THE ATONEMENT AND THE MODERN MIND.

II.

WE have now seen in a general way what is meant by the Atonement, and what are the characteristics of the mind to which the Atonement has to make its appeal. In that mind there is, as I believe, much which falls in with the Atonement, and prepares a welcome for it; but much also which creates prejudice against it, and makes it as possible still as in the first century to speak of the offence of the cross. No doubt the Atonement has sometimes been presented in forms which provoke antagonism, which challenge by an ostentation of unreason, or by a defiance of morality, the reason and conscience of man; but this alone does not explain the resentment which it often encounters. There is such a thing to be found in the world as the man who will have nothing to do with Christ on any terms, and who will least of all have anything to do with Him when Christ presents Himself in the character which makes man his debtor for ever. All men, as St. Paul says, have not faith: it is a melancholy fact, whether we can make anything of it or not. Discounting, however, this irrational or inexplicable opposition, which is not expressed in the mind but in the will, how are we to present the Atonement so that it shall excite the least prejudice, and find the most unimpeded access to the mind of our own generation? This is the question to which we have now to address ourselves.

To conceive the Atonement, that is, the fact that forgiveness is mediated to us through Christ, and specifically through His death, as clearly and truly as possible, it is necessary for us to realize the situation to which it is

related. We cannot think of it except as related to a given situation. It is determined or conditioned by certain relations subsisting between God and man, as these relations have been affected by sin. What we must do, therefore, in the first instance, is to make clear to ourselves what these relations are, and how sin affects them.

To begin with, they are personal relations ; they are relations the truth of which cannot be expressed except by the use of personal pronouns. We need not ask whether the personality of God can be proved antecedent to religion, or as a basis for a religion yet to be established ; in the only sense in which we can be concerned with it, religion is an experience of the personality of God, and of our own personality in relation to it. "O Lord, *Thou* hast searched *me* and known *me*." "*I* am continually with *Thee*." No human experience can be more vital or more normal than that which is expressed in these words, and no argument, be it ever so subtle or so baffling, can weigh a feather's weight against such experience. The same conception of the relations of God and man which they express is expressed again as unmistakably in every word of Jesus about the Father and the Son and the nature of their communion with each other. It is only in such personal relations that the kind of situation can emerge, and the kind of experience be had, with which the Atonement deals ; and antecedent to such experience, or in independence of it, the Atonement must remain an incredible because an unrealizable thing.

But to say that the relations of God and man are personal is not enough. They are not only personal, but universal. *Personal* is habitually used in a certain contrast with *legal*, and it is very easy to lapse into the idea that personal relations, because distinct from legal ones, are independent of law; but to say the least of it, that is an ambiguous and misleading way of describing the facts. 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. Perhaps the simplest way to make this evident is to notice that the relations of man to God are the relations to God not of atoms, or of self-contained individuals, each of which is a world in itself, but of individuals which are essentially related to each other, and bound up in the unity of a race. 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, a moral constitution of eternal and universal validity, which neither God nor man can ultimately treat as anything else than what it is.

This is a point at which some prejudice has been raised against the Atonement by theologians, and more, perhaps, by persons protesting against what they supposed theologians to mean. If one may be excused a personal reference, few things have astonished me more than to be charged with teaching a "forensic" or "legal" or "judicial" doctrine of Atonement, resting, as such a doctrine must do, on a "forensic" or "legal" or "judicial" conception of man's relation to God. It is all the more astonishing when the charge is combined with what one can only decline as in the circumstances totally unmerited compliments to the clearness with which he has expressed himself. There is nothing which I desire to reprobate more whole-heartedly than the conception which is expressed by these words. 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. Every-

