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THE ATONEMENT AND PSYCHOLOGY.

By Rev. Prof. J. G. MCKENZIE, M.A., D.D.

INTRODUCTION.

PSYCHOLOGY, as a science, is still suspect in many theological and philosophical quarters. To Barthians it is almost anathema; while to many others it seems to be an attempt to explain away the objectivity of religious experience rather than an aid to its explanation.

Nevertheless, there can be no question about the intimate relations between theology and psychology. Psychology describes and analyses the experiences; theology formulates its doctrines in relation to the objects of those experiences. Psychology has no technique whereby it could validate or invalidate the doctrine of God, the Incarnation, the Atonement or the Resurrection; but it does accept as psychological fact that men have experiences which they relate to these doctrines. "I saw God high and lifted up" is an experience; "I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me" is an experience; "Therefore, there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" is an experience. Every one of these experiences involve theological dogma; the concepts on which the dogmas are built may be true or false, but the experience is nevertheless psychologically real.

The central and indeed the crucial experience of the Christian believer is that of being reconciled to God, of being at one with Him, of sins forgiven, of being right with God. His experience of forgiveness and of being reconciled to God are immediate in exactly the same sense as I have an experience of a patch of colour. I may be wrong in referring my experience to an external world; or granting an external world, I may be mistaken as to the object to which I refer my experience of the patch

of colour ; but there can be no question as to the reality of the subjective experience. Even if my experience be an hallucination, the experience is nevertheless subjectively real and must be accounted for. So with my experience of forgiveness and reconciliation ; I may be wrong in my reference of those experiences to something that happened on the Cross ; nevertheless, the experiences would not be invalidated, but only the reference ; the experience would still be psychologically real.

Personally, I believe the psychologist can go further than this. In my analysis of the patch of colour I find that the feeling of externality is a true part of the experience. In other words, the actuality of the external world is given, not inferred ; externality is an experience and not an inference. I may be all wrong in my notions regarding the nature of the external world I experience through the senses, but that will not invalidate the experience of externality. And the study of dreams and hallucinations does not even appear to contradict this experience of externality. All we can infer from such a study is not that a doubt can be thrown upon the reality of the external world, but that dreams and hallucinations are both subjective and *private* ; whereas my experience of the external world is subjective but open to all.

Analogously, I might argue that the experience of objectivity in my religious experience is part of the experience and not an inference. And I do not see how you could confute me except on grounds that would involve the denial of the external world and all moral and æsthetic values as objective.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND THEOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM.

Be that as it may, the psychological approach to the problem of the Atonement is through the analysis of the experience of forgiveness, beginning with the conviction of sin, the sense of alienation from God, the acceptance and realisation of forgiveness and reconciliation through my repentance. The theological approach, on the other hand, is through the intellectual concepts of the nature of God, the nature of man, and the nature of sin.

Now, there is a fundamental difference between these two modes of approach to the problem of the Atonement. The theological approach may involve nothing more than an intellectual insight into the relations between my concepts of God,

the nature of man and the nature of sin. Intellectually I may recognise the inevitable relation between retribution and sin, and yet never experience the conviction of sin in myself, never realise the sense of alienation from God and man which sin involves. For an adequate theory of the Atonement to be formulated experience and reflection must go hand in hand. Just as sensation without thought is blind, so experience without reflection is not likely to yield the *modus operandi* of Atonement. On the other hand, thought must have experience on which to reflect; otherwise it is divorced from reality. If religion is "an experience of reality," a sharing of the life of God, then it would seem to follow that theology cannot afford to neglect the psychological analysis of religious experience.

Here, then, is the psychologist's justification for intruding into the realm of theology. It is as a necessary co-labourer with the theologian that he attempts to elucidate the experience of the forgiveness of sins. To do his share of the task well he should have no presuppositions; he should have no preferences for this theory or that. Naturally, when he has finished his task he will have a preference for any theory which takes accounts of the psychological facts.

PSYCHOLOGICAL QUESTIONS THE PROBLEM RAISES.

What, then, is the experience of sin and its forgiveness? What as an experience does it mean to be reconciled to God? In the analysis of the experience does the psychologist find any hint as to why forgiveness is always linked in Christian experience with the Cross? Any hint as to how God is able to forgive sin? What is it sin violates? What has to be removed before reconciliation can take place?

