibid., p. 184.

4 Ibid., p. 249.



saving interest in Christ?" And he answers: "No verily; yea but a very few of them have it." We have noted a similar lack of optimism above.

PATRICK GILLESPIE:

This period in Scottish theology produced three great works on the theology of the covenants. They were: 'The Therapeutica Sacra' by Dickson, 'The Covenant of Life Opened by Rutherford, and 'The Ark of the Covenant Opened' by Patrick Gillespie. Gillespie was Minister at Stirling and his work was profoundly influential in his time. He stands in the same federal tradition as Dickson and Rutherford. Like them, he held the covenants to be three in number -- the covenants of works, redemption and grace. He accepted the same forensic interpretation of the atonement as his contemporaries, interpreting the passage in 2 Corinthians 5, 'He was made sin for us, who knew no sin.' as that "He was legally the sinner...."<sup>1</sup>

But there are certain special unique features in Gillespie's development of the subject of the covenants to which attention must be given.

The first is that Gillespie tends to be conscious of the danger of separating the covenants of redemption and grace in such a way that their fundamental unity is impaired. Thus he is concerned to draw these two covenants closer together than are Dickson or Rutherford:<sup>2</sup>

We are not to conceive of the covenant of redemption

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1 Patrick Gillespie, The Ark of the Covenant Opened, Stirling, Parkhurst, 1677, p. 183.

2 Ibid., p. 5.

in such an abstracted consideration and notion, as if the things transacted in that covenant made with Christ, had no relation to, nor connection with the covenant made with us; but on the contrary, we are still to keep in mind the great affinity and connection that is between these two covenants....

Though the covenants are to be distinguished, Gillespie will not have them divided, since the covenant of grace has its rise and origin in the covenant of redemption. The connection between them he defines in terms of cause and effect:<sup>1</sup>

In a word, there is such a connection between the covenant of redemption made with Christ, and the covenant of reconciliation made with us, as is betwixt the cause and the effect; God's covenant with Christ is the cause; His covenant with us is the effect: for it hath a proper efficiency in the producing of this, such as is betwixt the root and the branch, the fountain and the streams....

Gillespie is also concerned by the tendency of the federal theology to give no place to the work of Christ in creation as in redemption:<sup>2</sup>

The Person who is the Mediator of the covenant of grace, is He whose name is called 'the Word of God'...and that both in relation to creation and redemption. He is the Word by whom all things were made...He is the Word in relation to the revealing of all the will of God.

Another unique feature in Gillespie's federalism, is his interest in the saving significance of the resurrection of Christ. In the work of Dickson, Durham or Rutherford there is no real attention given to the significance of the resurrection of Christ for His redemptive work. But to Gillespie, the resurrection is

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1 Gillespie, Ark of the Covenant, p. 126.

2 Ibid., p. 162.

Christ's "Coronation Day in our nature":

Now this day of Christ's exaltation in His human nature at His resurrection, which was the fulfilling of what God said to Him when He was by eternal destination and decree, called and set apart unto the work of redemption, ... is fitly called the day wherein He was begotten.... The day of Christ's resurrection, was the day of vesting, inaugurating and installing Him in His Regal Office and Authority in our nature... this was a Coronation day, a day of exaltation of Him in His human nature....

The increasingly forensic way of interpreting the doctrine of the atonement had laid less and less significance upon the resurrection. In the moral world, or the world of law postulated by the federal theology (as it worked out the doctrine of atonement within the general framework of the covenant of works) the fundamental concern was the moral guilt of man. This was satisfied in the death of Christ as the sacrifice for sin. But the significance of His taking upon Himself our human nature; His renewal in the positive sense of that nature in His life; and His triumphant re-creation of our nature in His resurrection; all of these aspects were subordinated to the forensic interest. It is interesting that Gillespie retains something of the earlier theology's concern to see saving significance in the resurrection of Christ.

Gillespie also considered the question of the freedom of God in the salvation of man. His problem was, "whether or not there was any necessity of nature, or natural essential justice in God, which required this way of suretiship and redemption necessarily, ... (so) that He could not pardon sin without a satisfaction?"<sup>2</sup>

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1 Gillespie, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

2 Ibid., p. 36.

He was conscious of the difference of opinion that "is among the orthodox" on this point, and quotes the view of Samuel Rutherford that redemption proceeds from God's Will, not from some necessity in His Nature. Yet he concludes: "God's punishing of sin, is not merely from His Will. And indeed the Scriptures... hold forth sin as not only contrary to God's holy Law, but also contrary to His holy Nature: I mean morally contrary to Him..."<sup>1</sup> After citing a number of Scripture references he asserts: "These Scriptures and the like (I say) have weight with me to reckon justice among the properties of God, and to believe that His punishing sin is not merely from His Will."<sup>2</sup> Here again is the manifestation of the essential theme of the federal theology -- redemption has its origin in the sin of man, and not in the election of God. Proceeding from the failure of man to keep the covenant of works, and assuming man's natural knowledge of the moral order they postulate the thesis that the moral law is an essential property of God, binding upon Him in all His ways. As we have seen, this view leads to a "natural theology" of the doctrine of the atonement which begins with man's need and sets forth the work of God in the framework of man's own understanding of the moral order. Thus the atonement is set forth as what God must do, rather than what He has done.

Gillespie also makes clear the conception, implicit in other works, that the representative nature of Christ's work is confined to the secondary covenant of grace. The covenant of redemption is

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1 Gillespie, op. city, p. 37.

2 Ibid., p. 37.

between the Father and the Son alone. Only in the covenant of grace is Christ "mystical" -- Christ and His people--involved. The covenant of redemption is between God and Christ alone in order that all may be of grace:<sup>1</sup>

Now the more of grace and God's gracious will and heart is in the business, and the less of the creature's will and acting, the better for us, the sweeter and the surer is the covenant. But here all is of the Lord and His gracious will, all is transacted betwixt God and Christ, and man is not so much as present at the first transaction of the covenant, as he was at the covenant of works; here he is neither at the beginning nor end of it; I mean, that end which it had in God's federal dealings with Christ, where the redemption and salvation of the elect was a concluded business....

So it is that he describes the covenant of redemption in substitutionary rather than representative terms. Christ is a private person in this covenant and is representative only in the covenant of grace:<sup>2</sup>

The covenant of redemption is transacted with Christ personal, not with Christ mystical, not with the elect company, but singly with the Captain of Salvation.... It was made with Christ, not as a public person representing many; but as an eminent chosen person, chosen out among His brethren.....The covenant of peace, kindness, reconciliation and life was indeed made with Christ mystical, head and members; with Him as a public person, representing all His seed and heirs that were chosen in Him; but the covenant of redemption was not so.

In the actual work of salvation Christ is alone as man's substitute. "Christ plainly claims the work of this covenant to Himself singly and personally considered, and leaving out all others, even His own body,<sup>3</sup> as having no accession to this that He was singly engaged in...."

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1 Gillespie, op. cit., p. 43.

2 Ibid., p. 74.

3 Ibid., p. 75.

This rejection of the representative nature of Christ's work in the covenant of redemption serves to relate his doctrine of the covenants to his doctrine of election. God elects the parties with whom He makes His covenants. In the covenant of redemption He elects His Son as a private person:<sup>1</sup>

...both these covenants are commensurable with God's election of the parties with whom He made the covenants: He first chose Christ, and by an eternal destination, elected Him to be the only person that should work the great work of redemption, and be the Captain of Salvation to His people; and with Him only He makes the covenant of redemption....

In the covenant of redemption, redemption is accomplished. But in the covenant of grace or reconciliation the redemption is applied. Here again God's election of the parties is shown:<sup>2</sup>

Again, He makes choice of an elect company to follow this Captain, to be a 'people saved by the Lord', and with this elect company only, 'chosen in Christ', He makes a covenant of peace and reconciliation in Him....

In all of this, Gillespie is dividing election from Christ and individualizing the doctrine. In the covenant of redemption there is the election of Christ as an individual without His people. Under this covenant He does the work of atonement. Then in the covenant of grace, there is the further election of the individuals to whom the purchased redemption is to be applied.

Here is the fundamental error of the separation of the covenants of redemption and grace. Man is not chosen in Christ in the election of God, but Christ alone is chosen. Christ's humanity and His identification with man has no significance in (over)

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1 Gillespie, op. cit., p. 115

2 Ibid., p. 115.

any fundamental sense in the covenant of redemption. The fact that Christ has a representative role in the covenant under which the redemption is applied, does not alter the basic failure of his unchristological conception of election. If he were to put the two covenants together and speak of Christ as the one elect Man in whom His people are found, he would be at the heart of a truer doctrine. But in separating the covenants, election becomes the election of Christ as a private person and the subsequent election of individuals is not so much in Christ, as in following after Him.

It is also apparent that this form of the covenant theology had an essentially substitutionary understanding of the work of Christ. This understanding served the interest of the predestinarian dualism in election. If Christ were truly representative in His work, how is it that He could represent some men and not all men? The theological problems which this question raised, made it much simpler to conceive of His work in a substitutionary rather than a representative sense. If Christ were a substitute only in His work, then the matter of for whom He did the work could be left to the application of it to individuals in the process of time. Thus representation is thought of only in relation to the application of redemption in the covenant of grace. And it takes place in that lesser covenant in the context of the subjective response of faith and the showing forth of the fruits of election from man's side.

Even though theologians of the future, such as Principal Denney, might formally abandon the structure of the covenants set forth in the federal theology, it can be seen that this stressing of substitution and rejection of any radical idea of representation, is the

heritage of federalism. And indeed, though the formal covenant structure is not there, the substitutionary emphasis is still concerned with the problems which led federalism to stress it. Substitution better avoids the question of universalism on the one hand, and representation of the elect only, on the other. It enables the issue of election to be worked out in the realm of the individual believer. Rather than being concerned about whom Christ represented, the focus of attention can be upon the life of the believer; it can look to the element of response and gratitude evident as he contemplates the substitution. Indeed substitution in this sense can serve to facilitate the subjective interest so evident in the federal divines, and evident also in the human responses to grace which are so essential to the moral world of Principal Denney.

Representation in the deepest sense is tied to a Christological understanding of election. If election is in Christ, and if Christ is the New Adam--then what He does in all His work of redemption, He does not just for Himself, but as the representative of His people. And if this be so, what He has done in Him. There are profound problems in this view--the problem of universalism and the possibility of rejection -- but this emphasis upon the radically representative meaning of election and redemption in Christ, does more honour to grace than the shifting of the concern to the area of human response.

In Gillespie's explanation of the conditions of the covenants the same division obtains. The conditions of the covenant of redemption are Christ's work and not in any sense ours. The conditions of the covenant of grace are on the other hand required of us, not of Christ:

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1 Gillespie, op. cit., p. 121.



The commands and conditions of the covenant of redemption and the covenant of reconciliation are different: For, there are commands in the covenant of redemption peculiar to Christ alone, and such as are not required of us, nor do belong to us; such as the command of taking upon Him our nature, and laying down His life, and making His soul an offering for sin, etc. ...Again there are commands and conditions required in the covenant of reconciliation which are peculiar to us alone; such as the commands of believing in Christ, repenting and working out our salvation with fear and trembling, etc....The former is Christ's work, not ours; and these are conditions required of us, not of Christ. (Italics mine)

Thus the separation between the covenants of redemption and reconciliation or grace, has produced a highly substitutionary understanding of the work of Christ in redemption, and a man-centred understanding of repentance and faith. These things are presumably "required of us, not of Christ." It is evident that as he separates Christ and the believer in the work of redemption, so also he tends to separate Christ and the believer in the life of faith. Though he would hold that the conditions of the covenant of grace are the way of applying the covenant of redemption and not the means of obtaining it (which is in Christ alone), yet Gillespie has, with his contemporaries, lost the radical sense of the identification of the believer with Christ in union with Him. Faith itself, and all the "conditions of the covenant" are found in Christ alone and in Christ for us.

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1 Gillespie, op. cit., p. 121.

SECTION FOUR: THE OLDER THEOLOGY RESURGENT:

In all of the writings of the federal theologians there are many evidences that the Reformation emphasis upon the representative character of Christ's work and His headship of His mystical body, was still a strong Scottish theme. While the imposition of the federal framework, as has been seen, tended to lessen the significance of the older view, yet that older view remained in a far greater than vestigial form. While the extreme federalists gave less and less significance to this aspect of Christ's work, there were other preachers and theologians who gave this theme the pre-eminence.

One such was Hugh Binning, who died at the early age of twenty-six. He had been one of David Dickson's students and was Minister of the parish of Govan. He gave great place to the representative and "mystical" themes of the older Scottish theology.

For Binning man's sin was not so much sin against the moral law as the breaking of the relationship of light from God which had given man His Image:

Man's glory consisted in the irradiation of the soul from God's shining countenance; this made him light, God's face shined on him. But sin interposing has eclipsed that light and brought on an eternal night of darkness over the soul. And thus we are spoiled of the image of God as when the moon comes between the sun and the earth.

Man's original righteousness is not a natural and inherent righteousness but comes from the relationship with God. The light of God shined upon human life. But being deflected by sin, how

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1 Hugh Binning, Works, Edinburgh, William Whyte, 1839, p. 21.

could that light be restored?<sup>1</sup>

Certainly it had been altogether impossible, if our Lord Jesus Christ had not come, who is the light and life of men. The Father shines on Him, and the beams of His love reflect upon us from the Son. The love of God, and His favourable countenance, that cannot meet with us in a direct and immediate beam, they fall on us in this blessed compass, by the intervention of a mediator.

This is a far cry from the view of Dickson and Durham that man had received certain natural endowments in creation which remained after the fall, though spoiled by sin. They therefore can begin from the light of nature and reason out salvation in Christ in terms of legal necessities and the punishment due human guilt. But Binning speaks in terms of a relationship of love and light, which when spoiled by sin meant man was without any light, and is alone restored when the Father sends forth His light into the world in His Son, to deal not only with man's guilt, but to bring the life of God to the total life of man. For Binning the light of God is seen nowhere within man, but alone in Jesus Christ.

God sends His Son into the world and the rebel is in Christ called a friend. "And yet that is not all, we are called to a nearer union, --to be the sons of God."<sup>2</sup> This union is brought to man in Christ, but as long as sin dwells in man it is not perfect, for there is some separation in human hearts. Nevertheless it is a true union and not spoiled by human weakness, for:<sup>3</sup>

Our union here consists more in His holding of us by His power, than our taking hold of Him by faith.

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1 Binning, Works, p. 21.

2 Ibid., p. 22.

3 Ibid., p. 23.

Union with Christ is "a greater unity and fuller enjoyment, a more perfect fellowship than ever Adam in His innocency would have been capable of".<sup>1</sup> It is an "emblem" of the unity and communion between the Father and the Son:<sup>2</sup>

Can you imagine that reciprocal inhabitation, that mutual communion between the Father and the Son? No: It hath not entered into the heart to conceive it....(later) Christ's union with the Father is the foundation of our union to God, and our union among ourselves.

The federal theologians might stress the separation between the believer and Christ in the covenant of redemption, but Binning was concerned to speak of the union of Christ and His people as akin to the very unity of the Father and the Son.

Like Rutherford, Binning saw the necessity of redemption, not in any requisite satisfaction of justice, but in the declared purpose or will of God:<sup>3</sup>

The truth is, it was not simply the indispensable necessity of satisfying justice that put Him upon such a hard and unpleasant work, as the bruising of His own Son; for, no doubt He might well have as well dispensed with all satisfaction, as with the personal satisfaction of the sinner. (But the reason was) He had a purpose to declare his justice.

Binning was not content with the merely legal formulations of the atonement prevalent in his time. For Him, justification was nothing imaginary--no mere legal fiction--but the receiving of the life of Christ by the Spirit:<sup>4</sup>

O that you could be persuaded of this, -- that Christ's business in the world was not to bring

1 Binning, Works, p. 23.

2 Ibid., pp. 23-24.

3 Ibid., p. 384.

4 Ibid., p. 395.

a notion of an imaginary righteousness only, by mere imputation, but to bring forth a solid and real righteousness in our hearts, by the operation of His Spirit: I say, imputation, or accounting righteous, is but a mere imagination, if this lively operation do not follow.

It is clear that Binning is more closely in the Reformation tradition than his federalist teachers. He well represents the continuance of that part of the Scottish theology which spoke of the believer's union with Christ as being at the very centre of justification and sanctification, and all God's dealings with man.

C.G. M'Crie speaks of the "mystical theme" in Scottish theology as a happy and sweet corrective to the legalism of the federal theology. While he interprets this "mysticism" in a subjective sense, he sees that at the heart of it is union with Christ. As he points out: "Scottish mysticism is also far removed from Scottish Federalism as it was developed by such divines as Dickson and Durham in their 'Sum and Practical Use of Saving Knowledge'." <sup>2</sup> He sees this theme stressed particularly in the work of Robert Leighton. Though Leighton was to ally himself with the episcopal party, he was steeped in the theology of the Scottish Reformation. Union with Christ, and the representative character of Christ's work was at the centre of his theology of the atonement: <sup>3</sup>

So then, there is a union betwixt believers and Jesus Christ, by which this interchange is made; He being charged with their sins, and they clothed with His satisfaction and righteousness.

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1 C.G. M'Crie, The Confessions of the Church of Scotland, p. 73.

2 Ibid., p. 83.

3 Robert Leighton, Commentary on St. Peter, vol. I, London, The Religious Tract Society, circa 1840, p. 444.

This union is founded in God's decree of election, running to this effect, that they should live in Christ, and so choosing the head and the whole mystical body as one, and reckoning their debt as His, in His own purpose, that He might receive satisfaction, and they salvation, in their Head, Christ. The execution of that purpose and union, began in Christ's incarnation, it being for them, though the nature he assumed is theirs in common with other men.

Leighton goes on to hold that the incarnation relates Christ and men. 'He is not ashamed to call them brethren'. But this relation applies only to the elect, not to all men. The union is also founded upon the work of the Son for His own:<sup>1</sup>

He presenting Himself to the Father in all He did and suffered, "as for them," having them, and them only, in His eye and thoughts, in all.

Again, the union is applied and performed in them when they "are converted and ingrafted into Jesus Christ by faith; and this doth actually discharge them of their own sins, and entitle them to His righteousness and so justify them in the sight of God."<sup>2</sup> Finally, this union has its consummation in glory when the prayer of Christ is answered, "I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."<sup>3</sup> With this essential stress upon union with Christ, Leighton stands clearly in the tradition of those Scottish theologians who preserved the older emphasis during the flood-tide of federalism.

In the theology of John Brown of Wamphray there is a strong resurgence of the earlier Scottish themes. He provides a considerable corrective to the legalism of the federal theology in favour of

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1 Leighton, Commentary on St. Peter, p. 445.

2 Ibid., p. 445.

3 Ibid., p. 445.

the older "mystical" view of union with Christ. Brown was Minister at Wamphray until he was banished in 1662. He became Minister of the Scots Kirk in Rotterdam where he died in 1679. In his greatest work, 'The Life of Justification Opened', his fundamental concern was with the "neonomianism" of the new English puritan school. In this volume, Brown sought to "set straight" various of the English theologians -- an enterprise which has always commended itself to the Scottish theologians (and indeed is not unknown in our own time!).

He set himself adamantly against any interpretation of justification by faith which viewed justification as being consequent upon faith. "Faith is a receiving, a laying hold upon, and a leaning unto the righteousness of Christ." <sup>1</sup> Faith is to be considered, "not in itself, nor as an act of obedience; but as an instrument, or mean laying hold upon the Righteousness of Christ without us, that it may be ours, and our only Righteousness." <sup>2</sup> It is Christ who saves, not man's own faith. Faith, contrary to the English puritans, is not our "Gospel Righteousness", and a gospel which sees faith as our new obedience and a work of man, is but "the old law of works." <sup>3</sup> To exalt faith so that it supplants the righteousness of Christ is a "gratification of proud self": <sup>4</sup>

Let many now consider these things and see whether or not the asserting of faith's being such a condition as this, be not a plain gratification of proud self.....

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- 1 John Brown, The Life of Justification Opened, 1695, p. 49.
  - 2 Ibid., p. 21.
  - 3 Ibid., p. 329.
  4. Ibid., pp. 20-21.

Brown was deeply concerned to counter the subjective emphasis of Richard Baxter and his followers who had begun to teach that faith itself was that which justified, and that this obedience of faith was the believer's "gospel righteousness". At the same time his views called in question the tendency of Scottish federalism to exalt the place of faith as the condition of the covenant of grace.

Brown strongly asserts that the believer's righteousness is found in the perfect and complete obedience of Jesus Christ:<sup>1</sup>

And sure, every unprejudiced person may easily see and be convinced, that this perfect and complete obedience of Christ is more able to furnish believers with all points of righteousness which the Law requireth, than the single act of faith, which our adversaries substitute in place thereof.... Shall one imperfect act of obedience be of more value than the full and perfect obedience of Christ?

This obedience of Christ was not for Himself but for us, and this is true of His active, as well as His passive obedience:<sup>2</sup>

It is not by anything in them, or done by themselves, that believers are legally accounted righteous; but only by the obedience of Jesus Christ, not only that which shined eminently in His death, but also which appeared through His whole life, so that in His obeying we are accounted obeying, and His obedience is accounted ours....

This righteousness of Christ is accounted to the believer in a legal sense, but Brown interprets this legal accounting or imputation in the light of representation and union with Christ. For by faith believers are:<sup>3</sup>

united unto Christ and become members of His mystical body, He being the Head and true

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- 1 Brown, The Life of Justification Opened, p. 149.
  - 2 John Brown, An Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, Edinburgh, David Paterson, 1766, p. 192.
  - 3 Brown, The Life of Justification Opened, p. 37.



Representative; and thereby He and they are one Person in Law, (being one Spirit) as the husband and the wife are one person in Law (being one flesh)....

Indeed in Brown's theology there is a strong centrality given to this union:

There is no privilege or benefit to be had by any in and through Christ, till first there be an union made up betwixt Christ and them; so that they have first an interest in Himself, before they have a right to any privilege purchased by Him....

This union is not merely a spiritual one, for Christ unites Himself to their bodies as well as to their souls:

This union is not only between Christ and the souls of believers, but also between Christ and their bodies; for their bodies are said to be "temples of the Holy Ghost,...and by virtue of this union their dead bodies shall be again raised in the last day.

Brown perceives that the union of Christ and believers is so close that all the similitudes of Scripture fall short of the reality:

...consider the clear and close union that is betwixt Christ and His people. Many similitudes are used in Scripture to point this forth; but yet it must be acknowledged that they come all far short in expressing the closeness of this union....When two are so near to other, that they are in one another, can the one be hurt and the other not smart and suffer? As there is nothing in nature that can represent this mutual in-being to the life; so there can be no sympathy that is founded on union in nature, that can resemble this, and clearly represent it.

This union with Christ is not just a union in which His redemption is applied. Christ was a "public person" in His work and He truly represented all His people in His work of redemption.

1 Brown, Exposition of Romans, p. 168

2 John Brown, Christ in Believers, the Hope of Glory, London, John Shaw, 1837, p. 64.

3 Brown, The Life of Justification Opened, pp. 129-130.

This representation of His people by Christ is the ground of  
Christian assurance:<sup>1</sup>

Believers, who have gotten an union made up with Christ, may rest assured, that seeing Christ was a public person while hanging on the cross, acting for them, and in their name satisfying justice for their guiltiness, and undertaking for their thorough sanctification, and meriting their full and final redemption; their natural corruption... shall at length in due time, be utterly destroyed and broken....

Brown sees this representative nature of Christ set forth clearly in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. "As Adam was a public person representing all mankind,...so Jesus Christ who is now come in the flesh is a public person, transacting and acting with the Father, as a common representative of all His own...."<sup>2</sup>

Brown is careful to preserve the predestinarian dualism here. He asserts that Christ's work on behalf of all men means on behalf of the elect. All men do not really receive the grace of God and many perish, so that "all men, must be Christ's spiritual heirs and seed, and all of these not one excepted."<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, and unlike Patrick Gillespie, Brown does not seek to avoid the problem of universalism by utterly discounting the representative character of the work of Christ in redemption. Christ represents His people and they are in Him in His work.

This strong assertion of union with Christ led Brown to see the real relation of justification and sanctification. The one was not Christ's work and the other ours, but the two are inseparably linked:<sup>4</sup>

The doctrine of justification by faith in Christ... is so far from being an enemy unto holiness and

1 Brown, Exposition of Romans, p. 203.  
2 Ibid., p. 187.  
3 Ibid., p. 191.  
4 Ibid., p. 196.

sanctification, that on the contrary it has sanctification inseparably annexed to it, and they always go together.

In the introduction to his volume entitled 'Christ The Way, The Truth and The Life', he asserts that his purpose is to show Christians the way of sanctification: how believers may apply "all fulness which is treasured up in the Head for the benefit and advantage of the members of the mystical body, as they may ...experience this truth, that in Him they are complete."<sup>1</sup> He speaks of Christ as "our sanctification", and seeks to show "what Christ hath done as Mediator, to begin and carry on to perfection the work of sanctification in the soul."<sup>2</sup> Sanctification is in Christ and is ours by union with Him. It is the fruit of His death and resurrection. As a public person and cautioner we are "accounted in law to be dead to sin in Him".<sup>3</sup> And "His resurrection is a pawn and pledge of this sanctification. For as He died as a public person, so He rose again as a public person."<sup>4</sup>

Brown has two further insights that reveal a questioning of the basic assumptions of federalism. He sees the inappropriateness of the concept of the Father and the Son bargaining over redemption. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are at one in the purpose of redemption:<sup>5</sup>

For here as often elsewhere, the Father is shown to have had a great hand in this matter, so as the rise and fountain is assigned to be the love of the Father; for as the propitiation was in Christ's

1. John Brown, Christ The Way The Truth And The Life, Edinburgh, Robert Ogle, 1839, p. 21.

2. Ibid., p. 96.

3. Ibid., p. 97.

4. Ibid., p. 98.

5. Brown, Exposition of Romans, p. 115.

blood, so it was God the Father, or rather the whole Trinity (seeing all their works in and about the creatures, belongeth to them all alike, excepting only the order of operation) that set Him forth to be a propitiation.

Moreover, Brown is concerned not to exalt the light of nature, so that man can have claims to a natural knowledge of God. He concedes that there is some light but:

So dim and dark is that small candlelight of nature, and so deep and unsearchable a mystery is God, that there are many things in God which nature is stone-blind unto, and will never be known by all nature's light.

Brown of Wamphray is significant in the Scottish theology of the atonement, because he represents the resurgence of the original reformed theology. He was concerned to stress the older themes of representation and union with Christ, and in this he provided a corrective to the federalism of his time. He was not without appreciation of the theological work of his fellows. Indeed, he shared with them an intense interest in the subjective side of faith -- with Durham he can speak of conscience as God's deputy<sup>2</sup> -- but with all that, his fundamental concern was with the real relationship of union with Jesus Christ, by which the believer was joined to his Lord, who was Himself, the atonement.

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The scholastic mould of the federal theology did much to discredit the theology of the covenant in later years. Denney, as we have seen, gave no place to the covenant whatever. Yet the essential concepts of federalism were to persist, even though the

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1 Brown, Exposition of Romans, p. 34.

2 John Brown, Enoch's Testimony Opened Up, Edinburgh, David Paterson, 1771, p. 127.

artificiality of its portrayal of the relation of the Father to the Son, and the inappropriateness of its language, were to find little sympathy by Denney's time. These essential concepts were the forensic concept of atonement; the setting of grace in the context of a covenant of works; and the growing stress upon the substitutionary aspect of the work of Christ.

Federalism had an essential legal interest because its tendency to speak of the Father and the Son bargaining over redemption revealed its inner concern that there was a conflict within the Trinity between attributes of justice and grace. The assumption that such a conflict existed led federalism to work out its doctrine of the atonement in terms which were relative to this assumed problem-- and the appropriate terms were legal ones. The stressing of the demand for justice in God led to a doctrine of the atonement which was solely concerned with the legal guilt of man, and the whole positive aspect of the re-creation of human life in the Incarnate Lord was under-stressed.

Another heritage of federalism was its method of developing the doctrine of the atonement. It had worked out the doctrine of redemption within the framework of a prior covenant of works. It began with man's history and from the "light of nature". It postulated a moral order, not from revelation but from man's awareness of himself and of Divine necessities. The result was a "natural theology" of the atonement, a doctrine which concerned itself more with what God had to do than with what He had done. The theology of the future though it divested itself of the trappings of federalism, remained profoundly influenced by federalism's method.

This theological method of federalism with its stress upon the "light of nature", and man's awareness of the moral necessities of the universe, contributed directly to Principal Denney's conception of the moral world. In the theology of Dickson and his contemporaries all the ingredients of this understanding of the moral world are present. All relationships between man and God take place in this area, because the moral problem--the problem of guilt-- is the only problem existing between them. Otherwise a natural continuity exists between the Creator and creature. Forgiveness--the substitutionary atonement-- comes from God to man and man responds in faith, repentance and gratitude. Denney's world of "reflection and motive, of gratitude and moral responsibility", is implicit in Dickson's world of human response to grace where faith is the condition of the covenant of grace.

The other lasting influence of federalism is seen in its tendency to stress the substitutionary character of Christ in His work. It may be assumed that federalism's fundamental emphasis was representative. This was more or less true when federalism spoke only of the two covenants of works and grace. But the stress in Dickson, Rutherford and Gillespie upon the further division of the covenant of grace was to lead to a loss of the representative view in favour of the substitutionary. When the covenant of grace was divided, Christ was not viewed as a representative in His actual work of atonement. As we have seen, representation came to be regarded as meaningful only with regard to the lesser covenant of

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1 As cited above, page 3.

grace -- the covenant in which the redemption was applied to individual believers. This lessening of its significance and the emphasis upon substitution is a lasting influence from the latter federal theology.