body knows that this is a travesty of the truth, and it is surprising that any one should be charged with teaching it, or that any one should applaud himself, as though he were in the foremost files of time, for not believing it. It is superfluously apparent that the relations of God and man are not those of a magistrate on the bench pronouncing according to the act on the criminal at the bar. To say this, however, does not make these relations more intelligible. In particular, to say that they are personal, as opposed to forensic, does not make them more intelligible. If they are to be rational, if they are to be moral, if they are to be relations in which an ethical life can be lived, and ethical responsibilities realized, they must be not only personal, but universal; they must be relations that in some sense are determined by law. Even to say that they are the relations, not of judge and criminal, but of Father and child, does not get us past this point. The relations of father and child are undoubtedly more adequate to the truth than those of judge and criminal; they are more adequate, but so far as our experience of them goes, they are not equal to it. If the sinner is not a criminal before his judge, neither is he a naughty child before a parent whose own weakness or affinity to evil introduces an incalculable element into his dealing with his child's fault. I should not think of saying that it is the desire to escape from the inexorableness of law to a God capable of indulgent human tenderness that inspires the violent protests so often heard against "forensic" and "legal" ideas: but that is the impression which one sometimes involuntarily receives from them. It ought to be apparent to every one that even the relation of parent and child, if it is to be a moral relation, must be determined in a way which has universal and final validity. It must be a relation in which—ethically speaking—some things are for ever obligatory, and some things for

ever impossible; in other words, it must be a relation determined by law, and law which cannot deny itself. But law in this sense is not "legal." It is not "judicial," or "forensic," or "statutory." None the less it is real and vital, and the whole moral value of the relation depends upon it. When a man says—as some one has said—"There are many to whom the conception of forgiveness resting on a judicial transaction does not appeal at all," I entirely agree with him; it does not appeal at all to me. But what would be the value of a forgiveness which did not recognize in its eternal truth and worth that universal law in which the relations of God and man are constituted? Without the recognition of that law—that moral order or constitution in which we have our life in relation to God and each other—righteousness and sin, atonement and forgiveness, would all alike be words without meaning.

In connexion with this, reference may be made to an important point in the interpretation of the New Testament. The responsibility for what is called the forensic conception of the Atonement is often traced to St. Paul, and the greatest of all the ministers of grace is not infrequently spoken of as though he had deliberately laid the most insuperable of stumbling-blocks in the way to the gospel. Most people, of course, are conscious that they do not look well talking down to St. Paul, and occasionally one can detect a note of misgiving in the brave words in which his doctrine is renounced, a note of misgiving which suggests that the charitable course is to hear such protests in silence, and to let those who utter them think over the matter again. But there is what claims to be a scientific way of expressing dissent from the apostle, a way which, equally with the petulant one, rests, I am convinced, on misapprehension of his teaching. This it would not be fair to ignore. It interprets what the apostle says about law solely by

reference to the great question at issue between the Jewish and the Christian religions, making the word law mean the statutory system under which the Jews lived, and nothing else. No one will deny that Paul does use the word in this sense; the law often means for him specifically the law of Moses. The law of Moses, however, never means for him anything less than the law of God; it is one specific form in which the universal relations subsisting between God and man, and making religion and morality possible, have found historical expression. But Paul's mind does not rest in this one historical expression. He generalizes it. 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), when God justifies the ungodly. Paul preached the same gospel to the Gentiles as he did to the Jews; he preached in it the same relation of the Atonement and of Christ's death to divine law. But he did not do this by extending to all mankind a Pharisaic, legal, forensic relation to God: he did it by rising above such conceptions, even though as a Pharisee he may have had to start from them, to the conception of a relation of all men to God expressing itself in a moral constitution —or, as he would have said, but in an entirely unforensic way, in a law—of divine and unchanging validity. The maintenance of this law, or of this moral constitution, in its inviolable integrity was the signature of the forgiveness Paul preached. The Atonement meant to him that forgiveness was mediated through One in whose life and death the most signal homage was paid to this law: the very glory of the Atonement was that it manifested the righteousness of God; it demonstrated God's consistency with His

