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A COMPARISON OF THE VIEWS OF ATONEMENT
OF JAMES DENNEY AND R.C. MOBERLY

by

Richard Philip Seawright

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A Thesis

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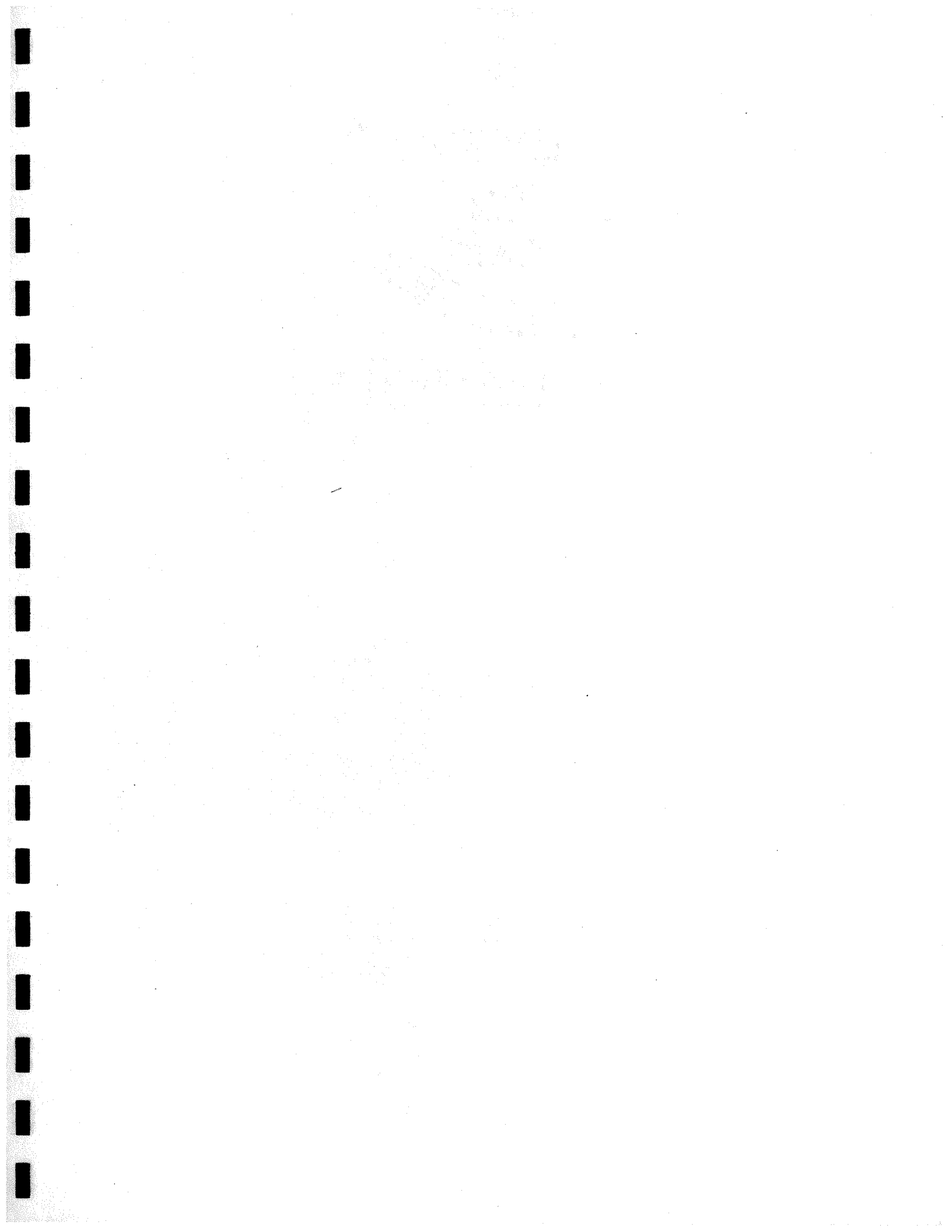


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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem Defined

It will be the purpose of this study to compare James Denney and R.C. Moberly as to their views of atonement. The purpose of this comparison will be to discover what similarities and differences there are between them in their respective views. It is not necessary to delimit the problem as stated, because it is delimited by its very nature, being a comparative study.

B. The Problem Justified

At the heart of the Christian revelation is the doctrine of the atonement. It is the core doctrine in the mind of Paul. In his letter to the Corinthians Paul says, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."¹ To Paul nothing but the 'word of the cross', which he equates with the 'gospel' in I Corinthians 1:17,18, is able to save men. It is the very heart of the gospel he preached. The Protestant principle of justification by faith has as its most essential component the doc-

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1. I Corinthians 2:2.

trine of the atonement.

James Orr calls Christianity a 'religion of Re-
demption'.¹ He goes on to define what he means by this
statement when he says:

"We may, therefore, set aside at once as alien to the true Christian view, or at least as inadequate and defective, all such representations of Christianity as see in its Founder only a great religious teacher and preacher of righteousness; or a great religious and social reformer, such as has often appeared in the history of the world; or a great philanthropist, caring for the bodies and souls of men; or whose main business it was to inoculate men with a new 'enthusiasm for humanity'; or a teacher with a new ethical secret to impart to mankind; or even such representations as see in Him only a new spiritual Head of humanity, whose work it is to complete the old creation, and lift the race to a higher platform of spiritual attainment, or help it a stage further onwards to the goal of its perfection. Christ is all this, but He is infinitely more. God's end in His creation indeed stands, as also His purpose to realize it; but, under the conditions in which humanity exists, that end can only be realized through a Redemption, and it is this Redemption which Christ pre-eminently came into the world to effect."²

Because of the great importance of the doctrine of the atonement and because it is central to any thinking concerning Christianity, this general topic is important.

The selection of James Denney and R.C. Moberly

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1. James Orr, The Christian View of God and the World, Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954, p. 287.
2. Ibid., pp. 287, 288.

for this study is not to be thought of as arbitrary in any sense of the word. The major doctrinal concern of these two men was in the area of soteriology. For Denney the atonement and Christianity were considered synonymous. Although Moberly wrote other books, his best known book is Atonement and Personality. Of this book Thomas Hughes says:

"This is one of the greatest books on the work of Christ, massive in grasp and treatment, keen and penetrating in insight, with deep psychological acumen, while through it all there runs a sincere spiritual tone, and a real Christian outlook."¹

To both of these men the atonement was of utmost importance. They both wrote during the latter half of the nineteenth century, when Christianity was under extreme fire, and both men recognized the value of this doctrine to the Christian Faith. In view of all this the choice of these two men can hardly be called arbitrary, nor the topic of atonement unimportant.

One final reason which supports the importance of this study is the fact that the views held by these two men are views which must be considered important for men today. James Denney's view of atonement is basically objective and may be called a 'Penal Satisfaction' view

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1. Thomas Hughes, The Atonement, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1949, pp. 196, 197.

of the atonement, while R.C. Moberly holds a more subjective view and may be classified as holding an 'Ethical Satisfaction' view of atonement. It may be said quite honestly that views which are completely subjective in nature are not held by very many men today. The same is true of a completely objective view of atonement. It is because these two men saw the many problems arising from the doctrine of atonement and attempted to cope with them that they are important for our day. Neither man is an extremist, and both are intellectually and spiritually honest men.

C. The Method of Procedure and Sources of Data

The method of procedure is basically simple, as this is a comparative study. In chapter one James Denney's view of atonement will be presented, in the second chapter R.C. Moberly's view of atonement will be presented, and the comparative study of these two men as to their respective views of atonement will be the burden of chapter three.

The principal sources for this study are the books of James Denney and R.C. Moberly. The major sources by Denney that have been used are The Atonement and the Modern Mind, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, and The Death of Christ. R.C. Moberly's book Atonement

and Personality has been used as the major source for examining his view of atonement. Another book which has helped the author in understanding and presenting Moberly's view of atonement is J. McLeod Campbell's book The Nature of the Atonement. Principal secondary books which have been used for guidance in this paper are The Atonement by Thomas Hughes, The Doctrine of the Atonement by John Mozley, The Christian View of God and the World by James Orr, and The Atonement and the Sacraments by Robert S. Paul.

CHAPTER ONE

JAMES DENNEY'S VIEW OF ATONEMENT

CHAPTER ONE

JAMES DENNEY'S VIEW OF ATONEMENT

A. Introduction

It is no easy task to comprehend and to explain James Denney's view of atonement because it is so very complex. For Denney the atonement was the very core and heart material of the Christian religion. Because it is so central to him it is at the same time involved, for it is the whole of his faith. He holds an essentially objective view of atonement, as has been stated earlier, and this objectivity can be traced basically to his view of a moral universe. This will be the burden of the first part of the chapter, which is called The Need for Atonement. The Nature of Atonement, The Means of Atonement, and The Results of Atonement will complete the chapter outline and will be the guideposts by which Denney's view of atonement will be explained.

