Representation and substitution in Thomas Erskine of Linlathen.

Foster, Marian

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author and no quotation from it or information derived from it may be published without proper acknowledgement.

END USER LICENCE AGREEMENT

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International licence. https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

You are free to:

- Share: to copy, distribute and transmit the work

Under the following conditions:

- Attribution: You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).
- Non Commercial: You may not use this work for commercial purposes.
- No Derivative Works - You may not alter, transform, or build upon this work.

Any of these conditions can be waived if you receive permission from the author. Your fair dealings and other rights are in no way affected by the above.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact librarypure@kcl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.
REPRESENTATION AND SUBSTITUTION
IN THOMAS ERSKINE OF LINLATHEN

by

Marian Foster

Ph.D
Kings College, University of London
Department of Theology and Religious Studies

1992
Representation and Substitution in Thomas Erskine of Linlathen.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the concepts of substitution and representation in Thomas Erskine of Linlathen (1788-1870). Erskine belonged to an ecumenical circle which included John McLeod Campbell, Edward Irving, F.D. Maurice and Bishop Alexander Ewing, and which was prominent enough in the nineteenth century to deserve more attention than it has received, up to now, in contemporary research. One of the controversial elements in their school of teaching was their rejection of substitution, as it was understood in their day, and their support for a representative theory of atonement.

Erskine's views are of particular interest because he began by accepting substitution, and only gradually moved away from it towards the idea that Jesus acted as a representative in his work of atonement. The thesis explores whether Erskine was rejecting only penal substitution, which was presented in early nineteenth century Scotland in a particularly crude and external form, or whether he saw the whole idea of substitution as unscriptural. He seems, in fact, to have recognized substitution, in a broad sense, but to have denied its specific connection with the death of Christ.

Erskine says that Christ is the head of humanity, and that in some sense his acts are the acts of all humanity, so that all participate in his death. Does substitution, however, really exclude participation? How does the idea of imputed righteousness relate to the renewed inner life?

Finally, there arises the question, whom does Christ represent? Orthodox Calvinism restricted the terms substitute and representative only to the elect, and they believed Christ suffered and died for them only. Erskine insists that Christ represents the whole human race, in the same way as Adam, and he came to believe that all would eventually be saved.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACKGROUND. THOMAS ERSKINE AND HIS CIRCLE</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A (i) The Early and Middle Years, 1820-1837</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) The Later Years 1838-1870</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Last Years</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (i) Thomas Chalmers (1770-1847)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Edward Irving (1792-1834)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) The &quot;Gareloch Heretics&quot;</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) F. D. Maurice (1805-1872)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v) Erskine and the Continent</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PART I. THE NATURE OF THE ATONEMENT</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1. From Penal Substitution to Representation: &quot;Salvation&quot; (1816) to &quot;The Brazen Serpent&quot; (1831)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Representation as a Prospective, and Substitution as a Retrospective Emphasis</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) &quot;Salvation&quot; : an Example of a Prospective Emphasis</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Prospective Emphasis in &quot;An Essay on Faith&quot;</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B The Sense in Which Substitution was Understood in Erskine's Day</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Federal Calvinism</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Explanation of Terms Associated with Penal Substitution</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Universal Pardon</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Some Attempts to Redefine the Doctrine of Penal Substitution by the Moral Government Theologians : a Reinterpretation of Substitution by Erskine and Irving</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) The Moral Government Theologians</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Ideas of Irving and Erskine</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) The Characteristic Ideas Surrounding Erskine's Representative Theory</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2. Representation and Substitution : A Comparative Study from Salvation to the Brazen Serpent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A The Incarnation</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) The &quot;Who&quot; Question</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Representation and Substitution Contrasted</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B The Work of Christ : the Problem of Sin</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Father or Judge? : Two different Starting Points in Dealing</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART II. THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT

Chapter 3. Whom did Christ Represent and for Whom did he Substitute Himself?

A For Whom did Christ die?
   (i) Universal Pardon
   (ii) Salvation not Universal

B Origin of the Idea of Universal Pardon
   (i) Comparison with Arminianism and the Theology of the Marrow Men
   (ii) Comparison with Moise Armyrout and James Fraser

C Controversy over Universal Pardon
   (i) Evangelical or Legal Repentance?
   (ii) Universal Pardon as the Basis of Assurance
   (iii) Controversy over Universal Pardon spreads to the Scottish Methodists

D The Question of a Limited Atonement
   (i) Substitution and a Limited Atonement
   (ii) Schools of Thought in Scotland
   (iii) Substitution in Relation to these Three Schools of Thought
   (iv) Controversy between Haldane and Payne
   (v) Erskine and the Rowites
   (vi) Universal Salvation

Chapter 4. Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of Election

A Erskine's Definition of the Common Doctrine of Election: Position of the Methodist and Moral Government Theologians
   (i) Single and Double Predestination
   (ii) Foreknowledge and Foreordination
   (iii) Characteristics of Westminster Calvinism and Areas of Conflict with other Groups Summarised

B Methodological Considerations

C The Potter and his Clay (Romans Ch. 9)
   (i) Election of Particular Individuals or of Certain Characters or Nations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Election in Christ: Reprobation in Adam</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Grace</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticism of Edward's Book &quot;Freedom of the Will.&quot;</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessity and Liberty</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God's Omnipotence and Man's Freedom</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5. How can Christ represent the Whole Human Race?</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Erskine as a Rationalian</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationalism in the &quot;Internal Evidence.&quot;</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) A Mystical Dimension added in &quot;The Doctrine of Election.&quot;</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Influence of William Law</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Adam, the Natural Head, Christ the Spiritual Head</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Love Mysticism</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Comparison of Representation and Substitution</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Erskine and the Quakers</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) The &quot;Inner Light&quot;</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) The &quot;Light&quot; and the Conscience</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) The &quot;Inner Light&quot; and the Bible</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D The Relationship of Christ to the Human Race</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) The Theological Basis of Universal Salvation: Christ the Eternal</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Natural Theology</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) The Eschatological Aspect</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Conclusion</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PART III. CHRIST THE REPRESENTATIVE** .................................. 229

Chapter 6. Substitution and Representation from Themes in the "Letters" 229

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Linked and Excluding Christological Models</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) The Fatherhood of God and the Sonship of Christ</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Fatherhood and Judgeship</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) The Law Court and the School</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Some Special Models used by Erskine</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) The Body of Humanity</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) The Inner Light and the Universal Conscience</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) The Language of the Bible</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Some Reflection on Erskine's Attitudes towards Substitution and</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation in the &quot;Letters&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Attitude towards Substitution</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Substitution as a General Concept and in Harmony with</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation in the &quot;Letters&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Characteristics of Erskine's Representation Theory of Atonement</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 7. "The Spiritual Order" ....................................... 259

(1) Erskine, the Broad Church and the Deity of Christ. ................ 259
A Religious Tendencies in Scotland in 1870 ........................................... 260
B Good and Bad Broad Churchism ......................................................... 264
C Liberalism in France: Erskine and Renan ........................................ 266
   (i) The Doctrine of the Father and the Son: Erskine's Answer to Renan .................. 270
   (ii) Is Jesus Christ that Son? .................................................................. 272
D Conclusion .............................................................................................. 273

(2) Scottish Calvinism, the Westminster Confession and Spiritual Religion .......... 279
A Christ in the Conscience ......................................................................... 280
B Theology and Ethics ............................................................................. 282
C The Kingdom of God: a Spiritual Kingdom ............................................ 285
D "The Purpose of God": Erskine's Condemnation of Penal Substitution .......... 287
   (i) Erroneous Views of the Character of God ........................................ 288
   (ii) Substitution, Representation and the Problem of Evil ....................... 290
   (iii) Mankind are by Nature God's Sons ................................................ 291
E Conclusion .............................................................................................. 293

(3) Biblical Scholarship, Religious Autonomy and the Nature of Righteousness .... 297
A Christ, the Teacher and the Bible .......................................................... 298
B "Thoughts on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans." .................................... 301
   (i) The Atonement not an Expiation, but a Manifestation of Love .......... 303
   (ii) An Illustration from Romans 3 Verse 25 .......................................... 305
C "Fragments": Two Different World-Views ............................................. 308
D Conclusion .............................................................................................. 311
E Epilogue ................................................................................................ 313

CONCLUSION .............................................................................................. 319
A Summary ................................................................................................. 319
B Some Characteristics of a Representative Theory ..................................... 324
C The Pattern of a Representative Theory ................................................. 326
   (i) To Erskine Substitution means Incarnation ....................................... 327
   (ii) The Work of Christ is Accomplished as a Representative ............... 328
   (iii) The Divine Image ........................................................................... 328
D The Meaning and Use of the Terms Today .............................................. 329

BIBLIOGRAPHY ......................................................................................... 333
Acknowledgements.

I wish to thank my supervisor Colin Gunton for his guidance, and helpful criticism of my work, James Torrance for first interesting me in Erskine, Alison Houghton and Kenneth Cracknell for their encouragement and support, and my son Gerald for help with the computing.

I have made extensive use of nineteenth century books from Westminster College Library, Cambridge, the Dr. William’s Library, London, and Cambridge University Library, and I would like to acknowledge the assistance of their Librarians. My special thanks go to the Rev. Tom Milroy of St. Rule’s Parish Church, Monifieth, who sent me photocopies of articles on Erskine, and information on how he was locally regarded.

I owe much to my children: Aidan, Gerald and Wendy, Bride, Rona and James, for their interest, and their belief that I would eventually complete this work.

Lastly, I am indebted to David Cornick, Nicholas Needham and David Hewlett for their help or advice.

M.F.
**Introduction.**

Thomas Erskine was one of the great leaders of religious thought in the nineteenth century, and he deserves to be better known. The publication of his first books marked the beginning of a long conflict for wider theological freedom in Scotland, which was to continue, against strong opposition, until his death. His influence as a teacher of spiritual Christianity soon spread widely in Britain, the Continent and America. The diffusion of his ideas was helped by the fact that he was a traveller familiar with theological circles in cities like Geneva, Paris and Rome; he was also a great talker, a good host and entertainer of visitors, and a gifted letter writer.