own character which would have been violated alike by indifference to sinners and by indifference to that universal moral order—that law of God—in which alone eternal life is possible. It is a mistake to say—though this also has been said—that 'Paul's problem was not that of the possibility of forgiveness; it was the Jewish law, the Old Testament dispensation: how to justify his breach with it, how to demonstrate that the old order had been annulled and a new order inaugurated.' There is a false contrast in all such propositions. Paul's problem was that of the Jewish law, and it was also that of the possibility of forgiveness; it was that of the Jewish law, and it was also that of a revelation of grace, in which God should justify the ungodly, Jew or Gentile, and yet maintain inviolate those universal moral relations between Himself and man for which law is the compendious expression. It does not matter whether we suppose him to start from the concrete instance of the Jewish law, and generalize on the basis of it; or to start from the universal conception of law, and recognize in existing Jewish institutions the most available and definite illustration of it: in either case, the only Paul whose mind is known to us has completely transcended the forensic point of view. The same false contrast is repeated in such a sentence as, "That doctrine (Paul's 'juristic doctrine') had its origin, not so much in his religious experience, as in apologetic necessities." The only apologetic necessities which give rise to fundamental doctrines are those created by religious experience. The apologetic of any religious experience is just the definition of it as real in relation to other acknowledged realities. Paul had undoubtedly an apologetic of forgiveness—namely, his doctrine of atonement. But the acknowledged reality in relation to which he defined forgiveness—the reality with which, by means of his doctrine of atonement, he showed forgiveness to be consistent—was not the law of the

Jews (though that was included in it, or might be pointed to in illustration of it): it was the law of God, the universal and inviolable order in which alone eternal life is possible, and in which all men, and not the Jews only, live and move and have their being. It was the perception of this which made Paul an apostle to the Gentiles, and it is this very thing itself, which some would degrade into an awkward, unintelligent, and outworn rag of Pharisaic apologetic, which is the very heart and soul of Paul's Gentile gospel. Paul himself was perfectly conscious of this; he could not have preached to the Gentiles at all unless he had been. But there is nothing in it which can be characterized as "legal," "judicial," or "forensic"; and of this also, I have no doubt, the apostle was well aware. Of course he occupied a certain historical position, had certain historical questions to answer, was subject to historical limitations of different kinds; but I have not the courage to treat him, nor do his words entitle any one to do so, as a man who in the region of ideas could not put two and two together.

But to return to the point from which this digression on St. Paul started. We have seen that the relations of God and man are personal, and also that they are universal, that is, there is a law of them, or, if we like to say so, a law in them, on the maintenance of which their whole ethical value depends. The next point to be noticed is that these relations are deranged or disordered by sin. Sin is, in fact, nothing else than this derangement or disturbance: it is that in which wrong is done to the moral constitution under which we live. And let no one say that in such an expression we are turning our back on the personal world, and lapsing, or incurring the risk of lapsing, into mere legalism again. It cannot be too often repeated that if the universal element, or law, be eliminated from personal relations, there is nothing intelligible left: no reason, no

morality, no religion, no sin or righteousness or forgiveness, nothing to appeal to mind or conscience. In the widest sense of the word, sin, as a disturbance of the personal relations between God and man, is a violence done to the constitution under which God and man form one moral community, share, as we may reverently express it, one life, have in view the same moral ends.

It is no more necessary in connexion with the Atonement than in any other connexion that we should have a doctrine of the origin of sin. We do not know its origin, we only know that it is here. We cannot observe the genesis of the bad conscience any more than we can observe the genesis of consciousness in general. We see that consciousness does stand in relief against the background of natural life; but though we believe that, as it exists in us, it has emerged from that background, we cannot see it emerge; it is an ultimate fact, and is assumed in all that we can ever regard as its physical antecedents and presuppositions. In the same way, the moral consciousness is an ultimate fact, and irreducible. The physical theory of evolution must not be allowed to mislead us here, and in particular it must not be allowed to discredit the conception of moral responsibility for sin which is embodied in the story of the Fall. Each of us individually has risen into moral life from a mode of being which was purely natural; in other words, each of us, individually, has been a subject of evolution; but each of us also has fallen—fallen, presumably, in ways determined by his natural constitution, yet certainly, as conscience assures us, in ways for which we are morally answerable, and to which, in the moral constitution of the world, consequences attach which we must recognize as our due. They are not only results of our action, but results which that action has merited, and there is no moral hope for us unless we accept them as such. Now what is true of any, or rather of all, of us, without