B. The Need for Atonement

The need for atonement is a very real one in the mind of James Denney. In his book The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation he says:

"Still, the heart of the reconciliation lies in the readjustment or restoration of the

true personal relation between God and the creature which has lapsed by its own act into alienation from Him; in other words, it consists in the forgiveness of sins."¹

In this statement is seen Denney's basic attitude toward the need for atonement. All relations between God and man are personal, or ethical. The 'personal relation' he speaks of that exists between God and man has been destroyed. God and man once had a relationship which no longer exists because of an act by man, which Denney calls sin. In order to understand the real meaning of this broken relationship which needs to be remedied, it will be necessary to discuss two major concepts that Denney holds--the moral constitution of the universe and the fact of sin in relation to this moral constitution.

1. The Moral Constitution of the Universe

As has been previously stated, any and all relations between God and man are considered personal or moral in Denney's mind. Thus, any relationship which has to do with the reconciling of man to God must be thought of as personal in nature. But these relations are not to be considered so personal as to be construed

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1. James Denney, *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, New York, George H. Doran Company, 1918, p. 6.

as unethical. There was nothing capricious in God's act of forgiving man. Forgiveness did not come without price or without moral considerations. In fact, according to Denney, any relations that exist between God and man exist on the basis of a universal moral law. Both God and man are, in a way of speaking, responsible to this law if proper relations are to exist between these two parties. He is most explicit concerning this point and spends a great deal of time explaining this concept. The following statement clarifies this idea:

"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 it is."¹

This moral constitution was considered by Denney to be the very essence of any intelligent thinking concerning the relations between God and man. Of this Denney writes the following:

"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."²

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1. James Denney, *The Atonement and the Modern Mind*, New York, A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1903, p. 68.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 79,80.

Thus, even the very act of atonement must be consistent with this moral constitution. Denney, in fact, calls the act of atonement the manifestation of God's righteousness. Of this very idea he says:

"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."¹

Thus, it is seen that only in compliance with this law is life possible and atonement efficacious. But why is it necessary to make atonement? It is at this point that a discussion of sin must enter the picture.

2. The Fact of Sin

Sin, says Denney, is the cause of the atonement. Sin is of such a nature, extent, and consequence that only atonement can take care of it. In order to understand Denney at this point it will be necessary to discuss sin as to what it is, man's involvement in sin, and the results of sin.

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1. Ibid., pp. 75,76.

a. Sin's Nature

In Denney's mind sin is the disordering of God's universal moral law. It is the disrupting of the moral symmetry of God's universe. "Sin is, in fact, nothing else than...derangement or disturbance: it is that in which wrong is done to the moral constitution under which we live."¹ Thus, sin may be defined, for Denney, as that moral disturbance of the personal relationship in which God and man are so completely and intimately involved. It is the breaking of that moral constitution which defines the very essence of all good.

b. Sin's Extent

As to the extent to which man is involved in his sin Denney answers, "completely". Man has entered into this rebellion against God's universal moral law so completely that he is unable to redeem himself in any way. Of this he says:

"...the doctrine of spiritual inability, as consequent on the corruption of man's nature by sin, remains and will always remain to represent the great truth that there is one thing which man cannot do alone. He cannot bring his state into harmony with his nature."²

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1. Ibid., p. 79.

2. Ibid., p. 85.

What Denney means is that man by 'nature' was meant for fellowship with God, but that because of his present 'state' of sin he is unable to realize this end. However, man is not totally lost, for he always "remains susceptible of redemption."¹ He is ever savable and redeemable in God's sight.

c. Sin's Consequence

This brings the discussion of the matter of the need for atonement to its conclusion. The basic consequence of sin is death, says Denney, and death is God's reaction or judgment toward sin. Of this he says:

"...there is in the nature of things a reaction against sin which when it has had its perfect work is fatal, that this reaction is the divine punishment of sin, and that its finally fatal character is what is meant by Scripture when it says that the wages of sin is death."²

He makes the situation even clearer when he says:

"What makes the situation serious, what necessitates a gospel, is that the world, in virtue of its sin, lies under the condemnation of God. His wrath abides upon it. That wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness in man: and it is sin in view of this, it is as the

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1. Ibid., p. 85.
2. James Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 214.

exact counterpart of this, that the righteousness and love of God are revealed in the Gospel."¹

Thus, the need for atonement in the mind of James Denney is seen only in relation to God's universal moral law and man's breaking of it. This should not be thought of as a legal view of atonement, for Denney thought of this moral constitution as the only basis for real, ethical relations between God and man. It is in fact the relationship itself. Denney summarizes the need for atonement as follows:

"The need of reconciliation, in the only sense in which the term 'need' can be properly used in this connection, lies, as we have seen, in man, and in his relation to God as affected by sin."²

The next question to be answered in understanding Denney's view of atonement is that of the nature of atonement. What kind of atonement is necessary to correct or fill this need of it? This is the task of the next section of this chapter.

C. The Nature of Atonement

In attempting to answer the question as to the

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1. James Denney, *Studies in Theology*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1895, pp. 102, 103.
2. James Denney, *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, p. 233.

kind of atonement necessary to fill the need created by man's sin, it will be imperative that Denney's view of the moral constitution of the universe be kept in mind. This concept is quite central to all his thinking concerning his view as to the nature of atonement. Three words will be necessary to describe Denney's view of the nature of atonement. They are: satisfaction, punishment, and substitution. These words are needed to describe the nature of atonement because of the way in which he defines the need of atonement-- that is, the breaking of God's universal law, or the moral constitution of the universe. The defining of these three words will be the task of this section.

1. Satisfaction

The word 'satisfaction' helps describe the nature of atonement as Denney understood it, because it points up the very important fact in Denney's system that God redeemed men in a moral, ethical way. He had been offended by man and it was therefore necessary that the holiness and righteousness of God be satisfied. The moral constitution under which God and man have their relations had been violated, and therefore God had to redeem man in such a way as to deal satisfactorily with

the moral law. At the same time God would be satisfied, for his moral law had been adequately restored.

Denney states this very clearly when he says:

"There can be no gospel unless there is such a thing as a righteousness of God for the ungodly. But just as little can there be any gospel unless the integrity of God's character be maintained."¹

God's character had to be maintained and his righteousness satisfied. He could not just forgive, for his character demanded a satisfaction for the wrong done to it. As he says:

"The Atonement is concerned with...not the freeness of pardon, about which all are agreed, but the cost of it; not the spontaneity of God's love, which no one questions, but the necessity under which it lay to manifest itself in a particular way if God was to be true to Himself, and to win the heart of sinners for the holiness which they had offended. The Atonement is not the denial that God's love is free; it is that specific manifestation or demonstration of God's free love which is demanded by the situation of men."²

Man's situation as a sinner and God's position as a righteous being who had been offended demanded satisfaction. Because of the whole moral (or immoral)

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1. James Denney, *The Death of Christ*, New York, A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1903, p. 166.
2. James Denney, *The Atonement and the Modern Mind*, pp. 30,31.

situation, there had to be a satisfactory atonement based on ethical grounds.

2. Punishment

The second step in understanding the nature of atonement according to Denney is to understand just how this satisfaction of ethical demands is to be gained. Denney replies that the only way to satisfy the ethical demands of the situation is through punishment -- "submitting humbly and without rebellion to the divine reaction against it (sin)."¹ Such a view is normally called 'penal satisfaction'. Denney seems to rebel against this idea, if it means a legalistic, non-personal, non-ethical atonement. However, he does say;

"...while the agony and Passion were not penal in the sense of coming upon Jesus through bad conscience, or making Him the personal object of divine wrath, they were penal in the sense that in that dark hour He had to realise to the full the divine reaction against sin in the race in which He was incorporated, and that without doing so to the uttermost He could not have been the Redeemer of that race from sin, or the Reconciler of sinful men to God."²

His concept of penal satisfaction is further clarified

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1. James Denney, *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, p. 234.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 273.

in the following statement:

"There is no getting past the fact that His sufferings had to do with sin. But they come on Him, not only because He would not sin, not only because He resisted unto blood, striving victoriously against sin, but because the world had sinned, and in becoming part of the world He stood committed to experience as its Savior everything in which the divine reaction against sin is brought home to the soul."¹

Thus the divine necessity for satisfaction is gratified in the punishment which Christ willingly endured on the cross. Christ took on himself our condemnation in his death and thus satisfied God and the ethical demands of the situation.

3. Substitution

'Substitution' is the final word which must be dealt with in order to understand atonement's nature from Denney's point of view. Redemption, for him, is something that man could never accomplish by himself. Man will always be dependent upon God for his salvation. So saying, he says that God does it for man and that he never need do it for himself.² Thus it is that he

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1. Ibid., p. 273.