When Henry Montague Butler, Master of Trinity College, gave the Commemoration Address at Westminster College, Cambridge on November 22, 1906 on the subject of "Thomas Erskine of Linlathen", he described him as "one of my spiritual heroes;"¹ a "very holy man - a man, too, 'greatly beloved' - who has long seemed to me to represent the Christian type in a more attractive form than almost any man or woman in the last hundred years."² He adds: "You will forgive me if, at the end, I take my leave of you with only one definite suggestion: this man, Thomas Erskine, who died thirty-six years ago, is worth studying and worth knowing."³

Yet until recently there has been comparatively little research done on this original and progressive thinker, whose ideas are of unusual interest. In 1985 the Rev. Tom Milroy, minister of St. Rule's Parish Church, Monifieth, which contains a beautiful memorial window to Thomas Erskine, and where he was buried, asked a number of local ministers if they had heard of Thomas Erskine. He concluded: "Nowadays, he is only remembered
as a street name, and I doubt if any of the residents have any idea who he was. In fact, testing out some of my colleagues in the area, only one had heard of Erskine and his theological contributions. Until I came to the Parish of Monifieth I had never heard of Thomas Erskine and I must confess, that apart from the enclosed articles, I know little about him.4

Since then Nicholas Needham has completed his thesis on Thomas Erskine's early life and thought, and it has now been published as Thomas Erskine of Linlathen: his Life and Theology 1788-18375 Erskine lived, however, to 1870 and this present work is a study of his theology through the whole of his long life in relation to his way of looking at Christ in his representative relation to the race. Because Erskine began by regarding the sacrifice of Christ of Christ as a substitution, showing equally the justice and love of God in preserving the moral government from contempt and ruin, and only gradually came to see him as the representative acting for all humanity, the method of the thesis is chronological.

We may now say a little, as an introduction to the subject, about the problem of the difference between the two concepts of substitution and representation, a difficulty to which Erskine by no means provided a complete answer. Linguistically, the present discussion centres round the fact that in English both substitution and representation are equivocal words and the difference in their meaning is not at once apparent. Leon Morris has declared that he finds it difficult to get a separate definition of either term: "The Oxford English Dictionary gives a meaning of representation that is relevant to our subject, 'The fact of standing for, or in the place of, some other thing or person, esp. with a right or authority to act on their account; substitution of one thing or person for another'. The same dictionary gives the meaning of substitution as 'The putting of one person or thing in place of another.'6
It helps to turn to the Bible for the New Testament does contain two prepositions corresponding to these ideas, \( \omega \nu \tau \) and \( \xi \kappa \eta \rho \) and they are generally connected with the sufferings and death of Christ and the fact of human sin. Erskine mentions these prepositions but seems unaware of the linguistic problems connected with them. He merely remarks that in the New Testament \( \xi \kappa \eta \rho \) normally corresponds to the idea of representation, and \( \omega \nu \tau \) means substitution. Commenting on Romans V. 18, he writes: "The difference lies in this, that according to the idea of Headship Christ acts organically for \( \xi \kappa \eta \rho \) men, in order that by what he does his spirit may be reproduced in them, while according to the doctrine of substitution he acts instead of \( \omega \nu \tau \) them, and to exempt them from acting." 7

Biblical specialists, like his younger contemporary Thomas J. Crawford (1812-1875), who was appointed Professor of Divinity at Edinburgh University in 1859, give a more detailed linguistic discussion of the two terms and he would have agreed with Erskine only in the case of \( \xi \kappa \eta \rho \) for he concluded that it can be said with certainty that it signifies substitution or commutation. 8

Some recent research would support this. Leon Morris, for instance, writes: "the preposition \( \omega \nu \tau \), 'for', is the preposition of substitution. Of itself it does not prove that the atonement is substitutionary, but it lends its measure of support to the other indications that this is in mind." 9 R.E. Davies, also, in an article in the Tyndale Bulletin states: "the preposition \( \omega \nu \tau \) always has the idea of equivalence, substitution or exchange present; it never has the more general meaning 'on behalf of, for the sake of'. Therefore Mark 10.45 can only mean that the life of Christ given up in death was given in exchange for the forfeited lives of the many." 10

Other scholars have been more cautious, though even Vincent Taylor, who argues for a representative atonement, admits that Mark 10.45
contains a substitutionary idea, since something is done for the many which they cannot do for
themselves." Zerwick thinks that ἑλπίζω may sometimes have an extended
meaning, and "the question may at least be raised" as to whether Mt. 20.28. (parallel of Mark 10.45.) has a connotation of substitution, or can be taken simply with
the sense of ἐπιλείψῃ. 12
The more liberal Hastings Rashdall, however, is reluctant to admit that
there is any substitution in the doctrine of the atonement that can be traced back to Jesus, and although he allows that Mat. 20.28. may be a
genuine saying, 13 he interprets it in a non-substitutionary sense.

ὥστε undoubtedly does mean 'instead of', 'in place of.' But a moment's candid
consideration of the context will perhaps satisfy us that no theory of substitution can really get
much support from the metaphor of the text...even in this passage...the death of Christ is
primarily set before us as an example: His death is looked upon as the culminating act of a self-
sacrificing life." 14

In the New Testament ἐπιλείψῃ is the rarer preposition, the preferred
word being ἐπιλέξῃ, and it is around ἐπιλέξῃ that the main controversy
lies. It is plain that not all the passages containing it in the New
Testament signify representation alone. Sometimes they clearly have a
substitutionary meaning and Crawford instances the Epistle to Philemon 13:
'Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead (ἐπιλέξῃ) he might have
ministered to me'. Here the preposition assuredly indicates 'substitution' because it is evident
that Onesimus was the minister of Paul, not for the benefit of Philemon, but in his stead". 15

More usually, though, it has a double dimension, meaning both "for the
benefit of any one" or "in the room of any one", and Davies thinks that is
why it was the preferred word in the New Testament: "while ἑλπίζω could
express the fact that Christ died in our place, it could not of itself state that this death was for
our benefit and for our good, and therefore ἐπιλέξῃ, which can express both ideas is used". 16
It should also be noted that the two phrases "for our advantage" and "in our stead" are not incompatible, and numerous theologians, in all ages, have thought that the two concepts should be taken together. Christ can be both a redeemer and an example, and Barth uses the word *Stellvertretung* to include both substitution and representation.

If we turn from the exegetical and linguistic standpoint to the theological one, we can say that Christ's saving work has two parts, a prospective and a retrospective part. In these two aspects it is related, "retrospectively to the condition of evil from which it is the purpose of God to save us, and prospectively to the condition of good to which it is His purpose to raise us". In this sense the two concepts are complementary, substitution attaching itself naturally to the backward looking aspect of the atonement, and representation to the forward looking one. One needs the other, for both enter into the theological conceptions of the atonement.

Dorothee Soelle recognises three characteristics of genuine representation: provisionality, dependence and identification.

Soelle points out that unlike substitution, which speaks of a work completed once and for all as something objectively in the past, Christ's representation of mankind is provisional. He is the forerunner who is in advance of each individual and at a point which they have not yet reached. Christ "runs on before us to God", and it is the part of the disciple to follow after him. Christ represents the individual for a time without wanting to replace him:

God, who despite the satisfaction already made, is still not content with the representative, continues to count on us, continues to look for us, to wait for us. For him, our hope, which is fixed on him, is not detachable and already settled. God is not content with our representative.
Our representative speaks for us, but we ourselves have to learn to speak. He believes for us, but we ourselves have to learn to believe. He hopes when we are without hope, but that is not the end of the story. The Spirit who intercedes for us with 'inarticulate groans' does not intend to replace our own praying. But certainly he represents those whose only prayer is ignorance of what to pray for. By his representation he holds their place open for them lest they should lose it".  

The second point brought out by Soelle is Christ's continuing identification with his followers for "running on before, Christ looks back at us".  

He secures for each individual time and delay: "He identifies himself with those who follow after, those who remain behind, those who no longer move forward. He identifies himself with those whose identity is still future".  

Finally Christ depends on those he represents, he relies on their assent: "the forerunner is shown up in all his provisionality when no one follows him. This is precisely the way Christ, the teacher, the forerunner, puts himself at risk".  

Erskine gives an important place to some of these ideas in his general discussion of the idea of representation. In The Brazen Serpent he writes:  

"He is given as a leader as well as a Commander to the people; he leads the way, he does not call on them to do things which he does not do himself; nor does he do things which he does not call on them to do. He is the 'forerunner who is for us entered', not to dispense with our entering, but to open the way for us and keep it open".  

Representation and substitution may also be viewed as related to the historic views of the atonement. Substitution is traditionally central to those theories the key-note of which is the removal of guilt by means of a satisfaction made by another. Because there were variants on the patterns of substitution popular at different times in Christian history, Erskine was reacting basically not against the idea of substitution itself but against penal substitution which prevailed in his day in nearly all the
Scottish churches.

In opposing penal substitution then Erskine was really questioning the forensic theory of the atonement, current in his day, with all its supporting ideas. A central question which he raised was whether the atonement applied to all men or to believers only. For whom did he substitute himself: for all men, or some men or no man? Orthodox Calvinists believed that Christ died for his elect, or for some sinners, because they thought there was a particularity in the atonement itself. Erskine felt, in common with Arminians and some moderate Calvinists, that Christ died for all men, but unlike both these groups he believed all were already pardoned before they believed.

Pardon is the bread from heaven, rained around all our habitations; it is the daily bread on which the soul must feed, to strength itself for the daily work. As long as we look on pardon as the ultimate object in religion, and not as a thing already possessed, it is impossible that we can thus feed on it; and unless we feed on it, we neither have peace nor strength. The pardon truly is Jesus Christ, and he hath himself told us, 'Except ye eat my flesh, and drink my blood, ye have no life in you.'

All but his own particular party felt then that while Erskine, at least in his early theology, was not opposing substitution altogether, yet he was putting it forward in conjunction with ideas that were inconsistent with it.

There has been a great deal of discussion, notably by D.J.P. Hewlett in his thesis, of the theological language and ideas usually associated with representation and substitution. Are there substitutionary theories of the atonement which exclude the idea of punishment? Or rather is
substitution tied to a penal framework of thought, or can it be
disassociated from it and attached to more congenial methods of thinking?

Quite a number of theologians have put forward the idea of inclusive
substitution. Hewlett, however, who has made a study of the concept in
P. Marheinelle, L. Morris, G. Capaldi, W. Wolf and W. Pannenberg doubts the
coherence of such a concept. He remarks that it presents great problems
logically for, "how can an act that is initially defined as being performed in my place, in
stead of me, also be understood to include me and my own act."26

One thing that is certain is that a representative or a
substitutionary theory of the atonement usually contains a range of ideas
which are far wider than those that can be logically connected with the
term. Erskine's favourite idea of universal pardon, for instance, seems at
first sight, at least, to have no special connection with representation,
and indeed, as it precedes Christian experience, to have the appearance of
substitution.

This exploration of the themes of substitution and representation in
Thomas Erskine was undertaken in the conviction that, although his views
and reflections on the subject were coloured by a particular historical
perspective, they will yet be of value in the current theological debate.