compromise of the moral consciousness, may be true of the race, or of the first man, if there was a first man. Evolution and the Fall cannot be inconsistent, for both enter into every moral experience of which we know anything ; and no opinion we hold about the origin of sin can make it anything else than it is in conscience, or give its results any character other than that which they have to conscience. Of course when any one tries to interpret sin outside of conscience, as though it were purely physical, and did not have its being in personality, consciousness, and will, it disappears ; and the laborious sophistries of such interpretations must be left to themselves. The point for us is that no matter how sin originated, in the moral consciousness in which it has its being it is recognized as a derangement of the vital relations of man, a violation of that universal order outside of which he has no true good.

In what way, now, let us ask, does the reality of sin come home to the sinner? How does he recognize it as what it is? What is the reaction against the sinner, in the moral order under which he lives, which reveals to him the meaning of his sinful act or state?

In the first place, there is that instantaneous but abiding reaction which is called the bad conscience—the sense of guilt, of being answerable to God for sin. The sin may be an act which is committed in a moment, but in this aspect of it, at least, it does not fade into the past. An animal may have a past, for anything we can tell, and naturalistic interpreters of sin may believe that sin dies a natural death with time, and need not trouble us permanently; but this is not the voice of conscience, in which alone sin exists, and which alone can tell us the truth about it. The truth is that the spiritual being has no past. Just as he is continually with God, his sin is continually with him. He cannot escape it by not thinking. When he keeps silence,

as the Psalmist says—and that is always his first resource, as though, if he were to say nothing about it, God might say nothing about it, and the whole thing blow over—it devours him like a fever within: his bones wax old with his moaning all day long. This sense of being wrong with God, under His displeasure, excluded from His fellowship, afraid to meet Him yet bound to meet Him, is the sense of guilt. Conscience confesses in it its liability to God, a liability which in the very nature of the case it can do nothing to meet, and which therefore is nearly akin to despair.

But the bad conscience, real as it is, may be too abstractly interpreted. Man is not a pure spirit, but a spiritual being whose roots strike to the very depths of nature, and who is connected by the most intimate and vital relations not only with his fellow-creatures of the same species, but with the whole system of nature in which he lives. The moral constitution in which he has his being comprehends, if we may say so, nature in itself: the God who has established the moral order in which man lives, has established the natural order also as part of the same whole with it. In some profound way the two are one. We distinguish in man, legitimately enough, between the spiritual and the physical, but man is one, and the universe in which he lives is one, and in man's relation to God the distinction of physical and spiritual must ultimately disappear. The sin which introduces disorder into man's relations to God produces reactions affecting man as a whole—not reactions that, as we sometimes say, are purely spiritual, but reactions as broad as man's being and as the whole divinely constituted environment in which it lives. I am well aware of the difficulty of giving expression to this truth, and of the hopelessness of trying to give expression to it by means of those very distinctions which it is its nature to transcend. The distinctions are easy and obvious; what we have to

learn is that they are not final. It seems so conclusive to say, as some one has done in criticizing the idea of atonement, that spiritual transgressing brings spiritual penalty, and physical brings physical; it seems so conclusive, and it is in truth so completely beside the mark. We cannot divide either man or the universe in this fashion into two parts which move on different planes and have no vital relations; we cannot, to apply this truth to the subject before us, limit the divine reaction against sin, or the experiences through which, in any case whatever, sin is brought home to man as what it is, to the purely spiritual sphere. Every sin is a sin of the indivisible human being, and the divine reaction against it expresses itself to conscience through the indivisible frame of that world, at once natural and spiritual, in which man lives. We cannot distribute evils into the two classes of physical and moral, and subsequently investigate the relation between them: if we could, it would be of no service here. What we have to understand is that when a man sins he does something in which his whole being participates, and that the reaction of God against his sin is a reaction in which he is conscious, or might be conscious, that the whole system of things is in arms against him.