These are formidable questions; they should not, however, be beyond the psychologist's competence to answer.

Space will not permit me to enter deeply into the psychological nature of sin. It must suffice to state conclusions whose grounds I have given elsewhere.* "Sins" are symptoms, or better still expressions of a principle that characterises a "sinful nature." The principle of Sin is ego-centricity. As I have said elsewhere; Ego-centricity denotes the type and cause of the type of personality which consciously or unconsciously "makes himself his

* "Psychology, Psychotherapy, and Evangelicalism," published by George Allen and Unwin.

own main purpose." In other words, everything and everybody is just grist to his own mill. Ego-centricity, which is Sin and not a sin pollutes the whole activity of the individual to such a degree that it is the principle of that individual's personality. What is lust but the ego-centric desire to use another for the gratification of one's own pleasure? What is greed but the ego-centric desire to seek the things that others cannot share? Pride, envy, unholy anger, covetousness, gluttony, sloth, lust—all these deadly sins of catholic moral theology can be explained without remainder by the principle of ego-centricity. Ego-centricity corrupts everything it touches. In a true sense it is *original sin*.

Hence it follows that it is the sinner who has to be forgiven more than the sin. Professor H. R. Mackintosh is on good psychological ground when he writes: "The psychological fact that in repenting the best Christians ask pardon, not only for what they have done, but even more for what they are, signifies the truth that 'sin' is predicable, strictly and in the ultimate sense, of the *self* rather than isolated acts. *We are sinful.*"

Such a definition shows us at once where we must look for the essence of the effects of sin. Sin disturbs the spiritual relations existing between personalities. That disturbance of spiritual relations is automatic. A gulf is created from both sides. It is not simply that by his sin an individual alienates himself from the one wronged, but the wronged becomes alienated from him. Hence the real problem of the Atonement is not how the sinner can be made to repent—the aspect on which the moral theories lay stress—but how the wronged person can overcome his inevitable tendency to withdraw himself from the wrong-doer. In other words, something must happen in the wronged person if forgiveness is to be real. Forgiveness involves something happening in both the wrong-doer and the wronged. It is never a one-sided affair.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF FORGIVENESS.

That brings us to the psychological conditions of forgiveness. And from what has been said the inference follows that only personal wrongs can be forgiven because it is only against persons we can sin. Sin operates within personal relations. When we speak of a person sinning against the law we are really using a figure of speech. The law, in so far as it corresponds to the

moral law, is the expression of the Will of God ; it is not something standing over against God and the sinner which the latter must obey, and which God must see is fulfilled. Even when we break the law of society it is society-persons we wrong. Psychologically forgiveness cannot be a juridical or a forensic term.

The way is now clear for a consideration of the psychological conditions of forgiveness. These conditions are not one-sided. We have seen that both sinner and sinned against are alienated. It is difficult to see how it could be otherwise in sin against God. Something must happen in God as well as in the sinner before forgiveness can become a reality ; and the crux of the problem of Atonement is : what does happen in God ? And the further question arises : how does it happen ?

It is here, I think, the theologian and the psychologist tend to take different paths. Apart from those who hold "moral theories" of the Atonement, the theologian almost invariably brings in a juridical element. Professor Mackintosh and Dr. Denny are quite emphatic on this point, and they both lay great emphasis on the inevitability of God's hostile reaction to Sin and to the necessity of retribution. They do not seem to be able to dissociate retribution from a juridical process. The former writes : "The point is that the Divine character is such that whenever it encounters moral evil in saint or sinner it cannot but react against it with repelling and retributive force. Love that is worthy to be called love, confronts the evil thing with an inevitable and intrinsic purity. If God did not chastise sin in the very act of forgiveness, and in the persons forgiven as a sequel to forgiving them, He would not be more loving than He is ; He would cease to be God." Dr. Denny found that "From a very early time—perhaps from the time of St. Paul himself—the sense that reconciliation was a great achievement involving effort or tension of some kind on the part of God, has played a considerable part in theologising on this subject. In forgiving sins, it might be said, God takes sides against Himself ; He has a right to exact something from us, and for our sakes foregoes that right. His justice impels Him in one direction and His mercy in another and in this very act of pardoning men and reconciling them to Himself He must reconcile these divergent attributes." Dr. Denny freely admits that this conflict between the attributes of justice and mercy is not part of the experience of forgiveness ; the idea he thought was speculative and not experimental.