2. James Denney, *Studies in Theology*, p. 126.

asks the question, "If we are not to say that Atonement, as a work carried through in the sufferings and death of Christ, sufferings and death determined by our sins, is vicarious or substitutionary, what are we to call it?"¹ Denney reasons that because Christ did the work of atonement for men, in that they were unable to do it for themselves, there is only one way to describe atonement and he therefore calls it substitution. "In forgiving sins, it might be said, God takes sides with us against Himself; He has the right to exact something from us, and for our sakes forgoes that right."²

D. The Means of Atonement

The questions as to why atonement is needed and what it is have been answered. There remain two questions to answer in this chapter--How is atonement accomplished? and What are its effects? Denney's answer to the first of these two questions will be dealt with in this section.

In Denney's understanding as to the means of atonement there are two needs or means which must be met--

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1. James Denney, The Atonement and the Modern Mind, p. 132.
2. James Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 21.

the divine means and the human means. The divine means which makes atonement possible is by far more important and more basic than the human means. The human means--reception of atonement in a man's life--is only secondary and is considered more of a result of the first and more important means.

1. The Divine Means

The divine means for Denney is atonement as understood in the words 'Christ died for our sins'. This is the whole of atonement put into its simplest terms. The reason that the death of Christ is a means, indeed even a necessity, in the mind of Denney stems from his concept of sin and God's reaction to it. Man has broken God's universal moral law and because of this he is under divine condemnation. God must do the redeeming, for man cannot redeem himself. At the same time God must redeem in such a way as to remain faithful to his own nature and present sin in such a way as to show men what he thinks of it. This view has been presented in the first two sections of this chapter dealing with the need and nature of atonement. Because of the situation there is only one possible means for atonement--the death of Christ. In his own words the

necessity that God is under can best be understood thus:

"What it (the cross) really means is that in the very act of forgiving sin...God must act in consistency with His whole character. He must demonstrate Himself to be what He is in relation to sin, a God with whom evil cannot dwell, a God who maintains inviolate the moral constitution of the world, taking sin as all that it is in the very process through which He mediates His forgiveness to man."¹

There is one word which describes this whole idea for Denney and that word is 'propitiation'. For Denney this word recognizes all the facts of the case. It says what sin is to God, how sin must be taken care of, and it describes the fact that there were divine needs to be satisfied. It not only recognizes the facts, but it also recognizes that the propitiatory death of Christ takes care of all these facts.² Man under God's wrath because of sin, is redeemed because of Christ's propitiatory death on the cross. "It (the cross) tells us that justification comes through faith in a propitiatory sacrifice; in other words, that God's mercy to the sinful comes through His judgment upon sin."³

In his commentary on the epistle to the Romans

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1. James Denney, The Atonement and the Modern Mind, p. 114.
2. James Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 162.
3. James Denney, Studies in Theology, p. 116.

Denney expresses his view as to the means of atonement:

"God's righteousness, compromised as it seemed by His forbearance, might have been vindicated in another way; if He had executed judgment upon sin, it would have been a kind of vindication. He would have secured the first object of ver. 26; 'that He might be righteous Himself'. But part of God's object was to justify the ungodly (chap. iv. 5), upon certain conditions; and this could not be attained by the execution of judgment upon sin. To combine both objects, and at once vindicate His own righteousness, and put righteousness within reach of the sinful, it was necessary that instead of executing judgment God should provide a propitiation. This He did when He set forth Jesus in His blood for the acceptance of faith."¹

2. The Human Means

The second means necessary in accomplishing atonement is repentance on the part of man. However, Denney does not place as much stress on this means, for atonement for him is basically the satisfying of God's righteousness--it is fundamentally objective in character. Of this he says:

"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

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1. James Denney, *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. by W.R. Nicoll, II, 4th ed., New York, Hodder and Stoughton, p. 612.

is a work--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."¹

However, repentance is a necessary part of atonement. It is called by Denney in one place "the fruit of the Atonement"² and in another "the reaction towards God"³ when men see what sin is and the love of God in relation to it. But it is always to be thought of as dependent upon God's action in the cross. It is the result of God's grace to men. It is, for Denney, "an adequate sense...of our sin..."⁴

Denney defines repentance in the following fashion:

"Repentance unto life is not a species of good works, it is a saving grace whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth with grief and hatred of sin turn from it unto God with full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience."⁵

Thus, for James Denney, the means of atonement lies fundamentally in the propitiatory death of Christ on the cross. Repentance is but secondary and a result of God's grace. The final question as to the

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1. James Denney, The Death of Christ, p. 145.
2. James Denney, The Atonement and the Modern Mind, p. 33.
3. Ibid., p. 124.
4. Ibid., p. 122.
5. James Denney, Questions of Faith, (A Symposium), New York, A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1904, p. 176.

effects of atonement is all that is left to discuss and shall be undertaken in the next section.

E. The Results of Atonement

The results of atonement are numerous. It is most difficult to name results in a list, for such a listing would become tiresome to read and not very enlightening. From Denney's point of view there are three basic results--union with God, union with men, and a life that has as its principal motive reconciliation. All are connected because all stem from the fact of Christ's death for sin, but each of these results when examined contributes ~~much~~ to the understanding of the whole picture.

1. Union With God

This is the most obvious result of atonement. It is for this very thing that Christ died and the whole reason for atonement in Denney's mind. Christ died to take away the barrier of sin which separated God and man. Of this idea Denney says:

"Sin, it is implied, keeps man at a distance from God; but Christ has so dealt with sin on man's behalf that its separative force is annulled; for those who commit themselves to Christ, and to the work which He has done for

them in His Passion, it is possible to draw near God and to live in His peace. This is the end contemplated in His dying for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous."¹

This union is possible in Denney's mind because the sin which separated God and man is removed. Man is now justified, or actually regarded as right with God. Man, through the cross, has come to know the mind of God concerning sin and has repented. The result is righteousness and union with God. The condemnation that was man's is removed and he and God are at peace. As Denney says:

"Before he (man) saw Christ and believed Him he was all wrong with God; God could do nothing but condemn him. Now, in virtue of his faith, he is all right with God, and there is henceforth no condemnation for him."²

2. Union with Man

The second result is the natural outcome of the first. Because man is united with God he has something in common with fellow-Christians, says Denney.

"The faith which united men to Christ is a common faith, and in uniting them to Him it unites them to one another."³ One comes into a new fellowship because of

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1. James Denney, The Death of Christ, p. 103.
2. James Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 292.
3. Ibid., p. 322.

the common faith men hold in Christ is Denney's conclusion. One is reconciled to men, God, and the whole of the moral and spiritual world. This second result is closely connected to the third result--the life of reconciliation.

3. The Life of Reconciliation

Because man has been made whole by being united with God he may live a life that has as its chief motive the work of reconciliation. This is so because he has a new motive power in his life. Of this Denney says, "The man who is reconciled to God through Christ and His Passion is reconciled to love as the law of life."¹ The life of love replaces the life of sin because trust and obedience have replaced distrust and rebellion. This is so because God has overcome that which separates man from God, others, and his real self. Denney says this plainly:

"The life of reconciliation is the life which itself exercises a reconciling power. It is the ultimate witness to that in God which overcomes all that separates man from himself and men from each other."²

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1. Ibid., p. 326.
2. Ibid., p. 329.

This life of reconciliation is possible because man has seen what sin means to God and truly repented of sin. God has cancelled sin in a man's life and caused him to repent and thus to be united to him. Denney characterizes this life as follows:

"Acceptance of the mind of God with regard to sin, as something which wounds His holy love, to which He is finally and inexorably opposed--in other words, repentance and submission to all the divine reaction against evil; acceptance of love as the divine law of life--in other words, self-renunciation and sacrifice for the good of others; these are the main characteristics of the life of reconciliation as a life in which the soul identifies itself with Christ through faith."¹

These ideas, then, form what Denney holds to be the results of atonement. They are all closely related and dependent upon one another. All results depend upon Christ's work which brings God and man into union and produces the reconciling life in man. He is united with himself and his fellow-man and lives the life of love--a life spent on others.

F. Summary

As can be seen, Denney's view of atonement is almost completely objective in nature. It stems from

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1. Ibid., p. 328.

his view of the relationship between God and man. There is, he says, a moral constitution in the universe which forms the ethical or personal basis for any relationship between God and man. This personal basis has been violated by man and thus there is a barrier set up between God and man which nullifies any opportunity for fellowship between them.

In order for the relationship to be corrected and fellowship to be resumed, atonement must be made. But this atonement must be made in such a way as not to violate, from God's point of view, the moral constitution of the universe. Thus, Christ became a propitiatory sacrifice for man's sin and took on himself the full reaction of God toward sin. He died in man's place and thus became man's substitute. He took on himself the punishment for sin, not because God was angry with him, but because God's wrath is always poured out upon sin, and Christ had become sin for men. Man, seeing this, came to the realization of sin's terrible nature and by the grace of God repented.

Thus, man becomes united to both God and man, and has a new life motive--that of love. His motive is the motive of God in Christ, for he has been united to Christ all because of the death of Christ.