Perhaps because he was not a systematic thinker he was able to bring
out more clearly and sharply theological truths which in his own age had
been neglected. His close friend Dr. John Brown wrote in 1875 after the
publication of Erskine's letters: "He had an intense rather than a wide mind, and
brought the rays of his intellect to a focus, making one thing very bright, and the next thing very
dark - as with a burning lens".27 He was helped too in his theological writing
by the possession of an originality of expression, a charm of style and a
literary cultivation which in combination was rare.
Erskine's personal vision was of a God of holy love at work in humanity, the whole of humanity, through Christ the head and representative. As its head Christ gives life to the body, not as a substitute standing instead of the individual, but as a representative allowing each member to play their own part in bringing about "the great salvation". For the same reason that he rejected substitution, Erskine rejected also the idea of the imputed righteousness of Christ, seeing it as not real righteousness but a kind of legal fiction.

Now, as it should be unspeakable loss to us to be partakers of holiness and the fruits of righteousness only by substitute and not in reality, so must it be a loss to partake of the chastening which yieldeth these fruits only by substitute and not in reality. Christ said, "The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" and he asks his disciples whose mother prayed for them that they might sit on his right and left hand in his kingdom, "Can ye drink of the cup which I drink of?" thereby intimating that he did not drink it to dispense with their drinking it, but on the contrary, that those who drink deepest of it after his example shall sit nearest to him in his kingdom. . . . Reader would you wish a substitute in holiness, or in blessedness or in glory? I know you would not, and therefore I say, dream not of a substitute in suffering, for these good things rise out of suffering. 28

Some will see Erskine's conception of imputed righteousness as erroneous, but at this point it is important to explain his overall vision rather than to criticise his particular views. Objections came thick and fast in response to all but the earliest of his books, and there was much force in some of them.

Central to his criticism of the penal substitutionary theory of the atonement, and of imputed righteousness was his positive intuition of what
St. Paul really felt righteousness to be. The righteousness which God demands is something of the heart and will and not a mere forensic righteousness. Erskine wrote towards the end of his life: "I am the better of meeting with right men, ... All my metaphysical interest is really theological. I care for metaphysics simply as an instrument; but our relation to God and his spiritual kingdom is the true Supernatural."
Notes

Introduction.


21. Ibid.


Thomas Erskine was born at Linlathen, near Dundee on 13 October, 1778, his father David being a member of the Church of Scotland, and his mother the descendant of an Episcopalian family, the Grahams of Airth Castle. After the early death of his father, Erskine spent most of his childhood in the happy home of his maternal grandmother, Mrs. Graham of Airth Castle, who was both an Episcopalian and a Jacobite, and whose views no doubt modified the tradition of Presbyterianism he had inherited from his father's side.

Erskine had his early schooling at Edinburgh High School, and later at a school in Durham, before being educated for the bar in the University of Edinburgh and called to it in 1810. Here he was drawn into the brilliant circle which centred on Walter Scott, Henry Cockburn and other talented men for which Edinburgh was renowned, but on the death of his elder brother in 1816 he decided to abandon his calling as advocate and retire to the estate at Linlathen. Free from the need to earn his own living, he made use of his leisure to write books on Christianity.

Deeply meditative by temperament he was repelled by, and soon began to reject, what he saw as a hard Calvinistic creed, full of technical phrases and subtle distinctions, but inadequate because it failed to reveal the depth of God’s love as revealed in Christ. In those books it can be traced how he gradually gave up the idea, accepted among orthodox Calvinist theologians, that Christ acted as a substitute in his work of atonement.

Erskine gives Christ other titles: priest, king, prophet, saviour, conqueror, head of the race, revealer of the Father, but the title he seems to prefer is that of representative. While in his early writings he still held a doctrine of
substitution as the ground of Christ's representation, yet he held the ultimate object of the atonement was the important one. God created all men and women that he might train them to receive his spirit, his nature and his character into them and in this process he works through a representative.

There are fundamental differences between representation and substitution when they are viewed in the context of theories of the atonement. In substitution Christ's death is related to law; it is seen as a full satisfaction for the sins of the elect. Christ bears the penalty of sin instead of them, and they escape the proper punishment. Erskine came to think that substitution was founded on a mistaken idea of God's relation to man which was not that of Judge but that of Father.

Erskine saw the fatherhood of God as the centre of the Christian Gospel, and a good father wishes his children to grow in wisdom and holiness. Jesus Christ is God's ideal for man, and individuals are called to be partakers of God's own nature by receiving Christ and walking in him. Erskine combined this ethical viewpoint with a theory of the mystical headship of Christ. Mankind form one body of which Christ is the head and root and representative, and not the substitute. He is "the pattern of righteousness to which every individual of the race is called". He did his work "not that men might be relieved from doing themselves any thing that is right, but they might be enabled to do it".

Representation and substitution then are often separated, but they can sometimes be seen as complementary aspects of the same theory of atonement. Salvation has two sides: the retrospective one dealing with past sins and often containing ideas like propitiation, expiation, satisfaction and substitution, and the prospective one completing the work of salvation and including the ideas of adoption, representation, increase of grace, perseverance and sanctification. Erskine takes the objective or retrospective side very seriously, but describes
subjective religion as the purpose of the atonement.

Erskine’s early theology then was a mediating one: atonement in the sense of substitution, the removal of sin and reconciliation to God was of vital importance, but without the ethical and spiritual element and the response of love in the individual person it is of no use. Writing from Herrnhut in December 1822 he made this comment about the evangelical Germans: "I find the distinction of objective and subjective religion very important. Some of the Christians whom I have seen here make their religion entirely an interior thing i.e. entirely subjective. In the Bible it is objective, i.e. it consists of the history of God’s dealings chiefly - but objective for the purpose of producing subjective religion. The Moravians are objective - they don't talk of faith, but of the cross and the glory of Christ."3

A.(i). The Early and Middle Years, 1820 - 1837.

This affirmation that there is more to the atonement than the mere substitution of Christ in the place of sinners was put forward in Erskine’s first book Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the Truth of Revealed Religion (1820). In it he stated that the object of Christianity is "to bring the character of man into harmony with that of God"4, a statement true enough in itself if properly guarded. Clearly, though some thinkers, like Newman, were alarmed by the strong subjective element in the book, and he was later to write: "That this is an object, is plain from Scripture, but that it is the object is no where told us; ... God's works look many ways; they have objects ... innumerable; they are full of eyes before and behind, and like the cherubim in the Prophet's vision, advance forward to diverse points at once".5 Newman thought that Erskine was clearly a rationalist.

A reviewer of Erskine’s second book An Essay on Faith (1822) describes it as a sequel to The Internal Evidence. "In the former, he very briefly, as well as beautifully, unfolded his views on the internal evidence of the Christian Revelation; as
consisting in the adaptation, the fitness, of that revelation to the actual wants and feelings of man. And in the present he shews, with equal brevity and beauty of illustration, if not with quite the same clearness, his views respecting the Faith necessary to receive such a revelation. 6

What then is faith? Erskine believed that there was a tendency in his time to think too much about different types of faith, about speculative and practical, historical, saving and realizing faith. This drew attention away from the thing to be believed in and from study of the Bible, and engaged the mind in a fruitless search for a mode of believing and an examination of the mental operation of believing. "A true faith", he says, does not properly refer to the mode of believing but to the object believed, "it means the belief of a true thing". 7

Faith then is believing "right things", and by this Erskine means, above all, the love of God towards man shown by universal pardon. This in turn produces love of God in men and women and the desire to be like him. As in his earlier book, there is a strong prospective emphasis, and in line with this he suggests that in Romans 1.16. the word "salvation" means moral healing and not deliverance from the condemnation of sin: "Salvation here signifies healing, or deliverance, not from the condemnation but from the influence of sin". 8

The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel was published in 1828. J.S. Candlish writes: "Erskine still retained his belief in the evangelical doctrine of the atonement, holding that Christ has obtained the forgiveness of our sins by suffering the penalty due to them in our stead. But he held that he has done this for all men; and that all mankind whether they know or believe it or not, are actually redeemed by Christ and pardoned by God for his sake." 9 Thomson and Wardlaw in 1830, and J.A. Haldane in 1831 all wrote books in response to the position which Erskine had taken that only universal pardon obtains the "unconditional freeness of the gospel". 10 Salvation,
Erskine had stated, is the spiritual cure, pardon the spiritual medicine, and the true meaning of salvation is sanctification.

His opponents argued that pardon and regeneration are inseparable, and no one could receive one without the other. Even those who believed in the universal offer and the particular application of the atonement felt that the difficulties of the universal sufficiency of the remedy, and the particularity of the application was not solved by saying that the atonement is universal with reference to pardon and restricted with reference to salvation.

Ralph Wardlaw wrote in 1829: "I seldom if ever pursued a book with more mingled feelings of approbation and disapprobation, delight and sorrow. I love the man. Every one who knows him must love him. . . . You will see I refer especially to his views of pardon and collateral topics, with which I cannot agree, and which I think confused and hardly consistent with themselves. . . . He was a hearer of mine. . . . perhaps six weeks ago - and he came into the vestry and walked part of the way home with me. But we could only break ground on the subject, and leave it. He was then unshaken in his sentiments."¹¹

Erskine's real break with the doctrine of substitution came with the publication of The Brazen Serpent in 1831. Robert Mackintosh's statement that Erskine's criticisms of penal substitution in this book were derived from a pamphlet of Edward Irving's published in 1830¹², do not appear to be quite correct in view of a controversy Erskine had with James Haldane about the subject in 1821¹³, although undoubtedly Erskine was influenced by Irving.