From the psychological point of view there can be no question of the fact that tension has to be overcome on the part of God. The tension, however, is not between attributes of justice and mercy, nor between a natural retributive force that must exact retribution and the love that would forgive; the tension is within the love-sentiment itself. Holy love which by its very nature must be repelled by sin is at the same moment under inevitable compulsion to "draw us sinners in." Love cannot but be "hurt" when the loved one has outraged the love; nor can love desire anything but the restoration of the sinner.

In other words, my contention is, that any analysis of forgiveness will show that it is never automatic; it is never spontaneous in the sense that there is no tension to be overcome within the sentiment outraged. That tension must be expressed, and it must be overcome from within the personality; and nothing done to "appease" or "propitiate" could induce forgiveness. In fact, true forgiveness is never induced from without; it must come from within the person forgiving.

Hence it seems to me, that the psychological analysis of forgiveness gives grounds for the intuition of the Church from the very beginning, that the Atonement involves an objective element, that is to say, involves something happening in God before forgiveness could have been possible. Overlooking a fault or wrong-doing is not forgiveness; "forgetting" is not forgiveness. True forgiveness is only possible when the wronged person experiences the hurt or wound to his love sentiment, overcome the inevitable sense of alienation created between him and the wrong-doer, and identifies himself with the wrong-doer as though the sin were his own. Forgiveness is truly object-centred; it is motivated by the wrong-doer's need. One does not forgive merely from pity for the wrong-doer, nor because one cannot bear to be alienated from another. It is a truly spiritual act, involving effort and must come entirely from within the one who forgives; it is a matter of grace.

From the psychological point of view, then, forgiveness involves, what Bushnell in his amended theory of the Atonement outlined in *Forgiveness and Law*, termed "cost" on the part of God. God cannot be indifferent to sin; His forgiveness cannot be automatic on the repentance of the sinner. Man's repentance does not induce forgiveness; it is the condition of our acceptance of it. God suffers for man's sin; His love is wounded and outraged by it; He is alienated from the sinner;

He is repelled by the sin ; the spiritual relation between Himself and the sinner is disturbed.

The whole problem, from the psychological point of view, is : How can God overcome His revulsion to man's sin ? How can He express this revulsion and the suffering it causes to Him ? How can He bridge the gulf which separates Him from the sinner ? That is the psychological problem from God's side. On man's side, the problem may be formulated thus : What induces repentance ? Can anything but a perfect repentance receive forgiveness and make reconciliation possible ? How can we explain the age-long feeling that the expiation of sin is necessary ?

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF FORGIVENESS FROM MAN'S SIDE.

Before I link up the Cross of Christ with Forgiveness let me analyse the psychological conditions of forgiveness from man's side. It has been usual in the theory of the Atonement to insist on the necessity of a sense of guilt as a pre-requisite of repentance, If what is meant is that a man must feel his sin as *Mea Culpa* and as proceeding from a sinful nature, no objection can be taken by the psychologist. But every practising psychologist knows that a sense of guilt instead of leading to repentance is always a moment in the downward thrust of repression ; and instead of leading to repentance and a true change of heart and will-*metanoia*, may lead to regression. This is what happens in all cases of neurosis and psychosis in which a sense of guilt is a prominent symptom. I doubt if any true repentance contains any element of fear of punishment, although there may be the fear of the loss of the love of God. Bitter shame and remorse, a true realisation of the sinfulness of our nature ; an unqualified acceptance of responsibility for our sins ; a consciousness of its outrage against God's love, and a profound realisation of alienation from God caused by our sins, are all inevitable elements in a true repentance that leads to *metanoia*. Without the *metanoia* there is no deep reconciliation to God. It is very probable that in all repentance there is a struggle in the subconscious mind of the sinner to repress these personality-disturbing emotions ; and in the neurotic and psychotic this tendency to repress the conflict and emotions into the unconscious is more or less successful ; so that instead

of a penitence leading to *metanoia* we get a penitence leading to regression of the offending tendencies. In such a case the ego-centricity and offending tendencies are left unmodified and no true relation with God can be established. In a true repentance the consciousness of the outraging of the love of God is far more prominent than any concern of the sinner with his own fate. Even in the sinner's sense of alienation, if there is true repentance, there is no despair.