Finally, the subjectivism of the federal period had a profound impact upon the theology of the future. When attention was focused upon the inner life of the believer, theology became concerned with the role of man's conscience and his own innate spirituality. God's voice was heard not only in His Word, but from within man's own God endowed nature. The subjective emphasis of the federal period was the "seed-bed" of the enlightenment and the source of the nineteenth century's confusion of the Spirit of God with man's own spirituality.

In this sense subjectivism answered the need of the "moral world". It gave man back his "freedom". It made him a moral creature. He became capable of responding to grace by summoning his own resources of faith and repentance. And his Christian life could be nourished from within, save with the added benefit of instruction from the pulpit in moral duty and obligation.

It is not surprising that in this atmosphere the doctrine of union with Christ became less significant. This union was the way in which the Word without became the creative and renewing Word within. It was not man's own word, man's own resource. It was the internalizing of the external Word. And since this union was all of grace, there was no place for man's pride--for the presumption of co-operation with grace. There was no place for the exigencies of mutual obligation, but simply the receiving of the light of God and the life of man in the Person of Jesus Christ. As the subjective interest grew, the doctrine of union with Christ, so central in the

earlier period, was given less and less place.

Nevertheless, federalism was not triumphant. We have spoken of the resurgence of the older view. We must turn now to the Scottish theology of the eighteenth century and see that resurgence continued in the work of Thomas Boston and others who sought to guard the doctrines of grace.

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CHAPTER THREETHE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCOTTISH THEOLOGY OF THE ATONEMENT IN THE  
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The period of David Dickson had been, along with the Reformation itself, a time in which Scottish theology formulated its basic positions and attitudes. In this sense the theology of Dickson's time can be understood without reference to what went before. This cannot be said of the century which followed. For much that was to follow in the eighteenth century and indeed to the present, was in direct continuity with the patterns established in the federal period.

We have seen that there were two divergent tendencies in the Scottish theology of the atonement, with considerable tension between them. The eighteenth century tells the story of how these two divergent views of grace resulted in open conflict in the Church with the resultant formal breach of the Secession.

In all the theological dispute of the time basic issues were at stake. In the matter of the relation of incarnation and atonement; creation and redemption; justification and sanctification; law and gospel; in each of these areas there was a tension between those who related these doctrines Christologically, and those who interpreted them within a fundamentally forensic framework. In the eighteenth century one branch of Calvinism sought to exalt grace in the free offer of the gospel, and the other stressed a legal relationship to God and the Christian life as the way of moral duty and obligation. What follows is the story of this conflict.

SECTION ONE: A THEOLOGIAN OF TRANSITION, FRASER OF BREA:

Occasionally in the history of the Church a theologian is given great insight into the theology of his own period and is able to assess its true worth without the benefit of hind-sight. Such a man was James Fraser of Brea. Fraser was born in 1639 and died in 1698. Writing at the end of the Westminster period (though his work on Justifying Faith was not published until 1722 and 1749) he clearly saw many of the flaws in the federal theology and yearned for a resurgence of the older reformed tradition. In his 'Memoirs' he speaks of how he was assisted in his spiritual quest by Luther on the Galatians and Calvin's Institutes, as well as by "that book called the 'Marrow of Modern Divinity'."<sup>1</sup> But it was especially by reading the Epistle to the Romans, by prayer and meditation that he came to question the prevailing theology of his time:<sup>2</sup>

I perceived that our divinity was much altered from what it was in the primitive reformers' time. When I read Knox, Hamilton, Tindal, Luther, Calvin, Bradford, etc., I thought I saw another scheme of divinity, much more agreeable to the Scriptures and to my experience than the modern. And though I plainly enough saw the errors of the Antinomians (for their errors lay very near truth), yet I perceived a gospel spirit to be in very few, and that the most part yea of ministers did woefully confound the two covenants, and were of an Old Testament spirit; and little of the glory of Christ, grace and gospel did shine in their writings and preaching.

Fraser saw right to the heart of the problem of federalism. He perceived the "Old Testament" spirit of the preaching of his time

<sup>1</sup> James Fraser, Memoirs, With Introduction by Alexander Whyte, Edinburgh, The Religious Tract Society, 1889, p. 232.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 233.

and the unchristological nature of much of the "new" theology. He set his mind entirely against the federal emphasis upon subjective response as a sign of election. He was Biblically oriented and strongly in contrast to the rationalist element in the newer theology which sought to ground redemption not alone in the election of God, but in the response of man. In all this, Fraser was aware of his own uniqueness:<sup>1</sup>

I know and acknowledge that in some things I seem to step out of the common road wherein the modern Divines of our Church, in Britain and Ireland have walked....

Nevertheless he sought to recall men to the Reformation tradition. In his treatise on Justifying Faith written while a prisoner in the Bass Rock, 1679, he states that his purpose in his "modest essay" is "to clear several things in some measure, and to present our present doctrine as more agreeing with our first Reformers, than some, who swerving therefrom, will allow."<sup>2</sup>

Fraser was especially concerned to counter the neonomianism of such English puritans as Richard Baxter who made "gospel obedience" a new kind of Gospel law. Baxter is "a stated enemy to the grace of God"<sup>3</sup> because his teaching makes the act of believing, a man's righteousness, rather than the righteousness of Christ. Faith is not an assent to the truths of the Gospel, "with a sincere purpose of Gospel obedience", for here is "nothing but a new covenant of works on some milder terms, and accommodated some way to our weakness."<sup>4</sup>

1 James Fraser, A Treatise Concerning Justifying or Saving Faith, Edinburgh, John Mosman, 1722, p. 6.

2 Ibid., p. 6

3 Fraser, Memoirs, p. 233.

4 Fraser, Justifying Faith, 1722, p. 16.

He is aware that the "neonomians" see their view as leading to a holy life: "Truly I confess that it stirs up to a moral righteousness, and begets a slavish kind of piety...."<sup>1</sup> And he is also aware that "there are not a few, who do not avow justification by inherent holiness as the condition of the covenant, who yet think it but a small venial error, and would have no din or stir raised thereanent...."<sup>2</sup> But for Fraser it is a fundamental error, for it refutes justification by Christ alone, without the works of the law. In the Reformation Scotland received the truth of justification:<sup>3</sup>

But this truth was not received in love, Scotland was unthankful, and did not improve this price that was in her hand,...Therefore the Lord raised up Antinomians and Arminians who on the one and other side assault and rend this truth.... Oh! mourn for these things, your contempt of grace, and turn you to the good old paths; look to Calvin, Luther, Bradford, Tindal, Mr. Patrick Hamilton, Mr. Bruce, and in their writings see this truth more clearly shining than in our modern writers....<sup>4</sup>

Having rejected the error that it is faith in itself, rather than the righteousness of Christ, which justifies, he looks positively at the nature of faith. He defines faith as an "echo" finding its origin in God's call not in man's response. With great insight into the truth of the matter he sets forth his view:<sup>4</sup>

Faith being an Echo, or an answer to God's call in the Gospel, it must therefore have in the nature of it, that which answers that

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- 1 James Fraser, A Treatise on Justifying Faith, Edinburgh, William Gray, (2nd part) 1749, p. 39.
  - 2 Ibid., p. 39.
  - 3 Ibid., p. 43.
  - 4 Fraser, Justifying Faith, 1722, p. 10.

call: If therefore we would understand the nature of faith, we must take our measures by the call of God in the Gospel, of which faith is the echo: What God declares in the Gospel, that faith must assent and say Amen to,...

He is therefore able to conceive of faith in the context of grace: <sup>1</sup>

We must therefore so conceive of faith, as to make it answer this design of exalting grace and humbling of man; and therefore, if ye put anything in it, which be any occasion of glory, ye have lost faith.

This great sense of the objective reality of the grace of God in Christ becomes abundantly clear in the way in which Fraser deals with the question of assurance. Assurance in the Westminster period had come to be a virtue, which while not necessary to salvation, was much to be sought after. But in the Westminster scheme it was to be sought after within the believer. Because of the double predestinarian framework, one could not find assurance in the objective work of Christ for the salvation of man, because one might not be of the elect. How then did one test his own election? By looking to the fruits of election-- those signs of a righteous life of faith which could give an assurance of election. This resulted, as we have seen, in a looking away from Christ, and a looking to personal spiritual experience, in order to test the validity of Christian faith. In practice it resulted in much questioning about one's gospel standing and a doubting and soul-searching piety in many sincere believers. And in some it produced a satisfied self-righteousness as they tested themselves for the evidence of election and weighing themselves in the balance found themselves not in the least wanting!

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1 Fraser, *Justifying Faith*, 1722, p. 14.

Fraser shifts the whole subjective frame of reference of the Westminster consideration of assurance. Assurance is not something that comes from the believer as a fruit of faith. Rather assurance is an adjunct of faith, and as faith is a gift of grace, so also is assurance. Fraser develops this thesis in the following manner: <sup>1</sup>

...there is an assurance of faith which is of the very nature of faith itself, and which is not a fruit of faith, but an adjunct.

Assurance enters right into the heart of faith, because assurance is assurance of Christ and His benefits, not of the believer's own spiritual prosperity. Faith is assured faith, because the assurance is of Christ, not of one's own apprehension of Christ. "Faith and unbelief are contrary in their abstract natures: and therefore it is the nature of faith to believe confidently...." <sup>2</sup> Fraser's concern is to shift the emphasis from the subjective to the objective ground of faith: "The objective grounds of faith however are very certain, whatever subjective uncertainty be." <sup>3</sup> And this being so, even though a believer be aware of his own insufficiency and inner doubt, he is commanded to be assured by looking no longer within, but to the certainty of the salvation which is in Christ: <sup>4</sup>

Consider you are called to come with full assurance to the Throne of Grace, nothing doubting; you are not only allowed to hope, or desire, or believe a possibility of salvation; but you are allowed, nay, commanded to believe the certainty thereof....

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1 Fraser, Justifying Faith, 1722, pp. 59-60

2 Ibid., p. 60.

3 Ibid., p. 75.

4 Ibid., p. 165.

The ground of this confidence is wholly in the Lord Jesus and without us, and not at all either in whole or in part in ourselves. I confess, were our hopes of confidence bottomed any way upon any work in us, it were no wonder our faith should stagger according to the foundation it were built upon.

Perhaps McLeod Campbell would have found a very different spiritual state in his people at Row if these words of Fraser had been the way of preaching assurance in the Scottish pulpits of the eighteenth century.

The Christ in whom assurance and faith are found is an all-sufficient Christ. His sufferings take away human guilt and His obedience gives man's want of righteousness. Christ's obedience, both active and passive, is the possession of the believer. Thus he holds that "Christ's active obedience is sufficient for thee."<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting that where the active obedience of Christ is stressed along with the passive obedience, it relates the cross and the life and person of Christ, in such a way that a full doctrine of the atonement results. The federal theologians in underemphasizing the significance of the active obedience revealed their fundamentally legal attitude which centred entirely upon the guilt of the sinner and the payment of the debt owing, rather than being concerned also with the sanctification and renewal of the life of man.

While the federal theologians came to stress the obedience of the Christian man as the way of sanctification, Fraser saw that sanctification, as justification, was in Christ, and that the way

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1 Fraser, Justifying Faith, 1749, p. 50.

of obedience was by participation in the obedience of Christ: <sup>1</sup>

And though the real believer in Christ hath a high esteem of obedience, and will, through grace endeavour to maintain good works, yet will he not substitute his own obedience in the room of Christ's.

With Samuel Rutherford, Fraser held strongly that Christ did not merely accomplish the possibility of redemption, but that Christ's work as the new Adam and Representative of mankind was the redemption. But unlike Rutherford, he spoke of Christ as representing all mankind, rather than only the elect. Fraser worked out this doctrine in an unusual way, allowing for an element of double predestination to be present, but in a secondary sense. His doctrine is obscure and seemingly contradictory on the point, but it is extremely significant in that it shows that he is seeking to find his way past the concept of double predestination, to the grace and love of God reaching out to all men.

Bearing in mind the objective reality of the redemptive work of Christ as representative, how is it that He died for all and yet all do not believe? Fraser answers the question by stressing first, the primary nature of the grace of Christ. Grace by Christ comes upon all, as did sin by Adam: <sup>2</sup>

How doth grace superabound to righteousness, if justification and life be purchased only for a few elected persons?....Therefore it would appear suitable to the superabounding of grace that the merits of Christ should extend to as many as the guilt of the first Adam did, otherwise the first Adam's sin should condemn more than the second Adam's righteousness could justify.

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1 Fraser, Justifying Faith, 1722, p. vi.

2 Fraser, Justifying Faith, 1749, p. 204.



It follows therefore, that Christ represented all men: <sup>1</sup>

...but Christ assumed or took on Him our human nature, therefore did Christ satisfy for human nature, and therefore satisfied for all and every individual of that species; for what is truly predicable of the kind or species, is predicable of every individual of that kind, hence there is a mankind love... and hence Christ is holden forth universally to all.

Christ's death is for all mankind. This is the primary assertion. But in a secondary sense, Fraser makes room for the predestinarian concepts. "So the redemption of Christ is first predicable of mankind, ere it be predicable of individuals, of elect or reprobates." Election and reprobation do take place on the secondary level, the level of individual election: <sup>3</sup>

Hence we see that in regard all and every one are not elected; hence we cannot say, the nature of man is elected, for election is of persons not of kind; and therefore is not election generally holden out to and predicable of all, as the promises and redemption are.

Election is in closing with Christ, by which His death for all is taken to one's self.

This doctrine of the universal extent of the atonement did not therefore mean universalism. All men were called to faith, but some did not believe. These stand not under law-judgment, for this was taken away in Christ, but they stand under gospel-judgment. The reprobate are commanded to believe that Christ died for them, but without the union of faith, they are not saved: <sup>4</sup>

When God therefore commands reprobates to believe

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1 Fraser, Justifying Faith, 1749, p. 269.

2 Ibid., p. 270.

3 Ibid., p. 270.

4 Fraser, Justifying Faith, 1722, p. 99.

salvation through Christ's blood to them particularly,, He commands them not to believe any lie, though they shall never be saved through Christ's name.....

Fraser's conception of the universality of the atonement seemed strange in his day, and the way in which he preserved a place for double predestination seems contradictory; yet in Fraser there is an attempt to break out of the old framework in order to magnify grace and do justice to the New Testament theme of the representative character of the Incarnate Lord. He did not allow his awareness of the seeming rejection by man of the gift of atonement, to deter him from making the death of Christ for all mankind his fundamental assertion. He begins with the full and all-embracing fact of grace and will not allow that fact to be negated or altered, in order to make comprehensible the other apparent fact of man's rejection. His contemporaries might say that since all men are not saved, therefore He must only have died for some. But Fraser begins with grace: Christ has died for all men and all men are called to faith.

Indeed Fraser regarded election as being God's concern and not man's. There was no value in questioning about one's own election or looking within to see fruits of its reality. Man must look to Christ and believe what He has done is for all. There is in God "a general goodwill towards mankind, especially to such as are within the visible Church."<sup>1</sup> And to the question as to what comfort this goodwill is if one is decreed to be damned or reprobated, he (over)

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1 Fraser, *Justifying Faith*, 1749, p. 66.

replies: <sup>1</sup>

Thou hast nothing ado with Election or Reprobation; thou art to consider thyself abstractly from both, neither as elected or reprobated, but as a fallen sinner in Adam whom Christ is sent to save, and to whom His philanthropy or mankind love hath appeared; the secret things belong to God, His command is my rule; not what is His intention, which as I cannot know for the present, so I am not called thereunto.

Fraser, with those of his contemporaries who were steeped in the earlier reformed theology, spoke much of union with Christ. It was the doctrine which made Christ's representative work real in the believer. It was the nearest relationship imaginable: <sup>2</sup>

Thou hast not only a relation in Him, and interest in Him, but thou hast or mayest have the nearest relation to Him and union with Him that is imaginable.... This union is our greatest honour, happiness and pride, in which only we can boast; Christ is yours, and Christ is God's and all things are yours; He is all in us; all His is ours, all the glory, honour excellency of Christ, is the poor sinner's united to Him by faith;... He is thy Husband Brother, Friend and Head.

It is unfortunate that the doctrine of union with Christ came to be more and more regarded as the language only of religious passion. But for Fraser, it was at the centre of all true doctrine.

Fraser had perceived the essential error of the subjectivism of the Westminster period and had strongly reasserted the objectivity of grace. As a "theologian of transition" he raised the issues which were to lead to conflict in the century to come. As to his influence -- James Walker says that his work soon passed out

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1 Fraser, Justifying Faith, 1749, p. 75.

2 James Fraser, Meditations on Several Subjects in Divinity, Edinburgh, John Mackay, 1721, p. 69.

of memory, but "at the same time, I think Fraser left more traces<sup>1</sup> of himself on our theology than we commonly suppose."

While Fraser sought to restore the objectivity of grace and to counter the legal and subjective tendencies of the federal period, another theologian of this period of transition, Thomas Halyburton, further developed these tendencies. Halyburton, who died in the year 1712, had a great influence upon the theology of the eighteenth century.

His understanding of the atonement, following through from the tradition of Dickson and Gillespie, was even more strongly substit-<sup>2</sup>utionary:

And He, to whom elect sinners were thus given, (in the covenant of redemption) by the designation of the Father and His own consent, was substituted in the room of elect sinners, and thereby came under an obligation in their stead, to answer the demands of the law as to what it required of them....

As he sets forth the doctrine he is concerned to stress the disjunction between Christ and believers in His atoning work. Nevertheless, he<sup>3</sup> does speak of a union with Christ resulting from the substitution:

I observe that, from all this, the purpose of the Father, His giving elect sinners to Christ, His substitution of Him in their room and the Son's acceptation; some relation betwixt Him and them doth result, which may as fitly be designed by the name of union, as any word or name I know to assign. It is granted that this is not that complete mystical union whereby we are actually grafted into Him as branches into the tree, whether it shall be called a legal or federal, fundamental or fountain union, as our divines differently term it, I am not concerned. Yet certain it is that such a relation there is, and that it is the fountain of all subsequent advantages to the elect.

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- 1 Walker, The Theology and Theologians of Scotland, p. 83.
  - 2 Thomas Halyburton, Works, Glasgow, Blackie and Son, 1837, p. 548.
  - 3 Ibid., p. 548.

Halyburton preserves some place for the doctrine of union with Christ, but he seems less sure of its meaning. There is "some relation" between Christ and believers because of His substitution, but it is not that "complete mystical union, whereby we are actually grafted into Him." Rather, the union is better described in legal and federal terms. And the relation of union to Christ is subsequent to the substitution arising from the covenant of redemption. With Gillespie, he banishes all thoughts of representation from the work of atonement itself. Representation, and that by a union between Christ and believers, comes subsequent to and on the basis of atonement, as the redemption is applied in time in the election of individuals. Because of the agreement of the Father<sup>1</sup> and the Son in the covenant of redemption, Halyburton holds:

...it follows plainly, that, immediately upon Christ's yielding of the satisfaction demanded, paying the price, or His engagement (for that is equivalent where the undertaker could not, nor would fail) there did result a right for them to freedom from the curse, and to all the benefits of His purchase. This right is not what the lawyers call Jus in Re, but Jus ad Rem. It is more properly said, there is a right for them, than they have a right; since they know not of it; it is not actionable by them, nor is it actually vested in their person.

This right is applied and actually given out "to each of them, for whom they were designed respectively in their several generations, in the season and order prefixed by God, to the praise of His glorious grace."<sup>2</sup> The atonement therefore is substitutionary, and applied in time in personal election.

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1 Halyburton, Works, p. 549.

2 Ibid., p. 550.

Halyburton was much concerned about the ordo salutis, and regarded regeneration as preceding justification. Thought justification followed in the same instant of time, the renovation of the believer's nature preceded the absolution from guilt and the acceptance of the believer's person, which is justification. Nevertheless, Halyburton laid great stress upon the subjective aspect of faith which is the means whereby the "sinner closes with and accepts of Christ as his righteousness."<sup>1</sup> The result is a union of which there are two bonds: "...the Spirit on the part of Christ, and faith on ours. Union must begin on His part; and His taking hold on us is the cause of our taking hold of Him, and so must be in the order of nature, before."<sup>2</sup> Yet faith, though by grace, is the response required from man's side for justification.

Halyburton saw three aspects to faith. The first was "an assent<sup>3</sup> unto the truths concerning Christ, His nature, person and offices." The second was "the receiving act of faith, whereby we accept of or receive Christ...."<sup>3</sup> (By "the will's consenting to, closing with, or being pleased with Him as such.")<sup>3</sup> The third was the "fiducial act or trust" in which the soul in "expectation and confidence of relief by Christ, throws itself upon Him."<sup>3</sup> As to which of these three aspects of faith justify, he holds that the Romans place it only in the first—the assent. "Others, among whom were many of our first reformers, seem, at least, to make the fiducial act...to be the justifying act of faith, viz. a confidence, persuasion, or belief that sins are forgiven."<sup>4</sup> But for himself, he concludes

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1 Halyburton, Works, p. 552

2 Ibid., p. 553.

3 Ibid., p. 562.

4 Ibid., p. 563.

that the second aspect of faith is the one which justifies. This second aspect, or "faith's closing with Christ", serves best his subjective interest. To simply believe as did the early reformers, in the objective reality of sin's forgiven in Christ, is not possible:<sup>1</sup>

But as to this, I shall only say, it is obvious this can be no man's duty to believe so, but upon supposition, that he is antecedently justified by faith.

That faith which is the justifying act of faith is, as John Owen set it forth, the heart's approbation of the way of salvation, and its "acquiescency therein, as to its own condition."<sup>2</sup> This second aspect of faith -- faith's closing with Christ -- serves best Halyburton's subjective interest. It shifts faith's attention from the objective fact of Christ's atoning work, to the manner and reality of its own acceptance of Him. In all of this, Halyburton continued the growing subjective interest of the federal divines, and their increasing stress upon the substitutionary character of the work of Christ.

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1 Halyburton, Works, p. 563.

2 Ibid., p. 563.

SECTION TWO: THOMAS BOSTON AND THE 'MARROW' CONTROVERSY:

The theology of Thomas Boston and the controversy over the 'Marrow of Modern Divinity', was profoundly important to the whole direction of Scottish theology. In a real sense it was a revolt against the legal and artificial nature of federalism, and a deeper reach into the gracious nature of the Gospel. As Professor G.D. Henderson has observed:

The Assembly denounced the Marrow teaching as inclined to antinomianism and laying too much stress on conversion and surrender as against good behaviour -- But Boston and his friends thought the danger lay rather in overemphasizing faith as against grace, response as against revelation.

The revolt against federalism did not mean that Boston and the "Marrow Men" rejected the scheme utterly. They still retained the conception of the two covenants of works and of grace. Nevertheless their fundamental concern was to introduce again the grace of the Gospel as the dominant theme of Scottish theology.

A recovery of this theme was much needed, both in theological work and in preaching. As Alexander Whyte remarked of the latter part of the previous century, "It was an age of great logical acuteness, and that acuteness was sometimes so carried into certain regions of religious truth as to make the simplicity of the Gospel to partake far too much of the refinements and the subtleties of the dialectical schools." <sup>2</sup> This rationalistic spirit, the emphasis upon moral duty, and the predestinarian dualism, had all

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1 G.D. Henderson, The Idea of the Covenant in Scotland, The Evangelical Quarterly, vol. xxvii, No. 1, January 1955, p. 12

2 Alexander Whyte, James Fraser, Laird of Brea, Edinburgh, Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1911, p. 96.



tended to obscure the centrality of grace.

Moreover, in the preaching, the legal and subjective themes of federalism had become predominant. John McLeod, in his book on Scottish theology, ~~and~~ without being unsympathetic to the theology of the period, can still say that the "experimental and searching strain of preaching" tended to "obscure the openness of the way of return to God", and the "freeness of the invitation".<sup>1</sup> When the Gospel was interpreted as if it were a new law, requiring from man repentance, faith and obedience -- and when election degenerated into determinism -- it followed that the preaching of the Church did not dwell essentially upon the grace of the Gospel but rather upon the moral duties of believers.

The Scottish federalists, with the English puritan neonomians, had, as we have seen, laid great stress upon faith as the condition of the covenant of grace. Christ had fulfilled the conditions of the covenant of redemption made between the Father and Himself, but the condition of the covenant of grace, which was faith, tended to be spoken of as if it were required of man as his own work. In varying degrees the federal theologians had sought to protect the element of grace by speaking of faith as the gift of grace, yet the essential direction of their theology had been to give man an indispensable<sup>2</sup> place of response in the work of his own salvation.

The proponents of this theology had come to suspect any definition of the Gospel which spoke strongly of the sinner's

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1 McLeod, Scottish Theology, p. 105.

righteousness being found not in himself, but in the righteousness of the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. They had so interpreted faith that human response in repentance, faith and obedience was essential. Moral duties contributed to man's own work of sanctification, as he was guided not only by the external word, but by the inner light of conscience. In this context, the Gospel of free grace was antinomian.

Moreover, as we have seen, this attitude was strengthened by the dual conception of election and reprobation. God had two attitudes to man, and the way in which one could determine his own estate, was to look away from the objective Word of grace and to look within to seek the fruits of the Christian life which would give proof of election.

Thomas Boston clearly saw the consequences of the subjective emphasis of the theology of the federal period. His work was a revolt against it -- an attempt to reassert the primacy of grace-- and to find the centre of atonement in the free grace of Christ. In his 'Memoirs' he tells of his early dissatisfaction with the prevailing theology of his youth, and of his concern to understand more clearly the doctrine of the grace of God in Christ. After his settlement at Simprin some new light came to him upon the doctrine of Christ, "but then I could not see how to reconcile the same with other things which seemed to be truth too."

It was at this stage in his quest that he was to discover the 'Marrow of Modern Divinity'. "Meanwhile, being still on the

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1 Thomas Boston, Memoirs of the Life, Time and Writings, New Edition, Edinburgh, Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1899, p. 168.

scent, (of the true doctrine of grace) as I was sitting one day in a house of Simprin, I espied above the window-head two little old books; which when I had taken down, I found entitled, the one, 'The Marrow of Modern Divinity', the other, 'Christ's Blood Flowing<sup>2</sup> Freely to Sinners'.<sup>1</sup> He did not care for the second book, but:

The other, being the first part only of the Marrow, I relished greatly; and having purchased it at length from the owner, kept it from that time to this day; and it is still to be found among my books. I found it to come close to the points I was in quest of, and to show the consistency of these, which I could not reconcile before; so that I rejoiced in it, as a light which the Lord had seasonably struck up to me in my darkness.

This discovery of the 'Marrow' by Thomas Boston at about the year 1700 was to profoundly influence the course of Scottish theology even to the present.

The Marrow had been written by one "E.F." and published in London in 1645. A Scottish reprint was provided by James Hog of Carnock after Boston's discovery of it. A great controversy then arose between the majority party in the church, who adhered to the more legal federalist strain, and the "Marrow men"--Boston, Hog and the Erskines among them. In 1720 the Assembly condemned the Marrow as unscriptural and dangerous. The Marrow men sought the revocation of this Act the following year, but in 1722 they were rebuked and charged by the Moderator to cease teaching its doctrines. The breach then became an open one.

The heart of the 'Marrow' was its teaching upon the free gift

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1 Thomas Boston, Memoirs, p. 169

2 Ibid., p. 169.

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of the Gospel to all men:

I beseech you to consider that God the Father as He is in His Son Jesus Christ, moved with nothing but with His free love to mankind hath made a deed of gift and grant unto them all, that whosoever of them all shall believe in this His Son shall not perish but have eternal life. And hence it was that Jesus Christ Himself said unto His disciples, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature', that is, go and tell every man without exception that here are good news for him, Christ is dead for him, and if he will take Him and accept of His righteousness he shall have Him.

The promise is to all men and everyone is warranted to believe that it is a promise particularly to himself.

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Even so our good King and Lord of heaven and earth hath, for the obedience and desert of our good Brother Jesus Christ, pardoned us all our sins, and made a proclamation throughout the whole world that every one of us may safely return to God in Jesus Christ.

Wherefore I beseech you make no doubt of it, but draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

Thomas Boston made the theology of the Marrow his own. He was in revolt against the legal spirit of the more recent theology, and rejoiced in the Marrow's proclamation of the universality of the Gospel. Boston still worked within the federal framework, though he rejected the division between the covenants of redemption and grace. And while still, in this sense, a "federal theologian", Boston sought to reassert the primacy of grace. As James Walker put it, there was "more of a desire to put the gospel near to human souls."<sup>3</sup> Boston's work was to mean even more perhaps for the spirit

1 E.F., The Marrow of Modern Divinity, New Edition edited by C.G. M'Crie, Glasgow, David Bryce and Son, 1902, pp. 112-113.

2 Ibid., p. 113.

3 Walker, The Theology and Theologians of Scotland, p. 91.

of theology than the letter.

In Boston's theology there are three fundamental themes which have much bearing on those problems related to the "moral aspect of the atonement". First of all, he seeks to find the way of grace within the prevalent calvinist understanding of election. Secondly, he strongly asserts the unconditionally representative character of the work of Christ. And finally he presents a Christ-centred theology in which justification, sanctification, faith and the Christian life are understood in relation not to moral duty but to union with Christ.