There are those, no doubt, to whom this will seem fantastic, but it is a truth, I am convinced, which is presupposed in the Christian doctrine of Atonement, as the mediation of forgiveness through the suffering and death of Christ: and it is a truth also, if I am not much mistaken, to which all the highest poetry, which is also the deepest vision of the human mind, bears witness. We may distinguish natural law and moral law as sharply as we please, and it is as necessary sometimes as it is easy to make these sharp and absolute distinctions; but there is a unity in experience which makes itself felt deeper than all the antitheses of logic, and in that unity nature and spirit

are no more defined by contrast with each other: on the contrary, they interpenetrate and support each other; they are aspects of the same whole. When we read in the prophet Amos, "Lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is His thought, that maketh the morning darkness and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, the Lord, the God of hosts, is His name," this is the truth which is expressed. The power which reveals itself in conscience—telling us all things that ever we did, declaring unto us what is our thought—is the same which reveals itself in nature, establishing the everlasting hills, creating the winds which sweep over them , turning the shadow of death into the morning and making the day dark with night, calling for the waters of the sea, and pouring them out on the face of the earth. Conscience speaks in a still small voice, but it is no impotent voice; it can summon the thunder to give it resonance; the power which we sometimes speak of as if it were purely spiritual is a power which clothes itself spontaneously and of right in all the majesty and omnipotence of nature. It is the same truth, again, in another aspect of it, which is expressed in Wordsworth's sublime lines to Duty:

> "Thou dost preserve the Stars from wrong,
> And the most ancient Heavens through Thee are fresh and strong."

When the mind sees deepest, it is conscious that it needs more than physical astronomy, more than spectrum analysis, to tell us everything even about the stars. There is a moral constitution, it assures us, even of the physical world; and though it is impossible for us to work it out in detail, the assumption of it is the only assumption on which we can understand the life of a being related as man is related both to the natural and the spiritual. I do not pretend to prove that there is articulate or conscious re-

flection on this in either the Old Testament or the New; I take it for granted, as self-evident, that this sense of the ultimate unity of the natural and the spiritual—which is, indeed, but one form of belief in God—pervades the Bible from beginning to end. It knows nothing of our abstract and absolute distinctions; to come to the matter in hand, it knows nothing of a sin which has merely spiritual penalties. Sin is the act or the state of man, and the reaction against it is the reaction of the whole order, at once natural and spiritual, in which man lives.

Now the great difficulty which the modern mind has with the Atonement, or with the representation of it in the New Testament, is that it assumes some kind of connexion between sin and death. Forgiveness is mediated through Christ, but specifically through His death. He died for our sins; if we can be put right with God apart from this, then, St. Paul tells us, He died for nothing. One is almost ashamed to repeat that this is not Paulinism, but the Christianity of the whole Apostolic Church. What St. Paul made the basis of his preaching, that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, he had on his own showing received as the common Christian tradition. But is there anything in it? Can we receive it simply on the authority of the primitive Church? Can we realize any such connexion between death and sin as makes it a truth to us, an intelligible, impressive, overpowering thought, that Christ died for our sins?