True repentance is elicited by the realisation of one's sin, and that sin outrages God's Holy love. In so far as the conviction of sin refers to the personality as a whole and not merely to particular sins, the repentance is deeper and the *metanoia* involves a change from ego-centricity to God-centricity. To the degree this change occurs to that degree there is real reconciliation; the spiritual relations between the soul and God are restored and become a conscious factor in the life of the individual believer and the "joy and peace in believing" are real and lasting. Though the individual may fall into sins, *the soul does not consent*, and consequently the spiritual relations are not disturbed.

THE MEANING OF THE CROSS.

The question now arises : How is the sinner's conviction of sin and repentance to be elicited ? How is he to see the meaning of the Cross in relation to his sin ?

All schools of theological thought have seen the Cross as central to any theory of forgiveness. The various theories of the Atonement depend on what is believed to have happened there. It may be true that the life and teaching of our Lord have inspired the good life more than the death, as Rashdall argues ; but it is at the Cross that men and women have realised their own sin ; there they have felt the burden of it lifted from their conscience ; there they have seen God reconciled to man and man reconciled to God. Whatever theory of the Atonement is held the psychologist cannot but take into account the Church's experience at the Cross. There is, as Professor Burkitt puts it, something inevitable about the Cross ; it is linked with that grace that covers our sin ; and no psychologist can ignore what is linked with the deepest experiences of the believer.

Can the psychologist give us a hint as to what must have happened on the Cross from his knowledge of sin, the conditions of forgiveness and reconciliation ? Can he explain why it is that

all theories of the Atonement have their triumphs in giving men the assurance of forgiveness and reconciliation? I think he can.

Let us summarise what happens in the process we call forgiveness. First, there must be a recognition by both sinner and the one sinned against of the sin that alienates them from one another. That alienation is a positive experience. It is felt by the sinner as an inevitable separation from the one sinned against; it is felt by God as an inevitable revulsion, even repulsion of the wrong-doer. If that experience did not alienate God it would be difficult to see what forgiveness could mean. Spiritual relations are disturbed from both sides; they must be healed from both sides. The subjective theories of the Abelardian type admit the alienation on man's side, and for them the problem is: how can man become "forgiveable"? How can repentance be elicited? The objective theories see the alienation on God's side, and their problem is: What can ward off the repelling force? How is man to make retribution?

It would seem to me that the psychological analysis enables the theologian to synthesise the two views; it preserves the objective element and makes it creative of the subjective experience of repentance. On the other hand, no psychological analysis of the experience will give us a theory of the Atonement by itself. Theological presuppositions must enter into any theory. For example, no theory of the Atonement can be divorced from a theory of the Incarnation. However immediate the experience of forgiveness and reconciliation is, and it is immediate, no theory of how the experience is possible is given in the experience. Our beliefs about God, the nature of sin, and of the nature of man undoubtedly colour the experience itself as well as determine the theory acceptable. Every theory of the Atonement is an intellectual construct. There is no Revelation of a theory of the Atonement. If we differentiate between "dogma" and "doctrine" then one could say that there is a Revelation of the dogma but no revelation of the doctrine. Doctrine arises in the inevitable attempt of the mind to find an explanation of its experience. Experience is thus both creative and created. The experience is the reaction of the soul of the sinner to the Revelation of forgiveness; that Revelation is made through the Cross. But the experience is also creative and is the source of doctrine.

What I think can be inferred from the psychological analysis of the conditions of forgiveness is that the Cross reveals in time and

through the death of our Lord how God overcomes the conflict within His own love-sentiment for man. The Cross reveals that God suffers for man's sin, and that unless He could and did suffer He could not forgive. On that Cross He reveals the "cost" in suffering He had to endure. In human forgiveness it is the estrangement of the loved one that is most deeply experienced; the wronged one feels the alienation of the wrong-doer as though it were his own. In psychological terms he identifies himself with the wrong-doer, and suffers as though the sin were his own. Psychologically this is "vicarious sacrifice"; it is a suffering not *instead of the wrong-doer*, it is the necessary suffering on the part of the wronged without which he could not forgive.