The first fundamental theme seeks to find the way for grace within the dualistic understanding of election. James Walker has observed a dramatic shift of emphasis in Boston:

I have often been struck with the frequency with which the subject of reprobation is introduced into our older theological works, and the almost unkind way in which reprobates are spoken of. Now the Marrow divines, as well as the divines of the second Reformation, believed in the doctrine of reprobation. But they treat it, as it were, with a holy awe, and do not care to thrust it forward. In Rutherford's work on the Covenant, the word reprobation or reprobate occurs between eighty and ninety times; in Boston on the Covenant it only occurs thrice. There can be little doubt what that indicates.

In Boston's work, 'A View of the Covenant of Grace', he asserts the primacy of the Divine election:

On Heaven's side is God Himself, the party-proposer of the covenant; 'I have made a covenant with my chosen!'. He was the offended party, yet the motion for a covenant

1 Walker, The Theology and Theologians of Scotland, pp. 91-92.

2 Thomas Boston, Works, Dundee, Laurence Chalmers, 1773, p. 130.

of peace comes from Him; a certain indication of the good-will of the whole glorious Trinity towards the recovery of lost sinners.

While holding to the doctrine of double predestination, he, with Fraser of Brea, concludes that the mystery may best be left with God. A man is not to concern himself with whether or not he is of the elect. Rather he is to believe the promise of the Gospel freely offered to him in Christ:

Question: But I fear I am none of those whom Christ represented in the covenant of grace: how then can I take hold of it by believing?

Answer: ...Wherefore that matter is an absolute secret unto you, which in this case you are not to meddle or determine in: for 'the secret things belong unto the Lord our God'... (and later) ...but one thing I know assuredly, namely that the covenant, in the free promise of life and salvation upon the ground of Christ's obedience and death, is held out to me, even to me, to be believed, trusted to and rested upon, by me, even by me: and therefore I will believe, and lay hold on it; and, upon the infallible ground of the faithfulness of God in the promise, 'Whosoever believeth shall not perish, but have everlasting life', I will assuredly conclude, that it shall be made out to me.

In all of this, Boston is moving away from the predestinarian dualism of second Reformation Calvinism. The federal framework is receding before the Biblical framework. Men in Boston's time, when Christendom was European civilization, needed a doctrine no wider than the world they knew. Boston, from the Bible, found that the fundamental thing to be said about election was that God had brought salvation to man in His Son Jesus Christ. He rightly saw that predestination was the fundamental mystery of the Christian religion.

But this most secret thing, in his view, belonged to God. For God had revealed His will for man in Jesus Christ and it is to Christ and His work for His people, that man must look to discern something of the mystery. So it is that Boston's fundamental stress in the area of election was to point men to the Father's "deed of gift and grant" unto mankind in Christ.

While Boston could speak of Christ dying only for the elect, and thought of His "administration" of the covenant of grace as the means by which Christ in time and in order chose men to be His, yet his fundamental motif was a looking away from self, to the saving person of Jesus Christ. In this way he introduced a much needed corrective to the predestinarian doctrine of his time. For Boston was much more concerned to dwell upon the positive meaning of election than to speculate about the mystery of reprobation. Thus it was that the essential message of Boston was to show the pre-eminence of the Father's "deed of gift" to mankind in Christ.

A second great theme in Boston was his strong assertion of the unconditionally representative character of the work of Christ. Though the representation was only of believers, Christ's work was done not merely on behalf of believers, but they actually did the work in Him:

Like as all mankind sinned in Adam, so believers obeyed and suffered in Christ the second Adam. For as the covenant of works was made with Adam as a public person and representative, all sinned in him, when he broke that covenant! So the covenant of grace being made with Christ, as a public person and representative, all believers obeyed and suffered in Him, when He so fulfilled this covenant.

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1 Boston, Works, p. 136.

It will be recalled that Patrick Gillespie especially, had spoken of Christ as a private person in the covenant of redemption, and a public person or representative only in the covenant of grace. We saw that the result was to stress the substitutionary character of the atoning work of Christ, and to relegate the representative element to the covenant in which the atonement was applied as individuals were brought to faith. Boston was unprepared to accept such a rejection of representation. There was but one covenant of grace, and Christ was a public person in that covenant:

The covenant of grace then was made with Jesus Christ, as the second Adam, ... And Christ in this covenant, represented all the elect, as His spiritual seed.... Then the covenant of redemption, and the covenant of grace, are not two distinct covenants, but two names of one covenant....

Boston therefore rejected the further division of the covenant of grace and spoke only of the covenant of works and the one covenant of grace. The covenant of works did not have priority over the covenant of grace, for "the covenant of grace was made from eternity." The covenant of grace was "the second covenant in respect of the order, and manifestation to the world, though it was first in being." Again, Boston's emphasis upon the primacy of grace is illustrative of his fundamental theological concern.

The representative stress is carried further as Boston holds that the condition of the covenant of grace was Christ's fulfilling all righteousness. This was required of man from the broken covenant of works, and Christ as representative, undertook to fulfil

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1 Boston, Works, p. 288.

2 Ibid., p. 288.



the condition for man. Thus he concludes, "Jesus Christ did fully perform it, in that, as a public person, He was born perfectly holy,<sup>1</sup> lived perfectly holy, and made complete satisfaction by His death."

Christ was a representative in His whole work of obedience to the Father:<sup>2</sup>

Wherefore it was provided, that Christ as their representative, should give obedience to the whole law for them; . . . in one word, that He should perform the whole will of God, signified in His law; so that with the safety of the law's honour, His people might have life.

The life of Christ and His whole work of obedience in life and in death, was as the representative of His people.

Is there any place then for a further condition to the covenant of grace other than the condition fulfilled in the obedience of Christ? How can faith be spoken of as a condition of the covenant? Boston deals with this question in the following way: "The covenant of grace is absolute, and not conditional to us. For being made with Christ, as representative of His seed,<sup>3</sup> all the conditions of it were laid on Him, and fulfilled by Him." So faith is not properly spoken of as the condition of the covenant of grace.

Boston, in his *Memoirs*, tells of having no fondness, even in his early years, for the "doctrine of the conditionality of the covenant of grace."<sup>4</sup> He relates an incident which occurred when a young man, on trials for license before the presbytery, spoke of the conditions of the covenant of grace. Boston questioned this and asserts: "I thought it was a pity, that such an improper way of speaking of faith should be used; since it was not scriptural,

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1 Boston, *Works*, p. 288.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 151.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

4 Boston, *Memoirs*, p. 170.

was liable to be abused, and ready to lead people into mistakes." <sup>1</sup>

In all of this, Boston's concern for the pre-eminence of grace is fundamental. Christ, as representative, has fulfilled the conditions of the covenant from man's side. Man must look then to what Christ has done, rather than to his own response, in order to see the true meaning of the covenant of grace.

Boston's third great theme issues from the Christological nature of his theological method, as he sees justification, sanctification and the whole meaning of the Christian life in relation not to moral duty, but to union with Christ: <sup>2</sup>

And, lastly, I come to speak of the benefits flowing to true believers from their union with Christ. The chief of the particular benefits believers have by it, are justification, peace, adoption, sanctification, growth in grace... Thus communion with Christ is the great comprehensive blessing necessarily flowing from our union with Him.

We enter "personally into the covenant of grace, so as to partake of the benefits in it, by our becoming branches of the second Adam, the representative therein..." <sup>3</sup> Christ is all the meaning of the covenant and the covenant of grace is ours in His union with us: <sup>4</sup>

As God, in making of the covenant, took Christ for all, for the condition, and for the parties to receive the promises; He being a second Adam; so sinners, in accepting and embracing of the covenant, are to take Him for all; the whole of the covenant, the parties and parts of it too being in Him, forasmuch as He is God as well as man, second Adam.

1 Boston, Memoirs, p. 171.

2 Boston, Works, p. 68.

3 Ibid., p. 198.

4 Ibid., p. 198.

Though Boston tends to think of union with Christ as not so much a participation by believers in Christ, as a flowing to them of His benefits, his essential reassertion of the theme was a necessary corrective to the excessive moralism of the eighteenth century.

In sum then it can be seen that the revolt of Boston and the Marrow theology was against the spirit of the theology of the federal period and a reassertion of the older Reformation theme of the primacy of grace. In this context, the atonement was not conceived of solely in moral, legal or contractual terms, but seen in its fulness in the person of Christ, who represents men in His life and work, and unites Himself to them in a real personal union.

The Marrow controversy went to the very heart of the Gospel. This has not always been accepted. Many have regarded it as an unnecessary furore over some obscure points of theology. Even James Walker in his 'Scottish Theology' can say that the "question is sufficiently intricate, and I do not think there is any real difference between the two."<sup>1</sup> Yet the difference was fundamental, and Boston's work (through its extensive publication) served to preserve the pre-eminence of grace.

Though Walker thought the issue not a basic one, he did see the essential positions of the two groups:<sup>2</sup>

It is perhaps a difference in the same line when the earlier theologians say: "The covenant was made with Christ, not as a public person representing many, but as an eminent chosen person, chosen out from among His brethren;" and the later teachers: "Jesus Christ, the party contracting on man's side in the covenant of grace, is to be considered as the last or second Adam, head and representative

1 Walker, The Theology and Theologians of Scotland, p. 78.

2 Ibid., p. 78.

of a seed." The question is sufficiently intricate and I do not believe there is any real difference between the two; only in the one case the vicarious was brought more distinctly out, in the other the representative; and the one making the relation between Christ and His people more arbitrary or artificial, -- the other making it more natural and real, though mystical.

The interest of the theology of the latter federal period was substitutive and made the relation between Christ and His people more arbitrary or artificial. Boston's emphasis was representative and sought to make the relation of Christ and His people more real and natural. In this Walker has rightly summed up the contrast. Yet the difference was more serious than he imagined, for the one was to issue in the arid moralism of the latter part of the century, and the other was to seek to turn the Scottish theology again to the truth of grace.

The profound difference between the two was set forth clearly and ably by Ralph Erskine, and his comment entitled, "The Difference Between a Legal and a Gospel Strain", though extensive, bears quoting in full:

The legal strain sets forth God more especially as a commanding and a threatening God, the Gospel strain sets Him forth more especially as a promising God. The legal strain makes God, as it were, nothing but a commander; but the Gospel exhibits Him as a promiser. Why, the law is God in a command, but the Gospel is God in a promise, God in Christ. The legal strain humours the natural pride of man, as if life were to be sought by the deeds of the law; but the Gospel strain humbles the pride of man, while it shows life only to be had by the free promise. Hence the Gospel is such a strange thing to carnal reason; learning cannot reach it; worldly wisdom is offended at it. What! life and salvation

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1 Ralph Erskine, as cited in, Gospel Truth Stated and Illustrated, collected by John Brown, Glasgow, Blackie, Fullarton and Co., 1831, pp. 387-388.

for nothing! Life and salvation in a free promise! This Gospel is foolishness to the world; it is hard to believe it. Why the world cannot think that God will give salvation at such a low rate. In a word, the legal strain gives men more to do for salvation, than they are able to do. The Gospel strain gives men less ado for salvation than they are willing to do: for no man is willing to be saved by absolutely free grace, till God make him willing in a day of power. A legal strain speaks as if all depended upon our obeying a command. A Gospel strain, on the contrary, as if all depended upon God's fulfilling His promise. As the law gives man all the work, and the Gospel gives grace all the work, that it may get all the glory; so the legal strain leads a man to himself, the Gospel strain leads a man out of himself to Christ for all. Hence also the legal strain genders unto fear and bondage, but the Gospel strain to hope and liberty.

It is significant that Erskine relates the legal strain to the attitudes and desires of the natural man. The legal strain, coming from the conditioning of the covenant of grace by the prior covenant of works, and influenced by the light of nature within man which gives him an awareness of the moral nature of the universe,--this legal strain is the inevitable result of a "natural theology of the atonement". Moreover, the whole subjective emphasis upon the necessary response in man to the grace of God, is an outgrowth of this natural theology.

The God of the legal strain who is set forth as a commanding and threatening God, is the God the natural man imagines. As Karl<sup>1</sup> Barth in his lectures, 'Evangelical Theology', has expressed it:

A God who confronted man simply as exalted, distant, and strange, that is, a divinity without humanity, could only be the God of a dysangelion, of a "bad news" instead of the "good news." He would be the God of a scornful, judging, deadly No.

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Barth, Evangelical Theology, An Introduction, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963, p. 11:

And such a view of God and of His way with man, is the conception of the natural man.

But the Gospel strain is founded upon the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The knowledge of God, the fact of human sin, the way of man's restoration,-- all of these things can only be understood in the light of the Gospel of grace. The Gospel speaks of God coming near, taking upon Himself our flesh and accomplishing His atoning work for us and in our humanity. Any right doctrine of the atonement must be determined in relation to this revelation. Between the legal strain and the Gospel strain, as Erskine shows us, there is the difference of heaven and earth.

SECTION THREE: THE REACTION TO THE MARROW THEOLOGY AND LATER  
DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY:

The doctrine of the Marrow men was attacked strongly by Principal James Hadow of St. Andrews. Hadow led the Assembly in its denunciation of the Marrow in 1722. In his book, 'The Antinomianism of the Marrow of Modern Divinity Detected', he stated that his purpose was to prevent the spreading of the "antinomian gangrene of that book".<sup>1</sup>

Hadow reveals a legal interest which owes much to the theology of the federal period. He holds that by the "Law of Christ", though men are not to seek justification on account of their own righteousness, "yet they are not loosed from the Law's obligation unto obedience for other ends."<sup>2</sup> Indeed the law "is not stripped and deprived of its penal sanction, even with respect to believers."<sup>3</sup> Having an understanding of the moral law derived from the light of nature, Hadow was able to take the moral law into the dispensation of grace and to speak of it as eternally binding:<sup>4</sup>

The Moral Law, or Law of Nature, which was imprinted in the heart of man in his first Creation, being of perpetual obligation upon all men, at all times, and in every state, is necessarily taken into the dispensation of grace; and so it becomes the Law of Christ.

The law of Christ becomes the guide to the duties of the Christian life, and as such has additional authority:<sup>5</sup>

The Moral Law, by becoming the Law of Christ,

1 James Hadow, The Antinomianism of the Marrow of Modern Divinity Detected, Edinburgh, John Mosman, 1721, p. ii.

2 Ibid., p. 76.

3 Ibid., p. 76.

4 Ibid., p. 73.

5 Ibid., p. 74.

and its being taken into the dispensation of grace, is so far from losing of its former authority, that it receives the addition of many motives and encouragements, which it had not in its original constitution, whereby obedience to its commandments is powerfully enforced.

The believer is under the law of Christ. The Marrow is antinomian in that in its opinion the law of Christ is not binding on the Christian. "Though the believer is not under the Law, as requires perfect personal obedience...yet is he not still under the Law, as the commanding Will of his Creator and Sovereign Lord?"<sup>1</sup>

For Hadow, the moral law, known in the heart of man from creation, is binding forever. The believer is under its authority and it still retains penal sanctions. The Christian life therefore is guided and directed by the moral law, which has now become the "law of Christ".

Hadow therefore holds that it is antinomian to think of sanctification as being in Christ. Sanctification cannot be confused with justification, for it is a work following justification, in which the believer conforms to the law of Christ. Thus he holds:<sup>2</sup>

Antinomians confound justification with sanctification, and thence put off the necessity of inherent holiness. They hold, that in justification, a believer is freed not only from guilt...and that he is sanctified imputatively, by Christ's being holy for him.

Hadow's framework is highly substitutionary and gives no place to the representative nature of Christ in His work. His is consequently a totally forensic understanding of atonement, which has to do solely with man's guilt under the covenant of works, and bears no

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1 Hadow, op. cit., p. 16.

2 Ibid., p. 156.



relation to the positive aspect of the re-creation of human life in Christ. Indeed, this positive aspect is so under-rated that it is possible to conclude that the Gospel becomes a second chance for man, in which he is delivered from the guilt of his disobedience to the covenant of works, in order to be given the opportunity of obedience to the new law of Christ under the covenant of grace.

The result of Hadow's view was to conceive of the Christian life in moralistic and legalistic terms. It was by obedience to the moral law that the Christian found assurance of the truth of his faith and of his election. He was directed to look within to find the marks of saving faith. The subjective emphasis was profoundly important to Hadow and in this he was true to his federal antecedents. So it is that he condemns the Marrow for overturning "the necessity of seeking after assurance by marks of saving faith".<sup>1</sup> "How can one know if he is in the faith?" One knows "by the graces of the Spirit and holy duties, which are fruits of faith, and marks and signs of an interest in Christ".<sup>2</sup>

The legal strain in Hadow finds its origin in the moulding of the covenant of grace by the covenant of works, with its assumption of knowledge of the moral law from the light of nature. It gives man a work to do and casts him back on his own resources. It increasingly finds light within to the detriment of the Word without. In the "orthodoxy" of Hadow, we clearly see the strong influence of the subjective interest of the federal theologians, and we see also the ground laid for the moderatism and moralism of the latter part of the century.

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1 Hadow, op. cit., p. 20.

2 Ibid., p. 26.

Two theologians of note, Adam Gib, and Principal George Hill of St. Andrews, will serve to illustrate the general positions of the Secession and the Church of Scotland during the later part of the eighteenth century. The contrast between their two views was clear and significant. In Gib there was a greater concern for grace, in Hill the doctrine of the atonement was essentially legal.

Principal Hill approaches the doctrine of grace with the pre-conceptions of the covenant of works apprehended by the light of nature. He holds that Calvinism does not teach that man's nature became corrupt in substance by the fall:<sup>1</sup>

They (the calvinists) consider the corruption of human nature, not as a substance, but as a defect or perversion of its qualities by which they are deprived of their original perfection.

This corruption did not therefore "imply that man has lost the natural capacity of knowing God, or the natural sense of the distinction between right and wrong".<sup>2</sup> He holds that the powers of reason lead man to infer "from the works of creation, the existence and the perfections of the Deity...."<sup>2</sup>

In this context, and in the light of the covenant of works, Hill regards God as the "supreme lawgiver" in the work of atonement:<sup>3</sup>

The first principal<sup>li</sup> upon which a fair statement of the doctrine of the atonement proceeds in this, that sin is a violation of law, and that the Almighty, in requiring an atonement in order to the pardon of sin, acts as the supreme lawgiver.

God is not therefore the God of the promise in Christ, but a God who as a lawgiver, upholds the moral government of the whole of

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1 George Hill, Lectures in Divinity, Fifth Edition, Edinburgh, Blackwood and Sons, 1850, p. 310.

2 Ibid., p. 310.

3 Ibid., p. 331.

the world:<sup>1</sup>

But it is under the character of a lawgiver that the Almighty is to be regarded both in punishing and in forgiving the sins of men; for, although by creation He is the absolute Lord and proprietor of all, who may, without challenge or control, dispose of every part of His works in what manner He pleases, He does not exercise this right of sovereignty in the government of His reasonable creatures; but He has made known to them to do, and He has annexed to these laws certain sanctions, which declare the rewards of obedience and the consequences of transgression. It is this which constitutes what we call the moral government of God....

God's relationship to man in His moral government, is essentially legal, with rewards for obedience and punishment for transgression.

Hill seems to import this understanding of God as essentially a lawgiver, into the covenant of grace. The covenant is called a covenant of grace because "it was pure grace or favour in the Almighty to enter into a new covenant" with man after his breaking of the covenant of works.<sup>2</sup> And secondly it is a covenant of grace, "because by the covenant there is conveyed that grace which enables man to comply with the terms of it."<sup>2</sup> But his fundamental view of the covenant of grace is a legal one in which mutual conditions and stipulations are met:<sup>3</sup>

It could not be a covenant unless there were terms -- something required, as well as something promised or given -- duties to be performed, as well as blessing to be received.

As we have noted it is a covenant of "grace" in that grace enables man to comply with its conditions. Thus the covenant of grace becomes in reality a new covenant of works, only with the conditions changed and made more gracious in Christ. Hill fails to see any

1 Hill, op. cit., p. 332.

2 Ibid., p. 492.

3 Ibid., p. 492.

fundamental opposition between grace and works. Indeed his conception of God as the "supreme lawgiver" is far different from the Biblical portrayal of God as a forgiving Father who gives Himself to men in Christ.

While Hill develops his understanding of the covenant of grace in legal terms, Adam Gib stresses the free determination of the will of God to save men. The Father and the Son are at one in the purpose of redemption. With regard to the view that Christ by His work purchased salvation from God, he maintains:

But if the great promise of eternal life, with all the other promises comprehended therein, -- be the purchase of the blood of Christ... the purchase of His obedience and death; so that the making as well as performing of them, is wholly owing to His fulfilling the condition of the covenant; Then it cannot be a covenant of grace, with regard to God the Father; it can only be a covenant of purchase, a covenant of justice.

As some developed the doctrine of the covenant of grace, it seemed that as Christ so fulfilled the conditions arising from the broken covenant of works and the justice of God, there was really nothing for God to forgive. The covenant of grace became a covenant only of "purchase" -- as Gib put it -- a covenant of grace, moulded and determined by all the conceptions of the covenant of works.

6 Gib however, sees a true covenant of grace, founded not upon God's attitude being changed by the fulfilment of the legal requirements of the covenant of works, but upon His own sovereign will to be gracious to man:

The truth of the matter is, -- that all the promises have their whole origin and foundation

1 Adam Gib, Sacred Contemplations, Edinburgh, Neill and Co., 1786, p. 195.

2 Ibid., p. 196.

in the absolute sovereignty of the grace of God, of the Godhead in the person of the Father. And the whole mystery of the condition of the covenant, -- of Christ's undertaking, of His fulfilling all righteousness, of His obedience unto death, of His redeeming and purchasing blood; all this is to be considered as the great mean devised by the manifold wisdom of God, for bringing the promises to an accomplishment, -- in a manner glorifying to all the perfections of God, and honouring to His law.

The whole work of Christ is not the means of obtaining God's forgiveness, it is the way of expressing it:<sup>1</sup>

The whole mediatory interposal belongs, not to the obtaining, but to the execution of the glorious purpose and plan of free grace in the establishment of that covenant.

Gib rightly sees that the covenant of grace is no means by which man may put claims upon God, but it ever remains a covenant of grace, in which the gracious and not the legal aspect is paramount.

In this covenant of grace, as Gib sets it forth there is great emphasis upon the representative nature of Christ:<sup>2</sup>

The reality of the covenant of grace appears from the personal state of Jesus Christ. It shall be observed here, that He bears the state of a public person. In comparison with the first man, He is called the second man. Of Him the first man was a figure, a representing type. In Him all the redeemed from among men are made alive; as they have all died in the first man. By His obedience they are all made righteous; as by the first man's disobedience, they were made sinners. And it is impossible to put any rational sense upon all this, but as denoting a covenant-headship in the person of Christ....

Christ in His whole work of salvation was the new Adam, and His work was not for Himself but for His people. "Christ performed a service under the law, no way in a private, but wholly in a public

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1 Gib, op. cit., p. 197.

2 Ibid., pp. 178-179.

character; no way for Himself, but wholly for His people. And so His whole righteousness, in that service, belongs to the ground of their justification." <sup>1</sup>

Principal Hill, on the other hand, give no real place to the concept of representation in his theology. Indeed he was suspicious of any doctrine which spoke of union with Christ. With regard to the conception of Christ as the Head of a mystical body, he comments: <sup>2</sup>

This last figure expresses, in the most significant manner, what is called, in theological language, the union of believers with Christ. ...while this figure serves, in a very high degree, to magnify the completeness of the provision made by Christ for the salvation of His people, it inculcates, at the same time, with striking force a lesson of dependence upon Him, as a lesson of mutual love. But, as all figures are apt to be abused by the extravagance of human fancy, there are none the abuse of which is more frequent or more dangerous than those in which the sublimity of the image serves to nourish presumption or to encourage indolence. Accordingly, the expressions in which Scripture has conveyed this figure are the passages most commonly quoted by fanatical sects...They have sometimes also been alleged in vindication of Antinomian tenets. Much caution, therefore, is necessary when this figure is used in discourses addressed to the people, that they may never lose sight of that substantial connection which it is meant to exhibit, and that the impression of their being distinct and accountable agents may never be swallowed up in the confused apprehension of a mystical union.

It is significant that his fear is that men may not see themselves as distinct and accountable agents. In Hill's understanding of "the moral government of God" (referred to above), there are conditions and responses to grace which men must meet themselves.

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1 Gib, op. cit., p. 270.

2 Hill, op. cit., p. 489.

In no sense, does Christ as representative meet these for them.

This was to lead in Hill to a legalistic interpretation of the Christian ethic. He recognized formally that good works in the Christian were the fruit of the operation of the Spirit. Nevertheless these works are necessary and can be spoken of as the conditions of the covenant of grace:<sup>1</sup>

By the conditions of the covenant of grace, therefore, are meant...those expressions of thankfulness which naturally proceed from the persons with whom God has made this covenant, which are the effects and evidences of the grace conveyed to their souls, and the indispensable qualifications for the complete and final participation of the blessings of the covenant. With this caution, we scruple not to say that there are conditions in the covenant of grace, and we press upon Christians the fulfilment of the conditions on their part....

Adam Gib, on the other hand, gives no place to good works in the covenant of grace. He contends that Scripture will allow "no mixture at all"<sup>2</sup> between grace and human works. Even where the condition of the covenant of grace is defined as "faith and repentance",<sup>3</sup> he holds:

But according to the above-cited definition, there is at least a mixture of works brought in, under the name of faith and repentance...And such a covenant of grace would be a new sort of a covenant of works, pretended to be on easier terms than the old; obtained for sinners by the Mediator.

In their respective approaches to the Christian life, the legal strain is clearly seen in Hill, and the strain centring on grace is seen in Gib. The distinction between the two strains was not always clear cut, and the Secession tradition had a considerable element of pietistic inwardness, nevertheless in their main thrust, the lines

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1 Hill, op.cit., pp. 492-493.

2 Gib, op. cit., p. 185.

3 Ibid., p. 185.

of division between Boston and Hadow were continued on in their theological descendants.

The latter part of the eighteenth century was the time of the ascendancy of the so-called "moderate" party in the Church of Scotland. Moderatism was not so much a theological position as an attitude to life. It was easily superimposed upon the Calvinist orthodoxy of the second Reformation. The subjective interest of that "orthodoxy" with its emphasis upon reason, the conscience and the light of nature, suited the mood of the moderates.

The polished rhetoric of the moderate preacher, Hugh Blair, with its emphasis upon the duties of the virtuous life, were much admired in this period. In a sermon on the unchangeableness of the Divine Nature, he asserts that "the Supreme Being is, and was, and ever will be, the supporter of order and virtue..."<sup>1</sup> This was the purpose of God in all dealings with man. It was His object in the original law of nature, and it is unquestionably the end of the Gospel:<sup>2</sup>

So invariably constant is God to this purpose, that the dispensation of mercy in Christ Jesus, which admits of the vicarious atonement and righteousness of a Redeemer, makes no change in our obligation to fulfil the duties of a good life. The Redeemer Himself hath taught us, that to the end of time the moral law continues in full force.... This is the only institution known to men, whose authority is unchanging and constant.... Manners, sentiments and opinions, alter with the course of time. But throughout all ages, and amidst all revolutions, the rule of moral and religious conduct is the same. It partakes of that immutability of the Divine nature, on which it is founded.

1 Hugh Blair, Sermons, vol. ii, London, T. Cadell, 1815, p. 100.

2 Ibid., pp. 101-102.



Blair's Sermons are typical of the preaching of the moderates. The great theme was the moral order and the path of Christian duty.

The ascendancy of the moderates was also related to the outlook and attitudes of the time. This was the age of reason in which man had concluded that the inner light was the best one, and the claim to revelation in the Christian religion was suspect. In Scotland the religious scepticism of David Hume had contributed much to the naturalizing of religion. In such a philosophical climate it was natural to underemphasize revelation and the historical nature of Christianity. Where reason and the light of nature played the dominant role the tendency was to regard the atonement as if it were a philosophical concept in which justice and grace were reconciled in God. Such a view did not require the incarnation and history to be at the heart of a true understanding of the doctrine. Atonement as an historical event in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, receded before a conception of atonement as the means of resolving the ought and the actuality of man's moral quest. A rationalised Christianity constructed a doctrine of the atonement which found its essential motifs in man's own inner awareness of the moral order, and gave less and less place to the fact of revelation. Thus the atonement could be viewed in abstraction from the incarnation and life of Jesus. And because the Christian life was largely a matter of man's obedience to obvious moral duties, the doctrine of union with Christ received little attention from the theologians and preachers of the time.

With the decline of moderatism and the rise of evangelicalism in the early decades of the nineteenth century, there was, strangely enough, no fundamental theological upheaval. The moderates were

moderate in attitude, but generally retained the theology of scholastic second Reformation orthodoxy. The evangelicals were evangelical in attitude, and while they were more inclined to question reason and emphasize revelation, generally accepted the same kind of hyper-calvinism which had been the theology, though not the passion, of moderatism. Thomas Chalmers and after him, William Cunningham, though they were to have great theological influence, preserved the essentially federal and forensic scheme of the Westminster period.

It remained for John McLeod Campbell to chart new waters. It is to his utterly original protest against the whole framework of federalism that we must now give our attention.

CHAPTER FOURJOHN McLEOD CAMPBELL AND THE REJECTION OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK OFTHE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENTSECTION ONE: CAMPBELL'S THEOLOGY

John McLeod Campbell is at once the most admired and most misunderstood of the nineteenth century Scottish theologians.

Admiration is almost universal. James Denney said of his work: <sup>1</sup>

Of all books that have ever been written on the atonement, as God's way of reconciling man to Himself, McLeod Campbell's is probably that which is most completely inspired by the spirit of the truth with which it deals. There is a reconciling power of Christ in it to which no tormented conscience can be insensible. The originality of it is spiritual as well as intellectual, and no one who has ever felt its power will cease to put it in a class by itself. In speculative power he cannot be compared to Schleiermacher, nor in historical learning to Ritschl, and sometimes he writes as badly as either; but he walks in the light all the time, and everything he touches lives.