CHAPTER TWO

R.C. MOBERLY'S VIEW OF ATONEMENT

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A. Introduction

Unlike Denney, Robert Campbell Moberly approached the problem of atonement from a more subjective viewpoint. He was interested in atonement as it affected the personality of a man. In his own words, "...current difficulties about atonement are largely bound up with, and inseparable from, current--and questionable--conceptions of personality."¹ Thus, his approach to the problem of atonement was through what he considered proper understanding of personality. In the preface of his book Atonement and Personality he explains this approach and title as follows:

"It has seemed therefore only right to give to these pages the title 'Atonement and Personality'; and that, not only in order to emphasize the belief that no explanation of atonement can be adequate which is not, at every point, in terms of personality; but also, and perhaps even more, because it seemed to become increasingly clear, on analysis of thought, that neither could any explanation of personality be adequate, which was not, in point of fact, in terms of atonement."²

One further point must be made before any attempt

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1. R.C. Moberly, Atonement and Personality, London, John Murray, Albermarle Street, W., 1917, p. xii.
2. Ibid., p. xiii.

at presenting Moberly's view of atonement is begun. This point stems from the statement quoted at the beginning of this chapter concerning what Moberly calls 'current and questionable conceptions of personality'.¹ He says that these contemporary ideas concerning man's personality assume "that the essentia of personality is mutual exclusiveness, or (in vivid metaphor) mutual impenetrability...".² The result of this kind of thinking is that men conclude, as fact, that what has been done by one person can in no way change another person.³ It is against this idea that Moberly fought, for he felt that such a presupposition was wrong and hindered any understanding of atonement. He waged war with this concept of mutual exclusiveness because it was his belief that what Christ did genuinely effects a change in men.

With these basic understandings as to the approach Moberly makes to understanding atonement, a development of his view of atonement will be given. The study of Moberly's view will follow the general outline used in developing Denney's view of atonement.

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1. Ante, p. 30.
2. Op. cit., p. xii.
3. Ibid., p. xii.

B. The Need for Atonement

That Moberly admits to a need for atonement is not to be doubted at all, but as to just what this need is one is left in doubt. He speaks of sin and of its effect upon humanity, but he does not define it so much as he assumes it. Of this Thomas Hughes says:

"Another point is clear, that Moberly has no real discussion of sin, and we are left in doubt as to his views on this important subject. He assumes the reality of sin, and its guilt and power in human life; there is also considerable discussion of the psychological aspects of sin, but he never tells us what he understands by 'sin'."¹

However, one need not stop here as though he could go no further in the understanding of what Moberly said was the need for atonement. Taking as a starting point the fact that he assumes sin to be the basic reason for atonement, one can come to a real understanding of the need for atonement as found in Moberly. First of all, he implies a view of original sin, as he speaks of the 'solidarity of humanity'.² What he means by this is seen in the following statement:

"Every pulsation of the blood in our veins,
every limitation, or temptation, or disorder,

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1. Thomas Hughes, *The Atonement*, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1949, p. 147.
2. R.C. Moberly, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

or decay, which, through the avenue of the body has come home to ourselves, and registered itself as part of our own private history and consciousness, is witness only too incontrovertible to the necessity and the absoluteness of our relationship with Adam. The nature, in and through which we live, is the nature which we have received by transmission from him. It is in us what it was in him first. We cannot separate ourselves from him. No indignation, no bewailing, no strenuousness of effort or resolve will avail to alter the underlying fact that our humanity is his humanity. From him it was derived to us; and in us it retains all those natural qualities and tendencies, in which and through which our personality grows to self-consciousness and self-expression; but which ourselves, long before any personality of ours, for good or for evil took their stamp, as being what they were, in him."¹

To be sure, Moberly was not saying that sin is humanness--that nature which we received from Adam--but he was saying that there are certain sinful aspects in a man's nature that have come to him from Adam. But, Moberly did not stop here with this distinction between God and man and the transmission of imperfection to succeeding generations. He went on to identify sin more definitely.

Sin has so entered into human nature as to effect it to its very core. It has perverted a man's very being.² His past, present, and future have been caught up

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1. Ibid., p. 88.
2. Ibid., p. 32.

in this fact of sin so that in and of himself he is helpless against it. He can only continue to sin--he¹ has been overwhelmed by sin.

Thus, Moberly comes to this conclusion as to the fact of sin. He says, "So the sin of the past is an abiding present and this we are conscious that it is in two distinguishable ways. It is in us both as present guilt and as present power."² In this statement Moberly presents man's predicament as he sees it. Man has sinned and knows it, but man cannot free himself from it or be the master of it. This, then, becomes the need for atonement for Moberly:

"The problem how the really unholy can be made to become really holy,--the actually sinful to be in the verity of Divine truth, actually righteous; is not yet solved, until both these difficulties are dealt with, and both are satisfied."³

He expresses this idea again by saying:

"The doctrine, then, of atonement through Jesus Christ, the doctrine of the redemption of sinful man, means a real change, not a fictitious one, in the man who is redeemed. It means a change no less portentous, in himself, than the change from being personally identified with sin, to being personally identified with the very Divine

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1. Ibid., pp. 32,33.
2. Ibid., p. 34.
3. Ibid., p. 277.

perfection of holiness."¹

It may be said, then, that for Moberly the need for atonement is vital. In his view man is so completely bound up with sin that he cannot separate himself from it. The need for atonement, therefore, becomes the need for a complete change in a man's life. The sinful must become holy.

The question as to the kind of atonement needed to make possible the change immediately arises. The next section--The Nature of Atonement--will deal with Moberly's answer to this question.

C. The Nature of Atonement

In Moberly's mind there are three words which explain the nature of atonement--punishment, penitence, and forgiveness. These words are not new to this context by any means, but Moberly felt that they had been wrongly interpreted and used by men in their explanations of atonement. Because he felt this way he sensed the need to redefine each of these words. And in redefining these words he said the following:

"There is one general suggestion, which equally applies to all three, which may be

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1. Ibid., p. 277.

stated here. It is this: that whereas, in our experience, we are familiar with every one of these three things, punishment, penitence, and forgiveness, in a certain inchoate or imperfect condition, but with none of them in its own consummation of perfectness; we are apt to frame our notions of what the words even ideally and properly mean, on the basis of our imperfect realization of them; and so to introduce elements and aspects, which belong only to their failure, into our ideal conceptions of what they themselves, in their own true nature, really are. No doubt, if all our experience is of their imperfectness, and all our conceptions must be based on experience; it may be said with a certain verbal exactness, that all our conceptions must be framed on the basis of imperfectness. But if, even within the imperfect experience, we discern the tendency and direction in which (though we fail to attain it) the consummation of these experiences would ideally be found; we may, on the basis of imperfect experience, approximately attain a true conception of what perfect realization would mean."¹

Moberly admitted that such a quest was more ideal than practical, but he said that he desired to find the ultimate meaning of atonement.² With this understanding he then defined what he meant by punishment, penitence, and forgiveness.

1. Restorative Punishment

In his way of thinking there are two ways to speak about punishment--as retribution and as restoration.

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1. Ibid., p. 2.
2. Ibid., p. 13.

For Moberly the first has nothing to do with atonement at all, but is a kind of external transaction¹ whereby God acts only on the basis of an eye for an eye. However, punishment is necessary if there is to be atonement, he says. It is necessary so that change in a person will be accomplished. It is the exhibition of righteousness upon that which is unrighteous.²

Change of personality or restoration of a person is the ultimate aim of punishment. Punishment that is atoning must never be thought of as retributive or penal, but only as restorative in character. Thus it is that he says that righteousness may show itself through punishment in one of two ways:

"It may be manifested within the personality, in the direction of a gradual re-identifying of the personality with righteousness. Or it may be manifested upon, and at the expense of, the personality;--the personality being regarded as something which righteousness can only be righteous by condemning with inexorable condemnation."³

He makes the contrast even more clear when he says:

"This is the great alternative for ourselves. Either the sense and touch of penal suffering becomes more and more, within the spirit of the punished, a bracing of strength, a deepening of the personal homage to God, a progressive expression of contradiction against sin, a progressive identification of the self with

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1. Ibid., p. 4.
2. Ibid., p. 5.
3. Ibid., pp. 12,13.

righteousness; or else it is, as mere pain, futile and helpless, having in it no satisfying or restorative element, but destined only, in the last resort to become the extreme opposite--the precise alternative and antithesis--to any possibility of forgiveness."¹

Moberly's objection, then, is not that punishment means pain, for with this he agrees.² His real contention is with a view, such as Dr. Dale's, which, Moberly says, implies retribution as the real meaning of suffering as opposed to the restorative element. It is this conviction which brings him to this final conclusion:

"...that in proportion as our punishment realizes its own meaning, its outward hardness tends to fade into an inner severity of will; retribution more and more is merged in contrition; penal suffering comes ever increasingly to mean the suffering of penance rather than penalty; but that in proportion as it fails in that essential purpose which made it what it was, it does acquire more and more that simply retributive character, whose climax is not Calvary but Hell."³

The first character of the nature of atonement for Moberly, then, is that of restorative punishment--that punishment which leads the sinner to penitence for his sin. But what is penitence for Moberly?