Is it not this we see on the Cross? We are not beholding a sacrifice *to God*, but the sacrifice *of God*, whereby He reveals in the death of Christ through suffering how His heart has been kept open to receive the sinner. The Cross is the Revelation in time of God overcoming the tension in Himself caused by sin and at the same time identifying Himself with the sinner, experiencing the alienation of the sinner from Himself. No one truly forgives who is incapable of experiencing something of the alienation the sinner suffers through his sin. Take the little child who has done some wrong which makes mother "cross," and who is intelligent enough to see that mother is suffering because he *could* have done it. The mother cannot turn to the child's appeal, "I am sorry," without an effort, without tension having to be overcome. The child senses the alienation and suffering of the mother; the mother in turn experiences the suffering her alienation is causing the child, and her heart breaks in an agony of love which is forgiveness, which bridges the gulf the child's sin has caused. The experience of the mother's alienation from the child, and the suffering of the child when it senses the alienation on the part of the mother are two moments in the experience of repentance and forgiveness; and these two moments in the one experience lead to *metanoia*, the change in the child which makes the sin "abhorred," and the two are reconciled.

No illustration can adequately represent what takes place in God in the experience known to us as forgiveness. It is His Holy love which is outraged rather than His Holy will. He cannot forgive in the sense of remitting penalties against His Holy Will. Forgiveness, as we have already said, is not a juridical or forensic term. When we violate His Holy Will in the physical

sphere, His over-ruling providence may transform the penalty into a spiritual blessing, but it cannot remit it. The Prodigal had to eat the husks the swine did eat; his wasted substance could not be restored, and the memory of that experience would always bring sorrow—a sorrow that would make his fellowship with the father closer and deeper because of the gratitude for the restored relationship. Sin may have effects outside the sphere of personal relationships, and the effects must work themselves out. It is within the sphere of personal relationships that Atonement takes place; it is in relation to God's Holy love that forgiveness is assured. God takes the burden of healing these disturbed relationships between His Holy love and the sinner upon Himself. "There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin"; that price is paid not *to God* but *by God*. Nothing the sinner can do for and by himself could bring forgiveness; forgiveness can never be merited. Sin is not a debt; it is a trespass. Forgiveness is a debt from our side, a debt we can never pay for but must receive, and receive as a gift. Forgiveness is God's act; repentance conditions the sinner's capacity to receive it.

Hence the psychological analysis of the conditions of forgiveness allows us to preserve the two fundamental elements in the theories of the Atonement—the objective and the subjective. The moral theories demand the exclusion of the juridical and forensic elements from the theory of Atonement; they see truly the Cross as the manifestation of God's love in a supreme form; they know that Calvary induces repentance as nothing else can. But they take no account of the fact that it "costs" God something to forgive. The sinner and the truly repentant cannot but intuit that his sin has caused suffering to God, and he feels the alienation of God. He does not intuit why God must suffer, nor how He overcomes His alienation; he simply experiences that God has done so. And the very fact that Christian thinkers have always felt that a theory of the Atonement was necessary witnesses to the fact that man has always intuited the fact that something must happen in God before forgiveness is a reality.

I think that it is possible, psychologically, to infer that as both God and man, Christ experienced the outraged love of God, and the suffering which overcomes the revulsion caused by sin; and at the same time what man must feel about sin in a true repentance. He could not have experienced the conviction of sin, the personal shame and sorrow, all of which enter into a true repent-

ance ; nor could He have experienced a personal confession of sin. Vicarious repentance and vicarious confession cannot mean that He repented or confessed instead of man, and that God accepted His repentance and confession in lieu of man's perfect penitence and confession. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which Christ must have felt what man ought to experience. He saw sin in all its violence ; He felt how it alienated from God in a way the sinner could not himself experience. In any other sense, vicarious repentance and confession is psychologically impossible. I cannot repent for another although I can experience in virtue of the process known as identification all the pangs of Hell that a loved one of mine ought to feel and must feel before forgiveness can be a reality. My suffering may induce or elicit repentance in that loved one ; through sensing what I feel he may intuit and thus elicit what he ought to feel. It is in that sense, I think, that we may find some truth in the theories of McLeod Campbell and Moberley.