I venture to say that a great part of the difficulty which is felt at this point is due to the false abstraction just referred to. Sin is put into one world—the moral; death is put into another world—the natural; and there is no connexion between them. This is very convincing if we find it possible to believe that we live in two unconnected worlds. But if we find it impossible to believe this—and surely the impossibility is patent—its plausibility is

gone. It is a shining example of this false abstraction when we are told, as though it were a conclusive objection to all that the New Testament has to say about the relation of sin and death, that "the specific penalty of sin is not a fact of the natural life, but of the moral life." What right has any one, in speaking of the ultimate realities in human life, of those experiences in which man becomes conscious of all that is involved in his relations to God and their disturbance by sin, to split that human life into "natural" and "moral," and fix an impassable gulf between? The distinction is legitimate, as has already been remarked, within limits, but it is not final; and what the New Testament teaches, or rather assumes, about the relation of sin and death, is one of the ways in which we are made sensible that it is not final. Sin and death do not belong to unrelated worlds. As far as man is concerned the two worlds, to use an inadequate figure, intersect; and at one point in the line of their intersection sin and death meet and interpenetrate. In the indivisible experience of man he is conscious that they are parts or aspects of the same thing.

That this is what Scripture means when it assumes the connexion of death and sin is not to be refuted by pointing either to the third chapter of Genesis or to the fifth of Romans. It does not, for example, do justice either to Genesis or to St. Paul to say, as has been said, that according to their representation, "Death—not spiritual, but natural death—is the direct consequence of sin and its specific penalty." In such a dictum, the distinctions again mislead. To read the third chapter of Genesis in this sense would mean that what we had to find in it was a mythological explanation of the origin of physical death. But does any one believe that any Bible writer was ever curious about this question? or does any one believe that a mythological solution of the problem, how death originated

—a solution which *ex hypothesi* has not a particle of truth or even of meaning in it—could have furnished the presupposition for the fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion, that Christ died for our sins, and that in Him we have our forgiveness through His blood? A truth which has appealed so powerfully to man cannot be sustained on a falsehood. That the third chapter of Genesis is mythological in form, no one who knows what mythology is will deny; but even mythology is not made out of nothing, and in this chapter every atom is "stuff o' the conscience." What we see in it is conscience, projecting as it were in a picture on a screen its own invincible, dear-bought, despairing conviction that sin and death are indissolubly united—that from death the sinful race can never get away—that it is part of the indivisible reality of sin that the shadow of death darkens the path of the sinner, and at last swallows him up. It is this also which is in the mind of St. Paul when he says that by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin. It is not the origin of death he is interested in, nor the origin of sin either, but the fact that sin and death hang together. And just because sin is sin, this is not a fact of natural history, or a fact which natural history can discredit. Scripture has no interest in natural history, nor does such an interest help us to understand it. It is no doubt perfectly true that to the biologist death is part of the indispensable machinery of nature; it is a piece of the mechanism without which the movement of the whole would be arrested; to put it so, death to the biologist is part of the same whole as life, or life and death are for him aspects of one thing. One can admit this frankly without compromising, because without touching, the other and deeper truth which is so interesting and indeed so vital alike in the opening pages of revelation and in its consummation in the Atonement. The biologist, when he deals with man, and with his life and death, deliberately deals with them

in abstraction as merely physical phenomena; to him man is a piece of nature, and he is nothing more. But the Biblical writers deal with man in the integrity of his being, and in his relations to God; they transcend the distinction of natural and moral, because for God it is not final: they are sensible of the unity in things which the every-day mind, for practical purposes, finds it convenient to keep apart. It is one great instance of this that they are sensible of the unity of sin and death. We may call sin a spiritual thing, but the man who has never felt the shadow of death fall upon it does not know what that spiritual thing is; and we may call death a natural thing, but the man who has not felt its natural pathos deepen into tragedy as he faced it with the sense of sin upon him does not know what that natural thing is. We are here, in short, at the vanishing point of this distinction—God is present, and nature and spirit interpenetrate in His presence. We hear much in other connexions of the sacramental principle, and its importance for the religious interpretation of nature. It is a sombre illustration of this principle if we say that death is a kind of sacrament of sin. It is in death, ultimately, that the whole meaning of sin comes home to the sinner; he has not sounded it to its depths till he has discovered that this comes into it at last. And we must not suppose that when Paul read the third chapter of Genesis he read it as a mythological explanation of the origin of physical death, and accepted it as such on the authority of inspiration. With all his reverence for the Old Testament, Paul accepted nothing from it that did not speak to his conscience, and waken echoes there: and what so spoke to him from the third chapter of Genesis was not a mythical story of how death invaded Paradise, but the profound experience of the human race expressed in the story, an experience in which sin and death interpenetrate, interpret, and in a sense constitute each other. To us they are what they are only in relation