Substitution, Erskine wrote, had cast out the true doctrine of the headship of Christ. Christ was head of the whole human nature, "so he was in every part of it, just as the natural head is by its nerves in every part of the body".¹⁴

Suppose a man dead and buried, and life coming again to him into his head, that living head might force a way for the body up from the grave, but it would not do this to dispense with the
rising of the body, but as the leader and commander of the body. So also is the work of Christ".\textsuperscript{15}

David Brown in "Letter to a Friend Entangled in Error" published in \textit{The Edinburgh Christian Instructor} wrote: 
"Mr. Erskine boldly avows, that although Christ did much on our behalf, he did nothing \textit{in our stead} at all. When I read this in the first edition of the "Brazen Serpent", and saw what importance he attached to it, I spoke against it to friends in Edinburgh when on a visit from London in May 1831; and you may remember my entreating several persons not to open the book."\textsuperscript{16}

In 1837 Erskine published \textit{The Doctrine of Election} in which he interpreted the parable of the potter and the clay in a way that opposed unconditional election. He also completely rejected penal substitution. People, he said, love substitution because it seems to "to combine the safety of the narrow way, with the ease of the broad way; . . . My dear reader, Jesus is not the substitute for men, but the head of men, and he declared the necessity of a personal sacrifice in each individual, and denied the possibility of substitution in this great work - and the work by which he made propitiation for men, is that same righteousness in which he presents himself as a pattern for the imitation of all men. 'Take up thy cross and follow me, and where I am, there shall my servant be'. 'If ye die with him, ye shall live with him; if ye suffer with him, ye shall reign with him.'"\textsuperscript{17}

(ii) \textbf{The Later Years 1838-1870.}

Erskine was forty-nine years old when \textit{The Doctrine of Election} was published, and for the next thirty years, until his death in 1870, he published nothing new, and even spoke with dislike of his former writings. Yet as his powers of authorship diminished, his influence grew wider and his ideas became simpler and deeper. Many of his friends thought Erskine changed during the last third of his life: "He saw around him better. The world was not so
hopeless as it seemed, nor the Churches so dead, although they were still dead enough. . . . The
spirit of liberality grew greatly in him, and was one of the chief charms of his later mood. 18

At the same time he developed a new sort of saintliness quietly exercising a kind of lay apostolate. Although he had been an eloquent preacher, he never entered a pulpit again but he visited the sick, comforted the bereaved, assisted those with problems or who were out of work, and made converts by his firm belief that through all their troubles God held for them an inexhaustible love. For his own part he surrendered himself completely to God, in fellowship and after the example of Jesus, God's Son and man's representative.

It was Erskine's understanding of the function of a representative, that not only does he lead the way, but his disciples must come after him and tread also the very path which he trod. If Christ came to reveal the character of God, then his followers must live according to this model and they must repeat his life and death and resurrection in themselves in order to realize their own salvation. Erskine's most distinguishing characteristic throughout his own long and arduous journey "lay in the intense and pure religious faith that possessed him. This burned within him, a deep and steady central fire, absorbing or rather transfiguring, his fine natural gifts and attainments - scholarship, refinement, humour and powers of argument." 19

This did not mean that he was ascetic, or a religious recluse for, although at heart he was a reader and a thinker, he was also a sympathetic correspondent and a brilliant conversationalist whose talk drew people to him. Art, literature, music and the classics all interested him, and he was especially fond of Shakespeare, Thucydides and Plato. Full of human wit and humour, deeply affectionate and loving towards all his friends, he made religion attractive to those around him. Henderson, writing in 1899, described him as a spiritual genius and added: "It is an interesting fact that at the present day churches that cannot tolerate Erskine's theological ideas prescribe his letters to their students as a
text-book in practical religion." 20

Erskine continued to travel a good deal, chiefly in France, Italy and Switzerland, but when he was not abroad he generally spent the summer and early Autumn in his large comfortable mansion at Linlathen. He began his Autumn receptions there in 1847 and they continued for the next twenty years. Erskine never married and his widowed sister Mrs. Stirling presided, until her death at the end of 1866.

Many people who had ideas or values in common assembled at Linlathen and shared their problems and insights. George Gilfinnan met Thomas Carlyle there and they formed a temporary friendship. On another occasion "the two walked down to Monifieth and bathed in the Tay." 21 William Knight in Retrospects tells us that he met Carlyle and F.D. Maurice there for the first time, and he also mentions Kingsley, Arthur Stanley, McLeod Campbell and Bishop Ewing as guests at Linlathen. 22

Erskine was a good host and he had a remarkable gift for setting everyone at ease. A great variety of topics were discussed at Linlathen, and he was able to treat the intellectual scepticism of his younger friends with courteous thoughtfulness, and to give replies that were at least worth reflecting on, out of his own experience. If a guest cared about literature, he found one who had read widely and had an intense interest in it, and it was the same with the classics. Erskine even took an interest in sport and sportsmen were among his visitors. No one who came as a stranger remained a stranger for long, and great care was taken to cater for all idiosyncrasies.
Carlyle, whose propensity for tobacco was not shared by Erskine, had to confine his smoking to the two rooms set aside for him and when the atmosphere in these rooms became impregnated with tobacco smoke beyond even the philosopher's endurance, he would go outside, no matter how stormy the weather, to continue his smoke. In front of the house used to stand an old rowan tree, where, in the cavity of the trunk, Carlyle kept a pipe ready for use. Carlyle's favourite walk in the grounds is now known by his name. 23

It was usually an ecumenical gathering, for Erskine in this respect was a man of the world, and his toleration extended itself to many varieties of religious opinion; discussions of all kinds took place at Linlathen and Erskine encouraged all manner of questions, particularly from the young: "he did not speak, as at second-hand, of something he had read in a book, but he witnessed directly to that which he had himself known and tried". 24

Dean Stanley remarked that Erskine "often spoke of the difficulty of accommodating himself entirely to any one form of Christian worship. 'I am inclined', he said once 'to think', with a full sense of the humour of what he was saying, 'that the last and best revision of the Liturgy would be to enjoin absolute silence.'" 25

From December till April, Erskine usually lived in Edinburgh where he held social gatherings at his house in Charlotte Square, and exercised hospitality much as he did at Linlathen. Here he was able to keep in contact with a wider circle of relatives and friends, and meet people he did not often see at Linlathen. There were a number of friends, however, which he saw in both places: he was host to Maurice, for instance, in November 1854 when he came to Edinburgh to deliver his lectures on "The Religion of Ancient Rome". Maurice wrote on that occasion: "I had pleasant visit to Edinburgh and Glasgow. Dear Mr. Erskine took rooms in a private hotel and entertained me there." 26

When Carlyle
revisited Edinburgh to be installed as Rector of the University in 1866, he was a guest of Erskine. "Many will still remember the wise and gracious courtesy, with which he then performed the duties of hospitality, on the one hand securing for his guest the repose he needed and desired, on the other according to as many as possible the coveted privilege of meeting the sage of Chelsea."27

Occasionally Erskine spent periods of several months in London; it was there that he sometimes met his old friend A.J. Scott and it was in London that his friendship with F.D. Maurice developed and ripened. "I have seen a good deal of Maurice." Erskine wrote from London in April 1855, "I hear him every Sunday with great interest ... I have seen Kingsley too, and Bishop Ewing, and a Mr. Baldwin Brown, a friend of Scott's, an Independent minister. I also see Carlyle, whom I really love, there is so much geniality of heart about him".28

D.J. Vaughan thought that Erskine's unique gift lay not so much in his books as in the influence he was able to exert through his letters and conversations.29 Principal Shairp was one of those who recalled some of these talks which he had with Erskine on visits to Linlathen. In one of these conversations they discussed the two capacities which Christ has in relation to mankind.

Erskine said that firstly Christ came as the representative of the Father, showing the character of the Father and demonstrating his loving and righteous and holy purpose towards all. So he comes down to every man, and is incarnate in his conscience, "and in that conscience, the true light, the Spirit within each man, He grieves over every man's sin, agonises for it in each man, 'suffers, the just for the unjust."30

Christ's second capacity is head and representative of the whole human race: "In this capacity He fulfils God's whole will, accepts the suffering which is eternally inseparable from sin, bears it willingly, not indeed to save us from suffering, but to call
each of us to accept God's whole will gladly as He accepted it, to accept suffering when sent, not as a punishment but as healing, and so to follow Christ. -"31. A characteristic of representation then, according to Erskine, is participation: Christ goes on ahead but he calls on every one to follow him, and to die continually to self and give themselves up to suffering and to death.

Particularly in his later years Erskine was often found at Polloc, the home of Sir John Maxwell and Lady Mathilda. Polloc stood a few miles from Glasgow on the southern banks of the Clyde, and was the centre of a social circle similar to that at Linlathen. Lady Mathilda, whose former name was Bruce, and who was the second daughter of the seventh Earl of Elgin, was a woman of great charm, spiritual insight and practical benevolence. Erskine much admired her but visited more frequently after her death when Sir John was left alone.

Alexander Ewing, Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, and John McLeod Campbell were also frequent visitors to Polloc. Many have commented on the peculiar reverence which Bishop Ewing had for Erskine. Alexander Ross in his Memoir of Alexander Ewing refers to it again and again: "whenever he met Mr. Erskine, or was engaged in correspondence with him, he invariably assumed the attitude of a humble and reverent disciple, although he might at the time be grappling with problems of which he could gain but little help from his friend".32 Vaughan points out that Ewing's ecclesiastical position, and his friendship with the Archibishop of Canterbury and other prominent English churchmen, could not fail to have added to the influence which Erskine exerted on English theological thought through his writings. Some English theologians who were not close to Erskine learnt about him indirectly through F.D. Maurice: this applies to men like G.D. Boyle, Dean of Salisbury, and F.W. Farrar, Dean of Canterbury. By such means as these,
the concept of representation, and a kind of qualified universalism became accepted as orthodox in English theology.

(iii) Last Years.

Erskine, now approaching eighty, was still alert, delighting in his friends' company and with the same deep interest in human life and many shrewd comments on it. On the whole he had been a happy man: the society in which he moved was congenial to him, his simplicity of character drew people to him, and his power of sympathy enabled him to enter into another's situation and to surmount doctrinal and personal differences.

His letters are full of expressions of deep affection for all his friends: "Beloved Snow" (to Julia Wedgewood), "Dearly Beloved", "My dear Brother", and to Bishop Ewing often "Vescovo Carissimo". Yet correspondingly he suffered intense grief when any of them died: "I feel as if I should delight to go home, and be in His more manifested presence, but I also feel that I need the never-ceasing help of His Spirit, to keep me from sinking into darkness that may be felt".33

A writer in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine tells of an encounter with Erskine, arranged by friends who thought Erskine's influence might resolve some of his religious difficulties: "something visionary and meditative was in his mild eyes, the veiled regard, retrospective and introspective, just touched by the abstraction of old age..."34 He could discover no real help in his "special teaching", "this new light upon old Christianity" and he was embarrassed and confused "by the sense that it was profane and disrespectful to the instructor, whose saintly character and beautiful purpose were not less fine, nor less worthy of reverence because they had failed in this particular case to influence and impress."35

Friends kept reassuring Erskine about how much they had gained from his writings and were still gaining from his presence. F.D. Maurice wrote on
September 20 1867, "I do feel very often when I am trying to tell the young men at Cambridge of the conscience that is in each of them, and who is speaking to it, how much you have taught me about that". He writes again in a similar way in January 1868, "I have especially recurred to all that you said about Faith. It seems to me that all my teaching here ought to be affected by it." 