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1. Ibid., p. 24.
2. Ibid., p. 12.
3. Ibid., p. 24.

2. Perfect Penitence

For Moberly, penitence is the very core of the atonement. It is to this that all punishment leads and it is because of penitence that forgiveness is made possible. It is, quite simply, an attitude one takes toward sin. However, ideal penitence--that with which Moberly deals--is possible only when one basic criterion is met. There is only true personal penitence when the penitent has within himself the possibility of righteousness and a self-consciousness of sin.¹ As he says:

"In its ideal significance, which alone is the measure of what it really signifies, we found it to be only a possibility of the personally Sinless; even while it also was the only condition on which the sin of the sinful could be really dissolved and destroyed."²

Again he says, "Penitence, in the perfectness of its full meaning, is not even conceivably possible, except it be to the personally sinless."³

In describing penitence Moberly uses the words sorrow, love, and faith. All of these are the results of the self-consciousness of sin. A man is sorry for his sin, and a man, out of love for God, turns to Him

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1. Ibid., p. 26.
2. Ibid., p. 279.
3. Ibid., p. 117.

and places his faith in Him. But for Moberly these are merely descriptions of penitence, not the essence of it, for he says:

"What we want to consider is the fullest import of the word *μετανοια*, --containing sorrow, love, faith, and whatever besides,--as a real changedness of the life and the mind; nor indeed of the life and mind only--or anything else which can be even abstractly detached and considered apart from the unifying self; as a real changedness, then, not only of life or mind, but of the very self that lives and wills."¹

Thus, penitence is that real change of life in a man. It is such a change that the past sin in a man's life is put to death and he identifies himself with righteousness and the Holy Spirit.² But penitence of this sort is impossible, for such penitence is possible only in the life of a sinless person--Jesus Christ.³ How, then, is this necessary yet impossible penitence made possible in the lives of sinful men? Moberly answers that the sinner may hate sin as God hates sin when the Holy Spirit enters the man's life and so controls him so as to make this possible. In his own words:

"It is the real echo,--the real presence--in their spirit, of Spirit; Spirit, not their own, as if of themselves; yet their very own,

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1. Ibid., p. 30
2. Ibid., p. 39.
3. Ibid., p. 43.

for more and more that Spirit dominates them and constitutes them what they are. It is, in them, the Spirit of human contrition, of human atonement; the Spirit of Holiness triumphing over sin, and breaking it, within the kingdom of sin; the Spirit at once of Calvary and of Pentecost; the Spirit, if not of the Cross yet of the Crucified, who conquered and lived through dying."¹

The second characteristic of the nature of atonement for Moberly is the complete change of self which he calls the perfect penitence, which is made possible by Christ's Spirit becoming man's Spirit. This leads to the final characteristic--forgiveness.

3. Forgiveness

Forgiveness in Moberly's mind may never be thought of as immoral, capricious, or arbitrary. It is the righteousness of God.² For Moberly forgiveness is given to men, not unconditionally, but only upon the basis of a true righteousness within the sinner. It is not mere pardoning from punishment and pronouncing a man good, he says, but it is the recognition on the part of God of something that is actually true in a man's life.³ It is in truth, that the man is righteous. And the man is righteous because of his penitence. In Moberly's

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1. Ibid., p. 46.
2. Ibid., p. 56.
3. Ibid., pp. 55,56.

own words:

"All this is really implicit in the fact, itself as fact not at all unfamiliar, that forgiveness must always retain its underlying character as a provisional thing, unless and until it is consummated in the holiness of the penitent, and in the perfect embrace, by love because it is love, of the holy penitent because of the holiness that is in him. Certainly we do not forget the extreme imperfection of human achievement in this, as in all directions of spiritual life. But none the less it is true that, when penitence once has begun, in any soul of man, however much it may seem to fall short of its meaning, nothing less than this is what it ideally means. It is a beginning, whose entire consummation, should it ever be consummated, would mean, in the perfect penitent, nothing less than a real and living righteousness. If it stops short of real separation from sin; if it stops short of true allegiance to righteousness; (and we are under no sort of delusion as to the universal experience of failure;) but if it stops short of these things, in stopping short of them it stops short of itself; for these things are the consummation of what penitence means. And forgiveness, when it reaches its consummation, is love's embrace of such a penitence as this."¹

Thus, for Moberly, forgiveness is God's righteous love recognizing in the sinner true righteousness and bringing to completion the act of atonement. This is the final characteristic of the nature of atonement. It will be the task of the next section to define the way that such an atonement is made possible according to Moberly.

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1. Ibid., pp. 70,71.

D. The Means of Atonement

To best describe Moberly's view as to the means of atonement it will be necessary to discuss, first, the incarnation, and, secondly, the atonement Christ made in his life and in his death. Such treatment is proper, for Moberly described the nature of atonement in such a way as to necessitate this kind of discussion.

1. The Incarnation and Atonement

In his discussion as to the nature of the atonement Moberly dwells a great deal upon penitence. As has been stated he says that to have penitence that is atoning it is necessary that the penitent be capable of righteousness; indeed, that the penitent be sinless.¹ Such penitence, then, necessitates that God become incarnate in man; for man, according to Moberly, does not have the ability to be truly penitent. As he says:

"And the more we try to run back to the root of the matter, the more we shall find our thought tied up to this irresistible--if paradoxical--truth: that a true penitence is as much the inherent impossibility, as it is the inherent necessity, of every man that has sinned."²

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1. Ante, p. 39.
2. Moberly, Op. cit., p. 43.

That Moberly believes that the incarnation is the only solution to this problem is seen in the following statement:

"Now it is precisely here...that we are confronted by those great affirmations of fundamental doctrine, which lie at the basis of the 'Atonement' of Christian revelation. It is the very root of the Christian doctrine that He, who made atonement between God and man, Himself, in the fullest sense, was God and was Man."¹

Thus, for Moberly, one sees in Christ the unique event which draws God and man together in one person. In this union Christ is identically what the Father is² and he is, at the same time, inclusively man.³ What Moberly means when he says Christ was inclusively man is hinted at in the phrase in which he says Christ was "the representative and inclusive summary of all mankind."⁴ What he was attempting to say is that Jesus Christ was completely God and man in every sense, yet without being a sinner.

But the question immediately comes to mind, What does all of this mean in relation to atonement? In the first place, Moberly finds in Christ the one who is able

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1. Ibid., p. 81.
2. Ibid., pp. 82ff.
3. Ibid., pp. 86ff.
4. Ibid., p. 93.

to be truly penitent. This raises still another question: In what way did Christ, the sinless God-man, accomplish this atoning penitence? This for Moberly is the real work of Christ.

2. The Work of Christ and Atonement

In the mind of Moberly there were two things which had to be accomplished to make atonement possible and they were accomplished in Christ. The two needs are expressed in the following statement:

"For our present purpose we may conveniently distinguish two primary needs, and achievements, in the work of the Mediator. There is on the one hand, the sanctification of the present; on the other, the cancelling of the past. There is the rendering to Godward...of the offering of a living Holiness, in human conditions and character; and there is the awful sacrifice, in humanity, of a perfect contrition. For practical purposes we may speak respectively, as--the one the offering of Obedience, and the other the offering of Atonement; or again as the one the offering of the life, and the other the offering of the death."¹

a. The Offering of Life

The offering of obedience is for Moberly "the crown² of the proper meaning of the life of man." In this

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1. Ibid., p. 98.
2. Ibid., p. 280.

life of obedience Christ exhibited his utter dependence upon God. He paid God the homage of a complete and perfect obedience. Moberly saw that it was impossible to separate these two offerings, for he said:

"...obedience is not really separable from atonement. Obedience is atoning; and the atonement itself can be exhibited as one great consummation of obedience. Again the life and the death are not really in contrast. Whatever is true of either, is in some degree true of the other. The death is the true and proper climax of the life. Only in death is the climax of obedience reached; while the life is a sacrifice from end to end."¹

It can be said, then, that Moberly saw the whole of the atonement as obedience to the will of God. In the offering of this life of obedience Christ fulfilled what no man had been able to fulfill--he was completely obedient to God and was thus the only man who could have offered the perfect penitence of atonement.

b. The Offering of Death

There are two basic ideas which define atonement for Moberly. The one is a perfect penitence and the other is a perfect holiness. The past guilt of sin must be relieved and the present power of sin must be undone. When such an atonement is made, a man may be righteous.

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1. Ibid., p. 99.