to each other, and when we deny the relation we see the reality of neither. This is the truth, as I apprehend it, of all we are taught either in the Old Testament or in the New about the relation of sin and death. It is part of the greater truth that what we call the physical and the spiritual worlds are ultimately one, being constituted with a view to each other; and most of the objections which are raised against it are special cases of the objections which are raised against the recognition of this ultimate unity. So far as they are such, it is not necessary to discuss them further, and so far as the ultimate unity of the natural and the spiritual is a truth rather to be experienced than demonstrated it is not probable that much can be done by argument to gain acceptance for the idea that sin and death have essential relations to each other. But there are particular objections to this idea to which it may be worth while to refer.

There is, to begin with, the undoubted fact that many people live and die without, consciously at least, recognizing this relation. The thought of death may have had a very small place in their lives, and when death itself comes it may for various reasons be a very insignificant experience to them. It may come in a moment, suddenly, and give no time for feeling; or it may come as the last step in a natural process of decay, and arrest life almost unconsciously; or it may come through a weakness in which the mind wanders to familiar scenes of the past, living these over again, and in a manner escaping by so doing the awful experience of death itself; or it may come in childhood before the moral consciousness is fully awakened, and moral reflection and experience possible. This last case, properly speaking, does not concern us; we do not know how to define sin in relation to those in whom the moral consciousness is as yet undeveloped; we only know that somehow or other they are involved in the

moral as well as in the natural unity of the race. But leaving them out of account, is there any real difficulty in the others? any real objection to the Biblical idea that sin and death in humanity are essentially related to each other? I do not think there is. To say that many people are unconscious of the connexion is only another way of saying that many people fail to realize in full and tragic reality what is meant by death and sin. They think very little about either the one or the other. The third chapter of Genesis could never have been written out of their conscience. Sin is not for them all one with despair; they are not, through fear of death, all their lifetime subject to bondage. Scripture, of course, has no difficulty in admitting this; it depicts, on the amplest scale, and in the most vivid colours, the very kind of life and death which are here supposed. But it does not consider that such a life and death are *ipso facto* a refutation of the truth it teaches about the essential relations of death and sin. On the contrary, it considers them a striking demonstration of that moral dulness and insensibility in man which must be overcome if he is ever to see and feel his sin as what it is to God, or welcome the Atonement as that in which God's forgiveness of sin is mediated through the tremendous experience of death. I know there are those who will call this arrogant or even insolent, as though I were passing a moral sentence on those who do not accept a theorem of mine; but I hope I do not need here to disclaim any such unchristian temper. Only, it is necessary to insist that the connexion of sin and death in Scripture is neither a fantastic piece of mythology, explaining, as mythology does, the origin of a physical law, nor, on the other hand, a piece of supernaturally revealed history, to be accepted on the authority of Him who has revealed it; in such revelations no one believes any longer; it is a profound conviction and experience of the human conscience, and all

that is of interest is to show that such a conviction and experience can never be set aside by the protest of those who aver that they know nothing about it. One must insist on this, however it may expose him to the charge of judging. Can we utter any moral truth at all, which is not universally acknowledged, without seeming to judge?