According to Julia Wedgewood Erskine felt his thought was entering a new phrase, although a variety of problems including increasingly bad eyesight prevented him from fully giving his new ideas to the world. Christianity, he insisted should be associated not so much with history as with science. The spiritual world was subject to laws which could be investigated in the same way as the physical world, given the right method.

Erskine then was still meditating continually on the problems of theology, and working from time to time on "The Epistle to the Romans" (later to be published in The Spiritual Order), but he was not writing easily. He told Bishop Ewing that he thought his place in theology would be a very subordinate one. He wished that instead of writing his conversation could be taken down in shorthand, "I find that the idea of writing for printing kills the life of my thoughts." He also wondered if his real vocation might be "in actual walking with God continually in the Spirit. It seems to me that there is a call on me for this, which I ought not to disregard."

A.J. Scott died early in 1866, "a noble character - on the whole, perhaps, the most impressive man I ever knew." Then, to Erskine's intense grief, his two sisters died in December 1866 and early in 1867.

Erskine had said a great deal about his relationship to Christ, the representative but what of the God whom he also represents? Erskine longed throughout all the trials that had come to him that God might break his silence with him, that once more, in this life, God might stretch forth his hand.
During Principal Shairp's last visit to Linlathen Erskine spoke to him about "the awful silence of God, how it sometimes becomes oppressive, and the heart longed to hear, in answer to its cry, some audible voice." He added, "But it has not always been silence to me. I have had one revelation; it is now, I am sorry to say, a matter of memory to me. It was not a revelation of anything new to me. After it, I did not know anything I did not know before. But it was a joy for which one might bear any sorrow, - 'Joie, joie, pleurs de joie', as was the title of a tract I used to read at Geneva. I felt the power of love, that God is love, that He loved me, that He had spoken to me', and then, after a long pause, - "that He had broken silence to me". As he spoke he touched me quickly on the arm, as if to indicate the direct impact from on high of which he had been aware.

Shairp continued to see Erskine at Edinburgh during the next two winters. He was now very frail, weary, almost blind and with a heart condition which gave rise to mental depression. He was very preoccupied at this time with the problem of evil, and dwelt a great deal on his own past sins which seemed to lie heavily on his conscience. He never doubted God's goodness, however, and the restitution of all things still appeared to him to be the first element of the gospel. He had a tendency to oversimplify things, and to try to reduce all aspects of truth to one. He now thought the whole gospel was contained in the idea of sonship.

At this time Erskine lost two of his oldest friends George Dundas (Lord Manor) and James MacKenzie. It was clear, however, that his own death was near, and on the night of 10th March, 1870 he suddenly became very ill and coughed up blood. The improvement in his spirits was immediate: "'You must not try to keep me,' he said quite cheerfully, but solemnly. But when Dr. John Brown, who came
in as he repeated the words, said, 'You will take this, dear sir; we cannot keep you when God
sends for you', Mr. Erskine answered, 'You are right; give it to me, I will wait His time.'

Dr. Brown, one of Erskine's closest friends, was an author as well as a medical
doctor having written *Horae Subsecivae* and *Rab and his Friends*, and he was
with him in his last days.

Erskine now seemed quite happy and gave loving individual messages to all
his relations. He also asked that his tract on "Education and Probation" be
printed separately prefaced by the words: "This principle of Education lies at the
very basis of the Gospel, for it contains in it, or expresses, the everlasting purpose of God
towards us, to make us partakers of His own righteousness."  

Although he had attended Presbyterian, Episcopal and Congregational
services it is not very clear whether whether Erskine was a communicant
member of any of them. Logan thinks he only communicated a few days
before his death, but Finlayson says he established an episcopalian
congregation at Broughty Ferry and during the latter part of his life
communicated there. Needham believes that when he was excommunicated
from David Russell's congregation in 1828 this meant 'he was debarred from taking
part in holy communion.' At any rate, records kept by his niece and by Miss
Gourlay show that on Sunday March 13, Mr. Sandford came to his house
between the services, and he took private communion together with his
nephew, niece and Miss Gourlay.

During the next few days his thoughts continued to dwell on the divine
Sonship. "Jesus, the Son of God", he was heard to whisper to himself, "and God"; the
peculiar emphasis laid upon the and indicating the current of his thoughts.

He died peacefully on Sunday, March 20 at Edinburgh. John McLeod Campbell wrote
a few days later to Bishop Ewing: "There was nothing but peace - trust - love, with
perfect clearness of mind - perfect realization of being parting with this life, and being
passing into that which is to come: - in one sense to come, but in the deepest sense it was his already."51

Principal Shairp was not with him when he died, but he remembered his funeral well: "It was a calm bright day of March. The funeral prayers of the English church were read in his own library, where he had so often prayed alone and in the family. He was laid beside his mother, and the brother he so revered, in Monifieth Churchyard, which is situated on the estuary of the Tay, where it broadens out to meet the ocean. The churchyard was filled with his kindred, his friends and his neighbours, and over that place and company there seemed to rest for a time a holy calm in harmony with the saintly spirit that had departed. The thoughts of others far away were centred on the churchyard that day."52

So this very holy Forfarshire apostle was laid to rest, and as it was felt that he still retained his mental vigour in his later years, his posthumous fragments were gathered together and published under the title The Spiritual Order and Other Papers. John McLeod Campbell thought that as "some portions of this book are at least equal to anything he ever wrote ",53 it could do no injustice to his memory. Edward Grupp, the Quaker, is said to have been strongly influenced by The Spiritual Order.54

Erskine's letters appeared in 2 volumes in 1877, edited by Hanna and including reminiscences of his admiring friends Dean Stanley and Principal Shairp. Many of his friends urged Bishop Ewing to prepare a life of Thomas Erskine, but he refused, confessing to McLeod Campbell "I cannot do it."55 Principal Shairp also professed "utter inability. I feel the truth of those words which Dr. McLeod Campbell wrote to Bishop Ewing soon after Mr. Erskine's death: 'No man is able to say to those who knew him not what he was; no man could say this to those who knew him in a way that they would feel satisfying."56

A review of The Spiritual Order described Erskine as "a spirit that as one of a saved minority could find no peace in heaven".57 McLeod Campbell could not quite
follow him all the way on the road to a true universalism but he wrote: "There is no misconception that I would more regret than that of concluding from my not seeing altogether eye to eye with Mr. Erskine, that I am rejecting the great essence of his book, - the conclusion as to the future of man at which he arrives. I am very far from this. I still feel difficulties which did not weigh with him . . . But I see enough to make me thankful that it is a question that so many good men are feeling to be an open one . . ."58

During his life-time then Erskine had been part of a very wide social circle who treated him with respect and in some cases almost with veneration. Although he was older than most other members of the group, and among the first to reject penal substitution, he soon met others who thought as he did and they mutually influenced and learnt from one another. It remains to say therefore a little about some of his many friends, their attitudes towards universal atonement and the contributions they made towards the development of a representative theory of the atonement.

B.(i) Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847).

Erskine found a second home at Cadder House, near Glasgow, the residence of his sister Christian and her husband Charles Stirling. While he was staying there in 1818 he first met Thomas Chalmers, and a friendship began between the two men which was to last until Chalmers' death. In 1818 Chalmers was at the height of his powers as a preacher, and was the popular minister of the Tron Kirk, Glasgow proclaiming his message to huge congregations largely made up of the upper and middle classes of the city.

After their first meeting Erskine wrote to Chalmers asking if they could correspond, and he sent Chalmers his "Translations of St. James". Chalmers
thought they might be worthy of publication, "if you can substantiate on good philosophical grounds all the reformatons that you propose". C\textsuperscript{59} Chalmers seems to have detected at once Erskine's weaknesses and strengths, and to have had a full appreciation of Erskine's special kind of talent. "There is a light, and a power, and a moral impression about your performance, that there is not about the version of the Apostle in our authorized Scriptures."\textsuperscript{60} Their publication in fact did not come about, but it was to Chalmers that Erskine sent in 1818 his first draft of \textit{The Internal Evidence}, which turned out to be his most popular book.

While he was a minister at Kilmany, Chalmers had been a Moderate, but after a religious conversion he became an Evangelical. From then on his kind of religion was no mere dry orthodoxy or head religion, and he admired many of Erskine's qualities, writing to him in 1818: "I stand sadly in need of your devotional frame all the day long - of the religion of feeling - of a real sensibility towards Him who is both a Just God and a Saviour - ". \textsuperscript{61}

The two men remained friends, even though Chalmers' convictions remained in harmony with the Westminster Confession (but not rigidly) and Chalmers never accepted what was "peculiar" in Erskine's theology, or allowed his name to become associated with his group. Erskine expressed his delight with Chalmers' appointment to the Divinity Chair in Edinburgh in 1827. Mrs. Chalmers was said to be equally delighted with Erskine's \textit{Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel}.

Chalmers himself took a rather more cautious view. He believed in God's universal love of all mankind, and he taught the truth of free salvation by the grace of God, but although he listened patiently to Erskine he never truly accepted his concept of universal pardon asking, "where is the pardon if a man continues an unbeliever to the last". \textsuperscript{62}

Erskine always stood completely firm on his central idea that the atonement
was for all, irrespective of whether or not they believed, and he made his
position quite clear in a letter to Chalmers. "I am persuaded that the free undeserved
and general love of God to the world, to the sinful family of Adam is the true ground on which
each individual of our race must rest. I know no other and see no other in the Bible. The
particular love is manifested in revealing to each individual the knowledge of the general
love; but it is not on the particular revelation that a man can or ought to rest - it is on the
general love thus revealed to him".63

Chalmers stood aside too at the trials of Irving and McLeod Campbell. At
the McLeod Campbell trial he took no part in the Assembly proceedings,
merely expressing the hope that he would "be got through".64 His excuse was
that it would take a month to master the literature on the subject, but Norman
MacLeod remarked in Campbell’s obituary notice in Good Words that "it may
be doubted whether he would have voted against a man whom he called 'the holy Campbell', and
whom he is said, on good authority, to have afterwards blamed only for 'rash statements.'"65

The friendship between Erskine and Chalmers was cooling in the late 1830s,
and Chalmers had many doubts and criticisms about Erskine’s book The
Doctrine of Election. Nevertheless Erskine acted for a week as an escort to
Chalmers when he visited Paris in 1838. They journeyed through Normandy
and made a visit to the Duc de Broglie and Madame de Broglie. Erskine
defends his The Doctrine of Election in a letter to Chalmers on 22 August
1838: "I think you have mistaken my meaning somewhat, - I think you are supposing that I am
contending for the right of rejecting every thing that does not commend itself to my
conscience, whereas I am in reality contending that no man has a right to think himself a
believer in a moral truth, unless his conscience consents to it".66