H.R. Mackintosh said of 'The Nature of the Atonement' that it "belongs to that very small class of treatises on theology which are also felt to be great books of devotion."<sup>2</sup>

Yet with all the admiration, Campbell is surely the <sup>most</sup> misunderstood of the nineteenth century theologians. This misunderstanding has several causes. Perhaps the first is that theologians have been too prone to fasten upon his conception of vicarious repentance as being of the very essence of his message on the atonement. This concept is a very important one to Campbell, but it is never

1 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 120.

2 H.R. Mackintosh, Some Aspects of Christian Belief, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1923, p. 80.

to be understood in the abstract -- out of relation to all that Campbell has to say. Campbell sets the vicarious repentance forth as a part of the meaning of the representative nature of Christ's work. It is only in the context of this strong representative emphasis, and his desire to see the atonement in the light of the incarnation, that vicarious repentance is rightly understood.

It is unfortunate that the concept of vicarious repentance has been taken out of the context of the whole of Campbell's theology. All that many know of Campbell is his famous phrase about Christ providing the Amen in humanity to God's judgment on sin. Compendiums of the various doctrines of the atonement have contributed to this by labelling Campbell's doctrine as "vicarious repentance". But Campbell has a much more valuable contribution to make than this. It is only when the whole of his theology is seen that its true worth is realized.

But perhaps the fundamental reason for the misunderstanding of Campbell is that he has been regarded as an isolated theological phenomenon, unique, and outside the mainstream of Scottish theology. This is far from the truth. Campbell cannot be understood rightly except in the context of the whole course of the Scottish Church's doctrine of the atonement. Campbell's themes arise out of his awareness of the "legal" and "Gospel" strains in the Scottish theology of the atonement. He is in revolt against the federal theology, with its legal and forensic framework determining and moulding the concept of grace. He is reasserting the radical nature of representation, which was such a strong theme in the early Scottish reformed theology and with the "Marrow men". Indeed, it is impossible

to rightly appreciate Campbell without being aware of the particular conflicts and history of the Scottish doctrine of the atonement.

It is clear, for example, that Campbell is in direct historical continuity with the revolt against the legal character of federalism seen in the Marrow controversy. He takes the revolt farther than the "Marrow men", but his fundamental concern is theirs: to protect the doctrine of the free grace of God in the person of Jesus Christ. In this connection, it is noteworthy that the Assembly in deposing Campbell from the parish of Row charged: "That the doctrines imputed to Mr. Campbell have been condemned by the General Assembly in 1720, and are directly opposed to the Word of God and the standards of this Church."<sup>1</sup>

The Rev. Andrew Robertson, in his 'History of the Atonement Controversy in Connection with the Secession Church', strongly<sup>2</sup> resents the association of the "Marrow men" with Campbell:

Surely the General Assembly of 1830 might have found enough in the Word of God and the Standards of the Church to have formed the ground of their procedure in the case of Mr. Campbell, who held the dogma of universal pardon, without falling back on the deed of 1720, against which the secession up to this day, is a practical protest.

Yet the Assembly of 1830, unlike the one in 1720, was wiser than it knew. By associating Campbell with the Acts of 1720 and 1722, they sought to discredit both the Marrow theology and Campbell himself. But their essential insight, perhaps unknown to themselves, was correct. Though Campbell was to go further than the "Marrow men",

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1 Andrew Robertson, History of the Atonement Controversy in Connection with the Secession Church, Edinburgh, Oliphant and Sons, 1846, p. 158 (as cited in).

2 Ibid., p. 158.

and would reject the whole predestinarian and forensic framework of federalism, his essential theme was theirs, -- the representative character of the work of Christ and the utter graciousness of grace.

The misunderstanding of Campbell therefore, has its origins in the failure to see his concept of vicarious repentance in the context of the whole of his theology; and in the failure to see him in the context of Scottish theological history. But there is one further reason for this misunderstanding. This is that many view Campbell as the first of the Scottish liberals. In his book about Campbell, 'Legacy of a Christian Mind', Eugene Bewkes portrays Campbell as an original thinker who casts off the orthodoxy of a former time in favour of a more loving conception of God. He interprets vicarious repentance in the liberal sense and so concludes:

The more essential and really fundamental meaning in Campbell's mind here is that Christ does not repent for us, and certainly not for Himself, but He has feelings of the divine mind, which when reproduced in us, cause us to repent.

Vincent Taylor, in an article about Campbell, maintains that it is unfair to characterize his view as vicarious repentance:<sup>2</sup>

It is easy to reply that no one but the sinner can repent and to say that Campbell replaces a legal by a moral fiction, but it is certain that such retorts do little justice to the subtlety and truth of his thoughts. Campbell had no thought of suggesting a substituted repentance, and he strongly maintains that Christ's offering was accepted by the Father entirely with the prospective purpose that it is to be reproduced in us.

1 Eugene Bewkes, Legacy of a Christian Mind, John McLeod Campbell, Philadelphia, The Judson Press, 1937, p. 213.

2 Vincent Taylor, The Expository Times, vol. 48, 1936-1937, p. 269.

Certainly Campbell's understanding of vicarious repentance was no moral fiction, yet Campbell is misunderstood unless it is seen that Christ is truly representative in His repentance. It is this element that makes the repentance possible in us. In other words, the Christian is not merely to imitate Christ, he is to be found in him. Taylor fails to see this element of representation which is so crucial in Campbell, and is inclined consequently to interpret him in the liberal sense.

In another article on Campbell and the Atonement in the Expository Times that same year, the writer refers to this same criticism that Campbell substitutes the imputation of Christ's perfect repentance for the calvinist imputation of Christ's righteousness. He admits: "Undoubtedly Campbell does speak at some length of Christ offering to God on our behalf a perfect repentance. And this must be regarded as ethically inadmissible. At this point he seems not to have completely emancipated himself from older ways of thought." <sup>1</sup> Such as the element of representation is seen here, it is rejected as a hold-over from the older theology. In all of this there is a failure to understand what Campbell is really saying. Representation is not a minor aspect of his doctrine of the atonement. It is at the very heart of it.

Perhaps the classic misunderstanding of Campbell is best seen in the comment of Otto Pfleiderer in his 'Development of Theology'. He describes Campbell's theology as a triumph of ethical inwardness

<sup>1</sup> J. M. Graham, John McLeod Campbell and the Atonement, The Expository Times, vol. 48, 1936-1937, p. 418.

over forensic externality:<sup>1</sup>

This is manifestly the same reconstruction of the Christian doctrine of salvation which was effected by Kant and Schleiermacher in Germany, whereby it is converted from forensic externality into ethical inwardness and a truth of direct religious experience, Erskine and Campbell appear, however, to have reached their convictions in entire independance of German theology, by their own absorbing study of the Bible; and I regard their ideas as the best contribution to dogmatics which British theology has produced in the present century.

Pfleiderer seems astonished that the Bible alone should have led Campbell and Erskine<sup>2</sup> to their position without the aid of German theology! Yet in complimenting Campbell for having followed the course of Kant and Schleiermacher, Pfleiderer reveals that he has entirely missed the import of Campbell's theology. Far from being a triumph of inwardness, it is in his flight from inwardness to the utter objectivity of grace in Christ, that Campbell reveals his fundamental concern. This will become apparent as we set forth Campbell's theology.

In this most popular misunderstanding of Campbell, he has been portrayed as the forerunner of the new liberalism. Though using somewhat of the language of orthodoxy he was concerned to speak only of the love of God and the subjective reproduction in men of the spirituality of the life of Christ. But the Jesus of liberal ethical idealism making a confession of sin in and for humanity, by virtue of His spiritual goodness -- such a conception was utterly foreign

1 Otto Pfleiderer, The Development of Theology in Germany and in Great Britain since 1825, London, Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1890, p. 382.

2 Thomas Erskine of Linlathen is often associated with Campbell, in that as his contemporary, he assented with him the doctrine of the universal extent of the atonement.



to Campbell. The controlling thought behind Campbell's view of Christ's confession of our sins, was his profoundly radical reassertion of the representative significance of the incarnation.

Undoubtedly there was a liberal sympathy toward Campbell because of his conflict with "orthodoxy" in 1830, and undoubtedly the idea of vicarious repentance taken by itself, seemed to be an acceptably liberal religious sentiment about the atonement, but far from being the forerunner of the new liberalism, Campbell asserted afresh the representative theme of the original Scottish reformed theology. He stands clearly in the tradition of the "Gospel strain" in Scottish theology.

Campbell's theology of the atonement is rightly understood only in the context of the history of Scottish theology. It was because of the effect of Scottish theology's "legal strain" on the life of his people in Row that Campbell was led to question the whole framework of federalism. Accordingly, it is to his early experience in Row that we must now give our attention.

It has been characteristic of Scottish theology that great theological movements have not begun in abstraction but have arisen out of the real life of the Church. This was true of Thomas Boston. It is especially true of McLeod Campbell. His theological maturity came in the country parish of Row. In his 'Reminiscences and Reflections', he states that it became more and more apparent to him that there was a want of true religion in the land. <sup>1</sup> Many whom he had thought well of had a wrong view of the nature of the atonement.

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<sup>1</sup> John McLeod Campbell, Reminiscences and Reflections, London, Macmillan and Co., 1873, p. 25.

"Instead of resting in the character of God as revealed in Christ, they looked upon the death of Christ as so much suffering -- the purchase-money of heaven to a certain number, to whom it infallibly secured heaven."<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of the atonement had been interpreted in such a way that the relation between the believer and the Lord who was Himself the atonement, had been obscured. Men conceived of it as a legal transaction apart from a relationship of love.

Moreover, the process of soul-searching to find the fruits of election, which had been the legacy of the Westminster period, had produced a self-doubt in many, who could not bring themselves to feel that they were forgiven. They had no assurance of the free grace of the Gospel, and their Christian lives were governed by a legalistic attempt at Christian duty, rather than by any real<sup>2</sup> relation to Jesus Christ. Campbell saw the issue clearly:

This meant, it was clear, that between them and the comfort of the consciousness of a personal possession of Christ as a Saviour, they vaguely conceived of a something by which they were to make Christ their own, -- a condition proposed to them, the consciousness of compliance with which would introduce them to the enjoyment of salvation. This something they attempted to speak of as repentance, faith, or love, or "being good enough", which last expression gave really the secret of their difficulty. Christ was to be the reward of some goodness-- not perfect goodness, but some goodness that would sustain a personal hope of acceptance in drawing near to Him.

The legal strain had made much of the conditionality of the covenant of grace. The conception that Christ was to be the reward of something

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1 Campbell, Reminiscences, p. 25.

2 Ibid., p. 132-133.

from man's side, revealed an idea of forgiveness as a legalistic system in which love and personal relations were not involved.

Campbell's answer to this problem was to try and direct his people away from themselves to the Gospel:<sup>1</sup>

In this mind the Gospel was practically a law, and the call to trust in Christ only an addition to the demand which the law makes,--an additional duty added to the obligation to love God and to love man, not the secret of the power to love God and to love man. Seeing this clearly, my labour was to fix their attention on the love of God revealed in Christ, and to get them into the mental attitude of looking at God to learn His feelings towards them, not at themselves to consider their feelings towards Him.

In this Campbell rejects the whole subjective emphasis of the "legal strain" in Scottish theology. For assurance man is to look to the work of Christ, not within himself. Campbell's son in his introduction to his father's reminiscences, summarizes his father's position thus:<sup>2</sup>

Many said, "Believe in the forgiveness of your sins, and they will be forgiven"; he said, "Believe in the forgiveness of your sins because they are forgiven." Many said, "Believe that Christ died for you, and your faith will be an evidence to yourself that you are one of those for whom Christ died"; he said, "Believe that Christ died for you because He died for all mankind."

In this period of struggle with the spiritual problems of his people, Campbell, like Boston before him, was much devoted to the study of the Scriptures, and the whole range of theological literature.

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1 Campbell, op. cit., p. 133.

2 Ibid., p. 27. (Introduction)

He studied the works of the reformers, Luther and Calvin,<sup>1</sup> and no doubt pondered the difference between the original reformed theology and federalism. He was much impressed by Erskine's 'Evidences', and in all his writing one can see that he is deeply conscious of the fundamental issues of the Marrow controversy.<sup>2</sup>

In his sermons to his people at Row he began to manifest the fruit of his study and his new-found conviction. His enquiry into the nature of assurance led him to examine the extent of the atone-<sup>3</sup>ment:

...and it soon appeared to me manifest that unless Christ had died for all, and unless the Gospel announced Him as the gift of God to every human being, so that there remained nothing to be done to give the individual a title to rejoice in Christ as His own Saviour, there was no foundation in the record of God for the Assurance which I demanded....

If Christ died for all, He did so as the representative of all:<sup>4</sup>

When Christ gave His flesh to death, willingly and freely, He did it not as an individual, but as our head and representative; as having taken on Him our sins and borne our griefs; as having come into the place of taking the load and burden of our race upon Him, so that, in this sense, all died when

1 It is puzzling that in 'The Nature of the Atonement' Campbell devotes an entire chapter to the teaching of Luther and then passes over Calvin to Calvinism as taught by John Owen and Jonathan Edwards. That he studied Calvin at this time is clear from a letter to his sister found in the two volume 'Memorial' edited by his son. On page 64 he comments: "As to the extent to which there is anything new in my views, I think I have a distinct conception of it, and when I go back to the writings of Luther and Calvin, I find it not great...."

2 Campbell, Reminiscences, p. 16.

3 Ibid., p. 24.

4 John McLeod Campbell, Sermons and Lectures, Third Edition, vol 1, Greenock, R.B. Lusk, 1832, pp. 95-96.

Christ died; and that as, in the judgment of God, Christ did not suffer as a private person, but as a head and representative, so also all rose when Christ rose. He rose not as a private person but as a head. In this sense we are included both in the death and resurrection of Christ.....

This concern for a right doctrine of assurance and his stress upon the representative nature of the atonement, led Campbell to reject the predestinarian framework and to teach that Christ had made atonement for all men. The General Assembly of 1830, on the basis of these so-called "Row heresies" deposed Campbell from the ministry of the Church of Scotland. The Church was not yet ready to give its own understanding of the atonement a searching re-examination. Campbell was set forth upon a path which would lead him to a deepened understanding of the doctrine and would result in his great work, 'The Nature of the Atonement'.

#### Campbell's theology of the atonement:

In turning to Campbell's theology of the atonement it is important to consider first his theological method. He was above all else a Biblical theologian. He approached Christianity as a religion of revelation. But revelation was not just the setting forth of revealed truths. Campbell was too conscious of the natural man's enmity to the things of God to give no place to the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit in revelation:

...an infallible Bible, with our own intelligence to gather its teaching, has seemed enough for our need; and the teaching of the Holy Spirit not being felt necessary, the promise of that teaching has had no attraction. It is easy to see how in

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1 John McLeod Campbell, Thoughts on Revelation, Second Edition, London, Macmillan and Co., 1874, pp. 117-118.

this way it has come to pass that the Bible has been honoured, and jealously guarded from the assaults of scepticism, while yet the personal teaching of the Holy Spirit who inspired the Bible has had no welcome -- any more than if the Bible had been intended to enable men to do without the living God, taking itself His place instead of leading to Him.

The light of revelation is found in Jesus Christ. It is improper to seek for another witness to the light, external to it, for the light of revelation has a "self-evidencing nature".<sup>1</sup> The concept of the light of nature, which had so much bearing upon the federal theologians' understanding of the moral law and the necessity of the atonement,<sup>2</sup> has no place in Campbell's understanding:

We therefore, have gone quite astray, if, being in the full light of Revelation, we are asking for a witness to that light, external to itself; instead of receiving the light with the obedience of faith. Such obedience is due, because it is light, -- simply on that ground.

In this understanding of revelation, Campbell sees the conflict between this view and the conceptions of the federal subjectivism with its emphasis upon the conscience and the light of nature. To ask for a witness to the light external to it, is to look to the darkness of man rather than to the light of God. Therefore, a right doctrine of the atonement is only to be had in the light of revelation. Thus where the federal theologians moulded their doctrine of grace by the conceptions of the covenant of works apprehended by the light of nature, Campbell's doctrine was centred upon the revelation of God in Christ:<sup>3</sup>

...the grace which brings salvation is itself

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1 Campbell, op. cit., p. 11.

2 Ibid., p. 19.

3 John McLeod Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement, London, James Clarke and Co., Fourth Edition, 1959, p. 4.

the light which reveals both our need of salvation, and what the salvation is which we need; explaining to us the mystery of our dark experience, and directing our aimless longings to the unknown hope which was for us in God.

Campbell therefore rejected the methods of natural theology as he set forth his doctrine of the atonement.

McLeod Campbell's thesis was that the atonement must be understood in the light of the incarnation. The faith of the atonement presupposed the faith of the incarnation. Theologians had been long divided on the relation of each to the other:<sup>1</sup>

Which was to be regarded as primary, which secondary? --was an atonement the great necessity in reference to man's salvation, out of which the necessity for the incarnation arose, because a divine Saviour alone could make an adequate atonement for sin? -- or, is the incarnation to be regarded as the primary and highest fact in the history of God's relation to man, in the light of which God's interest in man and purpose for man can alone be truly seen?-- and is the atonement to be contemplated as taking place in order to the fulfilment of the divine purpose for man which the incarnation reveals.

I feel it impossible in any measure to realise what I believe in believing in the incarnation without giving a preference to the latter view; and accordingly my attempt to understand and illustrate the nature of the atonement has been made in the way of taking the subject to the light of the incarnation.

Campbell is profoundly conscious of the tendency of the "legal strain" to ground the necessity of atonement in the fact of human sin, rather than in the Divine purpose for man. To construct the doctrine in that way inevitably subordinates the positive significance of the incarnation to a solely forensic and penal interest in the guilt of man and the necessary punishment of that guilt. The conditioning

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement, p. xxv.

of the covenant of grace by the covenant of works was the classic example of federalism's grounding of the necessity of atonement in man's need rather than God's purpose. For Campbell to say that the atonement must be understood in the light of the incarnation, is to say that it must be understood in the light of the revelation in Christ of the positive purpose of God for human life.

Campbell does not accept the purely incarnational theology which conceived of the incarnation as being itself the atonement. "The faith of what the Scriptures teach of the development of the incarnation is not less essential to an enlightened peace of mind than the faith of the incarnation itself."<sup>1</sup> Thus the atonement<sup>2</sup> is seen as a development of the incarnation:

If the atonement is rightly conceived of as a development of the incarnation, the relation of the atonement to the incarnation is indissoluble; and in a clear apprehension of the incarnation must be felt to be so.

Again, speaking of the Apostolic assertion of the death of Christ as a propitiation for sin, he holds; "Both Apostles see the love of God not in the incarnation simply, but in the incarnation as developed in the atonement."<sup>3</sup> He does not therefore speak of the incarnation apart from the whole course of the life and death of Christ. Yet he sees that fundamentally the whole work of Christ cannot be comprehended except in the light of the incarnation.

In one of his early sermons, preached before his congregation,

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1 Campbell, op. cit., p. xxviii.

2 Ibid., p. xxvii.

3 Ibid., p. xxx.



in Row, he set forth his understanding of the essential purpose of the incarnation:<sup>1</sup>

...and when God declares that He has given us eternal life, I understand Him as meaning nothing less than His giving us a participation in this very life which He had from all eternity. And the whole history of the incarnation of God has its explanation in this, as the great purpose which God had in view...The incarnation and the dispensation of the Spirit, have their origin in this high purpose of God, that men should be partakers of a divine nature.

The purpose of the incarnation is to bring to man the divine life, in the adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ. It is this which Campbell calls the "prospective" aspect of the atonement. He defines the grace of the atonement as having a two-fold aspect: "The one retrospective, referring to the evil from which that grace brings deliverance; the other prospective, referring to the good which it bestows."<sup>2</sup> The great good which the incarnation bestows is the bringing of life from God to the world in Christ. In all that Campbell has to say about the nature of the atonement this primary understanding of the prospective aspect of the atonement in the incarnation is fundamental.

Another great theme in Campbell is the direct consequence of his emphasis upon the incarnation. This theme is his stress upon the representative character of the person and work of Jesus Christ. We have seen how he speaks of Christ in his life and death acting not for Himself, but "as our head and representative".<sup>3</sup> Behind all that he says of the work of Christ is his view of Him as the new

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1 Campbell, Sermons and Lectures, p. 8.

2 Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement, p. 4.

3 Campbell, Sermons and Lectures, p. 95.

Man, the One in whom humanity is sanctified and brought to the life of sonship. In the federal theology with its two covenants of redemption and grace, Christ's representative character had been related solely to the subsidiary covenant. The result was to divide Christ and His people, and the representative nature of His work was made to recede before a legal and substitutionary emphasis. McLeod Campbell's revolt against the forensic scheme of federalism was to restore a right understanding of representation.

Consequent upon his insight into the representative theme, as it was related to the incarnation, Campbell rejected the predestinarian dualism as unbiblical:<sup>1</sup>

I believe that the atonement has been an atonement for sin, having reference to all mankind; I believe this to be distinctly revealed; I believe it to be also implied in what the atonement is in itself.

For Campbell the worst offense of the scheme of double predestination was that it denied the very heart of the Gospel. Those who supported the doctrine maintained that God's attribute of justice was universal,<sup>2</sup> but were unwilling to think of His attribute of love as universal. As Campbell sets forth his opposition to the doctrine one can sense his indignation rising. Reprobation not only offends his Christian spirit, it calls him back to the practical spiritual problems he<sup>3</sup> found and grappled with in his first congregation at Row:

But is it fair to ask men to put their trust in that God of whom we cannot tell them whether He loves them or does not? in that Saviour of whom we cannot tell them whether He died for them or not? .... --is it strange that some degree of irritation, and even indignation, should be manifested?

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1 Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement, p. 2.

2 Ibid., p. 63.

3 Ibid., p. 66.

Campbell rightly sees that this dualistic framework was a significant factor in the legalistic interpretation of grace:<sup>1</sup>

Another result of that conception of the nature of the atonement (the limitation of its reference) not less conclusive as an argument against it, is the substitution of a legal standing for a filial standing as the gift of God to men in Christ.

The concept of reprobation had helped to shift men's attention from their natural relation to God in Christ -- which had ramifications for every human life --- to the legal relation, which was more easily predicated of the elect alone. The result was to substitute a legal standing for the filial standing which was the real meaning of God's gift to men in Christ.

Campbell perceived the error which the conception of double predestination had introduced into the federal theology's doctrine of the atonement. He rejected its legalism and its unwillingness to universalize God's love, while universalizing His justice. He saw clearly that it cut at the heart of the meaning of God's gracious gift of His Son to be the Saviour of the world. God had a purpose in Christ for all human life, and for Campbell this was clearly the message of the Bible.

Campbell also called in question the federal understanding of the moral law and the concept of the necessity of the atonement finding its origin in the satisfaction to Divine justice.

God's law, in Campbell's view is not to be regarded as a lifeless thing, in which God has as little interest as the judge of an earthly court might have in the law he is administering. God's law is

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell, op. cit., p. 69.

much more than that. "God's law is God's own heart come out in  
 the shape of law."<sup>1</sup> God's law can never be abstracted from God  
 Himself:<sup>2</sup>

When Christ magnified the law and made it honour-  
 able, He proved it to be God's heart, and so He  
 glorified it. Do not feel then as if God comman-  
 ded you to be holy and yet was personally indifferent  
 whether you are holy or not. Oh, if you knew the  
 truth you would find God's very commandments to be  
 all promises, His very laws to be encouragements;  
 ....I beseech you to know that you have to do not  
 primarily with laws and doctrines, but with the  
 living God: that you have to do not with rules or  
 precepts or opinions, but with a real Person, a  
 living God, One who does at this moment as truly  
 see you and as truly think of you individually,  
 as if you saw Him in this room.

This profound sense of the law as related to God's Person, is evident  
 also in the introduction to his 'Nature of the Atonement', where he  
 deplores as an extreme evil the "development when a personal God is  
 lost to the human spirit in the uniformity of the course of nature  
 or the reign of law."<sup>3</sup> Thus he deplores "the tendency to rest in  
 law without ascending to God...."<sup>4</sup>

There is a difference between the laws of the physical universe  
 and the laws of the moral universe. God has given existence to the  
 laws of nature. But the law of the moral universe is what God  
 Himself is:<sup>5</sup>

And so the difference between the physical universe  
 and the moral universe in respect of law is, that  
 the former we trace, to the will of God, the latter  
 to what God is.

Campbell sees two kinds of law. God has created the laws of nature

1 Campbell, Responsibility for the Gift of Eternal Life, London,  
 Macmillan, 1873, p. 106.

2 Ibid., p. 106

3 Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement, p. xxxii.

4 Ibid., p. xxxiv.

5 Ibid., pp. xxxiv-xxxv.

as apart from Himself to govern the physical universe. But in the moral realm, the realm of relationships and personality, God's law is His will, and that not apart from Himself:<sup>1</sup>

The difference between these regions lies in this, that in our relation to the former we have to do with a work of God -- a system of things to which He has given existence; while in our relation to the latter we have to do directly with the will of God; that is to say, His will as His mind and character....

It would seem that Campbell, with this conception, is setting bounds to man's understanding of law. Man can apprehend the laws of the universe through his natural understanding. He can do this because these laws are in a real sense a part of God's creation which He has given to man to have dominion over. But when it comes to the Kingdom of God, the whole matter of God and His attitude to man, God has not created a law governing that relationship, in the sense that it stands apart from Him, and by which He is bound.

Moreover, God has not given to man, by his reason, to understand this aspect of God's nature, save in revelation. There is therefore no natural knowledge of the will of God as there is a natural knowledge of the laws of the physical universe. Only in faith can one know the will of God, and this presupposes revelation. The presumed natural knowledge of the moral law of God has led man into a profound misunderstanding of the nature of God and His law, and of the relationship of grace and law. Only in Christ does man find the knowledge of the true moral law as it is in the character of God:<sup>2</sup>

...as Science in the largest sense of the word is our practical light under the reign of law, so is Christ the light of the kingdom of God.

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1 Campbell, op. cit., p. xxxvii.

2 Ibid., p. xxxix.

Campbell is critical of the stress of the federal theology in which the justice of God is regarded as a barrier to atonement. He recognizes the significance of the element of justice to the retrospective aspect of the atonement. But in his mind it is subordinate<sup>1</sup> to the prospective aspect:

Christ has "redeemed us who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" -- Christ "suffered for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Both that we were "under the law" and "unjust" and that we were "to receive the adoption of sons" and to be "brought to God" may be expected to have affected the nature of the atonement as determining what it must be adequate to; more especially the latter, as the great result contemplated. Accordingly, in the writings of the Apostles, we find the necessity for the atonement being what it was, connected with both -- but more especially with the latter.

As Campbell expresses the distinction later, his view is founded upon that conception of the atonement which finds its root-cause in the fatherliness of God. The other view finds it necessary to deal with justice as presenting obstacles to the realisation of God's gracious design.<sup>2</sup> Campbell is critical of those systems of theology in which the legal or retrospective aspect has been the foundation of the development of the doctrine of the atonement:<sup>3</sup>

For however our "receiving the adoption of sons" and our being "brought to God" enter into the scheme of salvation as represented in these systems, it is in the fact that we "were under the law" and "unjust" -- that is to say, that we were sinners, under the condemnation of a broken law, that the necessity for the atonement has been recognised.

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1 Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement, pp. 27-28.

2 Ibid., p. 338.

3 Ibid., p. 28.

In this Campbell has described the federal system, and its understanding of the covenant of grace from the vantage point of the prior covenant of works. In this system the moral law was in a sense abstracted from God and became a barrier to God's purpose of salvation. The atonement came to be regarded as the cause of God's forgiving love, since His justice and love were reconciled in it:<sup>1</sup>

But 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.

Where the framework of the federal theology postulated an abstracted moral law and a solely forensic atonement with regard to it, it became difficult not to fall into the error of this wrong kind of propitiation.

For Campbell the right way of approach to the doctrine of the atonement is not from the point of view of legal necessity, but rather from the revelation of the life of sonship given in Christ. Sonship and being brought to God must determine the doctrine of the necessity of the atonement, not the concepts of sin and law. In short, Campbell saw that we must begin with the election of God, not with man; with Christology, not presumed legal necessities; with historical reality, not abstract reasonings from our inner awareness of the nature of the moral law.

In Campbell's view the law is not "the Mosaic ritual" but "that law of which the Apostle speaks when he says, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man"-- that is to say, the law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and mind and soul and

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell, op. cit., p. 18.

strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." <sup>1</sup> He concedes that all the divine attributes are in one view against the sinner, but: <sup>2</sup>

I believe, on the other hand, that the justice, the righteousness, the holiness of God have an aspect according to which they, as well as His mercy appear as intercessors for man, and crave his salvation.

The justice of God and the holiness of God do not alone condemn the unrighteousness and sin of man, but they crave that man should be <sup>3</sup> righteous and holy:

But justice looking at the sinner, not simply as a fit subject of punishment, but as existing in a moral condition of unrighteousness, and so its own opposite, must desire that the sinner should cease to be in that condition; should cease to be unrighteous, -- should become righteous: righteousness in God craving for righteousness in man, with a craving which the realisation of righteousness in man can alone satisfy. So also of holiness.

God's justice and holiness, far from being in opposition to His mercy and grace, seek the salvation and redemption of man.

This positive and loving understanding of the character of God is revealed in Jesus Christ. In Christ we see the law, not understood only as a "thou shalt not", but understood in the positive sense: "Lo, I come to do Thy will." The law therefore, is manifest in the righteousness and holiness of Christ.