Such an atonement is accomplished in the death of Christ, says Moberly.¹ As Moberly says, "Assuredly the death of Jesus Christ had another relation. It was not obedience only, but atonement; not only perfect, in the present, as homage; but sovereign, in relation to accomplished sin, as undoing."² This Christ accomplished because He made perfect penitence for mankind in his self-identification with sin for the sinful, while being the self-identification of righteousness in man at the same time.³ Such a statement is best understood in the words of Moberly, himself:

"Is not consummation of penitence, that penitence whose consummation sin makes impossible, the real, though impossible, atonement for sin? And are not these just the things which would consummate penitence--first, a real personal self-identity with the consciousness of sin, in its unmeasured fulness, as seen by God; secondly, a real personal self-identity with the absolute righteousness of God; and thirdly, by inevitable consequence, a manifestation of the power of inherent self-identity with righteousness in the form of voluntary acceptance of all that belongs to the consciousness of sin,--a realization, not of holiness merely, but of penitential holiness?"⁴

These conditions were completely met in the death of Christ, says Moberly. In his own words one reads:

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1. Ibid., pp. 110, 111.
2. Ibid., p. 116.
3. Ibid., p. 117.
4. Ibid., p. 129.

"He, then on the Cross, offered, as man to God, not only the sacrifice of utter obedience, under conditions...which made the effort of such perfect will obedience more tremendous than we can conceive; but also the sacrifice of supreme penitence, that is, of perfect will-identity with God in condemnation of sin, Himself being so self-identified with sinners, that this could take the form of the offering of Himself for sin. He voluntarily stood in the same place of the utterly contrite--accepting insult, shame, anguish, death--death possible only by His own assent, yet outwardly inflicted as penal; nay, more, in His own inner consciousness, accepting the ideal consciousness of the contrite--which is the one form of the penitent's righteousness: desolate, yet still, in whatever He was, voluntary; and in that very voluntariness of desolation, sovereign. He died, in fact and in full, that which would in the sinner constitute perfect atonement, but which has for ever become impossible to the sinner, just in proportion as it is true that he has sinned."¹

These, then, are the means of atonement for Moberly. He seems to be speaking of 'vicarious penitence' though he denies this. In Christ men learn the possibility of penitence, they are not excused from it. This was done on behalf of humanity, not in place of it.² In dying on the cross Christ made the perfect penitence necessary for atonement. What the results of this atonement are is the problem of the next section.

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1. Ibid., pp. 129,130.
2. Ibid., pp. 283ff.

E. The Results of Atonement

There is one thing for which all true atonement exists, says Moberly. That one thing is Pentecost--the coming of the Holy Spirit into the life of the believer. Moberly says it this way:

"But the relation of what He did to us, its working, its reality for and in us, you can only explain at all in terms of Pentecost. An exposition of atonement which leaves out Pentecost, leaves the atonement unintelligible--in relation to us. For what is the real consummation of the atonement to be? It is to be--the very Spirit of the Crucified become our spirit--ourselves translated into the Spirit of the Crucified."¹

To be sure, Moberly says that the atonement is both objective and subjective, for he says:

"The two, then, are really inseparable, as convex and concave. Objective, that is wholly without subjective realization, is the same as non-existent. Subjective, that is not objective also, is hallucination."²

But, his basic attitude is that of the subjective view, for he says with great conviction, "Human penitence, human atonement, human righteousness,--all are first before our eyes, as external objects, that they may be the secret of our hearts, that they may be the very truth of ourselves."³

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1. Ibid., p. 151.
2. Ibid., p. 142.
3. Ibid., p. 153.

The real work of the Spirit in the human life is to bring into being a truly Christian personality. The work of the Spirit is to consummate atonement by transforming the human personality into a Christian personality.¹ Christian personality is described by Moberly in the following passage:

"The Spirit of the Incarnate in us is not only our personal association, but our personal union, with the Incarnate Christ. To clothe the phrase for a moment in other language, He is the subjective realization within, and as, ourselves, of the Christ who was first manifested objectively and externally, for our contemplation and love, in Galilee and on the Cross. He is more and more, as the Christian consummation is approached, the Spirit within ourselves of Righteousness and Truth, of Life and of Love. He is more, indeed, than within us. He is the ultimate consummation of ourselves. He is the response, from us, of goodness and love of God. He is, with quite unreserved truth, when all is consummated, our own personal response. He is so none the less because He is also...the response which out of, and within, and as, ourselves, He Himself--not we--very gradually wrought. His presence in us is His response in us, become ultimately ourselves: He is Christ Himself in us, become the Spirit which constitutes us what we are: and therefore, though in us,--though ultimately ourselves,--a response really worthy of God, really adequate to God: a mirror, an echo, nay even a living presentment and realization, of what Christ Himself is--who is the Eternal God."²

Thus, Moberly says that the result of the atonement

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1. Ibid., p. 153.
2. Ibid., pp. 204,205.

is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within the human personality. In fact, Moberly says that this act of indwelling brings about the consummation of human personality--Christ in men responding to God. It is as if he is saying that God's Spirit becomes man's spirit.

F. Summary

In summary, then, it might be stated that although Moberly says that he is objective and subjective in his approach to the atonement, he really belongs to the subjective camp. He views all of atonement as it relates to the personality, for neither, he says, can be understood apart from the other. Atonement and personality can only be understood as one properly relates each to the other. He points out that man is hopelessly enmeshed in sin and is unable to free himself from this predicament. This is so because of the nature of sin and because man as sinner cannot make perfect penitence, which is required in atonement.

Penitence is the key which unlocks Moberly's whole system. All punishment has as its purpose penitence, and forgiveness is resultant upon penitence. Because perfect penitence can be offered only by the sinless God-man, He came and lived a life of obedience unto God.

His life of obedience was consummated in the cross and thus he made the perfect penitence needed to atone for man's sin. Only the God-man could do this, for atoning penitence must be made by the perfectly sinless. Such an atonement may be rightly called 'vicarious penitence'.

It is penitence which has as its result the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which, for Moberly is the fulfillment of the atonement. In the coming of the Holy Spirit into the life of a penitent man--a kind of personal Pentecost--human personality is fully realized. It is the Spirit of Christ within the human personality responding to God in holiness and obedience. This, then, is the atonement for Moberly. It is the changing of the human personality from a completely helpless and Godless spirit to the union of it with the Holy Spirit. It is the consummation of human personality--the joining with God's Spirit so that they are one.

CHAPTER THREE

A COMPARISON OF THE VIEWS OF ATONEMENT
OF JAMES DENNEY AND R.C. MOBERLY

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A. Introduction

It shall be the purpose of this chapter to compare the views of atonement as put forth by James Denney and R.C. Moberly. In order to do this adequately it will be necessary to compare them at every step of development. Such a comparison is best accomplished by examining the similarities and differences as to the need, the nature, the means, and the results of atonement as each man understood and explained the doctrine of atonement. Having examined the various similarities and differences between the two men, certain conclusions may then be drawn as to the basic differences between the two men specifically, and between the two general views these men put forth. It will not be the object of this comparison to take sides with either man in opposition to the other, nor to point out the weaknesses of either view--except when and where either man speaks of such a weakness--but it shall be the specific purpose of the study to compare the two men and draw conclusions solely upon the basis of this comparison as it points up the basic similarities and differences between each man

and the general view he supports.

B. A Comparison of the Views
as to the Need for Atonement

Both Denney and Moberly say that sin is the problem that confronts God and man and **creates** the need for atonement.¹ Both men also agree that man, of and by himself, is incapable of righting this situation. Sin is an incurable disease as far as man is concerned. Moberly said, "He has sinned. He is sinful. His past is so in him that he cannot but continue to sin."² In the same line of thinking Denney says that man "cannot bring his state into harmony with his nature."³ Each conceived of man in such a way as to proclaim him unable to save himself and as utterly lost in his sin.

However, each man conceived the nature of sin to be somewhat different. For Denney, sin was the breaking of the moral constitution of the universe which was the basis for righteousness in the world.⁴ Denney's main understanding of sin is moral derangement, or estrangement from God. Such thinking is clearly seen in the

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1. Ante, pp. 14,34.
2. Moberly, Op. cit., p. 33.
3. Ante, p. 12.
4. Ante, p. 12.

following statement: "The need of reconciliation is given in the fact of alienation or estrangement. Man requires to be put right with God because, as a matter of fact, he is not right with Him."¹ It is as if there were some external law which has been broken. The breaking of this law constitutes sin. Sin becomes something without man. Yet, Denney says that this external, moral² law is personal.

But, if Denney is difficult to comprehend on this subject, Moberly is even more difficult to understand. In Moberly's mind sin is completely personal. It is something which affects a man within his very being. For Moberly, sin in a man

"...is more than a load to be borne, more than a debt to be discharged, more than slavery to be annulled, more than sickness to be healed: nor will any one of these metaphors, or the scenery which belongs to these metaphors, symbolize adequately the whole truth of his case. For in all these metaphors, suggestive though they be as far as they go, the essential self remains untouched. So far as these metaphors go, the man loaded or freed from load,--the man in hopeless debt or with the debt paid,--the man enslaved or redeemed from slavery,--the man in sickness or recovered from sickness, --is the same man. On either side of each proposition the quality of the subject is unchanged. But sin enters within. Sin af-

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1. James Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, p. 187.
2. Ante, p. 9.

facts and perverts the central subject, the essential self. Delivery therefore from accomplished sin must mean not only a change of the circumstances or settings or conditions of the central subject; but such essential alteration in the subject himself, that he himself shall both be what he is not, and shall not be what he really is."¹

Thus, sin for Moberly is something within which makes man unholy and completely and hopelessly lost apart from the intervention of God.