Chalmers replies at length and in a conciliatory tone on October 9 1838:
"It is a very important modification that you bring forward in your letter on the subject of
revelation and its authority. I fear that you have not expressed it clearly enough in your
book, where you seem to say that the Bible is no revelation to a man unless his conscience goes along with it. Now what I contend is that the Bible is sufficiently accredited — first for a rightful challenge on every man's attention, and then if this attention be duly given for a rightful challenge on his belief, for the want of which belief therefore a clear principle of condemnation will be made to lie upon him at the day of reckoning. I daresay you are quite at one with me here; and on the other hand I am equally at one with you in thinking that the full benefit of the revelation, or any part of it has not been realized until the conscience and experience of the man have been brought into entire coalescence with the subject-matter of the record".67

Chalmers was disappointed by Erskine's lack of enthusiasm for, or interest in, the Disruption. Erskine showed little sympathy with it, merely remarking in a letter on May 27 1844: "The present time is a very trying one. I do not feel myself called upon to take any part in this movement (the Disruption), but I always expressed my conviction that it was more of a political than of a religious character".68 He admits though in another letter "that it is generally felt that the rights of the people are asserted by the seceding ministers, which weighs a good deal".69

Chalmers then was one of those who remained outside the inner circle who shared Erskine's ideas, but belonged to a larger circle of personal friends who thought differently but gained much from one another. The two men in many respects were wide apart in their views, and divided by temperament and circumstances, but Erskine always valued Chalmers' comments and observations on his books. Chalmers wrote to Erskine in 1843: "I should rejoice if we met eye to eye. I feel convinced of a radical and essential unity betwixt us, however diverse and distorting the media might be between our respective visions and certain of those questions on which we may chance to differ".70
(ii) Edward Irving (1792-1834).

Irving was four years younger than Erskine, and one of the main contributors to the great crisis which shook the Scottish Church in the early 1830s. Erskine first mentions him in April 1827 in connection with his book on *Prophesies*; he was much struck by it and recommended it to his friends, but preferred Law's *Spirit of Prayer* and *Spirit of Love*.

Difficulties and uncertainties had arisen about this time over the doctrine that Christ did not die for all men but only for the elect. In the summer of 1828, after discussions with McLeod Campbell, Irving came to recognize the universal love of God, and from that time onwards taught the atonement was for all, and he spoke of the great power which faith in it had to awaken a sense of sin, and "to quicken love to Him who first loved us".

Irving's views on representation and substitution come particularly in his book *The Orthodox and Catholic View of Our Lord's Human Nature* (1830), and it exposed him to charges of heresy. The actual libel against him, however, was on the doctrine of the sinfulness of Christ's human nature. Erskine loved and valued Irving and eagerly learnt from him, "the most precious doctrine of our union with Christ; which cometh only from his precious union with us. If he was not during his life of our flesh and bones, we cannot in this day of his glory, be of his flesh and bones".

This doctrine that Christ had assumed fallen human nature was of great importance to Erskine and Irving for they both based their doctrine of substitution on the incarnation, and claimed that in respect to his work Christ was the representative. Orthodox Calvinist teaching connected substitution with the death of Christ; they taught it had to do with judicial state and with man's condition in point of law. Christ died as a substitute for the sins of
others; altogether sinless he stood in the room of those who were sinful.

Irving called it a fiction to put Christ in the condition of a sinner although he was not in that condition: "If he was not, and God treated him as if he had been so; if that is the meaning of their imputation and substitution, or by whatever name they call it, away with it, away with it from my theology for ever, for it makes my God a God of make-believes and not of truth". 75

According to Irving the atonement was the moral reconciliation of two hostile natures. Christ brought the will of man into conformity with the will of God; he destroyed sin in the manhood and presented to the Father a human will entirely delivered from evil. Christ was the representative because this work of purification, completed in him, was to become the pattern of the destruction of sin in others.

Because the atonement then is the conformity of the creature will to God, and not a judicial cleansing from guilt, Christ's role in it is better described as that of a representative rather than a substitute. Although he himself was sinless, the sufferings he bore were due to sin in his own nature. Because he triumphed over sin, so will his followers triumph; the atonement is the work of the Holy Spirit carried out in each believer as it was in Christ.

This doctrine of a representative who came into man's experience, and resisted the corruption and depravity of his own human nature, thus preparing a path for others to follow, was also put forward in Erskine's *Brazen Serpent* and in Campbell's sermons. Orthodox Calvinists saw it as error, and not only because it set forth a representative as opposed to a substitutionary view of the atonement. They asked such questions as the following: how can Christ function as a representative or an example to copy if his own holiness was so defective that every temptation awakened a response within? In what way can a disposition able to help other individuals out of sin be found in a man with a
disposition to sin himself, so that he has to struggle every inch of the way to resist temptation and to walk with God? Can the power to deliver man from evil be found in one who has "the corruption of our whole nature known as Original Sin?" 76

Erskine and Irving became further suspect when they involved themselves in the controversy connected with the manifestation of miraculous gifts in the church at Port-Glasgow and in the Gareloch. These appearances soon spread to Irving's church in Regent Square, and the accusation was that they broke out in support of highly suspect doctrines like universal pardon, and the sinfulness of the flesh of Christ.

All the same, these two thinkers had their disagreements, and one dispute was about the value of "the light within", a concept which was to become of increasing interest to Erskine. 77 Erskine did not remain for long either under the influence of the religious enthusiasm engendered by "the gifts", but the miracles and the gift of tongues continued to hold Irving's settled belief to the end.

Irving died in 1834: "He has been a remarkable man, in a remarkable age. He was a man of much child-like feeling to God, and personal dependence on Him, amidst things which may well appear unintelligible and strange in his history". 78 Erskine, who was to live another 35 years, returned soon to his quiet meditation: "His face and manner, as well as his conversation seem, more than ever I saw him, full of peace and joy in God". 79

(iii) The "Gareloch Heretics".

Round about 1827 a warm friendship began to develop between Thomas Erskine and John McLeod Campbell, the minister of Row in Dumbartonshire, Robert Story, the minister of Rosneath, and A.J. Scott, who sometimes
conducted Sunday services for Campbell, and was in 1830 to become minister of the small Scottish congregation at Woolwich. By 1830 these men had become the nucleus of a party in Scotland with their own distinctive theology which included universal pardon, assurance as of the essence of faith and a representative theory of the atonement.

Robertson's book, *A Vindication of the Religion of the Land* (1830), contains an appendix entitled "Difficulty of Finding a Characteristic Name for the Followers of Mr. Erskine" for, he says, they were "indignant at the name of Gareloch Heretics".80

Nevertheless many books and pamphlets of the period do call them by that name, but sometimes they are called the Erskineites or occasionally the Campbellites. Erskine then is most often considered to be the leader of this school: "when such men as Mr. Erskine become abettors of heresy, it is no matter of surprise if minds of a less firm texture are ensnared."81 Andrew Thomson remarks that *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel* "seemed to be used as a sort of text book by supporters of his dogmas."82

Reviews in periodicals published about 1830 make frequent references to the Erskineites: "Mr. Erskine and his compeers", "Mr. Erskine and his associates", "Mr. Erskine and his followers", "Mr. Erskine's new theory of the gospel", and there is also a reference to "the society for diffusing Mr. Erskine's doctrines".83

A reviewer of Dr. Burns' book on the Gairloch heresy agrees that Erskine should be considered the leader, and he thought this was because he had made his views widely known through the publication of books. He adds: "Mr. C.'s sentiments, however, are pretty generally known, and it is reported, are frequently in the shape of 'Notes', 'Tracts' etc. obtruded upon the public, but especially upon those who 'go down' to the Clyde 'in ships', so that, like the sibyl's leaves, they are literally tossed about by every wind that blows."84

- 43 -
Occasionally they were called Campbellites presumably because the conflict centred on the parish of Row (or Rhu) were McLeod Campbell was the minister: "we have been credibly informed, that numbers have resorted thither on his account, and of these a few have never found their way home again."95 A reviewer of John Smith’s book, a series of pulpit discourses called A Treatise on the Forgiveness of Sins (1830), says that it was written because a number of Smith’s congregation, at St. George’s Glasgow, "had been decoyed into the Row fold, or were in danger of being so decoyed, and Dr. Smith, like a faithful shepherd, keeps a watch upon such."86

Campbell first came to the Gareloch in 1825, and between 1826 and 1827 he developed the ideas which were to lead to controversy. The conflict heightened after the announcement by placards and newspaper notices of the coming publication of Notes of the Rev. J.M. Campbell’s Sermons, taken in Short-hand. A critic who signed himself "A Lover of Truth" responded with a pamphlet called Critical Remarks on the Everlasting Gospel: a Sermon (1830). He claimed that Campbell’s ideas came from Mr. Erskine, "his master": 87 "one part of this exposition is just a kind of enthusiastic rhapsody, like some of Mr. Erskine’s book upon the unconditional freeness of the gospel, ...".88

The Evangelical Magazine supports this view declaring that Mr. Campbell had acquired, "an adventitious popularity in certain quarters, in consequence of his known adoption of the religious opinions of Mr. Erskine."89

We wish Mr. Erskine would go back to Dundee, and sit, as he formerly did, at the feet of Mr. Russell; if he would do so, we should not despair of his return to a better mind; and as for Mr. C., and some two or three more with him, they are only what their leader has made them; should he be reclaimed they cannot possibly keep their ground.90
If it were true that Erskine taught McLeod Campbell, an interesting parallel could be drawn with the atonement controversy in the United Secession Church (1841-1845), when the teaching of two professors Dr. John Brown and Dr. Robert Balmer that the death of Christ had a general and universal reference as well as a particular reference, rebounded on one of their students James Morrison when he preached it during a revival ministry.

The remarkable thing about the Gareloch Group, however, is that the four central figures Erskine, Campbell, Scott and Story all claimed to be expressing common ideas which they had arrived at independently. "The historical independence", Dr. Campbell wrote a year or two before his death, "which we mark when two minds working apart and without any interchange of thought, arrive at the same conclusions, is always an interesting and striking fact when it occurs; and it did occur as to Scott and myself, and also as to Mr. Erskine and me, and I believe too as to Mr. Erskine and Scott". Mr. Story's convictions also developed, according to his account, out of meditations on his own experience.