It follows then that Christ's active obedience is to Campbell not primarily a fulfilling of the law in the legal sense, as a positive manifestation of the character of God. It is a loving revelation of the will of God for human life, set forth in all its

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1 Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement, p. 28.

2 Ibid., p. 30.

3 Ibid., p. 30.



perfect and righteous life of Jesus. Thus the obedience is not so much the fulfilling of an abstract law, as the setting forth of the heart of the Father by the Son. In the federal scheme Christ's life and death revealed nothing more of God than what the law, negatively considered, testified. Only its conditions were met. But in Christ, the very Holy Life of God is manifest in human flesh as both the revelation and the fulfilment of the will of God for man.

The tendency of the forensic scheme of theology to oppose the attributes of grace and justice was the result<sup>of</sup>/reasoning extraneous to revelation. If the speculations upon the attributes of God had been more related to the life of Christ, there would have been no presumed conflict between justice and love, With regard to this, Campbell observes that it would have been well, "if these deep reasoners had used the life of Christ more as their light"<sup>1</sup>. The essential error of such reasoning was that their attention was "fixed upon the obedience of Christ as the fulfilling of a law, and the life of sonship in which this fulfilment has taken place, is left out of view."<sup>2</sup>

The federal scheme of theology with its forensic emphasis, viewed the life of Christ in terms of obedience to law, and when the Divine justice was satisfied, there was nothing more to be said. Campbell saw that this left out the whole Divine purpose of adoption. The atonement in his view, did not just bring men into a new standing in law. God sought men for Himself. He

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1 Campbell, op. cit., pg. 64.

2 Ibid., p. 70.

sought not alone to pardon their guilt, but to redeem their life. Thus the atonement transcends the matter of sinners being reconciled to the law, and becomes a matter of those who are dead finding life again:<sup>1</sup>

In the light of the Gospel we see, that our need of salvation, and our capacity of salvation as contemplated by the Father of our spirits, involved the problem,-- not "how we sinners could be pardoned and reconciled, and mercy be extended to us;" but "how it could come to pass, that we, God's offspring, being dead, should be alive again, being lost, should be found."

This brings us to the heart of Campbell's understanding of the atonement. How is a man justified before God? What is God's way of atonement? For Campbell the answer is - the person of Jesus Christ:<sup>2</sup>

No man cometh unto the Father but by Him, inasmuch as humanity cannot attain to God but in the Eternal Life given in the Son of God. No other conscious condition of humanity is nearness to God but that which is presented to us in the humanity of Christ.

Christ is the life of God come to the world, and justification is no legal fiction, but a real sharing in that life of Christ.

In this context his conception of vicarious repentance becomes richer and more meaningful. His famous statement about the perfect Amen in humanity to the judgment of God upon sin, had been anticipated in an early sermon:<sup>3</sup>

And how was Christ in the world? As the great confessor of its sin. He was in the world as condemning sin in the flesh. Above all, He suffered and died, and thus expressed His Amen to God's righteous sentence upon sin.

In his 'Nature of the Atonement' he gave this thought classic expression

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1 Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement, p. 92.

2 John McLeod Campbell, Christ the Bread of Life, 2nd Edition, London, Macmillan and Co., 1869, p. 119.

3 Campbell, Sermons and Lectures, p. 238.

in these words: <sup>1</sup>

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 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 judgment of God on the sin of man.

But Campbell defines this immediately, as only being possible through the incarnation: <sup>2</sup>

A condemnation and confession of sin in humanity which should be a real Amen to the divine condemnation of sin, and commensurate with its evil and God's wrath against it, only became possible through the incarnation of the Son of God.

It would seem that in Campbell's view Christ as God in our humanity suffers from our sin (and perhaps for our sin in the sense of from our sin) and this as God toward man. But as man toward God, this takes the form of a perfect response of confession of our sin and acceptance of the Father's wrath and judgment. In so responding Christ absorbs the wrath and the response is a perfect repentance in humanity for the sin of man. It is important to note that Campbell did not discount the divine wrath as some later sought to do, rather, the wrath was turned away by Christ's perfect repentance for man, and His absorption of the wrath thereby unto Himself.

As we have seen, this statement of Campbell's has been so misunderstood, that many have assumed that it set forth his whole doctrine of the atonement. Taken out of context it has been interpreted as the substitution of a moral fiction for a legal fiction.

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1 Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement, pp. 135-136.

2 Ibid., p. 138.

But Campbell's conception of Christ's vicarious repentance cannot be understood in this way. Seen in the context of his Christological framework -- the incarnation and the adoption to sonship -- it becomes a profoundly significant aspect of the whole representative work of Christ in our humanity.

Moreover Campbell deals with the vicarious repentance as having to do with the retrospective aspect of the atonement. With regard to the prospective aspect, he strongly emphasizes not only Christ's repentance for man, but His positive work of sanctifying and renewing human life in the whole course of His obedience. It is with Christ's perfect righteousness in humanity that God, well pleased. The Father accepts of humanity in Him not only retrospectively because of His perfect confession of man's sin, but prospectively because of His perfect righteousness in humanity:

We now approach the subject of this dealing of Christ with the Father in the light of Christ's own perfection in humanity, and connect His laying hold of the hope for man which was in God with the Father's testimony that He was well pleased in the Son. What we have thought of Christ as necessarily desiring for us, was the fellowship of what He Himself was in humanity. This, therefore, was that which He would ask for us; and we can now understand that He would do so with a confidence connected with His own consciousness that in humanity He abode in His Father's love and in the light of His countenance. Thus would His own righteousness be presented along with the confession of our sins when He asked for us remission of sins and eternal life. (Italics mine)

In view of this, it is incredible that Campbell's doctrine of the atonement should have been characterized solely as vicarious repentance. Christ's own righteousness from the whole course of His obedience, is presented, along with the confession of our sins, as He intercedes with the Father for His brother men. The vicarious repentance is only properly understood therefore, in its relation-

ship to the whole meaning of the incarnation and the representative character of the whole work of Christ in His life and death.

With regard to Christ's suffering and death, we come to the least satisfactory element in Campbell's exposition of the nature of the atonement. Perhaps his concern to correct the errors of the forensic understanding of the doctrine led him to emphasize what the former had understressed, and in consequence of dwelling upon the significance of the life of sonship, he gave less place to the meaning of the death. It would seem in any event, that the death of Christ ever remained a profound mystery to him. Indeed he confesses: "We feel also that His tasting death, the wages of sin, is that in the experience of Christ in His bearing of our sins which is most out of sight to us."<sup>1</sup>

In Campbell's view Christ's sufferings were not penal, but arose naturally out of who He was. The Holy One of God could not but suffer in His identification with sinners. For Campbell, the holiness and love in the suffering, not the amount of pain, were at the heart of the atonement. The suffering of Christ is not to be seen as "the measure of what God can inflict, but the revelation of what God feels."<sup>2</sup>

He refers to the death of Christ as a moral and spiritual sacrifice for sin:<sup>3</sup>

He who endured the cross, despising the shame, did so as He tasted death, of which the cross was for this reason the selected form, in that oneness of

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1 Campbell, op. cit., p. 405. (Additional notes)

2 Ibid., p. 312.

3 Ibid., p. 304.

mind with God which rendered His doing so truly a fitting element in the atonement; and thus in respect even of all that was most physical and external, the real value and virtue was strictly moral and spiritual; for the tasting of death for us was not as a substitute, -- otherwise He alone would have died; nor as a punishment, -- for, tasted in the strength of righteousness and of the Father's favour, death had to Him no sting; but as a moral and spiritual sacrifice for sin.

Death, "filled with that moral and spiritual meaning in relation to God and His righteous law which it had as tasted by Christ, and passed through in the spirit of sonship, was the perfecting of the atonement."<sup>1</sup>

With all the extremely valuable insights which Campbell has into the errors of the forensic scheme, and the necessity of seeing the atoning nature of the life and righteousness of Christ, he does little justice to the meaning of the death. What he means by such a statement as "the real value and virtue of the death was strictly moral and spiritual" he does not make clear. In any event, he will allow for no element of opposition between the Father and the Son in the death of the cross. He confesses his relief at not having to conceive of the Father as against the Son in the cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me."<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps Campbell's failure here is that he does not carry his radical understanding of Christ's identification with man in His life, to a similarly radical understanding of identification in His death. Whatever sin meant to God, it meant an awful separation between man and Himself. The gulf between man and God could only be bridged by

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1 Campbell, op. cit., p. 304.

2 Ibid., pp. 312-313.

the Son who came forth from the presence of the Father in that movement of humiliation which had its beginning in the incarnation. This was a movement of identification with sinful man. In the death of Christ there was that one awful moment when He had gone all the way in identification. And this He did in order that He might bring man back to the Father in Himself in His whole movement of exaltation by the resurrection and ascension. It seems that Campbell is unwilling to see the meaning of this identification with man in the death of Christ. Accordingly, the Father's wrath upon the sin of man is absorbed by the vicarious repentance of Christ, but has no relation to a vicarious death. But if Christ be truly representative in His death as in His life,--in the whole course of His obedience, both active and passive, then the death of the cross is God's inevitable judgment upon sin falling upon the Person of His Son. There is an opposition here of the Father to the Son, incredible as it may seem, but it is an opposition that has its origin in the Son's willing identification with the sinfulness of humanity. That Campbell cannot conceive of such an opposition is the essential reason why he cannot allow his radical conception of representation to have the full meaning in the death of Christ which he gives to it in His life.

Nevertheless, it is in the righteousness of Christ that our life is found. Justification, sanctification and all things are to be found in Christ. <sup>1</sup> And further, "What is thus 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

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1 Campbell, op. cit., p. 220.

in us." <sup>1</sup> This is not to be done by way of following Christ's example, but in union with Him we are given to participate in His life: <sup>2</sup>

Further, as they (the disciples) were to live the life of sonship, not as independent beings, following the example of the Son of God, but as abiding in the Son of God, as branches in the true vine, this peace which He bequeathed to them they were not to have apart from Himself.

The whole triumph of God's purpose for humanity is seen in the ascension of Christ. Humanity is at God's right hand: <sup>3</sup>

...consider Christ's present place. The man Christ Jesus, our brother, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, is, at this moment upon the throne of the Almighty God. And observe He is there, not because He is God, for that was His eternal glory; but He is there in His human nature -- He is, in His humanity, exalted to that high place.... It is, on the one hand, a deep and glorious mystery to see God upon the earth as a man; and, on the other hand, it is a deep and glorious mystery to see a man upon the throne of God. Both these things are seen in Jesus Christ.

Because our Brother Man is ascended to the right hand of God so we are brought to the life of sonship in union with Him.

The contribution of McLeod Campbell to a richer and fuller understanding of the doctrine of the atonement has been inestimable. In his work, he challenged the essential presuppositions of the federal theology -- presuppositions which so long tended to develop the Scottish doctrine of the atonement in solely legal categories. Moreover, he strongly reasserted the radically representative under-

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1 Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement, p. 177.

2 Ibid., p. 201.

3 Campbell, Sermons and Lectures, pp. 253-254.



standing of the work of Christ -- a conception which was strong in the earlier Scottish theology and was always evident in what Ralph Erskine called "the gospel strain" in Scottish thought.

Campbell was fundamentally a theologian of the life of Christ. He saw the unreality of a rationalized doctrine of the atonement in which the person of Christ and the love of Christ were given no significant place. And in all his theology, he sought to show that the atonement is known, when Christ is known -- for Jesus Himself is the atonement -- in His person and in His work all that man needs to be brought to life in God is found.

We have seen that his conception of Christ's atoning work was much greater than the idea of vicarious confession taken by itself. But even so it is also clear that his conception of the death of Christ does less than justice to that greatest of all themes. In rejecting any element of the penal in the work of Christ, Campbell was attempting to escape from the framework of the thought forms of the covenant of works which so long shaped the understanding of grace. He was profoundly aware, with all the Christian sensitivity of his spirit, of the unloving and rationalistic manner in which penal conceptions of the atonement had been developed. But the very fact of a cross -- the means of criminal execution -- points in all its stark reality to the mystery of the judgment of God upon sin. It is impossible to entirely discard the penal, or at least what it strives for, and to retain a full New Testament understanding of the atonement.

Campbell, as we have seen, held that the wrath of God was real. But the wrath was turned away in the repentance of Christ. There was therefore no place for the wrath or judgment of God in the death of Christ. No penal element whatever was allowed.

Campbell has been criticized by many who have asserted that in his theology the atonement does not mean enough to God. There was a tendency in Campbell to regard the work of Christ solely in its man-ward aspect. Certainly the cause of atonement is in the free and gracious election of God. Any conception of what the atonement means denies this, when it conceives in a false way of a change in God's attitude to man based upon the work of Christ. But the election, creation and salvation of man in Christ is not to be opposed to the concept of atonement in which the Father's wrath toward the sin of man is turned away in the Son's obedient life and death. In Christ we see the way in which the Father's wrath against the sin of man is turned away. The Father has chosen man in Christ, and in Christ we see the way of man's deliverance and of the Holy God's acceptance of sinners. To regard the atonement solely in its man-ward aspect is to fail to see fully what sin means to God and how it is that a Holy and righteous God accepts sinners in His Son.

Nevertheless Campbell's contribution was a truly great one. He clearly understood the consequences of attempting to superimpose an understanding of grace upon a prior covenant of works, with all its assumptions of mutual obligation and response. He sought to ground his understanding of the doctrine on the prospective purpose of the incarnation, which was the life of sonship -- adoption in Christ that men might be the sons of God. Thus it was, that Campbell was able to formulate his doctrine of the atonement in the context of grace. To begin with the purpose of sonship revealed in Christ, was to look pre-eminently to the gracious decision of God for man. And it was to lead Campbell beyond the thought forms of

individual election and reprobation, to a fuller view of the meaning of election in Christ. His theology sets forth Christ as the New Man who brings the righteousness of God to human life. In Him our human nature is lifted up to the life of sonship and by union with Him in faith we are given to participate in that new life.

This fuller understanding of election was not without its problems, but it did ground the atonement firmly in the gracious election of God in Christ.

SECTION TWO: EPILOGUE TO CAMPBELL--THE MOVEMENT AWAY FROM THE  
FORENSIC FRAMEWORK

In the latter part of the nineteenth century there was a movement away from the long dominant forensic emphasis in the Scottish theology of the atonement. The Secession tradition,-- the United Presbyterians, passed a Declaratory Act in 1879 which among other things moderated their position on limited atonement. The Free Church did the same in 1892. While the early years of the Free Church had seen a great revival of interest in the theology of the second Reformation, and while this new federalism was prominent in the work of William Cunningham, James Buchanan and James Bannerman, before the turn of the century the movement away from the legal framework became dominant.

As a kind of epilogue to McLeod Campbell, though not necessarily in any direct relation to his influence, we must now trace the change in Scottish theology up to the time of Principal Denney. We will begin with R.S. Candlish, the leader of the Free Church who began to see that the federal framework had some glaring omissions, and will trace the change in the Scottish theological climate through a number of representative theologians to Candlish's son, James S. Candlish who was Principal Denney's colleague in his early years at the Free Church College in Glasgow.

R.S. Candlish stood essentially in the federal tradition. In his book, 'An Inquiry into the Completeness and Extent of the Atonement', published in 1845 he strongly defended the concept of limited atonement. Where the New Testament had spoken of the Gospel

being for all men, it meant Gentile as well as Jew. It did not mean all men universally:<sup>1</sup>

Was the death of Christ, or His work of obedience unto death, considered in the light of a satisfaction rendered to divine justice, and an atonement made for human guilt, undertaken and accomplished for any but the elect? We answer without qualification or reserve, in the negative.

With a strongly individualistic emphasis he concluded:<sup>2</sup>

...and what comes home to me as the crowning excellence of the Gospel, is this very assurance it conveys to me -- not that there is something in Christ for all, but that there are all things in Christ for some,...

Candlish also accepted the essentially legal framework of the doctrine of the atonement:<sup>3</sup>

In other words the method of recovery, having its source in sovereign grace and love, must have its accomplishment through procedure that must be primarily of a legal and judicial nature.

Nevertheless, along with his acceptance of so much that was essential to the federal theology's understanding of the doctrine of the atonement, Candlish was to see something of its basic error, and to point the way toward a recovery of the centrality of the doctrine of union with Christ.

Candlish's fundamental criticism of the older theology was that it did not make a sufficient place for the conception of adoption to sonship in Christ. In his book, 'The Fatherhood of God', he comments with regard to adoption:<sup>4</sup>

For I cannot divest myself of the impression that the subject has not hitherto been adequately treated in

1 R.S. Candlish, An Inquiry into the Completeness and Extent of the Atonement, Edinburgh, John Johnstone, 1845, p. 3.

2 Ibid., p. 56.

3 R.S. Candlish, The Fatherhood of God, Fifth Edition, Edinburgh, Adam and Charles Black, 1870, p. xxxii.

4 Ibid., p. 192.

the Church. In particular, I venture a critical observation on the theology of the Reformation, In that theology, the subject of adoption, or the sonship of Christ's disciples, did not, as it seems to me, occupy the place and receive the prominence to which it is on scriptural grounds entitled.

Thus Candlish asserted that in the matter of adoption, "theology has fresh work to do...."<sup>1</sup> He was even critical of the Westminster standards in this regard. "I never have had any scruple to affirm that their statements on the subject of adoption are by no means satisfactory. No doubt all that they say is true; but it amounts to very little."<sup>2</sup>

Candlish worked out his own understanding of the doctrine by asserting the fundamental significance of the incarnation. By the incarnation, human life had come to a new relation to God, that of sonship to the Father:<sup>3</sup>

From all this it clearly follows, that in the one undivided person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God come in the flesh, humanity enters into that very relation of sonship which, before His coming in the flesh, He sustains to the Father. From henceforth fatherhood is a relation in which the Supreme God stands, not merely to a divine, but now also to a human being; to one who is as truly man as He is truly God.

It was not through any generalized or universal Fatherhood by which a man came into the relation of sonship to the Father, but by a real union with Jesus Christ, who alone was the true Son and gave men to participate in His Sonship by adoption. Professor Crawford of Edinburgh university and Candlish had entered into considerable controversy on this point. Crawford postulated a generalized

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1 Candlish, The Fatherhood of God, p. 193.

2 Ibid., p. 194.

3 Ibid., p. 42.

Fatherhood of God in the very nature of creation. Candlish however, saw true sonship only in Jesus Christ. And such sonship became the possession of men only by union with Christ:<sup>1</sup>

Then, again, I cannot but think that the actual realization of sonship, as I put it, forms a natural and fitting climax to the Calvinistic doctrine of grace. The essence or heart's-core of that doctrine is the personal union of the believer to Him in whom he believes....In His cross and in His grave I am made one with Christ ...my justification is in Him, in virtue of my oneness with Him in His service. Can it really be so unless I am so thoroughly one with Him as to share with Him also in His sonship?

In all of this Candlish still adhered strongly to the dualistic understanding of election and reprobation. He warned that he did not mean that the incarnation had "somehow affected beneficially humanity in general; the human nature as such; the human race universally and at large."<sup>2</sup> Indeed Candlish developed his understanding of sonship in a very personal and individualistic way. With regard to the atonement he held that Christ had not died for mankind generally or in the mass but that He had "tasted death for men, one by one, as it were, individually and personally bearing the sins of each"<sup>3</sup>.

Candlish was no more willing to universalize the doctrine of union with Christ than he was to universalize the Fatherhood of God. He saw union with Christ as deeply personal and individual. Thus he was able to give a significant place to the traditional concept of double predestination.

Nevertheless, it is extremely important to see that Candlish's

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1 Candlish, The Fatherhood of God, pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

2 Ibid., p. 45.

3 Candlish, The Extent of the Atonement, p. xxix.

personal and individual interest issued in a highly representative understanding of the work of Christ. Christ's work was not simply the ground of salvation which could be applied to individuals, it was their salvation. He was extremely critical of the older federal view which understood the work of Christ in such a highly substitut-  
 ionary way, that the work was only the possibility of subsequent indiv-  
 idual salvation. Such a view made the whole "peculiarity of Christ's  
 relation to His people turn, not on the essential nature of His work  
 on their behalf, but on the terms which He made with the Father"<sup>1</sup>.  
 If Christ did His work in abstraction from His people, then election  
 became the means of applying that redemption to a certain number.  
 In such a case there was no real relationship between the believer  
 and Christ in His work. Thus Candlish held that this would be to  
 assert "that Christ really has not done more for them (the elect)  
 than for others; although by the divine arrangements regarding it,  
 what He has done is to be rendered effectual for their salvation and  
 not for that of others...."<sup>2</sup> Such a view separates Christ and His  
 people in His work and contradicts the representative element which  
 the Scripture stresses. He sees to the heart of the problem of the  
 federal view when he asserts that this wrong emphasis was more  
 concerned with upholding abstract law than with the real relation  
 of the sinner to Christ:<sup>3</sup>

And here the great practical evil comes out. The death of Christ, or His work of Atonement, is viewed very much as an expedient for getting over a difficulty that occurred in the divine government, in reference to God's negotiating a treaty of reconciliation

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1 Candlish, The Extent of the Atonement, p. 35.

2 Ibid., p. 35.

3 Ibid., p. 35.



with the guilty; it is a sort of coup-d'état, a measure of high and heavenly policy, for upholding generally and authority of law and justice in the universe. But that purpose being served, it may now be put very much in the background, excepting only insofar as it is a manifestation of the divine character....

A doctrine of the atonement which makes no place for representation thus simply creates a ground for a negotiation of peace between man and God as it is individually applied. The result is what may rightly be called "another Gospel":<sup>1</sup>

...as if it (the atonement) made way for reconciliation, than as if it actually procured it. Is not this like what Paul calls "another gospel"? To preach or proclaim salvation through Christ, is a different thing from proclaiming salvation in Christ.

In Candlish's view it was impossible to separate Christ and His people in His atoning work:<sup>2</sup>

I assume here...the reality, not so much of substitution as of identification; not so much the eternal Son's substituting Himself for us, as His identifying of Himself with us.

In this Candlish revealed that his understanding of representation was not merely federal-- that is that Christ legally represented His people. Rather his understanding was one of utter identification. It was Christ's identification with his people beginning with His incarnation that meant He had placed Himself in their place in the matter of their relation to God:<sup>3</sup>

The incarnation of the Son of God is His entering into our relation to God, as a relation involving guilt to be answered for, and the wrath and curse of God to be endured.

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1 Candlish, The Extent of the Atonement, pp. 35-36.

2 Candlish, The Fatherhood of God, p. 55.

3 Ibid., p. 57.

Christ was therefore by His incarnation the real representative of His people in all His work of reconciling man to God. His work did not present the possibility only of salvation. It was the salvation.

As we have seen Candlish formally preserved the forensic and predestinarian emphasis of scholastic hyper-calvinism. Yet in stressing the significance of the concept of sonship, he was led beyond to a deeper understanding of the atonement than the solely forensic. Indeed he was to conclude that while the forensic categories were proper ones with which to describe justification, they were transcended by more personal categories in the matter of adoption.

He made a distinction between justification and adoption. Justification was concerned with "the legal and judicial character of the transaction".<sup>1</sup> But justification which was "the benefit which immediately flows from Christ's redeeming work...opened the way to the ulterior and higher benefit of adoption".<sup>2</sup> Adoption, unlike<sup>3</sup> justification could not be interpreted in a forensic sense:

I think it is of as much consequence to maintain the thoroughly unforensic character of God's act in adopting, as it is to maintain the strictly forensic character of His act in justifying. All is legal and judicial in the latter act;...nothing is legal or judicial in the other.

Candlish conceived of justification as the removal of the barrier between man and God as Christ bore man's guilt. "This however, is all over now", and in adoption, God's love overflows: now "it is simply Fatherly love."<sup>4</sup>

While the distinction between justification and adoption could

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1 Candlish, The Fatherhood of God, p. 161.

2 Ibid., p. 149.

3 Ibid., p. 163.

4 Ibid., p. 164.

tend to an unchristological separation between the two, it is extremely significant that Candlish totally dismissed the forensic element from the life of sonship in the "ulterior and higher benefit of adoption". In this he was concerned to restore the central emphasis upon the incarnation and union with Christ, which was so strongly evident in the early Scottish reformed theology. The very centre of Candlish's view of the atonement was thus the filial relation to the Father which was ours in Jesus Christ. This great insight he set forth in this way:<sup>1</sup>

Thus I think the fact of the incarnation may be shown to involve this consequence, that the relation of fatherhood and sonship subsisting between the first and second persons in the Godhead is not incommunicable; that it is a relation in which one having a created nature may participate. Undeniably, in point of fact, humanity actually shares in it, in the person of the Son of God, Jesus Christ come in the flesh.

In R.S. Candlish we see the older federal and forensic scheme giving way before a more Christological interpretation of reconciliation. His insights were to have a considerable influence upon the movement of the Scottish Church in the latter part of the century toward the recovery of the "Gospel strain" in the Scottish doctrine of the atonement.

The movement away from the forensic framework was not, of course, universal. In Professor George Smeaton of New College there was a strong reassertion of the essential elements of the legal framework of the federal theology. In his work, he gave a forceful and vigorous

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<sup>1</sup> Candlish, The Fatherhood of God, p. 46.

ous defense<sup>c</sup> of the penal and substitutionary views of the atonement. In the preface to his book, 'The Doctrine of the Atonement', he referred to the subtle errors which "in an evangelical guise, and not seldom with exegetical appliances, tend wholly to subvert the elements of substitution and penal visitation, which constitute the very essence of the atonement."<sup>1</sup> The forensic element was therefore basic in his understanding of the doctrine.

Smeaton saw the necessity of atonement as a means of reconciling<sup>2</sup> not simply God and man, but God's love and His wrath against sin:

...God loves His creatures; yet He cannot but cherish just anger against sin, and against sinners because of sin, as will be sufficiently evinced by the everlasting punishment striking on all who are out of Christ. And this can be more easily conceived, when we reflect that love and wrath are in God an eternal, constant will, expressive of His nature: love being ever active to do His creatures good, so far as it is not obstructed; wrath being active to visit sin with punitive justice. The atonement is nothing else than a provision to effect the removal of those obstructions or impediments which stood in the way of the full exercise of grace; and it consists in the satisfaction to justice in every respect.

Smeaton did not attempt to relate the wrath to the love, as did McLeod Campbell in his view of God's righteousness as a positive expression of His love. In such a framework Smeaton inevitably is open to the charge that his doctrine is abstracted from the relationship of God and man with which the atonement is concerned, and has become a doctrine which deals with the problem of a supposed need of reconciliation of the divine attributes within the Holy Trinity.

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1 George Smeaton, The Doctrine of the Atonement, Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1870, p. vi.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

Smeaton also reasserted the federal view of a covenant of grace conditioned by a prior covenant of works. The necessity of the incarnation was grounded not in any Divine purpose of sonship, but in the need of a substitutionary atonement to deliver man from his guilt. He asserted that the Apostles never thought of the atone-<sup>1</sup>ment apart from the necessity of salvation from sin:

They represent the historical experience of the Son of God as conditioned solely by sin, and there is no warrant from anything in their language for giving it a double foundation. The stupendous fact of man's redemption was an end worthy of such a cost, but the incarnation was not necessary except on the supposition of redemption from sin. The incarnation and the cross are thus viewed as inseparable, but both as means to an end, viz., the vindication of divine justice, the expiation of sin, the meritorious obedience to be rendered to the law. This is the rationale of the infinite condescension displayed in the incarnation and the cross. The apostles make no allusion to any other design.

It must be admitted that Smeaton was concerned as Denney later was, to refute a view of the incarnation which held that it would be necessary even apart from human sin. Smeaton maintained that such a speculation denied the actuality of a present sinful world. The New Testament was concerned with the reality of sin and it did not give any place to speculations as to the need of an incarnation apart from that actuality.

Nevertheless the bold assertion that "the incarnation was not necessary except on the supposition of redemption from sin" is to say that the Mediator, Jesus Christ, has no necessity in any original creaturely relation to God. This denies the Christological unity of creation and redemption. All of God's dealings with man are in

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1 Smeaton, op. cit., p. 11.

Christ both in the work of creation and redemption. In reality Smeaton was expressing in more modern language that view of the federal theology which understood the covenant of grace in the thought forms of the covenant of works.

Though his essential emphasis was substitutionary, Smeaton did recognize the representative character of the work of Christ. Representation was understood however, in a forensic sense:<sup>1</sup>

Christ is represented as made sin for us, in the same way in which we are made the righteousness of God; that is, by a judicial act on the part of God, the moral Governor and Judge.

There was however, a real relationship between the sin of man and the suffering of Christ. It was not simply a fiction:<sup>2</sup>

When it is said that Jesus was delivered for our offences, the words bring out the connection between our offences and His sufferings, and prove that it is a causal connection, on the ground of substitution. There must have been a relation formed between Him and us, of such a kind that He and His people were federally one, representatively one, legally one in the eye of God. But for such a covenant relation, our sins could not by possibility have affected Him, nor brought Him to the cross.

Though Smeaton sought in this way to stress the identification of Christ with His people, he was unwilling to ground the fact of representation in the incarnation; rather he grounded it upon a legal and federal relation based upon the covenant.

Though Smeaton was in the forensic tradition and as we have seen accepted the fundamental premises of federalism, there was nevertheless<sup>in</sup> his theology a movement toward a somewhat deeper understanding of representation. The obedience of Christ was the means of the manifestation of the righteousness of God in human life.

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1 Smeaton, op. cit., p. 224.