DOES GOD SUFFER ?

The fact, then, that God in Christ suffers because of the tension caused by man's sin, and has to overcome that tension through suffering, and also must suffer in so far as He experiences the alienation of man from Him, the question arises as to whether God is passible. Rashdall treats this question from the theological point of view. From the psychological point of view it would seem that love involves the capacity to suffer. If we say God is Love, that God forgives sin, we are really saying that God is capable of suffering and He does suffer. A love that was impassible is a love inconceivable by man ; and certainly it is contrary to all human experience. It is only as the heart is kept open to receive the wrong-doer that forgiveness is possible, and that can only be kept open through suffering. The Holier and deeper the love the greater the suffering. It would seem, then, that instead of God being impassible, He is the most passible Being, for He is pure Holy Love. And it is just because He is pure, Holy love that He can forgive absolutely. Moberley thinks that a perfect penitence alone must condition absolute forgiveness ; and thus he is compelled to posit a perfect penitence on the part of Christ for all men, which each one of us appropriates. Apart from the fact that such a demand for a perfect penitence as a condition of sin would be making forgiveness a

“transaction,” Moberley makes forgiveness depend on the penitence and not on God’s Holy Love. What I think we can say is that Moberley’s theory like all moral theories makes the whole process turn on man’s condition of forgiveness, not on God’s grace. Be that as it may ; what is certain is that the more perfect the penitence, the more sure is the *metanoia* ; but the forgiveness is absolute from God’s side if there is penitence which is real and not the morbid penitence which leads to regression. Just as when we are guilty we are hopelessly guilty, so when we are forgiven we are absolutely forgiven—there is no half-way house. A perfect penitence is not the same as a perfect repentance. Repentance includes both *penitentia* and *metanoia*. *Penitentia* may be sincere and deep and yet the *metanoia* far from perfect. That is why we fall into the very sins we have but confessed and for which we have been forgiven. To the degree that penitence is sincere and profound, to that extent the soul cannot consent to sin. St. Paul does not doubt his forgiveness nor the sincerity of his penitence although he was conscious of division in his soul : “ That which I would I do not, and that which I would not that I do.” The penitence was sincere and profound but the *metanoia* was not complete.

A final word may be said as to why all theories of the Atonement have their triumphs by eliciting the intuition that God forgives. The dogma is intuited but not the doctrine. We must remember that under the conviction of sin the sinner is not seeking a theory of the Atonement but forgiveness. It is not the truth of the doctrine that elicits the intuition but the dogma ; that is to say the preaching of the dogma elicits the intuition that God forgives. The fact that the Penal theory still elicits the intuition that God forgives is due to the psychological fact that many people’s penitence is tinged with a strong feeling of guilt ; their punitive conscience always demands punishment, and in the case of sin, a punishment they cannot inflict upon themselves. Hence the attraction of the theory lies in the fact that it offers to the punitive conscience a substitute who has borne their punishment, and all that remains for them is to appropriate it. The Satisfaction theory can only grip those who can believe that the merit of one can cancel the debt owed by another ; while the moral theories will always appeal to those whose first movement towards a conscious relation to God was not motivated by any fear of sin or deep conviction of sin, that conviction growing with their growth in grace.

We conclude then that the psychological analysis of the conditions of forgiveness on both God's side and man's does not give us a theory of Atonement, but the material which the theologian may weave into a theory that synthesises both reflective thought and experience. I may go further and say that the Revelation of the forgiveness of sin, and the Revelation that the forgiveness is related vitally to the Cross are true to experience. In other words, the dogma finds a response in experience, and that the Church neglects at her peril the preaching of that dogma.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS.

The Rev. Principal H. S. CURR wrote: Professor McKenzie has called attention in this paper to a phase of soteriology which has been neglected in a great measure. It is surely a matter of great importance that the experience of forgiveness should be analysed in the light of psychological doctrine, and his discussion has the merit of stimulating reflection on the subject as well as of providing a great deal of information regarding it.