To be sure, each man is presenting what he feels is the basic emphasis as to the nature of sin. Both may even have granted the other man's idea, but the basic stress of each is easily seen.

One more basic contrast is seen in each man's thinking concerning the need for atonement. In Moberly's system, sin is that reality which so mars man as to make the perfect penitence of atonement impossible.² It is not man's separation from God that Moberly dwells upon so much as it is the fact that real penitence is made impossible because of sin. On the other hand, Denney says that the consequence of sin is death,³ or separation from God. There is a greater difference here than first meets the eye, for at the bottom of the

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1. Moberly, Op. cit., p. 32.
2. Ante, p. 39.
3. Ante, pp. 13,14.

difference is one of the more basic differences between the two men and their systems. The ideal is very important to Moberly, for he says that unless one speaks of ideal or perfect penitence, one need not speak of it at all in any real sense.¹ But, in Denney one finds none of this stress. Denney says that man may turn to God in repentance and faith and that God will accept this on the basis of the work of Christ.² It is not the inability of man to repent that is the result of sin,³ but the condemnation of the sin by God, says Denney. One finds no such emphasis in Moberly at all.

One finds, then, that though both men agree upon the ideas that sin is the problem dealt with in atonement and that man is unable to cope with this problem, there are basic differences to be found in these men. For Denney, sin is the breaking of the very law that binds God and man together, bringing condemnation upon man. For Moberly, sin is the unholiness of man, the disorientation of a man within himself which makes it impossible for him to repent of his sin. He does not speak of condemnation at all.

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1. Ante, p. 39.
2. Ante, pp. 22, 23.
3. Ante, pp. 13, 14.

C. A Comparison of the Views
as to the Nature of Atonement

It is at this point that one finds some of the greatest differences in the two men. But, before dealing with these differences, it might be well to point out that both men agree completely upon the idea that a strictly penal or transactional atonement is not to be thought of as Christian. Denney sees the idea of penal satisfaction, but only as Christ realized God's complete wrath or condemnation upon sin on the cross.¹ Moberly, however, is vehemently opposed to any concept of penal atonement. For him any suggestion of penal atonement means that God has acted in retribution and atonement becomes a transaction as a result.²

Both men disown any view of atonement as judicial or transactional. However, no matter how much these men deny retribution in punishment, it is at this point that one finds a fundamental difference in the men. It is in their respective discussions concerning punishment that they disagree. Moberly criticized a view very much like Denney's because he said the view presented punishment as retribution.³ It is clear that Moberly

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1. Ante, p. 17.
2. Ante, p. 37.
3. Moberly, Op. cit., pp. 4ff.

does not hold the concept that man is under the condemnation of God, for this is what penal atonement assumes. This is quite clear in Moberly when he agrees with Professor Jowett, who said in opposition to the penal view of atonement:

"God is represented as angry with us for what we never did; He is ready to inflict a disproportionate punishment on us for what we are; He is satisfied by the sufferings of His Son in our stead. The sin of Adam is first imputed to us; then the righteousness of Christ...The death of Christ is also explained by the analogy of the ancient rite of sacrifice. He is a victim laid upon the altar to appease the wrath of God. The institutions and ceremonies of the Mosaical religion are applied to Him. He is further said to bear the infinite punishment of infinite sin. When He has suffered or paid the penalty, God is described as granting Him the salvation of mankind in return."¹

In his rejection of such a position, Moberly made it very clear that he rejected the concepts of God's condemnation of sinners, the substitutionary concept of atonement and the penal satisfaction of the cross.²

Denney, on the other hand, admits to the concepts.³

In one place he says:

"I have indicated, in a summary way, what the New Testament 'theory' of Christ's work is. His death is conceived as putting away

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1. Ibid., pp. 386,387.
2. Ibid., pp. 392ff.
3. Ante, pp. 13,18.

sin, because in that death our condemnation came upon Him. That is the apostolic interpretation, the apostolic theory, of the atonement."¹

Of the substitutionary idea in atonement, which Denney supports, Moberly says that the work that Christ did was not done as a substitute, "but as that inclusive total of true humanity."² He was not so much a substitute as he was a model to be followed.

One final difference is seen in Denney and Moberly, and it is in this difference that much of this discussion centers. The heart of the work of Christ for Moberly is penitence.³ It is with this idea that Denney disagrees. Moberly does not think of the work of Christ as complete until penitence has taken place in the heart of the believer. To speak of the finished work of Christ is to speak of mathematical equations and a kind of spiritual transaction.⁴ It is only as the objective facts of the atonement become subjective through personal penitence that atonement is complete, says Moberly.⁵ Denney, on the other hand, says that atonement is complete at Calvary and that it is acquired by faith. No matter how strongly the passion of Christ may moti-

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1. James Denney, *Studies in Theology*, p. 108.
2. Moberly, *Op. cit.*, pp. 283, 284.
3. *Ante*, p. 39.
4. Moberly, *Op. cit.*, pp. 137, 138.
5. *Ante*, p. 49.

vate a person to become a Christian, it is not the re-
production of the moral qualities that save a man, but
the completed work of Christ. Not to think in this way
is unscriptural, he says.¹ Denney accuses Moberly of
making such an error when he says:

"This is felt even in a book so profoundly
spiritual and Christian as Moberly's Atone-
ment and Personality. The great word of the
New Testament, when the conditions of salva-
tion are concerned, is faith; but faith is
a term which hardly figures in Dr. Moberly's
exposition at all. He is preoccupied with
penitence, with experiences of the soul in
relation to sin, not with faith, the exper-
ience of the soul in relation to the Saviour.
There is no initial assurance in Christianity
as he unfolds it, and even a reader who is
conscious that faith without penitence is not
faith but presumption, cannot get over the
feeling that, as compared with that of the
New Testament, the Christianity Dr. Moberly
expounds has no pulse. We lose contact with
the New Testament utterly unless we can say
from the beginning that because of what
Christ suffered for us, and on that ground
alone, the doom of sin is no longer the doom
of those who believe on Him."²

To summarize what has been said in this section,
Moberly holds that Christ's sufferings are not retri-
butive, but restorative in nature. That is, Christ did
not experience God's wrath and condemnation, but offered
himself as the perfect penitence for men. This was not

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1. James Denney, *The Christian Doctrine of Reconcilia-
tion*, p. 284.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 284, 285.

a completed work, nor substitution, but was only made complete as a man applied this to himself--emulated what Christ had done. Denney says that Christ's work must be considered as a finished work. A man is saved by believing in the finished work of Christ. This finished work is substitutionary in nature, for Christ experienced the full wrath of God in the place of the sinner on the cross. This, says Denney, is not retribution, but reconciliation.

D. A Comparison of the Views
as to the Means of Atonement

Both Denney and Moberly say that the death of Christ made atonement for God and man.¹ Much has already been discussed in the previous section as to what the death meant. However, one thing more might be said here to point up the comparison between the two men. Moberly said that the death of Christ was the consummation of a perfect penitence and obedience of Christ in atonement.² It was the final act of the obedience of Christ toward God. For Denney, the death of Christ was propitiatory in nature. It was the voluntary acceptance

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1. Ante, pp. 19, 47.
2. Ante, pp. 47, 48.

of God's divine judgment upon sin.¹

A final difference in the two men at this point is seen in Denney's criticism of Moberly's use of the incarnation in atonement. Of this Denney says:

"Experience...has contributed too little to the doctrine of Athanasius on what Christ does for men; it has not sufficiently either inspired or controlled his thoughts; and great as are the patristic names which represent the same type of teaching...it is not here we can hope to find the true key to the doctrine of reconciliation."²

He says that there is a real tendency to do this in the work of Moberly.³ For Denney the incarnation is solely the historical life and death of Jesus Christ.⁴ For Moberly, it seems to be something more than this. It is as if the incarnation is such a vital part of atonement that it becomes atonement. Moberly, of course, does not hold that the incarnation was the atonement, but he speaks so much of it as a part of the atonement that Denney criticizes him on this account. This is not meant as a criticism of Moberly, but only as a comparison of these two men as they thought of the means of the atonement. Denney said nothing about the incarnation

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1. Ante, pp. 21,22.
2. James Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, pp. 43,44.
3. Ibid., p. 44 (footnote).
4. Ibid., pp. 183,184.

except that it expresses the fact of Christ's historical life and death. But Moberly, because he defined atonement as basically perfect penitence, made much more of the incarnation as it related to atonement.