2 Ibid., p. 145.

The sinless humanity of Christ was the great central fact of all  
 time:<sup>1</sup>

The obedience of Christ realizes the lofty ideal or goal set before the human race; and on this account it is the greatest event in the world's history. He was acting for His people, and they were representatively in Him. The entrance of Christ's sinless humanity, with the law in His heart, became the central point of all time, to which previous ages looked forward and after ages looked back. He was the living law, the personal law, -- an event with a far more important bearing than any other that ever occurred. It was the world's new creation. It is made ours not less truly than if we ourselves had rendered it, in consequence of the legal oneness formed between us and Him.

In all of this Smeaton saw the redemptive significance of the humanity of Christ. Nevertheless his essentially forensic framework did not allow him to see the meaning of the incarnation and obedience of Christ as the ground of the adoption to sonship. He was content to define the meaning of representation as "legal oneness" and did not ponder the fulness of representation as it was set forth in the older view of union with Christ.

The movement away from the forensic conception of atonement continued to develop in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Continental liberalism, while it had its influence, was not dominant in Scotland. There was no great abandonment in Scotland of objective as opposed to subjective theories of the atonement. While the liberal influence was apparent in the moderate tradition, the Scottish Church generally, with its confessional and theological tradition, followed a different path. With the liberat-

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1 Smeaton, The Doctrine of the Atonement, p. 124.

ing impetus which the new liberal spirit undoubtedly brought, the movement away from the rigidly forensic conceptions of the atonement took the form of a movement toward the Christological conceptions of the earliest Scottish reformed theology. A renewed emphasis came to be placed upon the person of Christ and the historical nature of the Christian revelation. Moreover there was a renewed concern to see the centrality for justification and all Christian experience, of the doctrine of union with Christ.

This movement away from the forensic element toward the themes of the early reformed theology was evident among the theological students of the time. The 'Opening and Closing Addresses' to the New College Theological Society in the Session of 1882-1883 clearly show the concern of the rising generation of theologians for a more Christological understanding of the atonement. It will be well to give some attention to their views as illustrative of the resurgence of the older themes.

The first address entitled "Christ the Centre of Christianity", was given by Alexander Martin, who was later to be Principal of New College. Martin warned that it was not proper to ground the whole of the doctrine of redemption upon the fact of human sin. In his view redemption meant the purification and glorification of human life, in the representative life of Christ. To speak only of the sin of man without consideration of this positive aspect was to fail to see that the problem of redemption was the problem of human life:

And here let us not take too narrow a view of what redemption implies. It may be true, perhaps, for most men that the prime necessity of redemption for them lies in their sin; they are at variance

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1 Alexander Martin, Christ the Centre of Christianity, Opening and Closing Addresses to the New College Theological Society, Session 1882-1883. Edinburgh, Lorimer and Gillies, 1883, p. 8.



with the world's law, and no individual striving can heal the breach. But the matter concerned --though covering this, and holding this, in one sense, for its main issue, -- is wider than any such experience; the problem of redemption is the problem of human life; and Christ is the Redeemer that suits us, because life in Him is solved.

By Christ's obedience to the will of the Father, human life was transformed; "Life, then, was to Christ a conquered thing; human life was by Him purified, glorified, redeemed."<sup>1</sup>

This transformation of human life was not something done apart from men, for Christ was representative of His people in all His work:<sup>2</sup>

Life once for all had been "finished" by the God-man, and now was "theirs" in Him. He had not lived alone, nor did He die alone. Neither He Himself nor those who knew His meaning most intimately, ever regarded Him so. He lived and died in a very special sense for others, for His Church; or better, His Church, in idea and Divine intention, in principle and effect, lived and died in Him. Hence, I repeat life was now the conquest of men -- theirs, namely, in Him. All others it had met and overthrown, now itself had met its conqueror. For He who had devised it and made it, had now Himself entered into it and fulfilled it.

This was no mere federal representation, but more properly described as identification, for the Church had "lived and died in Him".

Martin saw that the doctrine of the personal Christ must be central in any right understanding of redemption. The "natural theologies" of the atonement which had been dependent upon a rationalized understanding of the necessities of the moral order, had consequently, de-emphasized the doctrine of Christ. The signif-

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1 Martin, op. cit., p. 10.

2 Ibid., p. 11.

icance of the incarnation and life of Christ had been made subordinate to a forensic interest which related to the necessities of the moral order. Man's guilt before God, not man's life in relation to God, had become the fundamental issue. Martin saw that a right perspective was restored when the doctrine of Christ was central:<sup>1</sup>

In short, in Him, in Him personally as the living Head of His body, the Church, God is freely and fully communicated to man, while man becomes, up to the extreme limit of his being, partaker of the Divine nature. No wonder, then, that it should be an easy and natural thing to give the doctrine of the personal Christ a central place in the theory of how all this is brought about. The other doctrines, greater and less, almost spontaneously arrange themselves around this. The doctrines of Godhead, of the World and Man, and the ruin brought on by Sin, are evidently presuppositions to the doctrine of Christ, and together form the situation which calls it forth. ...They lead to Him or return upon Him. In a word, Christian Theology is Christology.

To ground redemption upon Christology, is to centre it upon revelation, and excludes the way of "natural theology" in the exposition of the doctrine.

In all of this, Martin saw that the Christian's relation to Christ was more than a legal relation. With reference to union with Christ he held:<sup>2</sup>

That point is, that the Christian life derives solely from Christ, is originated and maintained solely by Him, and apart from Him does, specifically as such, cease to be.

The closing address of that session, given by Thomas Gregory, was entirely devoted to the doctrine of union with Christ. Entitled, 'Union to Christ the Ground of Justification', Gregory presented a

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1 Martin, op. cit., p. 18.

2 Ibid., p. 25.

detailed historical study of the doctrine of union with Christ. He asserted that all Christian traditions had some understanding of the matter, but that ordinarily the union was viewed as the consummation of redemption, taking effect in sanctification.

Thus, "the name Unio Mystica has its usual application rather<sup>1</sup> to the consummation than to the initiation of redemption."

St. Paul's description of the union as "a great mystery" was understood eschatologically in terms of Christ's relation to the<sup>2</sup> glorified Church, but it should not be so limited:

But the name ought not to be so limited, for even in the passage referred to, Christ's redemptive work for the Church is given as an evidence of His oneness with it, so that this mystical union of believers into one body with their Lord has an application extending far beyond the conscious derivation of life from Him which is begun in regeneration. It is the object of this essay to show how necessary the idea is to a satisfactory statement of the doctrine of Justification.

Having stated his purpose, Gregory reviewed the history of the doctrine. He rejected the concept of union with God as set forth by the medieval mystics, holding that their view meant the attempt to discover an essential continuity between man and God, and involved an escape from individuality. The Reformation made the doctrine of union with Christ a central one, and nowhere did it find better expression than in the early Scottish reformed Catechisms of Craig and Davidson. Indeed, Gregory concluded: "The writers of these Scotch Catechisms seem to have kept the balance between insistence on Christ's work and insistence on union to Him better than it

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1 Thomas Gregory, Union to Christ the Ground of Justification, Closing Address to the New College Theological Society, 1883, Edinburgh, Lorimer and Gillies, 1883, p. 33.

2 Ibid., p. 33.

is done in any other Reformation document." <sup>1</sup> If the Westminster Confession of Faith had been more related to the older Scottish tradition, it would have given a more prominent place to this element in the doctrine of justification.

Gregory was aware of the increasingly forensic interpretation of justification, which caused the doctrine of union to Christ to be given less and less place in Scottish theology. He saw that the concept of "federal union" with Christ was too much bound up in solely legal categories. It had two drawbacks which he defined as: "First, that it is apt to be opposed to actual union as a separate thing; and second, that it has an association of unreality about it." <sup>2</sup> To conceive of justification in terms of substitution and imputation, gave no real relation to Christ so that His suffering and human guilt were never more than artificially related. But the theological importance of the doctrine of union with Christ was, "that it solves the contradiction that there is on the one hand in the suffering of the innocent, and on the other in the acquittal of the guilty...." <sup>3</sup>

For Gregory, union to Christ was not just the end of justification, but the beginning of it. Founding his assertion upon the election of Christ's people in Him before the foundation of the world, he held that "there is a real union of Christ's people to Him, which precedes and accounts for the gift of faith." <sup>4</sup> This union he described as a "oneness". which involved a radically representative understanding of Christ's identification of Himself with His people in all His work. Christ suffered for His people when many were yet

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1 Gregory, op. cit., p. 41.

2 Ibid., p. 44.

3 Ibid., p. 42.

4 Ibid., p. 46.

unborn, nevertheless He was one with them: <sup>1</sup>

When He took our nature He came under the law of human solidarity, of human brotherhood, and obligation and love. His body, the Church, is the "fulness", the necessary complement, "of Him that filleth all in all."

Because Christ so represented His people that they were one with Him, this oneness in the relation of union was the ground of their justification: <sup>2</sup>

If these things are so, we must look for the ground of Christ's suffering for us and of our receiving life from Him in a real and spiritual and eternal union of Christ to His people.

Since in this union Christ's people were one with Him, representation was the better way of understanding the work of Christ than substitution. The substitutionary interest indeed tended to so separate the believer and Christ, that the believer could give some place to his own work and contribution in the matter of salvation. When all things were found in Christ, only then did the believer find satisfaction: <sup>3</sup>

Thus the conceptions of substitution and imputation and love and discipleship fail to give rest to the spirit, because they allow and encourage it to hold itself off from God, as if independent as well as distinct. On the other hand, the assertion that union with Christ is the condition of man's true life, denies his independence in the inmost retreat of his being, and therefore satisfies.

Moreover, "The connection between Christ and His people which is thus proved is better expressed as oneness than as substitution...." <sup>4</sup> It was not just the benefits of Christ, but Christ Himself, with His benefits, who became the believer's by the oneness of that union.

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1 Gregory, op. cit., p. 49.

2 Ibid., p. 49.

3 Ibid., p. 48.

4 Ibid., p. 49.

In his stress upon the centrality of the doctrine of union with Christ, Gregory showed a great appreciation of the insights of the earliest Scottish reformed theology. As he set forth his own understanding, he sought to counter the forensic viewpoint which saw the relation of Christ and His people only in legal terms. It was necessary, rather, to ground the union in the reality of the incarnate Lord who had made Himself one with His people in the incarnation. The relationship was not simply legal, but was real and natural, and by it, Christ Himself, with all His benefits, was made the believer's.

Gregory represents another step in that movement toward the recovery of a fuller doctrine of the atonement which was evident in much of Scottish theology in the latter part of the nineteenth century. And again, the movement away from the forensic framework took the form of a movement toward the early Christological insights of Scots reformed theology.

No attempt to understand late nineteenth century theology in this light would be complete without attention being given to the work of Professor William Milligan of Aberdeen University. Particularly in his great work on the 'Ascension and Heavenly Priesthood of our Lord', Milligan laid great stress upon the relation of the person of Christ, to the whole movement of His atoning work, begun in His incarnation and completed in His ascension and heavenly priesthood.

Milligan was concerned to understand the incarnation not only as the Divine means of dealing with sin, but as the first step in the attainment of a new relation of men to God, in which men became

the children of God:<sup>1</sup>

For the object of the Incarnation was not simply to make it possible for the Eternal Son to labour and suffer and die. Had no more than this been necessary for the accomplishment of His work, it would be difficult to understand why His human nature should not have been a merely temporary possession, and after having been united to His Divine nature during the days of His humiliation, been laid aside at His exaltation.... But we are not led to think that the sole or even the great object of the Incarnation was to prepare our Lord as a victim for the sacrifice. Scripture everywhere implies that, necessary as was His suffering of death to procure the pardon of sin, and precious as are its fruits, it was only a step towards the attainment of a still higher end -- an end contemplated from the beginning, corresponding more closely to the nature of God Himself, and alone able to satisfy our need. That end was to bring us into a state of perfect union with the Father of our spirits, and so to introduce into our weak human nature the strength of the Divine nature, that not in name only, or outwardly, or by a figure, but in truth, inwardly, and in reality, we might receive the right to become children of God.

Milligan's understanding of "this higher end" of the incarnation is strongly reminiscent of McLeod Campbell's conception of the prospective purpose of the atonement. Indeed Milligan's very terminology -- such as, "the Father of our spirits." -- shows that he had been deeply influenced by Campbell.

Nevertheless, Milligan was unwilling to centre all of theology in the incarnation alone, for, in his words: "As the Ascension necessarily presupposes the Incarnation, so without the Ascension the Incarnation is incomplete."<sup>2</sup> He was deeply aware of the value of the new stress on the incarnation as over against the forensic view,

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1 William Milligan, The Ascension and Heavenly Priesthood of our Lord, London, Macmillan and Co., 1898, Second Edition, pp. 29-30.

2 Ibid., p. 33.

which had for too long centred its attention solely upon man and his guilt. But he was concerned also to see the incarnation as a history which had its culmination in the ascension and glorification of Christ: <sup>1</sup>

...notwithstanding the immense advance lately made by theology, from the manner in which, after having long devoted itself too exclusively to man and his salvation, it has turned to Christ, a most important part of the gain may be lost sight of. Occupying itself with the Incarnation alone, theology and along with it religion will be deprived of its most essential characteristic. It will fail to dwell amidst those superearthy realities which it is the object of the New Testament to make our daily food; and though man and the world may still be elevated, they will not be pervaded by the light and the spirit of heaven. The Ascension must thus be combined with the Incarnation if we would understand the process by which the Almighty designs to realize His final purpose with regard to humanity.

In the ascended Christ was seen the full and final purpose of God <sup>2</sup> for human life:

Seated on the throne of that heavenly world which is above us and around us on every side, is One in whom the human nature has been closely and indissolubly united with the Divine; and from that time onward humanity is filled with its loftiest potencies and most glorious prospects. At the Ascension the goal of humanity is reached.

In Milligan's view the incarnation was the beginning of a history in which, through the life and work of Christ, God lifted up human life to sonship in Him. The incarnation, no more than the death of Christ, was not an event which could be separated from the totality of His life, -- these things were all part of the movement of His new humanity, through the ascension, toward the presence of the Father on high. Even in the creation itself God's ultimate purpose

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1 Milligan, op. cit., p. 34.

2 Ibid., p. 34.



was the uplifting of human life to Himself in Jesus Christ:<sup>1</sup>

Even in the creation of man, therefore, the Ascension of our Lord, and not merely His Incarnation must have been part of the Divine Counsel.

Milligan saw the cross as the beginning of the glorification of Christ. John's Gospel demanded that the facts of the crucifixion and resurrection be considered as one event. The words of Jesus, "And I, if I be lifted up on high out of the earth, will draw all men to me:",<sup>2</sup> have in Milligan's view one meaning: "...that His Glorification begins not with the Resurrection but with the Crucifixion."<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, the crucifixion of Christ was a true and proper sacrifice for sin:<sup>4</sup>

...there can be no doubt upon one point, that the death of the Redeemer upon Calvary was a true and proper sacrifice for sin. In this light it is always and everywhere presented to us in Scripture. In this light, with comparatively little exception, it has always been acknowledged and believed in by the Church. No other explanation of it has obtained more than partial acceptance.

The Christ who gave His life as a sacrifice for sin and showed forth His glory in the love of the cross, rose from the dead and entered into the presence of God. Thus His glory is not only in His earthly life,<sup>5</sup> but in His risen and ascended life:

When St. Paul speaks of the Redeemer, it is seldom in any other light than as One who has not only assumed humanity, but in whom humanity has been glorified. When he describes "the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe," he has in his mind a power not exhibited only in

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1 Milligan, op. cit., p. 31.

2 St. John 12:32.

3 Ibid., p. 78.

4 Ibid., p. 114.

5 Ibid., pp. 32-33.

the earthly life of the Redeemer, but "the strength of that might which God wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places."

Milligan's fundamental concern was that the work of Christ should not be conceived of apart from His person and life. The incarnation; the cross; the resurrection; the ascension; were not capable of definition apart from the very person and present life of Christ. It was His life in the incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension which gave meaning to those supreme events. Therefore a right doctrine of the atonement was not to be concerned solely with one aspect of His life -- the death, or the incarnation-- but rather with the totality of His life in all its movement of humiliation and glorification. And such a doctrine was to be concerned supremely with His present life -- a life which was eternally an offering from humanity in the presence of the Father.

It was Christ's life, what He was as Mediator in the hypostatic union, which He offered to the Father, both in death and in the heavenly presence:<sup>1</sup>

What He offered on the cross, what He offers now, in His life, a life unchangeable not only in its general character as life, but in the particular character given it by the experience through which it passed.

This understanding of the significance of the very person and life of Christ to the meaning of redemption led Milligan to stress the conception of a heavenly offering. He recognized that many interpreted the function of the ascended Christ as that of heavenly intercession on the basis of His finished work of atonement in His death. But to his mind, intercession was not enough. "Our Lord, even

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1 Milligan, op. cit., p. 133.

in His exalted and glorified state must have "somewhat to offer".<sup>1</sup>  
 What He offered to God on behalf of humanity was not His death, but  
 His life as a life which passed through the experience of death.

Thus:<sup>2</sup>

Death is an act accomplished in a moment. If any claim is to be founded upon it, it must be recalled as a past act in order that the claim may be allowed. Life is a condition or state. At every instant of its course it may bear the stamp imprinted upon it at its beginning, and it will be judged of by what it is, not by what it was.

Milligan's fundamental conception of the atonement was the offering of Christ's life to the Father, not just His death as the penalty for sin. The Old Testament thought of atonement not in terms of the death for sin, but "in the use afterwards made of the blood thus shed in death."<sup>3</sup> Where the New Testament spoke of the blood of Christ, the blood meant His life. And this life, which passed through death,<sup>4</sup> Christ presents to the Father:

His life was what He gave to God as life, although it was a life which then and there, as demanded by eternal considerations connected with the relations between God and man, passed through death. The same blood then, or in other words, the same life, is next presented to the Father within the sanctuary; and the only difference between what it was before Christ died and what it was after He died is this, that it has now a new character fully impressed upon it,-- the character given it by that death which has been freely accepted in obedience to the Father's will, and in love to the Father and to men. Thus we obtain a view of our Lord's work by which its two great stages, that of His dying upon the cross, and that of His presenting Himself to His heavenly Father in the Most Holy Place, are united under one conception -- the conception of offering.

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1 Milligan, op. cit., p. 123.

2 Ibid., p. 134.

3 Ibid., pp. 131-132.

4 Ibid., p. 133.

Jesus Christ, who offered up His life in death before the Father  
 ever presents Himself as the eternal offering of humanity to God: <sup>1</sup>

What our Lord was after He sat down at the right hand of the Heavenly Majesty He can never cease to be.... What He had done must penetrate what He always does; and the thought of Offering cannot give place to that of Intercession.

It is significant to note that Milligan does not set forth a conception of Christ's offering in which His sacrifice for sin is eternally repeated. He does not so conceive of the relation of time and eternity that (in the Roman sense) Christ's death is continually presented to the Father in the heavenly realm as a continuing sacrifice for sin. Rather he asserts the historical and "once for all" nature of Christ's work. Fundamentally, the heavenly offering is joined to the earthly offering in the person of Christ, crucified, risen and ascended.

Milligan's essential point is that the work of Christ can never be separated from His person. He is the One who has done the work. His person -- His life -- is presented to the Father as that life in which humanity is perfected and redeemed--that life which passed through the experience of death and is risen and ascended to God. As from man's side it is impossible to conceive of the Son apart from His work, so also when the Son presents Himself to the Father, the Father accepts the offering of the Son in whom He is well pleased -- the Son who has accomplished His work. The Father does not simply have regard to one moment in the life of the Son, but the Father has regard to the Son Himself-- to the Son who in His life and death and in the whole course of His obedience to the Father, wrought the forgiveness and salvation of man.

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<sup>1</sup> Milligan, op. cit., p. 126.

In the sacrifice of Himself in His death, Christ paid forever the penalty of sin, and in the presence of the Father He is eternally the One who has done this work:<sup>1</sup>

In surrendering His life for man our Lord fulfilled the highest conception of a perfect and everlasting offering which cannot in the nature of things be followed by any other sacrifice for sin. The penalty for sin once completely paid cannot be paid again. Its stamp remains imperishably on the life now lived by the ascended Lord. In the presence of His Father He is forever the Lamb that was slain, and no repetition of His offering can take place.

In Milligan's view, the very essence of Christ's Priestly work was its representative character. By His incarnation in human nature, and in all His work, Christ represented His people, and this representation was forever:<sup>2</sup>

As, too, Christ retains His humanity forever, so His people are forever in Him. As they were identified with Him in the earlier, they are also identified with Him in the later steps of His offering. In no part of His work does the Redeemer stand alone. He never ceased to be the Mediator between God and man, the Head of the Body, the Representative of the whole line of His spiritual descendants.

When Christ's offering was seen as His life, His whole offering became a unity, and a unity also of Christ and His people:<sup>3</sup>

...let us look at our Lord's offering as one of life, of life passing through death upon the cross, and afterwards "perfected" in heaven, and His whole offering becomes one, and our part with Him also one. One with Him, we die in Him, rise in Him, reign in Him. We are in Him from the beginning to the end of our spiritual experience. Our repentance, our cry for pardon, our acceptance of the penalty of sin, our new and higher life, are all in Him -- involved in the very idea of receiving Him as He is....

Milligan held that the concept of representation was the better way

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1 Milligan, op. cit., pp. 141-142.

2 Ibid., p. 140.

3 Ibid., pp. 144-145.

of regarding the work of Christ than substitution. Representation was not merely an outward appointment, but rested "upon an internal reality, and an internal correspondence with the essential elements of their state." "He becomes what they are, that they in Him may become what He is."<sup>1</sup>

It was union to Christ which gave that internal reality to representation. "...personal identification and union with Christ is the fundamental and regulating conception of our state as Christians."<sup>2</sup> All that man has to present to God is found in Jesus Christ and His people are given to participate in Him:<sup>3</sup>

Whatever they do must be first done by Him....  
They do not live simply in the power of something which He bestows on them as a gift, apart from what He is. They live "because of" Himself in them.

Thus it was that Milligan saw union with Christ as the central truth of Christian experience:<sup>4</sup>

Union on our part to Christ in all His fortunes penetrates the whole process of redemption; and our Lord's offering, while He takes us into it and along with it from the first, is complete as well as one.

As a figure in the movement away from the forensic interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement, William Milligan has his importance in his stress upon the relation of the work of Christ to His person. It was in the living and ascended Christ, the head of the new humanity, that atonement was to be found. Christ had taken human life upon Himself, had borne the sin of man in His death, and now presented His own perfect life on behalf of men, in the presence of

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1 Milligan, op. cit., p. 343.

2 Ibid., p. 197.

3 Ibid., p. 137.

4 Ibid., p. 146.

the Father. The Father accepted the perfect offering of the Son, and all whom the Son represented. By union with Christ through His Spirit, man was given to share in His perfect and glorified humanity. Thus, in Milligan, the forensic framework was supplanted by a real and substantial relation between believers and the glorified humanity of Christ.

We began this section with an appraisal of the theology of Robert S. Candlish. We saw how Candlish began to move away from the older legal framework, toward an understanding of the incarnation in the light of the adoption to sonship in Christ. It remains to conclude this section by giving attention to the theology of his son, James S. Candlish, who was for twenty-five years Professor of Systematic Theology at the Free Church College in Glasgow. Though Candlish died in 1897, he was for a few years the colleague of James Denney, and Denney wrote the preface to his lectures, published posthumously, and entitled, 'The Christian Salvation'.

Candlish approached the doctrine of the atonement with considerable appreciation of many of the strands which contributed to its richness. He noted a juridical interest in St. Paul, a more "subjective and religious" interest in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Johannine conception of atonement through communion with Christ. Each of these strands, when properly related to the other, contributed to the full Biblical understanding of the atonement:

In Paul's epistles and that to the Hebrews, explanations of the fact are given from different points of view, one more objective, juridical, and ethical; the other more subjective, typical, and religious;--

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1 James S. Candlish, The Christian Salvation, Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1899, p. 33.

the former viewing it in the light of God's moral law and government, the latter in that of the ordinances of worship and religious experiences of men. Since both of these are real and important relations, the views founded on them are each legitimate, and neither contradicts nor excludes the other, for the great sacrifice of Calvary has not one only but many bearings on God and man and the universe.

Candlish saw in the epistles of John the further conception of Christ as our atonement through communion with Him:<sup>1</sup>

There is a special reference to Christ's death when it is said, "the blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1:7); but the blood is viewed in 5:6 not only as shed on the cross, but as belonging to that true human nature in which He came by His birth. John regards the whole person of Christ as our propitiation; and the way in which we obtain an interest in it is by personal life-communion with Him.

Candlish asserted that in the history of the doctrine of the atonement, the juridical conception was the one most readily employed. Unfortunately this conception was often employed in erroneous ways:<sup>2</sup>

But at first it was often applied in erroneous ways; and even when that was not done, it was sometimes pressed in a narrow and onesided manner, to the exclusion of the complementary views which the New Testament contains.

Again he contended that many theories founded upon St. Paul and the Epistle to the Hebrews gave no place to the essential element of union with Christ:<sup>3</sup>

...and it may be noticed that all these theories (juridical and governmental) are founded entirely on two sets of statements by the apostles, Paul's doctrine of redemption, and the sacrificial explanations in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and

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1 Candlish, op. cit., p. 34.

2 Ibid., p. 36.

3 Ibid., p. 49.



have mainly proceeded on the plan of taking from Scripture the idea of righteousness, and interpreting this by various philosophic assumptions, while the series of statements about our union with Christ in His death have been overlooked or little used.

In this Candlish was rightly aware of the method of the "legal strain" of the older theology. "Righteousness" had been abstracted from its Christological and Scriptural context, and had been interpreted in terms of the external philosophical assumptions of a moral law apprehended by the light of nature. In such a method there was no place for the key doctrine of union with Christ.

In reaction to this neglect some had taken the element of union, so strong in John, and also an important element in Paul, and had emphasized it to the exclusion of the juridical element. The result was again a partial doctrine.

The mystical element was not therefore sufficient in itself, but it did include one important truth: "that our relation to Christ as our Redeemer is not a mere moral or federal one, but a real spiritual union."<sup>1</sup> Taken together with the juridical and object-<sup>2</sup>ive element it pointed toward a full understanding of atonement:

But when the mystic element is not pushed to such extremes, and is accepted as supplementing and not superseding the idea of an objective bearing of the atonement on the requirements of God's character and law, it is a thing that has been recognized by the most spiritual Church teachers in various ages, as Athanasius, Bernard, Luther, Calvin, Jonathan Edwards; and it enables us to form a conception of Christ's work that is free from the one-sidedness of most other theories, and probably comes as near to doing justice to the whole teaching of revelation and enabling us to understand the great redemption as is possible.

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1 Candlish, op. cit., p. 51.

2 Ibid., p. 51.

Candlish saw that union with Christ meant a real relation between Christ and His people and was the key conception in the right understanding of the atonement:<sup>1</sup>

According to the teaching of Christ and His apostles, as contained in the New Testament, there is a union of Christ and His people which is vital and spiritual, and though not discernible by the senses or demonstrable by reasoning, yet really apprehended by the soul and verified by its fruits; and when this is recognised in connection with the atonement, along with the corresponding truth of Christ's spiritual oneness both with God and man in virtue of His incarnation, the defects of many theories of the atonement may be supplied, and a more satisfactory explanation approached.

The conception of union with Christ avoided the artificiality of a solely legal relation between Christ and His people. In all His work, Christ was their representative:<sup>2</sup>

He gives His life a ransom in their stead because He is their representative, and He is their representative because He has become the Son of Man. His tie to the race is a real and living one: He not only has taken the same nature, but has for them all the feelings of a brother.

Candlish grounded the representative character of the work of Christ in the fundamental fact of the incarnation. He who was one with God had become one with man. It was not therefore by a "mere appointment or covenant" that he bore the punishment of men's sins, but it was the "natural consequence of His oneness both with God and man."<sup>3</sup>

Forgiveness was thus through union to Christ:<sup>4</sup>

...when believers are forgiven because of Christ's sacrifice of Himself for them, it is not as if His merit was ascribed to them by a mere legal fiction, for they are brought into such a vital union to Christ that His death is truly, though spiritually, theirs also....

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1 Candlish, op. cit., p. 51.

2 Ibid., p. 52.

3 Ibid., p. 52.

4 Ibid., p. 52.

While Candlish accepted the necessity of preserving the juridical element in the doctrine of the atonement, he asserted that it could only be rightly understood in the Christological and Biblical context. Moreover that context also provided the parallel conception of union to Christ. By the incarnation He became one with man and truly representative of man in all His work. Only when these elements were held together was a truly Biblical doctrine of the atonement possible.

As an epilogue to the great contribution of McLeod Campbell, we have seen somewhat of the movement away from the solely forensic conceptions which were the heritage of the later federal theology. In this movement there was a reaching out to more Christological formulations, and to formulations founded upon revelation. In the conception of union with Christ, with all that the doctrine meant for the incarnate Lord's identification with man in His work, these theologians pointed the way toward a full doctrine of the atonement.

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CHAPTER FIVETHE MORAL ASPECT OF THE ATONEMENT -- JAMES DENNEY ANDH. R. MACKINTOSHSECTION ONE: JAMES DENNEY'S MORAL ASPECT OF THE ATONEMENT IN THE  
LIGHT OF SCOTTISH THEOLOGY

In the introductory Chapter, we set forth Principal Denney's understanding of the moral world, and what he conceived to be the 'moral aspect of the atonement'. Having given attention to the theme as it was developed in the whole course of Scottish theology, it is now possible to make an assessment of Denney's position and to see how he stands in the context of that theology.