Campbell's immediate motive for putting forward the doctrine of universal pardon arose out of the pastoral situation at Row. He found among his parishioners little assurance of God's love of them as individuals, because one of the basic tenets of federal Calvinism was a limited atonement. Mr. Story, on the other hand, was first directed to the question of assurance by the preaching of Dr. Malan of Geneva whom he had met on his visit to Scotland, but he saw many difficulties in the subject. He began reading the Fathers of the church and the Reformers but could find neither rest there, nor in a return to the popular teaching. It was Alan Ker, to whom Story had been introduced on his first arrival in the West, and Dr. Gordon who had discussed this subject in his Sermons (1825), together with his own reflections and reading, that finally brought to him an understanding of the nature of the atonement.
In February 1826, in a letter to his father, Campbell first mentions reading Erskine's *Internal Evidence*, but talking about it at a later time he was uncertain about the date when they first met, "Dear, dear brother! I am unable to say to myself with confidence whether it was in 1827 or 1828 when dear Scott took me to him, as to one who knew that love of God in which we were seeing eye to eye." 94

Hanna believes, however, that Campbell may have been preaching the doctrine of universal pardon before it was put forward so explicitly in Erskine's book *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel*(1828). "If not before, it must have been immediately after the publication of the "Unconditional Freeness", that he heard Mr. M'Leod Campbell preach in Edinburgh. Returning from the church Mr. Erskine said with great emphasis to a friend who accompanied him, "I have heard today from that pulpit what I believe to be the true gospel". 95

Erskine first met Scott in 1826, when Scott was attending classes at Edinburgh University, and tutoring the family of one of Erskine's friends. In 1828, when he was visiting Campbell at Rhu, he was reintroduced to Scott and this cemented a friendship which was to last until Scott's death in 1866. "For Mr. Scott, Mr. Erskine entertained the highest regard and admiration, always speaking of him as the man with the most powerful grasp of spiritual truth whom he had ever known". 96 It was at this time that Erskine also formed a warm friendship with Edward Irving, and with Robert Story who was about his own age, had been minister of Rosneath for 15 years, and whose parish was on the opposite of the Gareloch to Campbell's parish of Rhu.

The peculiar views which the "Gareloch heretics" set forth, and which brought them into conflict with orthodox Calvinists, were listed in many pamphlets of the period, and the following extract from a pamphlet published in 1830 gives a popular summary of that teaching:

- 46 -
... and as there may be some, into whose hands this tract may come, who are in the dark as to these tenets, for their sakes I arrange them as follows:

1. That men are not born under the curse of a broken law, but in a state of pardon.
2. That Christ has redeemed all men.
3. That faith consists of believing your sins are pardoned, or that God loves you.
4. That assurance is inseparable from faith.
5. That no evidence of your being a believer is necessary to your rejoicing in God.

These, as far as I know, are the principal features in the system.97

It can be added that these views were combined with a representative, as opposed to a substitutionary view of the atonement, the group believing that it originated not in God’s justice and a legal demand but was a revelation of the divine love meant to bring all, under the representation of Christ, into the liberty of sonship.

When the new ideas became combined with the reappearance of the gift of speaking in tongues, which was associated with the names of Isabella Campbell and a family of twin brothers called Macdonald, several newspapers took up a campaign against the group.

... we have charges

of 'blasphemous fooleries' in the Times;

of 'wild delusions' in the Record;

of 'infatuated talk' in the Evangelical Magazine;

of 'extravagencies' in the Christian Observer;

of 'monstrous folly' in the Christian Advocate;

of 'disgusting profanation' in the Morning Chronicle.98
It has often been said, and it cannot be too strongly emphasised, that the motives of these thinkers in putting forth these distinctive views was not basically an interest in speculative doctrine. Their common characteristic was their holiness, and their ideas were deeply grounded in reflection and personal experience. "Campbell was a very attractive man personally. I used to play with his children twenty years ago, and felt an affectionate reverence for his gentle character," wrote Alexander Robertson McEwen. "Dr. Campbell was the best man without exception, I have ever known . . . His character was the most perfect embodiment I have ever seen of the character of Jesus Christ," said Norman MacLeod in Good Words. These sentiments could be echoed in the frequent tributes to all the other members of the group.

On the 24 May 1831, soon after Erskine's publication of The Brazen Serpent, John McLeod Campbell was judged and deposed from the ministry of the Church of Scotland, for preaching the supposedly heretical ideas of assurance as of the essence of faith, and universal atonement, which were declared to be contrary to the Westminster Confession, and the Standards of the Church. The next day they deposed Hugh Baillie Maclean and 2 days later A.J. Scott was deprived of his license to preach, for preaching similar doctrines to John McLeod Campbell.

Erskine followed through the Mcleod Campbell case with deep concern to the end. He stood by Campbell because he knew perfectly well that if he had been a minister of the Church of Scotland he could not have compromised either, and he too would have been deposed. At the final trial, after the vote had been taken, the following incident is recorded and described here by Hanna in his editorial comment on Erskine's letters.
Before the sentence of deposition was actually pronounced, some slight discussion as to the order of procedure took place. Dr. McKnight of Edinburgh, who held at that time the office of Chief Clerk of the Assembly, on being appealed to, in the height of his emotion, and meaning exactly the reverse of what he said, was heard to declare that "these doctrines of Mr. Campbell would remain and flourish after the Church of Scotland had perished and was forgotten". Mr. Erskine, who was present, caught the words. Turning to those behind him, he whispered. "This spake he not of himself, but being High Priest - he prophesied". 101

McLeod Campbell was to go on to become minister of a fixed congregation in Glasgow where he remained until 1859, but he also preached elsewhere often in the open air. He had no desire to form a sect, and always resisted the idea of doing so. His great achievement was his book *The Nature of the Atonement* (1856). In it he stressed that the initiative for the atonement came from divine love and not from the justice of God, and that the sufferings of Christ were not penal. He spoke of "the impossibility of believing that He who said, 'Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law', could have felt the pain of the holy sorrow which caused His tears to flow, to have been penal suffering, seeing that the pain was endured in sympathy with God, and in the strength of the faith of the divine acceptance of that sympathy". 102

(iv) F.D. Maurice (1805-1872).

It is well known that Maurice was influenced by Erskine, and that he acknowledged it in *The Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament*. Maurice, explains William Knight in *Retrospects*, "had a keen sense . . . of the extent of his debt to others, or of what they had to teach him alike by their thoughts and achievements". 103 His interest was excited first by *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel*
because he saw in it a new starting point for theology. Of all Erskine's books, however, he was helped most by The Brazen Serpent and in February 1831 he wrote to his sister Priscilla: "I cannot, however, give up Mr. Erskine, one of whose books has been unspeakably comfortable to me. It is one you have not read, and I will not ask you to read it unless you like. The peculiarities of his system may be true or not, but I am certain a light has fallen through him on the Scriptures, which I hope I shall never lose, . . ." 104

Hanna points out that in The Brazen Serpent can be found the seeds of many of Maurice's ideas on the moral nature of the atonement, and its relation to Christian character.

The indirect influence, which Erskine exerted on Maurice, reaches as far back as the year 1822 when Maurice was going through a period of religious difficulties connected with the idea of everlasting punishment. He confided in a lady called Lucy, who was a friend of his mother and also of Erskine. This lady suggested answers to Maurice's queries along the lines which she thought Erskine would have dealt with them: "Where is your authority for regarding any individual of the human race as destined to misery either here or hereafter?" . . . She declares to him that to represent God as capable of such a mode of dealing with His creatures as this is to make Him into a horrible tyrant . . . It is evidently the first time that his idea has ever been presented to his mind." 105

Florence Higham, in her biography of Maurice, says that the lady also advised him to read Erskine, 106 but if so there is no record of his having actually done so at that time. The evidence is that he discovered Erskine's books about 1830, when he was at Exeter College, Oxford and the effect on him was deep and immediate. He had joined an undergraduate essay society where he met James Bruce, afterwards eighth Earl of Elgin, and it was Bruce who introduced him to Erskine's writings.

The first reference to a meeting between Erskine and Maurice comes in a
letter written in January 1838: he describes Maurice as "a very metaphysical man; I have not got into him yet. I hope, when I return to London, to know him better. He goes a great deal in with Pusey, and the other Oxford people, though they do not sanction all he says. It is a strange system which substitutes office for spirit ... Jesus was the Light of the world not by office, but by having the light of God actually in Him and shining out of Him."107

By June 1841 though, the relationship seems to have become warmer for, in describing the sending of The Kingdom of Christ to M. Vinet, Erskine remarks: "The writer is a friend of mine, whom I value highly, as a man of great worth and great intellectual power."108

The next year Erskine is again in London, and it is evident that he has become a friend of Maurice's family also, for Maurice writes to his wife in April 1842: "I have just returned from Mr. Scott's lecture, and have been pleasantly detained since I left it by a walk with Mr. Erskine. I was sorry not to have you with me ... I know you delight so much in Mr. Erskine, that I grudged the time he was here and you away".109 Erskine seems to have made regular visits to the family until he left London in July, and he sent Mrs. Maurice a copy of Madame Necker's work L'Education Progressive.110

If the concept of universal pardon provoked a crisis which led to the McLeod Campbell affair in Scotland, it was the concept of everlasting punishment in hell which caused an equivalent crisis in the Anglican Church. Maurice was the man at the centre of the conflict and the offending work was "Eternal Life and Eternal Death" which was included in his Theological Essays. Maurice, following Erskine, brought out the contrast between the good and evil state: hell is a state of unrighteousness, heaven is a state of righteousness. These states of life and death have no necessary connection with future time.

After F.D. Maurice was deprived of his chair at King's College, London
Erskine wrote several letters to friends expressing his sympathy for Maurice, and he speaks of his own misgivings about this eternity of torment prepared for the majority of mankind. He finds it impossible to reconcile it with God as the Father who loves all men perfectly. "You may have observed in the newspapers that my friend Maurice has been deposed from his professorship in King’s College, on account of heretical opinions. The non-eternity of future punishment is, I believe, the point. You know how completely I sympathise with him in this. I hope the Church of England will not treat him as the Church of Scotland treated Campbell".111

Erskine looked forward to the publication of Maurice’s books, read them carefully and critically, and discussed with Maurice any points which were not clear to him, or with which he disagreed. In 1854 he was reading The Doctrine of Sacrifice; he liked particularly the sermon on "Christ’s Sacrifice a Peace-offering for Mankind", and wrote to him to say "how thankful I feel to God that such words are spoken to our generation..."112

In this book Maurice was exploring the idea of a theology based upon Christ’s role in creation: "Was man, then, according to his original constitution related to Christ? Was the reconciliation of the world to God, the restoration of it to its proper condition in the well-beloved Son?"113 Erskine rightly saw this as the only true basis of a theory of universalism.