E. A Comparison of the Views
as to the Results of Atonement

It has been seen that union with Christ is the result of atonement for both Denney and Moberly. Denney says that union with God was that for which Christ died.¹ Man's oneness with God through the Spirit was the very object for which all of the atonement worked, says Moberly. The personality which is Christian is such because of atonement. It is God's Spirit indwelling man that is atonement's chief end.² But what this meant for both men is something quite different, as seen in the following statement by Denney:

"It hardly needs to be said that no union of Christ with men or of men with Christ is contemplated in the New Testament which would destroy the personality or individuality of the sinner. There are some things which it is hardly possible for a man to utter, and the passion which leaps up to express them may at times overlap itself. When Paul exclaimed, "It is no more I that live but Christ liveth in me," he was throwing out words at one of these permanently inexpressible things,

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1. Ante, p. 24.
2. Ante, pp. 49-51.

and it is beside the mark to reduce them to cold prose and read them as if they had been dictated in a psychologist's laboratory; they do not mean that Christ or the Spirit of Christ had become the "constituting reality"¹ of Paul himself, so that Paul virtually ceased to be, his old personality vanishing, and that of Christ appearing in its place. Paul never ceased to be; if he had, he would not have been saved in Christ, but lost in God. Whatever union with Christ does, it enables a man to become himself, the true self with all the individuality for which God created Him; when Paul says, "I live no longer, but God liveth in me," he is not declaring his pure passivity or abnegation of striving henceforth, but the completeness with which Christ is taking his personality into His service."²

Moberly says of the passage Denney alludes to³ that the real self is changed so that God really becomes the 'I'.⁴ As has been seen, the Spirit of Christ so enters the Christian that it is the Spirit responding to God. In Moberly's mind the 'I' of the Christian and the Spirit of Christ are one and the same thing.⁵

Finally, one may say that in Denney the Christian is brought into union or fellowship with God in Christ, while in Moberly the Spirit of Christ becomes the real person in Christ.

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1. Moberly, Op. cit., p. 151.
2. James Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, pp. 306, 307.
3. Gal. 2:20.
4. Moberly, Op. cit., p. 152.
5. Ante, p. 50.

F. Summary

It has been the purpose of this chapter to compare the views of atonement as held by James Denney and R.C. Moberly. It has not been the purpose to subject either view to a subjective criticism, but only to allow each man to criticize the other if and when he did, so as to clarify the position each man held.

In comparing each man with the other it was found that Denney and Moberly had many points of agreement. Both felt that the need of atonement lay in the fact of sin and in man's inability to rid himself of this problem. Both men also held that any view which said that God was angry with Christ was not a Christian position. Both men tried to set forth a view of atonement which stayed clear of any forensic or juridical factors. Denney and Moberly also agreed that the death of Christ was central in making the atonement possible. A final similarity was found in the fact that both men said that union with Christ was the result of atonement, the end for which the rest of atonement aimed.

However, there were many differences found. Whereas Denney called sin the breaking of a moral law, Moberly called it an inward problem of men, which made it impossible for them to repent. For Denney sin was more

objective than for Moberly. Another difference seen in these two men is that Denney holds all men under God's condemnation because of sin. He also says that Christ stood in the place of men as their substitute and took upon himself their condemnation. But Moberly says that sin makes man unable to repent and that Christ had to come as the incarnate Son to make the perfect offering of penitence needed in atonement. Moberly does not admit to the wrath of God upon sinners and totally disowns any view of retribution in atonement. Denney criticizes Moberly for his concept of penitence which Denney says takes the place of faith in Moberly's system. For Denney, the work of Christ was a finished work on the cross, while Moberly says it is finished only as men accept God's Spirit into their lives. Denney rebelled at Moberly's ideas concerning the incarnation because he said they imply that the incarnation tends to become the atonement in Moberly's system. A final difference in the two men is seen in their views concerning the results of atonement. Denney held that men are brought into fellowship with God, while Moberly said that the Spirit of Christ becomes the real constitution of the Christian personality. These were the basic findings in this comparison of Denney and Moberly.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It has been the purpose of this thesis to compare the views of atonement that are held by James Denney and Robert Campbell Moberly to discover the similarities and differences between them in their respective views. Such an undertaking is justified because of the importance of the doctrine of atonement in Christianity, because of the importance of the doctrine of atonement in the writings of these two men, and because their views are representative views of atonement and deserve this attention. In order to accomplish the purpose of the thesis it has been necessary to present the views of atonement of Denney and Moberly in separate chapters, discussing each view as to the need for atonement, the nature of atonement, the means of atonement, and the results of atonement. The final chapter discussed the similarities and differences between the respective views.

Denney's view of atonement was found to be basically an objective view. That is, atonement is thought of as being between God and man in all of its parts. Sin, says Denney, is the breaking of the moral constitution of the universe, which is the basis of any personal,

ethical relationships between God and man. The repairing of this moral constitution becomes the task of atonement. There is only one way that the moral constitution can be repaired and that is through Christ's death on the cross, which Denney calls a satisfaction of God's righteousness, a penal death--a death in which Christ voluntarily accepted God's condemnation of sin,--and a substitutionary death--a death in which Christ died in the place of sinful men, who were unable to make atonement for themselves. Man, seeing this propitiatory death of Christ, repents of sin and accepts God's free gift of salvation in Christ by faith. As a result of this man is united with God and his fellowmen, and lives a life that is motivated by love.

Moberly's view of atonement was found to be much more subjective in nature than Denney's view, for he viewed the whole of atonement in relation to personality. The reason for atonement is sin, says Moberly, and sin is of such a nature that it has completely enmeshed man and made impossible the one thing man must do to be saved--that is, to repent. Thus, because atonement requires a perfect penitence which can only be offered by a sinless person, God sent the incarnate Son who lived a life of perfect obedience which was consummated in the

cross, and who thus was able to offer the perfect penitence of atonement on behalf of men. The death of Christ is not to be considered as substitutionary, says Moberly, but only as beneficial for men. The result of the perfect penitence of Christ is a personal Pentecost in the life of the believer. The Spirit of Christ becomes the spirit of the redeemed man.

When Denney and Moberly were compared it was found that they had much in common. The need for atonement in both views was found to be in the fact of sin and man's inability to save himself. Both men said that the nature of atonement was not to be considered forensic. The means of atonement for both men was the death of Christ and the result of atonement in both views was thought of as union with God in Christ. However, many differences were found. Whereas Denney said that sin was the breaking of the moral constitution which existed between God and men which resulted in God's condemnation of sinners, Moberly said that sin was man's inability to repent. Moberly rebelled against any idea of condemnation, for he said that this meant that God had acted in retribution, not in restoration. Denney said that man must put his trust in the finished work of Christ to be saved, while Moberly said that man must emulate

Christ's penitence before salvation is completed. Denney said Christ died in the place of sinful men and Moberly said that Christ died on behalf of sinful men, leaving out any thought of substitution. Moberly spoke a great deal about the incarnation in the atonement and Denney criticized him for this, saying that he tended to make the incarnation the whole of atonement. Finally, Moberly said that Christ's Spirit becomes man's spirit as a result of atonement. Denney said that men are united with Christ in fellowship, but they never lose their identity as the result of atonement.

In conclusion it may be said that the study of these two men has pointed out very clearly that there are certain central concepts that must be present in a Christian doctrine of atonement. The first concept has to do with the fact that there is a vital need for atonement. Both men have pointed out that man is in a desperate situation and cannot save himself from this predicament. A second concept that is central to a Christian doctrine of atonement is that it is in the person and work of Jesus Christ that atonement is made. Atonement is possible only in Jesus Christ. He stands at the very heart of atonement and thus at the very heart of the Christian Faith. Finally, the Christian

doctrine of atonement has as its basic result 'at-one-ment'--the bringing together of God and man in Jesus Christ.

It may also be said on the basis of this comparative study that no one single view of atonement, either objective or subjective, adequately explains the Christian view of atonement in Christ. It is only as the objective views and the subjective views are allowed to question and correct one another that a more comprehensive view of atonement can be put forth. Each view tends to stress certain basic concepts which are truthful and worthy to the exclusion of others. A truly biblical concept of atonement must attempt to correlate the objective and the subjective elements. This is so because of the basic points of view taken by each view. Denney tends to see the whole of atonement from the standpoint of the satisfaction of God's righteousness. Such a stress is needful, but it also tends to make atonement something apart from men. Such a view tends to forget the needs of men and it tends to become 'transactional' as Moberly says. However, Moberly's point of view is so anthropocentric that the tendency is to understand atonement only in terms of men's needs to the exclusion of God.

It may be said, then, that a truly biblical view of atonement must be eclectic to some extent. To stress certain ideas to the exclusion of others is to do great harm to the biblical Christian view of atonement. Because the atonement is so central to Christianity and because it is so all-inclusive in its meaning for the Christian Faith, it is admitted that such a task is very difficult, but it is to be attempted at any cost.

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