The first thing that must be said is that Denney cannot be abstracted from the context of the history of Scottish theology. He does not appear as a unique phenomenon, unrelated to his theological predecessors. With all his originality, his theology very much bears the imprint of the influence of the past. While he formally abandoned the covenant framework of the old federal theology, many of its essential concerns were his, and in his own theology of the atonement, particularly with regard to its moral aspect, Denney betrays an interest in many ways deeply related to the concerns of federalism.

It is clear firstly that Denney approaches the subject of atonement sharing the same forensic framework as did the federal theology. There is no emphasis upon what McLeod Campbell termed, "the prospective purpose" of the incarnation. Rather, the concept of grace is interpreted within the thought forms and attitudes of the requirements

of the moral world. As the federal theology interpreted the covenant of grace in terms of the demands and requirements of the prior covenant of works, so Denney, though with a new terminology, centred his doctrine upon the sin of man and the exigencies of the moral world.

This emphasis in Denney led him to understress the saving significance of the incarnation and its essential relation to the whole work of Christ. Denney was fundamentally concerned, as was the later federal theology, with the death of Christ as an atonement for man's guilt. He was inclined therefore to give no meaningful place to the life of Christ and to the prospective aspect of the incarnation, save in a way which made it necessary to the requirements of the atoning death.

Evidence of Denney's tendency to interpret grace within the thought patterns of the covenant of works is to be seen in his approach to Christology. The doctrine of the person of Christ is to be understood, in Denney's view, in the light of the atoning death:<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of the atonement, in the central place which Scripture secures for it, has decisive importance in another way: it is the proper evangelical foundation for a doctrine of the Person of Christ. To put it in the shortest possible form, Christ is the person who can do this work for us.

As we saw in the first Chapter, Denney is little interested in the classical Christology, and his understanding of the doctrine of the two natures is always directed toward the specific task of atonement defined in relation to man's guilt. In Denney's mind, it is the work, not the person which has paramount significance. "Christ is the person who can do this work for us."

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<sup>1</sup> Denney, The Death of Christ, p. 230.

Denney rightly saw the error of those who stressed the classical view out of relation to the work of Christ. But in his own view, he tended to maintain the division between the person and work of Christ. Where the person attained significance only in relation to the work; and where the work was conceived of in terms of the exigencies of the moral order; the result was an interpretation of grace which centred its attention upon the due penalty for man's guilt more than upon the re-creation of his life. The prospective purpose of the incarnation, seen in the whole understanding of adoption to sonship was given little place in Denney's doctrine.

In his stress upon the atonement conceived of in the sense of Christ's passive obedience in His death, and in his failure to relate it fully to the positive aspect of the incarnation and life of Christ, Denney stands clearly in the federal tradition. As we have seen, the federal theologians, conditioning the covenant of grace by the covenant of works, gave less and less significance to the incarnation and the active obedience of Christ. All of His life was interpreted in terms of suffering so that His life became a participation in His death. So also does Denney speak of His life as a "part of His death",<sup>1</sup> and gave no place to the element of the sanctification and renewal of our humanity in the life of Christ, -- an element which was so strongly evident in the original Scottish reformed theology, and was reasserted by McLeod Campbell.

It is clear therefore that Denney shared the essential presupposition of the old federal theology: the covenant of grace was to be interpreted and understood in the light of a prior covenant of

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1 Denney. The Death of Christ, page, 311. Cited above, page 14.

works. Though he abandoned the formal covenant framework, his view of the moral world was essentially founded upon the conceptions of the world and the relation of God and man to which the covenant of works gave rise. Though, as we shall see, Denney's view was moulded and shaped by nineteenth century influences, these influences had an historical identity with the rationalistic orthodoxy of the second Reformation period. The emphasis of that period upon the light of nature had led to the Enlightenment of the next century, and the moral and ethical assumptions of the nineteenth century were grounded upon this general subjective interest.

In the first Chapter we set forth Denney's conception of the moral world. It was the world of personal relations between man and God. It was a world of "reflection and motive, of gratitude and moral responsibility."<sup>1</sup> In such a world, the moral law was of supreme importance. "It is law in the large sense of ethical necessities which determine all the relations of God and man."<sup>2</sup>

Denney conceived of the atonement as taking place in the moral world. In his view to try to supplant the atonement with the incarnation was to raise metaphysical rather than moral problems:<sup>3</sup>

Now Scripture has no interest in metaphysics except as metaphysical questions are approached through and raised by moral ones. The Atonement comes to us in the moral world and deals with us there; it is concerned with conscience and the law of God, with sin and grace, with alienation and peace, with death to sin and life to holiness; it has its being and its efficacy in a world where we can find our footing, and be assured that we are dealing with realities.

All of the relations between God and man are therefore governed by the

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1 Denney, The Death of Christ, p. 306. Cited above, page 3.

2 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 167. Cited above, p. 23.

3 Denney, The Death of Christ, p. 236.

over-ruling conception of the moral world.

The federal theology, conscious of man's responsibility under the covenant of works, and with a legalistic view of the Christian life, tended to exalt the role of the believer in the response made to grace from man's side. Thus it was that the federal theology, as we have seen, spoke of faith as a condition of the covenant of grace. And faith, along with repentance and obedience, though formally recognized as the outworking of grace, came more and more to be regarded as something which man contributed in order to make the work of grace complete.

In the light of all that we have seen of this emphasis in the federal theology, it is clear that Denney's conception of the moral world has essentially the same interest. The moral relationship between God and man requires that faith and the response to the Gospel should be given a considerable place in the scheme of salvation. The cross constitutes a "moral appeal".<sup>1</sup> Man responds to this moral appeal in faith and lives his Christian life in gratitude for this great deliverance. Indeed gratitude becomes the main-spring of the Christian life.<sup>2</sup> Man's inner response "seals the covenant" from man's side. In all of this Denney has the same interest as the federal theologians -- to provide considerable place for man's response to the grace of the Gospel.

Of course, man's response to the Gospel is of supreme importance. By union to Christ, the believer becomes one with Christ's response to the Father on man's behalf. Union with Christ, by participation in His righteousness and life, leads to the true morality, and to a real and effective life of obedience and faith. Yet when the response to the Gospel is conceived of apart from union with Christ,

1 Denney, The Death of Christ, p. 305. Cited above, p. 17.

2 Denney, The Expositor, 1904, p. 160. Cited above, p. 19.



there is a danger of regarding faith and man's response as if they were a required human work. As Ralph Erskine said of the "legal strain" as opposed to the "Gospel strain":<sup>1</sup>

What! life and salvation for nothing! Life and salvation in a free promise! This Gospel is foolishness to the world; it is hard to believe it. Why, the world cannot think that God will give salvation at such a low rate. In a word, the legal strain gives men more to do for salvation, than they are able to do. The Gospel strain gives men less ado for salvation than they are willing to do: for no man is willing to be saved by absolutely free grace, till God make him willing in a day of power....the Gospel strain leads a man out of himself to Christ for all.

The conditioning of the covenant of grace by the covenant of works, was a means by which man could interpret grace within a legalistic framework. That framework provided a place for his own work of response, and as the federal theology developed its subjective interest, it revealed something of man's essential unwillingness to regard grace as free.

Denney, as we have seen, conceived of man, even after the fall, as a creature innately capable of response to the Divine call. We saw how he criticized the Westminster doctrine of the fall for being so severe that it almost excluded the possibility of redemption. Speaking of the Westminster view he commented: "The need of redemption is only too powerfully expressed here, but what becomes of its possibility? What is left in man for even redeeming love to appeal to."<sup>2</sup> Man is therefore still a moral creature -- or at least a creature living in a moral and personal world. His response to the appeal of the atonement produces faith and gratitude which becomes the sust-

1 Ralph Erskine, Gospel Truth, pp. 387-388. Cited above, pp. 132-133.

2 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 199. Cited above, p. 18.

†aining power of the Christian life.

In this respect, Denney's conception of the moral world was the historical descendant of the federal subjective interest. The assumption of a moral continuity between man and God which, though spoiled by sin, was still existent, was basic to the federal view. The light of nature within and the Word without, as James Durham put it, were the two guides to the Christian life. In Denney's moral world, man possesses the same inner capacities which enable him to respond to the Divine grace.

The concept of the moral order, founded upon a sense of the natural continuity of God and man, and understood by the light of nature within, and revelation without, assumes not only that the world is a moral world, but that man is a moral creature. His sin has not so spoiled him that he has ceased to be a creature who can participate in such a world. Redemption therefore becomes a restoration to his natural estate, rather than a lifting up to a new and greater estate in Christ. In such a framework it is his guilt rather than the totality of his life which has the focus of attention.

This same identity of interest with the later federal theology is seen in Denney's emphasis upon substitutionary atonement and his rejection of any meaningful concept of representation. He spoke with approval of the preceding generation's acceptance of substitution:

The doctrine of Atonement current in the Church in the generation preceding our own answered frankly that in His atoning work Christ is our substitute. He comes in our nature, and He comes into our place.... Death was not His due: it was something alien to One who did nothing amiss;

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1 Cited above, p. 76.

2 Denney, The Death of Christ, pp. 301-302.

but it was our due, and because it was ours He made it His. It was thus that He made Atonement. He bore our sins. He took to Himself all that they meant, all in which they had involved the world. He died for them, and in so doing acknowledged the sanctity of that order in which sin and death are indissolubly united. In other words, He did what the human race could not do for itself, yet what had to be done if sinners were to be saved: for how could men be saved if there were not made in humanity an acknowledgment of all that sin is to God, and of the justice of all that is entailed by sin under God's constitution of the world?

In Denney's view Christ's work was a work done alone, the One becoming the substitute for the many. Death was not His due, and in taking the place of guilty men, He made Himself their substitute. This way of speaking of the death of Christ speaks deeply and profoundly of the utter graciousness of grace. He did for us what we could never do. The inner truth of substitution is that Christ alone is Saviour -- we did not and can not save ourselves. As Denney himself expressed it:<sup>1</sup>

Christ has done something for us which gives Him His place for ever as the only Redeemer of men, and, no matter how thoroughly under His inspiration we are changed into His likeness, we never cease to be the redeemed nor invade His solitary place.

With his profound concern for this truth of substitution, Denney rejected the concept of representation as a way of speaking of the atoning work of Christ. As we saw in the introductory Chapter, he vehemently rejected any concept of representation other than a representation which was the outcome and not the origin of the life of faith.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, pp. 280-281.

2 See above, pp. 12-13.

The original Scottish reformed theology had laid great stress upon representation, and substitution had been given no place in the Westminster Standards. Indeed, the federal theology was highly representational in its original conception of the work of Christ. This element was particularly strong in Samuel Rutherford, who, as we saw, spoke of the atoning work of Christ as the actual redemption of the elect -- not simply as the basis of their redemption. Such a view necessitated a thoroughgoing conception of representation.

The failure of the federal theology was that it increasingly tended to interpret representation in a legal and artificial way. The failure to provide for any real relationship between Christ and His people, and the failure to see the incarnation as the ground of that ~~i~~identity, resulted in a doctrine of representation which seemed far off from man -- a pretence which served the requirements of the forensic framework.

The failure of the federal theology to understand representation in the light of the incarnation and the real relation of union of believers to Christ, manifested itself in an increasingly substitutionary conception of atonement. The division of the one covenant of grace into the two covenants of redemption and grace, served to separate Christ and His work from His people. Particularly in the work of Patrick Gillespie, we saw how Christ was conceived of as a private person in the covenant of redemption, and as a public person only in the covenant of grace -- the covenant in which the redemption was individually applied. The real work of atonement was accomplished in relation to the covenant of redemption, and in this covenant Christ was not the representative of His people.

This division of the covenant of grace served the dualistic interest of the predestinarian views of the federal theologians. If Christ were to be truly representative in His work, how could He represent the elect and not all men? As we observed in speaking of the theology of Patrick Gillespie, substitution made it possible to speak of the atonement as something done by Christ on behalf of the elect. It could be applied to them in a secondary covenant in due time. There was consequently no problem as to the extent of the representation -- a problem which was very real when the atonement was conceived of as the actual redemption of Christ's people who were in Him in His work.

Though Denney had abandoned the formal structure of the covenant theology, its increasing substitutionary emphasis, grounded upon its forensic approach and its dualistic understanding of election, were themes which were particularly strong in his theology. Substitution as he conceived it was a view of the atonement which regarded redemption as that which came to an individual on the basis of the work of Christ. Christ alone had done the necessary work, and on the basis of this deed, redemption was applied to individuals in due course. Indeed, in this view, there still remain two covenants of grace - the covenant under which the atonement is won by Christ; and the covenant by which it is individually applied.

The substitutionary view therefore tends to separate between Christ and His people in the work of redemption. It presents the relation of Christ and His people in a legal and artificial way, and fails to do justice to the positive aspect of the incarnation in the

1 See pp. 85-89 above, in which this matter is extensively considered.

identification of the Son with our humanity. The essence of the substitutionary view, that Christ died for our sins instead of us, while it contains a great truth of grace, does not do full justice to the radical identification of Christ with man, which is at the heart of the full meaning of atonement.

The representative view, that Christ died for us, rather than instead of us, does not separate between Christ and His people. It takes the incarnation seriously. Christ identified Himself with us and made Himself flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone in His incarnation. He made Himself to be the New Adam, the One who would renew and sanctify humanity, make atonement for sin, and bring mankind to the Father, -- raised to sonship in Himself. If the atonement is seen in its full scope -- in the whole movement of humiliation and exaltation in the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ; in short, in His Person -- it is clear that the representative figure is the better one. He was born, for us, not instead of us, and in the same sense He died and rose and ascended. The present life of Christ is a life in the presence of the Father, for us. As He made Himself to be one with us in His person and work, so He is ever one with us before the Father. Representation, or better, identification speaks best of the whole scope of the atoning work, for it truly relates our humanity to that humanity of Christ in which the work of redemption and adoption is accomplished.

Only when representation is seen in such a radical sense does the bearing of our sins become real. In a highly substitutionary framework, the imputation of human sin to the sinless One always has an element of unreality about it. It is thought to be "legally" imputed,

the Father regarding it "as if" it were really the bearing of human sin. Such an approach never really carries conviction. But when the sin-bearing of the sinless One is seen in the light of His identification of Himself with us in His incarnation, then His taking upon Himself of our sin becomes as real and tangible as His very taking of flesh itself. Representation shows the profound relationship between our guilt and the suffering of Christ which substitution does not bring out. For in the incarnation, Christ involved Himself in our plight and made Himself truly one with us in our predicament. The New Adam, our Brother Man, has made Himself so completely one with us that to take our sin upon Himself is at the heart of the meaning of that identification. And again, He has made Himself so completely one with us that His righteousness manifest in our flesh in all His work, becomes ours in a real and natural way. The substitutionary view seeks to preserve the distinction between Christ and humanity. The representative view seeks to make the identity as close as possible. Most certainly the latter view is truer to the doctrine of the incarnation.

This is not to say that the doctrine of representation is without its problems. It can often be presented in such an abstract way that it heightens the separation between Christ and men. The federal conception of representation tended ~~to~~ <sup>so</sup> rationalise its understanding that the atonement had no real relation to humanity. The covenant between the Father and the Son concluded the matter apart from the involvement of the race. In such a form representation becomes a variant of substitution. Christ does His work "on behalf of" men. But the incarnation means that we are actually involved in the work

of Christ. And we are involved, not because we have identified ourselves with Christ, but because He has identified Himself with us in the taking upon Himself of our humanity.

Substitution, as Denney presented it, tells us that our participation in Christ is a participation of grace -- not of right. It guards against the idea that man contributes to the work of redemption and in any sense redeems himself. He who was without sin did for us what sinners could never do. In this there is an unlikeness between Christ and man, and to see it is to see grace. But the grace of Christ is seen even more profoundly when, in the incarnation and the representative nature of His work, He takes away the unlikeness and humbles Himself to become one with us. In Christ the unlikeness is overcome. We become members of His body, and having nothing in ourselves, are given to participate in His righteousness, and to be in Him, in the presence of the Father.

More than anything else, Denney was concerned for grace. When some of his contemporaries had evolved a theology of representation which seemed to him to indicate that man had redeemed himself, he was therefore determined to combat it. Nevertheless it was a failure that he did not so ground his understanding upon the incarnation, that he could see the full meaning of Christ's identification of Himself with us.

The tendency in Denney was to separate between believers and Christ in His work. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his rejection of any meaningful conception of union with Christ. We saw in the first Chapter <sup>1</sup> how he refused to give any other than a "moral" meaning to the doctrine. Union to Christ was the language of religious

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1 See above, pp. 16-22.



passion and had no meaning other than in the moral realm. As we saw, Denney defined this "moral union" in the subjective terms:<sup>1</sup>

The only union it (the New Testament) knows is a moral one -- a union due to the moral power of Christ's death, operating morally as a constraining motive on the human will, and begetting in believers the mind of Christ in relation to sin; but this union remains the problem and the task, as well as the reality and the truth, of the Christian life.

This union had no meaning at all in relation to the work of Christ. It was not, as Thomas Gregory defined it, the ground of justification.<sup>2</sup> Our relation to the work of Christ was present and ethical:

Our dying with Him, even if we call it, as Paul does, our crucifixion with Him, is a present and an ethical experience; it is a dying to sin, a being or rather a becoming insensible to its appeals and its power; our living with Him is a being alive to God, a new sensibility to His claim upon our life. In other words, our union with Christ is not metaphysical or mystical, but moral; it is not a basis for a new life such as faith could not give, or such as includes a security for the new life beyond what faith could bestow; it is something achieved by faith in the very measure in which faith makes Christ's attitude to sin and to God its own.... All His thoughts and feelings in relation to sin..become ours through faith. This itself, and nothing else, is our union to Christ.

This "moral union" is accomplished through faith and its experiences, and "is not something which has an antecedent existence and value of its own on which faith can presume."<sup>3</sup>

In all of this Denney failed to see the real relation between Christ and His people brought about by His incarnation and His atoning work as our representative. It is apparent that he was out of sympathy with that strain in Scottish theology, particularly the original reformed theology, which laid great stress upon union |

1 Denney, The Death of Christ, p. 306

2 Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, pp. 304-305.

3 Ibid., p. 305.

to Christ. The result was that in Denney's theology the relation of Christ and His people tended to be legal and moral, rather than natural and real. His doctrine of justification remained an imputation of Christ's righteousness in the forensic sense, rather than a real receiving of righteousness by the believer through union with Christ who was, in Himself, the atonement. In light of the great place which the doctrine of union with Christ has been given in the Scottish theology, Denney's rejection of any meaningful and objective understanding of it, allies him in this respect with the "legal strain" in the Scottish tradition.

We saw at the outset that Denney's overriding presupposition was his conception of the moral world. From all that we have seen of the Scottish theology, it is possible to assert that this is essentially the old forensic viewpoint in modern dress. The federal theology, by interpreting grace in the context of a prior covenant of works, had given a supreme place to the concept of law in all the work of salvation. It had assumed a natural knowledge of the moral order founded upon the creation and the light of nature. In its application of the concept of law to the doctrine of the atonement, it therefore interpreted law apart from its Biblical context of grace, and apart from revelation. An understanding of law grounded upon man's self-awareness as a "moral creature" therefore tended to supplant the Biblical understanding of the law as the command of a Holy and Gracious God. Such a conception tended to abstract the law from the Person of the Deity and to conceive of it as governing not only the way of man, but also the way of God with man.

Denney was charged by some of his contemporaries with teaching

a forensic or legal doctrine of the atonement. He was concerned to refute this and agreed that a crudely forensic view was a travesty of the truth:<sup>1</sup>

To say that the relations of God and man are forensic is to say that they are regulated by statute -- that sin is a breach of statute -- that the sinner is a criminal -- and that God adjudicates on him by interpreting the statute in its application to his case. Everybody knows that this is a travesty of the truth....

In Denney's mind the forensic doctrine rested upon a view of God and man as the magistrate on the bench and the criminal at the bar. And as such he denied a crudely forensic view.

Nevertheless, Denney gave a central place to the conception of law in terms of a universal moral order. In speaking of the relations between God and man he asserted that they were, to begin with, personal relations. But to say that was not enough. Unfortunately many had assumed that personal relations transcended legal relations and were independent of law. But personal relations were both ethical and universal:<sup>2</sup>

The relations of God and man are not lawless, they are not capricious, incalculable, incapable of moral meaning; they are personal, but determined by something of universal import; in other words, they are not merely personal but ethical. That is ethical which is at once personal and universal. ✓

Because this was so the relation of God and man was governed by a moral order universally binding and valid:<sup>3</sup>

The relations of God to man therefore are not capricious though they are personal; they are reflected or expressed in a moral constitution to which all personal beings are equally bound,

1 Denney, The Death of Christ, second ed., p. 272.

2 Ibid., p. 271.

3 Ibid., p. 271.

a moral constitution of eternal and universal validity, which neither God nor man can ultimately treat as anything else than what it is.

If the relations between God and man are to be rational and moral, and if they are to be ethical, -- "they must be not only personal but universal; they must be relations that in some sense are determined by law."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the relations of God and man are governed by the universal law -- "that moral order or constitution in which we have our life in relation to God and each other."<sup>2</sup>

In Denney's view, St. Paul did not conceive of the law simply in terms of the Jewish religious practice, but for him the law was universal:<sup>3</sup>

He has the conception of a universal law, to which he can appeal in Gentile as well as in Jew -- a law in the presence of which sin is revealed, and by the reaction of which sin is judged -- a law which God could not deny without denying Himself, and to which justice is done (in other words, which is maintained in its integrity), even when God justifies the ungodly. But when law is thus universalised, it ceases to be legal; it is not a statute, but the moral constitution of the world.

In Christ's death homage was paid to the law so conceived.

In Denney's view the conception of a universal moral constitution of the world transcended a merely legal view of the moral law as a statute. It was supremely ethical and of universal validity, and neither God nor man could ultimately treat it as anything else than what it was.

Certainly the law as the command of the Holy God -- and the law manifest in the righteousness of Christ -- was determinative of the awful necessity of the cross. Any attempt to comprehend the

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1 Denney, The Death of Christ, p. 272.

2 Ibid., p. 273.

3 Ibid., p. 274.

meaning of the atonement apart from the conception of the revelation of the righteousness of God -- in His law, and supremely, in His Son -- does less than justice to the Biblical theme of the wrath of the righteous God in the face of man's unrighteousness. Man's sin is a supreme offence to God, because God is revealed as the Holy One.

While such a true concept of law is therefore a determinative one in any right understanding of the atonement, law must be understood within the context of revelation. Where the covenant of grace was interpreted in the light of a prior covenant of works, a natural knowledge of law and an assumed knowledge of the moral order became the means of interpreting the atoning work of Christ. In such a scheme, law was understood apart from the context of grace -- its sole context in the Biblical setting. The law grounded upon man's self-awareness as a "moral creature", became the means of interpreting the work of grace. In short, revelation was understood in the light of a natural awareness of the moral order, and a theology of revelation gave way before a natural theology with its man centred interests.

The law, conceived of apart from revelation, has ever been the means of giving man a place in the work of salvation. The essential assumption of a moral order is the assumption that man is a moral creature. A legalistic interpretation of law tells man that because he is able to comprehend the moral law, he has within himself the possibility of achievement by it.

We have seen that the rationalistic orthodoxy of the seventeenth century, with its subjective emphasis had assumed a natural knowledge of the moral order through the light of nature. Through conscience and his own inner light, man could have an awareness of the moral order which could complement the Divine revelation in Jesus Christ.

This attitude of rationalistic orthodoxy led directly to the Enlightenment and to the subjective emphasis so evident in nineteenth century theology.

The conception of the moral order, from Kant through Schleiermacher to Ritschl, owed much to the basis laid for it in the seventeenth century. The assumption that the truth of the moral order was within, found expression in Kant's assumption that "I ought, therefore I can." Ritschl sought to arrive at religious truth by assuming moral values and then creating religious truth out of them. The overriding assumption of this development was that man had an essential light within, which gave him an appreciation of the moral world, and made him a moral creature. Man's knowledge within became the source of his understanding of the universe, of God, and of moral government. As James Orr described Kant's view in his book on the Ritschlian<sup>1</sup> Theology:

The ends of absolute worth which we discover in ourselves become the key to unlock the riddle of the universe without, and compel us to postulate God as the bond of union between the natural and moral worlds, and to endow Him with all the attributes implied in moral government.

Ritschl was critical of evangelical theology where it had laid insufficient emphasis upon the ethical interpretation of Christianity through the idea of the moral Kingdom of God.<sup>2</sup> It was through moral values that the meaning of revelation was found.

Though Denney was a critic of the Ritschlian theology, his conception of the moral order was profoundly influenced by the whole course of nineteenth century ethical idealism. He accepted the

1 James Orr, The Ritschlian Theology and the Evangelical Faith, Third Edition, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1905, p. 33.

2 Albrecht Ritschl, The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation, Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1900, pp. 10-11.

essential premise of the moral world and sought to re-interpret the older legal view in terms of his wider understanding of the moral order. In his view "legal" conceptions were narrower than were "moral" ones.

Nevertheless, there is an essential relationship between legal and moral conceptions. Both are founded upon a natural knowledge of the law of God implanted within man in the creation, and the latter is the outgrowth of the former, as theology became less and less centred upon revelation. Though Denney insisted that his view was not a forensic one, his understanding of the moral order was to a considerable extent the old conception of the moral law, presented in the modern terminology of nineteenth century ethical idealism.

In all that has been said of the theology of James Denney, it must be remembered that criticism has been directed to only one aspect of his work. His greatness as a theologian is not questioned. Indeed, his contribution to Scottish theology was probably greater than any of his contemporaries. Yet he had a "blind-spot", as Professor A.S. Peake put it, and it has been with that "blind-spot" that this thesis has been concerned. If this work has appeared unduly critical of Dr. Denney it is because attention has necessarily been given to this one aspect, rather than to the great insights of the whole of his theology.

There was no friend of Principal Denney more appreciative of his work than Professor H.R. Mackintosh. Yet Mackintosh was critical. He saw what was lacking in Denney's view of the moral aspect of the atonement and strongly reasserted the doctrine of union with Christ. It is to Mackintosh's contribution that we must now give our attention.

SECTION TWO: THE CONTRIBUTION OF H. R. MACKINTOSH

Professor H. R. Mackintosh was profoundly conscious of the problem's raised in Dr. Denney's view of the moral aspect of the atonement. He considered that Denney's theology, along with the theology, of Ritschl, suffered because he made no use of the concept of mystical union with Christ.

Both writers, on grounds of the sort I have indicated, make no use of the idea in their theological constructions, not altogether, as it appears to me, to the advantage of the whole.

As we shall see, Mackintosh held that to speak of man's relation to Christ simply in moral terms was to say less than ought to be said about His absolute identification with us.

While Professor Mackintosh held similar views to Denney about the personal nature of man's relation to God, and the necessity of experience as a ground of Christian knowledge, he seemed more conscious than Denney of the problem of the relation of the Christian religion to morality. In Denney's mind morality was at the centre of all the great assertions of the Christian religion. He would never speak of something as merely moral. The very highest experiences of Christian faith were shot through with moral meaning. And these highest experiences, if they could not be defined in moral terms, were immediately suspect. In Denney's mind, morality was never a problem for Christianity, because morality and Christianity were joined together in the very nature of things.

Professor Mackintosh, while he agreed that Christianity could never be anything less than moral, did not accept the premise that it could not be anything more. In his words: "Justification, forgiveness, is not immoral, but it requires more than moral

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1 H. R. Mackintosh, Some Aspects of Christian Belief, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1923, p. 99.



terms for its expression."<sup>1</sup>

Forgiveness has to do with God, not with abstract morality. Indeed, abstract morality has an inflexibility by which in its own terms, pardon becomes ethically inferior. But if pardon be regarded as ethically impossible by abstract morality, then a terminology of grace is needed which transcends the limitations of a humanly-conceived morality. In Mackintosh's view, forgiveness transcended<sup>2</sup> ethics. It was not immoral, but its origin lay beyond morality:

...the doctrine of forgiveness, indicative as it is of our dependence rather than of our freedom, brings out clearly the difference of the religious from the purely moral standpoint. It is characteristic of religion to take a graver view of sin than that taken by morality, while at the same time asserting, as the other does not, the possibility of its being remitted. Accordingly, when it is urged that forgiveness is contrary to morality, this really is a dim and confused testimony to the truth that Divine pardon transcends ethics, because pardon is in kind peculiarly and distinctively religious. It is not immoral, but its origin lies beyond morality, just as poetry has a way of being above or beyond logic.

Morality has to do with "good". Christianity has to do with God. Speaking of the inability of ethics to assist a bad conscience,<sup>3</sup> Mackintosh asks:

...but the question cannot long be shirked whether in fact we are able to cope with the bad conscience so long as we remain within the boundaries of ethics. Can even the loftiness of the ideal be expressed in moral terms; can moral thought do justice to the depth of our distress over failure to attain it? Must not "the good" in what seems its impersonal cold and high distance become "God" if our conviction that the Universe is now unfriendly is to be accounted for, and if there is to be substantial hope for our escape and victory?

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1 H. R. Mackintosh, The Christian Experience of Forgiveness, London, Nisbet and Co., 1927, p. 117.  
 2 Ibid., p. 13.  
 3 Ibid., p. 72.

Professor Mackintosh was profoundly aware that the new relationship between God and man in Christ transcended moral conceptions. This new relationship could not be described by natural moral understandings, but could only be determined in the light of revelation and with a terminology appropriate to grace.

As well as stressing the insufficiency of moral conceptions to describe the greatest truths of Christianity, Mackintosh also saw the necessity of viewing the law in the context of the holiness of God. In referring to Rudolph Otto's "striking book", 'The Idea of the Holy'<sup>1</sup>, Mackintosh made this illuminating comment:

Otto has afresh made us feel that an exclusively moral conception of God is not quite in focus, and that the Biblical conception of holiness, properly understood, stands for all in God's being that transcends reason in the narrower sense, all that towers up in infinite sublimity over man and the world.