Sometimes, apart from the general denial of any connexion between death and sin, it is pointed out that death has another and a totally different character. Death in any given case may be so far from coming as a judgment of God, that it actually comes as a gracious gift from Him; it may even be an answer to prayer, a merciful deliverance from pain, an event welcomed by suffering human nature, and by all who sympathize with it. This is quite true, but again, one must point out, rests on the false abstraction so often referred to. Man is regarded in all this simply in the character of a sufferer, and death as that which brings suffering to an end; but that is not all the truth about man, nor all the truth about death. Physical pain may be so terrible that consciousness is absorbed and exhausted in it, sometimes even extinguished, but it is not to such abnormal conditions we should appeal to discover the deepest truths in the moral consciousness of man. If the waves of pain subsided, and the whole nature collected its forces again, and conscience was once more audible, death too would be seen in a different light. It might not indeed be apprehended at once, as Scripture apprehends it, but it would not be regarded simply as a welcome relief from pain. It would become possible to see in it something through which God spoke to the conscience, and eventually to realize its intimate relation to sin.

The objections we have just considered are not very serious, because they practically mean that death has no moral character at all; they reduce it to a natural phenomenon, and do not bring it into any relation to the con-

science. It is a more respectable, and perhaps a more formidable, objection when death is brought into the moral world, and it is urged that so far from being God's judgment upon sin, it may be itself a high moral achievement. A man may die greatly; his death may be a triumph; nothing in his life may become him like the leaving it. Is not this inconsistent with the idea that there is any peculiar connexion between death and sin? From the Biblical point of view the answer must again be in the negative. There is no such triumph over death as makes death itself a noble ethical achievement, which is not at the same time a triumph over sin. Man vanquishes the one only as in the grace of God he is able to vanquish the other. The doom that is in death passes away only as the sin to which it is related is transcended. But there is more than this to be said. Death cannot be so completely an action that it ceases to be a passion; it cannot be so completely achieved that it ceases to be accepted or endured. And in this last aspect of it the original character which it bore in relation to sin still makes itself felt. Transfigure it, as it may be transfigured, by courage, by devotion, by voluntary abandonment of life for a higher good, and it remains nevertheless the last enemy. There is something in it monstrous and alien to the spirit, something which baffles the moral intelligence, till the truth dawns upon us that for all our race sin and death are aspects of one thing. If we separate them, we understand neither; nor do we understand the solemn greatness of martyrdom itself if we regard it as a triumph only, and eliminate from the death which martyrs die all sense of the universal relation in humanity of death and sin. No one knew the spirit of the martyr more thoroughly than St. Paul. No one could speak more confidently and triumphantly of death than he. No one knew better how to turn the passion into action, the endurance into a great

spiritual achievement. But also, no one knew better than he, in consistency with all this, that sin and death are needed for the interpretation of each other, and that fundamentally, in the experience of the race, they constitute one whole. Even when he cried, "O death, where is thy sting?" he was conscious that "the sting of death is sin." Each, so to speak, had its reality in the other. No one could vanquish death who had not vanquished sin. No one could know what sin meant without tasting death. These were not mythological fancies in St. Paul's mind, but the conviction in which the Christian conscience experimentally lived, and moved, and had its being. And these convictions, I repeat, furnish the point of view from which we must appreciate the Atonement, i.e. the truth that forgiveness, as Christianity preaches it, is specifically mediated through Christ's death.

JAMES DENNEY.

THE VALUE-JUDGEMENTS OF RELIGION.

II.

EXPOSITORY AND HISTORICAL (*continued*).

II. Otto Ritschl, Reischle and Scheibe on Value-Judgements.

(1) *Otto Ritschl*, the son of the founder of the school, claims that in his pamphlet *Concerning Value-judgements*, he stands for the position held by his father, which he, "although in a still in some measure undeveloped form, rather assumed than illumined and made distinct on its varied sides." (*a*) He begins with a *historical survey*, in which he traces the idea of value-judgements to *Luther*, but the name to *Kant*. In *Luther's* view what distinguished religious from all other knowledge was the incomparable