I cannot help thinking that Dr. McKenzie fails to do full justice to what is known as guilt. There is a reference to it in the concluding paragraphs of his paper, but he does not seem to have grappled with the gravity of the problem which it creates. The classic cry for pardon is surely Psalm li. The burning words may be taken as they stand. The force of the argument is not affected by any critical enquiries as to the date, or occasion, or authorship of that great penitential lyric. With it one might be allowed to class the hymn "Rock of Ages." I do not suggest that it can be justifiably mentioned in the same breath as the Hebrew poem, but it gives classic expression to the soul's longing for an experience of pardon and cleansing which, to my thinking, differs very deeply from that which the writer of the paper seems to consider to be normal and necessary. Sins and forgiveness are here reduced to terms of outraged love, that word being interpreted with reference to God, not in the Biblical sense, but in that of modern humanitarianism. Was it Principal P. T. Forsyth who used to maintain that Divine Holiness and Divine Love are different names for the same Divine Attribute?

It is precisely there that the psychological argument enters. There are classic pictures of guilt in the Bible and in the worlds'

literature, whether produced in a Christian context, or otherwise, and the effect of these is tremendous. In such cases forgiveness is bound to be a marvellous and mighty experience, since, as it has been well said, nobody can be said to have entered into the joy and peace of forgiveness unless he is able to forgive himself. The voice of conscience must be silenced, not because it is stifled, but because it is satisfied. A simple analogy will make the point clear. Sin is often regarded as debt. Let us, then, take the case of a bankrupt. How can he gain self-respect again? He may pay a composition to his creditors in accordance with a legal decision. He may by herculean efforts pay off his indebtedness as Sir Walter Scott did. Some benefactor may pay his debts so that, like the famous figure in Longfellow's poem "he owes not any man." There is a healthy instinct in human nature which impels us to make amends when we have failed by omission or commission. That is satisfied in the Cross of Christ which Professor Burkitt so felicitously describes as inevitable. It is inevitable psychologically as well as in every other way. In these circumstances, I find myself unable to endorse Dr. McKenzie's sentences. "God takes the burden of healing these disturbed relationships between His holy love and the sinner upon Himself." "There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin; that price is paid not to God but by God." To my way of thinking the price is paid both to God and by God. In other words, God owed it to Himself, as we say in daily life with reference to men and their ways. The extent of God's debt to Himself may be measured in some degree by the fact that it could only be discharged by the death of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ. "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans v, 8).

Mr. W. E. LESLIE wrote: While the paper raises an important question in a suitable way it has two marked defects.

We know that anthropomorphism is legitimate, for we could have no thought of God without it; but when Dr. McKenzie "psychologizes" God he is on very precarious ground.

The second defect is more fundamental. The author does not seem to be clear as to the nature of an "experience." In various places he equates "to experience" with "to sense," "to realise,"

“to feel.” He recognises the distinction between a subjective experience or feeling and its objective cause, but I think he nevertheless confuses them. Take his first example as an illustration (page 1) “I saw God (*sic*) high and lifted up” is *not* an experience. The experience is the vision of a high and lifted up being. The Seer adds the information as to the identity of that Exalted One. We believe that his explanation is correct. But it does not form part of what he felt. Many have told us that they have seen the Virgin Mary, etc. In their case we must accept their experience, but we probably reject their interpretation of their experience. I think that the theology of experience which the author builds up is really based upon this ambiguity.

Col. the Rev. F. J. MILES wrote: A worthy contribution to the reconciling of different theories of the Atonement, but a point might well be made under the caption “Does God suffer?” (page 33, line 18). It is obvious that the degree of resentment against sin is measured by the depth of love of the one sinned against for the one sinning. I may be but slightly affected by a sin against me by a stranger, while being cut to the quick and bitterly resenting a like sin against me committed by one I dearly love.

Dr. R. E. D. CLARK wrote: In his beautiful and thoughtful paper Professor McKenzie has argued that if God’s mind be like our minds, He cannot forgive without suffering. Yet the suffering to which these arguments lead us, is the suffering associated with an *internal* tension, it is the mental suffering in the heart of God to which the Old Testament prophets so often call attention. This, surely, is not to be identified with the suffering of the Cross.

The Cross does not merely show us a struggle within the heart of God, it reveals something much more surprising—the fact that man was allowed to inflict actual suffering upon his Maker. How shall we seek to understand this new feature—the fact that God was not content to make a self-sacrificing mental effort to love the sinner, but that he chose that His Son should be crucified by wicked men?