The Glory and Majesty and Holiness of God was much more than humanly conceived morality could grasp or comprehend. It was necessary, therefore to understand the law in the light of the revelation of the holiness of God, rather than in terms of natural morality.

True morality could never have any existence apart from such a holy God:<sup>2</sup>

God does will the good, for invariably He acts in conformity with His intrinsic nature; and yet, just as truly, good is not in any sense an entity or power outside God, or over Him, with which even He has to come to terms. Only in Him, indeed, has the good utterly real existence; apart from God, and those to whom God communicates His life, goodness is no more than an abstract noun.

As a consequence of this, Mackintosh warned against the impropriety

1 H. R. Mackintosh, The Christian Apprehension of God, London, S.C.M., 1930, p. 149.

2 Ibid., p. 155.

of the older view of <sup>the</sup> presumed conflict between the Divine attributes of love and righteousness -- a conflict which was both assumed by, and understood in relation to, human moral conceptions. "...we must be on our guard against reviving the old misconception which divided the nature of God against itself, by deriving forgiveness from love and the punitive consequences of sin from righteousness." <sup>1</sup> Men for too long had assumed that there was hope from God's mercy, but from His holiness they could expect nothing. Mackintosh saw that McLeod Campbell, "the greatest of all Scottish theologians", <sup>2</sup> had shown the right way. He was aware "that for those who have beheld God in Christ, the partition between love and holiness has broken down <sup>3</sup> and the nature of each of them has diffused through the whole."

The holiness and righteousness of God was not known from man's awareness of his own moral nature. Man's knowledge of such a God was founded upon revelation. The forgiveness of God was, in Mackintosh's mind, far beyond the comprehension of reason. Man could not find his way to grace. Rather, he was confronted by it: <sup>4</sup>

It is the breaking of eternity into time, the intervention of a love beyond all measures, a supernatural event not deducible by any human calculus from the nature of the universe but rather the spontaneous and unanalysable deed of God. We do not reach it by hard thinking, we are confronted by it.

The forgiveness of God in Christ could only be understood in the context of revelation and of grace. Man's moral terminology was insufficient to describe it and his reason could not deduce it,

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1 Mackintosh, The Christian Experience of Forgiveness, p. 25.

2 Mackintosh, The Christian Apprehension of God, p. 158.

3 Ibid., p. 158.

4 Mackintosh, The Christian Experience of Forgiveness, p. 34.

but God had manifested the wonder of Divine pardon in Jesus Christ. The initiative was altogether with God. No concern with man's role in response to grace could be allowed to diminish that Divine initiative:<sup>1</sup>

...whatever obscurity may surround the place and contribution of the human will in the experience of being saved and however natural the protest against an all-absorbing fatalism of grace, it remains true that the reality of Jesus owes nothing to us but is a simple gift of the Father. When our eyes open spiritually, the first object on which they light -- an object they do not make but find -- is a gracious God, who is calling sinners to Himself. In responding by faith to His call we act indeed, but it is the activity of taking.

In all of this Mackintosh was supremely conscious of the insufficiency of moral concepts to encompass the truth of Divine forgiveness in Christ. He was aware of the problem of the moral aspect of the atonement -- it tended to govern the understanding of the doctrine not so much by revelation as by humanly-conceived conceptions of the moral realm. But when men's eyes are opened spiritually, the "first object on which they light -- an object they do not make but find -- is a gracious God, who is calling sinners to Himself." It was only in the light of this revelation of God in Christ, that a right doctrine of the atonement was to be found.

For Professor Mackintosh the very centre of this right doctrine of the atonement; the doctrine which answered the problem of the moral aspect, was to be found in the concept of union with Christ:<sup>2</sup>

Turning now to the doctrinal bearing of this great conception, I should like to put forward the plea that Union to Christ is the fundamental

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1 Mackintosh, The Christian Experience of Forgiveness, p. 35.

2 Mackintosh, Some Aspects of Christian Belief, p. 108.

idea in the theory of redemption. It is from this centre alone, as it seems to me, that we can interpret luminously all the problems which gather round justification and sanctification, and which have so often been construed in a way that sacrificed either the moral or the religious interests at stake.

Denney's description of the union with Christ as a "moral union",<sup>1</sup> did not, in Mackintosh's view, do full justice to the doctrine:

...I think there are certain aspects of Union with Christ which are insufficiently described by the epithet 'moral', and which many people have dimly in their minds when they still hanker for the word 'mystical'.

Sir William Robertson Nicoll, the friend of Denney and Mackintosh, was also critical at this point. His view was expressed in a letter to Denney written in 1903:<sup>2</sup>

You do not seem to me to give anything like sufficient importance to the place which the union with Christ occupies in the Pauline writings. To interpret this as meaning a moral union is surely to clip and sweat the spiritual coinage.

In 1908, Nicoll had written to Mackintosh on the subject of the mystical union. It was not sufficient to think of the union as a union of soul with soul. To Nicoll that was not what was meant by St. Paul. "He means a union of the man with the glorified humanity of Jesus Christ. After this all the deeper writers have felt, and our own Shorter Catechism shows it..."<sup>3</sup>

In asserting the centrality of union with Christ, Mackintosh cautioned that he did not mean a union of the "substance" of Christ and the "substance" of believers. "Men of today rightly

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1 Mackintosh, Some Aspects of Christian Belief, pp. 109-110.

2 Darlow, William Robertson Nicoll, Life and Letters, p. 353.

3 Ibid., p. 354.

reject any such view." <sup>1</sup> Yet this did not mean that the union was in Nicoll's phrase, "a union of soul with soul". It was a real and personal union, and Mackintosh maintained that what he meant by "personal" was essentially what the older writers meant in their use of the word "substantial": <sup>2</sup>

...we do well to remind ourselves that substance was simply the category by which earlier thinkers strove to affirm the highest conceivable degree of reality; it was indeed their loftiest notion of God Himself. Nothing so exalted or so adequate could be said of Him as that He is the ultimate or universal Substance. Hence it is not surprising that they should have spoken freely of a substantial union with the Lord. Such a union was for their minds the most real imaginable, and was regarded as being laden with a secret and ineffable significance far transcending all conscious ethical relationships.

Though Mackintosh <sup>3</sup> saw this as the older way of expressing the same truth, he held:

But we have to put aside the category "substance" and construe the facts freshly in terms of personality. On the accepted principle of modern philosophy that there are degrees of reality, a personal union ought to be regarded as infinitely more real than a "substantial" one.

Mackintosh's caution concerning a "union of substance with substance", was related to his hesitancy with regard to the modern use of the term "substance" as it found expression in the Chalcedonian Symbol. This hesitancy was criticized by Bishop Gore who held that Mackintosh had imperiled his own fundamental position by his dislike of the term. By "substance" the Fathers (over)

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1 H.R. Mackintosh, The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ, New York, Scribner's 1912, p. 334.

2 Ibid., p. 334.

3 Ibid., p. 334.

meant reality:<sup>1</sup>

...that by "substance" the Church means no more and no less than "real thing", so that when we speak of the Son and of the Spirit as "of one substance" with the Father, we mean that they belong to that one real being which we call God; and when we speak of Christ as of one substance with us, we mean that He took the real being of man, and is that real thing, in all respects, that a man is.

This criticism by Bishop Gore may serve to point up the modernity of Mackintosh in abandoning the category of substance for the category of personal relations, but it does not call in question that Mackintosh regarded union with Christ as a "real thing". It was simply that Mackintosh felt that personal categories were a better means of expressing the completeness of the union: "... personal union ought to be regarded as infinitely more real than a substantial one."<sup>2</sup> And in his view, a personal union with Christ was the greatest reality.

We have seen that Professor Mackintosh held that the doctrine of union with Christ was the fundamental idea in redemption. He found it set forth in Reformed theology, and more than that, it was the central conception of St. Paul and St. John:<sup>3</sup>

It is well to recall the fact, however, that the conception of a mystic union is one that in no way depends upon the authority, be it great or small, of post-Reformation systems of theology. Its roots go much deeper in spiritual life, as well as much farther back in Christian history. If the phrase is not in the New Testament, the thing is on every page of St. Paul and St. John.

The locus classicus was of course Galatians ii. 20: "I am crucified with Christ; and no longer do I live; Christ liveth in me."

1 Charles Gore, The Reconstruction of Belief, New Edition in one volume, London, John Murray, 1930, pp. 853-854.

2 Mackintosh, The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ, p. 334.

3 Mackintosh, Some Aspects of Christian Belief, p. 102.

Here Mackintosh described St. Paul as giving way to his pent-up<sup>1</sup> feeling:

We can hear the triumph in his voice. He feels as if he had lost his old self, and all but changed his identity. There has been the importation of another's personality into him; the life, the will of Christ has taken over what was once in sheer antagonism to it, and replaced the power of sin by the forces of a divine life.... What he was had ceased to be, and what remained had a better right to Christ's name than his own.

Language was insufficient to express the truth of this union:<sup>2</sup>

No doubt the verse was written at a white heat; no doubt the Apostle, if he had been cross-examined, would have admitted that he did not mean, after all, that Christ and Paul were so utterly identical as now to be indistinguishable; but this implies only that language has broken down under an intolerable strain, and that words which at their best must always be general are insufficient to express a fact that has no real parallel or analogy anywhere.

A full discussion of St. Paul's conception of union with Christ meant, in Mackintosh's view, treatment of the whole of his theology.<sup>3</sup>

"His whole view of Redemption is implicitly present in it."

As union with Christ was central for St. Paul, so also was it<sup>4</sup> central for St. John:

St. John, to whom it was given to speak the last and deepest word on the great Christian certainties, repeats still more convincingly the assertion that union with Christ is the secret of redemption.

And again:<sup>5</sup>

Just as in St. Paul, the mystic union is contemplated alternately from either side, and can be described equally by the phrases 'ye in Me' and 'I in you'. The former appears to mean that the Christian's life

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1 Mackintosh, Some Aspects of Christian Belief, p. 103.

2 Ibid., pp. 103-104.

3 Ibid., p. 104.

4 Ibid., p. 105.

5 Ibid., p. 107.



is rooted in Christ and has in Him its encompassing vital element and medium; the second that He Himself is present in His people as the living centre, the animating principle, of their inmost being. Now in all such passages we feel that the distinction between Christology and soteriology, never more than provisional anyhow, has disappeared. Christ is definable as the Person who can thus be our inward Life, while on the other hand it is because He is this Person that His relation to us can be of this interior kind.

Having seen that the doctrine of union with Christ was the fundamental idea in the doctrine of redemption, Mackintosh was directly critical of Principal Denney's "moral" view. There were certain aspects of that union which were insufficiently described by the word "moral". The experience of union to Christ had no real parallel or analogy anywhere and was far beyond anything men had experienced in relation to their fellows. The word "moral", while it might be appropriate to describe the relation of men with men, was felt by many to be inadequate to describe the truth of the new relation of Christ and His people:<sup>1</sup>

In the first place, they feel that the Union in which they are personally identified with Christ is far and beyond anything they have experienced in their relations to fellow men. To the term 'moral' there always seems to cling a certain externality; it appears to describe and regulate affairs between persons that after all are separate, each possessing the solid rights of independent being, which in many cases it is their duty to assert and enforce.

The moral view requires for man his freedom and his independence of action. As a moral creature he is free to respond to God, and his response has its origin not so much in grace as in his inner moral capacities. Such a framework conceives of the relation of God and man as essentially legal, and as such is an impossible framework for grace.

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1 Mackintosh, op. cit., p. 110.

In union with Christ the separateness of independent beings has disappeared, and moral terminology must give way to the religious in order to speak the language of grace:<sup>1</sup>

Somehow in our relation to Christ that separateness has disappeared; things happen as if it were no longer there. I do not say it is non-existent, or that there may not be varying degrees of it; but I do say that great saints, who were also great theologians, have felt that language which spoke of its absence was far truer than language which assumed its presence. Hence, while even in our relations to Christ our experiences remain ethical in the sense that it would never be right to call them unethical, yet they are also more than ethical; they are religious.

Union with Christ, in Mackintosh's view, while it was never anything less than moral, was certainly much more. "It is the experience, or the fact, in which morality, carried up into its highest and purest form, passes beyond itself."<sup>2</sup> So it was that men have used the word "mystical" to describe this union.

Professor Mackintosh's second criticism of the use of the term "moral" followed directly from his first objection. It was a terminology which did not adequately allow for the fundamental truth of grace:<sup>3</sup>

...to describe Union with Christ as moral, and no more, makes no provision, or only a quite insufficient one, for the fundamental truth that the Union is initiated on His side and sustained at every point by His power. It is a commonplace of the preacher that our hope lies not in our hold of Christ, but in His hold of us; but is it not just in such certainties, familiar as the sunshine though they be, that the power and glory of the Christian Gospel dwells?

Man's relationship to God through union with Christ is not the relationship of independent beings, each with duties and

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1 Mackintosh, op. cit., p. 110.

2 Ibid., p. 111.

3 Ibid., p. 111.

responsibilities. It is a relationship of grace, initiated and maintained by God. Our relation to Him is not dependent upon our feelings and motives, but upon His strong hold upon us. To insist that the relation of God and man in Christ can be no more than moral, is to assert man's independence against the grace of Christ's identification with our humanity. It is to exalt man before the wonder of the Divine condescension.

The God with whom we have to do is the God who dealt with us "while we were yet sinners". We were dead to God and the grace of God raised us up to newness of life in Christ. It is God who is active in the work of redemption, and no terminology is adequate to describe this truth which does not allow for this fact.

The moral view requires that assurance and certainty should come from man's own apprehension of God. In the history of Scottish theology it produced an increasing subjectivity which sought for assurance within. Mackintosh rightly saw that union with Christ meant deliverance from such religious subjectivity. Speaking of the moral view he asked:

Are we really to say that our connexion with Christ consists in, and is exhausted by, the conscious feelings and motives which pass through our minds; that if I get up some morning with my soul dead and my gratitude dumb, with faith so darkened that I cannot utter a sincere prayer, my relation to Christ is, for the time being, at an end?

It was Christ's hold upon His people rather than their hold upon Him which was the ground of assurance. Assurance could not come from within:

One thing, surely, is entirely clear; whatever it be that evokes assurance, it cannot be anything in ourselves, for it is just regarding ourselves that ex hypothesi we are in doubt.

1 Mackintosh, Some Aspects of Christian Belief, p. 111.

2 Mackintosh, The Christian Experience of Forgiveness, p. 248.

True assurance was only found in Christ; Christ as He comes in the New Testament, with all the certainty His Divine grace and forgiveness. Such assurance would come when one looked away from self to Christ:<sup>1</sup>

Forget yourself, and allow Jesus to make Himself so familiar that you know God's very self is touching you through His holy love. Thus we escape from subjectivity, as the New Testament invariably does, to the great fact of Christ and God's trustworthiness in Him.

The truth of union with Christ, for which moral conceptions did not allow, was that however weak our hold upon Him, His hold upon us was sure and certain. This was a "mystical" union, a union dependent in its inception and in its completion upon the fundamental fact of the Divine grace in Christ.

Mackintosh cautioned that the union of which he spoke was a union of Christ and His people.<sup>2</sup> Many writers had generalized the doctrine and had spoken of a union between Christ and the race. He did not find this a New Testament teaching, nor did it have any relation to experience. The tendency of such a view was "to bring salvation down to the level of a natural process."<sup>3</sup> If we were "in Christ" just as our bodies were in the atmosphere, could salvation be kept spiritual on such terms?<sup>4</sup>

While Mackintosh was unwilling to generalize the doctrine of union with Christ, he did hold that to deny that all men are in Christ was "not the same thing as saying that they have no relation to Him at all." What that relation was and how it was related to the fact of the incarnation was not, in Mackintosh's mind, an area for speculation. The true universality of Christ was seen in the

1 Mackintosh, The Christian Experience of Forgiveness, p. 249.

2 Mackintosh, Some Aspects of Christian Belief, p.115.

3 Ibid., p. 116.

4 Ibid., p. 116.

work of the Exalted Lord gathering men to Himself: <sup>1</sup>

Though a man may resent the very thought of it, Christ is still seeking him, blessing him, gathering round him all the appealing influences of the Kingdom of God on earth. And from that universality of living power and sufficiency, which resides in Christ always -- yesterday, to-day and for ever -- may spring up at any moment the spiritual redemptive relationship of personal indwelling.

For Mackintosh this was the truth of Christ's relation to all men. To speak of a union of Christ with the race in the other sense, was to make this most personal of all doctrines utterly impersonal. Union with Christ was the greatest reality, but to generalize it and abstract it from the realm of personal relations was to make it unreal.

Nevertheless, Mackintosh spoke in another sense of the relation of Christ to all men. In the context of personal relations, He was "the representative or central person" - and stood "in a momentous kinship to men." <sup>2</sup> It was this view of Christ as the representative of men in His work of atonement which made His bearing of sin real. Substitutionary concepts which stressed the separateness between Christ and men were not sufficient. A radically representative view was required: <sup>3</sup>

...if Jesus Christ were one more human individual merely, as separate from men as we are from our fellows, the difficulty just noted (how Christ's work avails for others) would be insoluble, alike in logic and in morality. But if with St. Paul and St. John we decline to conceive Christ as one isolated person, and the Christian as another, then the representative act of sacrifice on His part is quite another thing, and the death that He died for all may have the significance which the death of all would itself have. Union between Christ and men, that is, just because it is a union, has two sides. His self-identification with us implies consequences both for Him and us. As the representative or central person -- none the less

<sup>1</sup> Mackintosh, Some Aspects of Christian Belief, p. 117. (footnote)

<sup>2</sup> Mackintosh, The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ, p. 332.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 332.

truly individual, as we shall see -- He stands in a momentous kinship to men; and this universality of relation forms one vital condition of His power to make atonement.

Oneness with Christ illumines the whole matter of His bearing of the sins of others. Men have found it difficult to conceive of how the suffering of One could avail for others. Union with Christ and His identification with us is the key to a right understanding of the matter:<sup>1</sup>

If, however, we make Union with Christ, in its profound New Testament sense, our point of departure, there can be no question of our guilt being externally imputed to Christ, and His righteousness as externally to us. It is a case rather of spiritual and willed self-identification with Jesus Christ the righteous, making us by no fiction but in actual will and spirit right with the Father.

Any doctrine of the atonement which separates between Christ and believers is in danger of destroying this real relation between the sinner with His guilt and Christ with His righteousness:<sup>2</sup>

It is surely the false step in many theories of atonement that they first abstract the Christian from Christ -- severing them as two mutually impervious personalities -- and then find it hard, naturally, to put them back into such a oneness that what Christ did and is fundamentally modifies our relation to God.

In this Mackintosh sees the inadequacy of substitution. While substitution serves to stress the fact that man can in no sense participate in the work of salvation, it serves also to separate between Christ and believers in such a way that the relation is made artificial and unreal. The doctrine of union with Christ points to His utter identification of Himself with men, as the separation between man and God is done away in His very person.

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1 Mackintosh, The Christian Experience of Forgiveness, p. 225.

2 Mackintosh, The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ, p. 332.

Christ's identification with men was carried to the uttermost<sup>1</sup>  
point:

Jesus, in other words, could not convey the Father's pardon to the guilty in absolute fulness except by carrying His identification with them to the uttermost point; at that point He gave Himself in death.

This gracious identification was at the heart of the meaning of  
the atonement:<sup>2</sup>

It was not that God stretched His hand from the sky, seized the mass of human iniquity, transferred it to Jesus by capricious fiat, then chastised Him for it. God does nothing in that way. But when Jesus entered into our life, took the responsibility of our evil upon Himself, identifying His life with ours to the uttermost and placing Himself where the sinful are by strong sympathy in a fashion so real that the pain and affliction due to us became unspeakable suffering within His soul -- that was the act of God, that (if we take seriously Jesus' oneness of mind and will with the Father) was indeed the experience of God. In no way other than by letting sinful wills do their worst to Jesus could it be openly demonstrated, and for ever, what sin involves in God's righteous judgment.

In Mackintosh's view the way of forgiveness was found in Christ's gracious identification of Himself with men -- bearing their sin and bringing them to the Father.

Finally, Mackintosh asserted that only in the light of union  
with Christ was it possible to see that true morality was in Christ:<sup>3</sup>

Thus atonement construed in the light of Union with Christ, so far from ministering to ethical laxity, means that the sinner who has admitted Christ to heart and life has now within him the principle of radical goodness. To take Christ for pardon and to take Him for holiness are one thing. The moral resources of life now abide in that Other, the partner of our spirit.

A humanly-conceived morality must fade away before the shining light of the holiness and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Man could never

1 Mackintosh, The Christian Experience of Forgiveness, p. 99.

2 Ibid., pp. 205-206.

3 Ibid., pp. 225-226.

find righteousness merely by attempting to conceive of it. But the righteousness of God had been made manifest in the human flesh of Jesus Christ. It was revealed and given to men in Him. By union with Christ men were given to participate in the true righteousness, and in the true morality.

The holiness and goodness of God was a far greater mystery than the mystery of evil. A human morality was in this sense impossible, for to comprehend the good was to comprehend God. Man could never find his own way to God or His righteousness. Yet God had revealed Himself in His Son, and His cross was the focus of the Christian religion:<sup>1</sup>

If we have stood beneath its shadow, if its aspect has touched and changed us, we too can bear witness to its ineffable significance; we now know that the mystery of goodness is greater by far than the mystery of evil. That the abyss between the Holy Father and us the sinful should have been crossed, from the further side; that in Jesus the guiltless suffering of the righteous, and for us, should have put on its absolute and final form, leaving nothing undone by God that might be done, nothing unendured that might be borne -- this is nothing of course, but a strange and unimaginable miracle. We cannot measure it, but we can drink in life from the thought of it; and its wonder, which no mind can compass or define, we can sing.

For Mackintosh, reconciliation between men and God was found in the present reality of fellowship through union with Christ. It was here that the moral aspect of the atonement was transcended by the higher truth of Christ freely bringing newness of life to men.

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<sup>1</sup> Mackintosh, The Christian Experience of Forgiveness, p. 227.



EPILOGUETOWARD A FULL DOCTRINE

In this study of the moral aspect of the atonement in Scottish theology we have seen the inter-relation and conflict of two distinct strands of interpretation. The legal-moral strand became dominant in the theology of the second Reformation and was determinative of much of subsequent Scottish theology. Nevertheless, and in conflict with the moral-legal strain, what Ralph Erskine appropriately called, the "Gospel strain", was centred on the doctrine of union with Christ, and was a constant Christological corrective to the other view. It is in this "Gospel strain" in the Scottish theology that the way is pointed toward a full doctrine of the atonement.

The legal-moral strain was founded upon the tendency to rationalize and spiritualize the doctrine of the atonement in terms of the presumed necessities of a humanly-conceived idea of the moral order. It presumed a natural knowledge of God from the creation. Man, given the light of nature, was able to attain a self-knowledge from which he could derive an appreciation of God's will for human life.

The federal theology, with its understanding of grace conditioned by the conception of a prior covenant of works, gave expression to these views. The whole development of the legal-moral strain became less and less concerned with the positive meaning of the incarnation as the Divine means of sanctifying and renewing human life, and directed its attention to the incarnation and life of Christ only as a necessary prelude to the bearing of the penalty of human sin. Moreover, it laid the basis for a substitutionary understanding of the work of Christ which, as we have seen, stressed the disparity

between Christ and men in His work.

The fundamental failure of the legal strain was that it did not allow for grace to really be grace. The forgiveness of God had to be motivated; it had to be moral; it had to be rational. It sought to speak of grace in a terminology inappropriate to grace, and the result was that it did less than justice to the greatest of all themes.

The "Gospel strain" saw the error of all of this. It was rooted and grounded in the revelation in Christ. God's way with man was not to be known through human self-knowledge or the light of nature. Indeed man as sinner could not even know himself, let alone the truth of God. But man's knowledge of Himself, and his knowledge of God was to be found in the True Man, Jesus Christ. Accordingly the Gospel strain took history seriously. Atonement was not an idea or spiritual transaction, it was accomplished in human history and in human flesh by the Man Christ Jesus.

The legal view tended to think of God as the far-away God of natural theology. The Gospel strain found God in the place where He had graciously come to man -- in the New Man, Jesus Christ. It realized the fundamental relation of revelation and atonement. Both were found in Christ. Man could not know about God without knowing God, and he could not know God so long as he persisted in his sinful rebellion. To know God was to know Him in Jesus Christ -- Jesus Christ who was in Himself reconciliation and atonement.

The Gospel strain in Scottish theology was conscious of the danger of separating the Person and work of Christ. Atonement was not found only in the work, or only in the Person; it was found in the Person who did the work. The whole movement of humiliation and

exaltation, from the birth, to the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ; all of these, as the work of the Son, were filled by Him with atoning significance. In His incarnation the Eternal Son identified Himself with man and took forever the flesh of humanity. In His life He manifested in humanity the perfect righteousness and holiness of God and so sanctified human life. In His death He took His gracious identification with sinful man to the uttermost and for man bore the wrath of the Father against human sin. By His resurrection He brought not a "spiritual" salvation, but His human flesh which had perfected human life and borne its sin, was raised up victorious. And in His ascension His glorified body had ascended to the Father where He would ever present to the Father a renewed humanity in Himself. All this was the meaning of the work of the Son.

But it was a work which could never be thought of apart from the Person of Jesus Christ. He was the One who had done the work. In His very Person was reconciliation. It was not therefore proper to speak of the atoning significance of "the incarnation" or "the cross" or "the resurrection". Rather should men speak of the atoning significance of Christ, incarnate, crucified and risen. In such a conception Christ is ever the great Contemporary, calling men to be joined to Himself in faith.

As H.R. Mackintosh clearly saw, the fundamental conception in the doctrine of redemption is union with Christ. The problems which arise from the moral aspect of the atonement find their origin in those views which separate between Christ and men, and they find their solution in that doctrine which joins men forever to the Eternal Son. Christ has become man, and in humanity, sanctified and renewed human life and so reconciled it to God. By union with Christ

men are given to participate in His perfect life and are received by the Father in Him. By union with Him men become sons of the Father by adoption and joint-heirs with Christ. The doctrine of union with Christ was the key doctrine of the Gospel strain in Scottish theology. It was the essential theme of the earliest reformed theology and even in the federal period was much spoken of. Its strong reassertion by McLeod Campbell, the Candlishes and H.R. Mackintosh served to point up the truth that the relation of Christ to men was not fictional but deeply personal and real. It is in a radical conception of representation -- in which Christ identifies Himself utterly with man -- and in union between Christ and His people -- that the vicarious nature of the work of Christ becomes meaningful.

The needs of the dualistic conception of predestination tended to force theologians to separate Christ and men in His work, so that the work, accomplished by Christ alone, might be applied individually to believers. The result was a substitutionary doctrine by which justification was subsequently given to believers on the basis of the work done by Christ. Yet a right doctrine of union with Christ leads us to see that in His death and resurrection, we were not separate from Him, but as He died and rose again, so we died and rose in Him.

Does Christ's representative work founded upon His identification with man in His incarnation mean universalism? Are all men in Christ? By separating between Christ and the men whom He represented in His work, the later predestinarian theology sought as we have seen, to avoid this issue. Yet the issue remains and is at the heart of the mystery of election.

Christ is the New Man and humanity is renewed in Him. The old Adam is defeated and is passing away. God's will for man in Christ is

the greatest reality. As Karl Barth has expressed it, the justification, sanctification and renewal of man has taken place in Christ. In Barth's view this has taken place de jure for the world and therefore for all men. De facto, however, it is not known by all men but only by those who have been brought to faith.<sup>1</sup>

Does this mean universalism? This is not for man to say. This most secret of all things belongs to God. The task of those who are in Christ through being brought to faith, is so to proclaim the saving significance of Christ to the world that all men may hear the truth of the renewal of humanity in Christ. Moreover in Christian proclamation men are not brought to a generalized truth, but to personal communion with a living Saviour.

Finally, the Gospel strain in Scottish theology presents in Christ the true moral aspect of the atonement. A concept of morality which is grounded in the creation and upon man's self-awareness is ultimately an illusion. Man ever is defeated by the disparity between what he ought to do and what he does. But the true morality, the manifestation not of the perfection of the human ideal, but of the righteousness of God in human flesh, is to be found in Jesus Christ. Righteousness in God did not seek alone to punish unrighteousness in men, but craved righteousness in them. This gracious redeeming righteousness was revealed in the Person and life of the Son. Christ is the obedient man who as man fulfils the Father's will for human life.

A human conception of the moral law ever remains impersonal and abstract, but the true morality, the true holiness is found in the Person of the Man Christ Jesus. And this true righteousness is the possession of the one who is united to Christ. Union with Him is

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1 Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. IV:2, p. 511 ET.

a participation in all that His righteousness means for human life. As Mackintosh put it, the moral resources of life now abide in Him. We are joined to the whole Christ, and all that is His, has by grace become ours. McLeod Campbell sensed the highest truth here when he said:<sup>1</sup>

I have daily many proofs that no one will ever have a sufficiently high standard of morality who does not rest his hopes exclusively on the merits of Christ.

To study the moral aspect of the atonement or indeed any aspect of the atonement, is ever to be lead to Christ. God has come to us and in wondrous grace has made Himself One with us in His Son. He comes bringing forgiveness, reconciliation and eternal life. Christ the Mediator is God with us and for us, and in love He gives us His life.

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<sup>1</sup> John McLeod Campbell, Reminiscences and Reflections, p. 16.

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