Here again psychology—the study of man’s own mind—does in part enable us to answer this very question. If a father watches

his son develop a character which is both cruel and loathsome and finds him heedless to advice and appeals, the time may come at length when every bond of sympathy and understanding will be broken. The father may begin to feel that hope itself is gone—that he must be content to abandon his son and think of him no more. Can human love do anything before lost hope severs the relationship between father and son for ever? Yes, there is one more thing it can do, though perhaps not one in a thousand of the best of earthly fathers would sink to do it. Such a father might contrive that his son, all unwittingly, should steal his father's goods, should buffet his father's body, should commit the sins of his everyday life upon his father. And then the hope that was being killed by disappointment would surely return again in the father's breast: he would know at last that some *new* thing had happened which in due time might suddenly and irresistibly bring home to the son the enormity of his crime.

Here, surely, we have as in a glass darkly a picture of the love of God to man—the love that sought to win us men not only by sending prophets and wise men to tell of the grief and tension in God, but the love which, undespairing of past failure, so ordained that in the fullness of time, we men should all unwittingly pour out our callous hatred on the One who loves us most. He died that we might dimly see what our cruelty, deference to public opinion, moral weakness and godlessness look like in the eyes of our Maker. He suffered that we, awaking at long last to see the horror of sin, might turn and be forgiven.

AUTHOR'S REPLY.

The most important criticisms I have to answer are those by Principal Curr and Mr. Leslie.

The Principal finds some difficulty in my interpretation of "guilt." I was careful, however, to use the phrase "the sense of guilt." Not for a moment does the psychologist belittle the wrong done to God by sin, indeed he deepens it. The 51st Psalm is indeed the classic expression of the state of repentance which is outlined in my discussion. "My sins are ever before me"—yes, but not as a barrier to the presence of God, but the dynamic urging him to seek the clean heart and the renewed mind. The sense of guilt, which the psychotherapist condemns, is that sense of sin whose content is

mostly fear of punishment and which inevitably tends to repress evil tendencies so that they are just as active in the unconscious mind as they were before conviction. A true repentance always seeks the clean heart and the renewed mind.

Forgiveness is always a "marvellous" experience, but it is God's forgiveness which makes it marvellous and not man's forgiveness of himself. I cannot think that a Christian can ever forgive himself for a wrong done; what keeps him from a melancholy state of mind is the expression of God's forgiveness. Certainly every forgiven sinner will want to make amends for wrong done as far as he is able; but that is a consequence of the gratitude for God's forgiveness, not because he has forgiven himself. I do not think, however, that the Principal and I differ in the fundamental sense, although I should not speak of God "owing a debt to Himself." That is psychologizing God much more than I have done, and for which Mr. Leslie pulls me up.

I next turn to Mr. Leslie's criticism. It is true that the psychologist is on precarious ground if "psychologizing" God. Here I think Mr. Leslie is making "psychologizes" equivalent to "psycho-analyze"!! There is no other way of treating the Atonement except by the attempt to understand God's reaction to sin, and that is "psychologizing." The theologian is psychologizing when he contends that God *hates* sin.

Mr. Leslie brings a more severe charge against me when he argues that I have confused his meanings of the word "experience." Everything that happens in our mind is an "experience." When we "sense," "realise" or "feel" something, we are undergoing an experience; but it is also part of experience to relate what we "sense," "realise" or "feel" to its cause—it is a cognitive experience. When Mr. Leslie says: "I saw God high and lifted up" is *not* an experience, and then immediately goes on to say that "The experience is the vision of a high and lifted up being," he surely contradicts himself. What I think Mr. Leslie is trying to get at is the differentiation between the facts of experience and the interpretation of the experience. I guarded against any ambiguity on page 31, and also guarded against the same ambiguity in a later part of the paper, where I say that the experience of forgiveness does not automatically give us a theory of forgiveness. The theory, the

cognitive side of the experience, is not immediate, but involves reflection and inference.

The main object of my paper was to try and synthesize the subjective and objective theories of the Atonement through a psychological analysis of the experience of forgiveness; and nothing in the discussion has shown any real defect in the synthesis. Naturally, in a paper one cannot go into all grounds for every position taken up, although I have tried to give grounds for my position in the volume, "Psychology, Psychotherapy and Evangelicalism."