The two friends stimulated one another because they often disagreed. As Hanna puts it, the seeds sown by Erskine, when "transplanted to other soil and subject to other treatment, germinated after fashions not altogether such as the first sower relished".114 Maurice was now an independent thinker developing their mutual ideas in his own distinctive way, although he always acknowledged his original debt to Erskine.

Erskine worried about whether, in Maurice’s theory of the atonement, the subjective side was not over-stressed. In February 1855, when he was in
London, he discussed this with Maurice: "I told him, that people could not make out whether, according to him, the sacrifice of Christ had made any change on the general condition of humanity, or whether it was only a manifestation of God's character in relation to man. I pressed on him that he might make this more distinct, and ought to do it." 115

Maurice's first visit to Linlathen House seems to have been in September, 1847 when he wrote to his sister: "You are right that I have much enjoyed my stay here. Mr. Erskine received me with the most affectionate kindness... The house is a very large comfortable mansion, much enlarged, I suppose, from the original house, but sufficiently uniform... Mr. Erskine is as delightful here as everywhere, with the same fresh sympathy and deep intuitions, from which one has derived so much help and teaching... Mr. Campbell was here on Thursday and Friday, and is just returned with his brother. I have had very pleasant intercourse with him on subjects of deepest interest." 116

In his Theological Essays Maurice wrote: "If we speak of Christ as taking upon Himself the sins of men by some artificial substitution, we deny that He is their actual Representative". 117 Maurice often spoke of Christ the Regenerator, and he explains that regeneration may mean one of two things: it may mean substitution in man of a nature bestowed upon him for that which belonged to him as an ordinary human being, or it may mean restitution of that which has fallen into decay. He saw Christ as "the Restorer of Humanity to its true and proper condition". 118 and this seems to be one of the reasons why he calls Christ the Representative and not the Substitute.

R.S. Franks points out that Maurice differed from Erskine on the subject of the nature of Christ's representation: "While both reject the idea of substitution in favour of that of representation, Erskine lays stress on the Incarnation of Christ in the fallen nature of humanity, in which nature he accepted the condemnation of human sin; but Maurice teaches that the surrender of Christ's will to God reveals the true sinless root of
In this respect then Erskine seems to have been nearer to Irving than to Maurice.

(v) Erskine and the Continent.

Erskine’s circle extended far beyond the shores of Britain, for long periods of his life were spent travelling on the Continent. Here he met people like Caesar Malan, Louis Gaussen, Merle d’Aubigne, Augustus Tholuck Adolphe Monod, Alexandre Vinet, Adele Vernet and Albertine, Duchess de Broglie. Erskine loved Malan but they often disagreed; in 1823 in a letter to Dr. Charles Stuart from Paris he said that Malan had charged him with Arminianism. "I maintain that guilt in man always supposed power - and there could be no guilt unless there existed the power of doing or abstaining". Erskine then modifies this by adding that, "no man ever believes or obeys except by divine teaching and divine support". Erskine always denied that he was an Arminian, but if he is saying that man needs divine grace to support his personal efforts, he is certainly straying from the strict orthodoxy of high Calvinism which insisted that salvation is solely and absolutely by grace.

Malan himself had been converted from Socinianism to Calvinism by Robert Haldane in 1816, and he began to preach salvation by faith. He made many visits to Scotland, and on one of those visits in 1826 Erskine wrote to Mrs. Montagu: "Malan has been a great deal in Scotland. I daresay he has been a good deal disappointed with many things and persons that he has seen here. Religion in Scotland is too much a thing of science, and too little a thing of personal application and interest. His reality pleases me very much; but I cannot go along with his continual demand of assurance of salvation from every person that he meets. I think that he confounds two things which are distinct - pardon and salvation. Pardon is a free gift without respect of the character in
those who receive it; salvation respects the character, and is in fact only another name for sanctification."  

Far more congenial to Erskine were Adolphe Monod (1802-1856) and Alexandre Vinet, two thinkers whose original inspiration had come from Erskine. F. W. Farrar, who greatly admired Erskine, wrote in the introduction to the book on Vinet by Laura Lane: "Vinet was also the beloved friend of one of the most attractive and large-hearted thinkers of the last generation - Thomas Erskine of Linlathen; and he sympathised to a great extent in that 'larger hope' which it was the holy passion of Erskine's life to promulgate and to defend."  

Vinet read Erskine's Internal Evidence in the French translation, and then learnt English in order to be able to read in the original. Drummond quotes his comment made in a letter written on 19th December 1823. "If I did not detest by principle the expression, "I am of Apollos and I of Cephas" I could have it in my heart to say, "I am of Erskine."

Erskine and Vinet did not actually meet until 1838 in Lausanne when Erskine described him as "the most remarkable man in the French Protestant Church". Erskine was impressed by the French Protestant Church, at that time, and they were much influenced by Vinet: "The successful candidate for one of their theological chairs within the last two months, acknowledged his belief of a universal final restoration, and this to judges on whom his election depended."

By 1844 Erskine had become Vinet's intimate friend, and he did not hesitate to share with him his doubts about the doctrine of substitution: "On many points which are considered to be important I cannot speak with the Church . . . My doubts are instinctive rather than reasoned or scientific; and I ought to admit that there is more than one of my views in favour of which I have not in a clear and decisive manner the witness of Scripture. Thus I cannot believe in substitution, and I am able to speak theologically against it."
Erskine met Monod in 1823. Monod was another thinker who had been strongly influenced by Robert Haldane, but later he was to grow away from orthodox Calvinism under the influence of Erskine and Vinet. Erskine met him again when he visited Naples in 1827: "For several months they walked, talked and drove together. 'They agreed – except in opinion'. Adolphe wrote to his parents: 'Erskine judges by Sentiment and proves by Imagination. As for me I'm fogged by Sentiment. I like what is clear and exact' (25 May 1827)." 128

Erskine described Monod as a man who was constantly going forward:

"Adolphe Monod, had he lived and gone forward, would have grown out of the sphere of his admirers, as, in fact, did Vinet. Vinet could count those who wholly sympathised with him on his five fingers". 129

It was to Madame de Broglie, daughter of Madame de Stael, that Erskine confided how he came to think of Christ as a representative rather than a substitute. Erskine felt that according to the doctrine of substitution Christ suffered instead of the individual leaving that person essentially unchanged, whereas as representative he did not take away the suffering but changed its character making it into "a sanctified and sanctifying suffering". 130

I believe that it was the experience of what you express in your letter, – I mean the experience of an insupportable burden of grief, which I could by no means cast off, – which first led me to take the view of the atonement which I now take, and to consider Jesus not as a substitute, but as the Head and Fountain of Salvation, supplying us with His own spirit, so that we may use the discipline of life, the sorrow, the agony of life, as He did, to learn obedience, to learn to find the will of God, which appoints our path, a union with the mind of God. ... And as He puts the cup of sorrow into our hand, He says, 'Can ye drink of the cup that I drink off'. 131
It would be easy to go on and enlarge the list, for these are only a few of Erskine's circle of friends which were eminent enough to demand some attention. Our concern, however, is with the substitutionary and representative aspects of the atonement, and it has already emerged that in this respect the influence of Erskine and his group on nineteenth century British thought, and particularly English thought, has been deep and lasting. These thinkers did not deny the principle of substitution, but they changed the meaning of the word in such a way as to make it unacceptable to the supporters of penal substitution. It is to a discussion of what was meant by the term penal substitution, and to Erskine's reaction against it, that we must now turn.
Notes.

Background.


21. Monifeith Almanac. 1898. (Published by The Late David McRae, Postmaster at Monifeith.) unpaged.


27. "Reminiscences by Principal Shairp". p. 373.


35. Ibid.


42. "Reminiscences by Principal Shairp". p. 377.


60. Ibid.


70. Hanna, ed. A Selection from the Correspondence of the Late Thomas Chalmers. p.
85. Ibid.


98. [One of the Congregation of the National Scotch Church.]. *A Word of Inquiry previous to Decision in the Matter of the Present Manifestations of, or Pretensions to, the Gift of Speaking with Unknown Tongues and Prophesying*. 2nd ed. (London: sold by W. Harding etc., 1832.) p. 12.


124. Ibid.


PART I: THE NATURE OF THE ATONEMENT.

Chapter 1. From Penal Substitution to Representation: "Salvation" (1816) to "The Brazen Serpent" (1831).

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the ideas of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen in his early period, from the publication of Salvation to The Brazen Serpent, and show their bearing on a substitutionary or representative atonement. It is proposed to do this chronologically, in three successive stages, for Erskine's theology grew out of his ever widening experience, his teaching changed and matured as the years passed and he took time to work out his final views.

In the first stage, Erskine accepts the penal substitutionary theory, and although he also describes Christ as the representative, the concept is used in conjunction with substitutionary language. Both functions were necessary to complete the atonement, and its benefits resulted from the two being taken together. If, at this point, we were to ask if anything in Erskine's teaching would lead us to expect that he would eventually adopt a true representative theory, a possible answer is his strong prospective emphasis. Erskine thought that the term salvation referred to the ultimate aim of the atonement, the regenerating and sanctifying effect on the individual, for nothing he thought could atone for sin except holiness.

In the substitutionary view the retrospective aspect was given foremost consideration. Scottish Calvinists showed a very close connection between the death of Christ and the removal of sin, because the emphasis was on the
existence of a difficulty which prevented God from forgiving. God's supreme attribute was seen as his justice, and until its demands were satisfied, by the death of Christ, there could be no salvation. Thus, as McLeod Campbell later explained, while all theories of the atonement imply that the ultimate reference is prospective, it is the "direct reference to the end contemplated, which distinguishes the view of the atonement now taken as compared with those other systems where the reference is more remote."¹

The watershed came with the publication of The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel, and this book marks the transition to the second stage of Erskine's thought. He refused to accept that God really demanded faith before he could forgive. Erskine's teaching on universal pardon, although he did not at this point mean by it universal restitution, was seen by the orthodox as heretical, and impossible to reconcile with the federal Calvinist concept of a limited atonement. He still states that Christ stood in the sinner's place, while he preserved the moral government from contempt and ruin, but his opponents were increasingly asking if other parts of his teaching were compatible with substitution.

A period of intense conflict led to the third stage when Christ was referred to as the representative, and his substitution, in the strict sense, was denied. Erskine did not reject it altogether, but attempted to re-state it in terms of incarnation rather than of the death of Christ. In doing this he was strongly influenced by Edward Irving who held that Christ, in his incarnation, took human nature under all the conditions of the fall, gradually purified it, and by the help of the Holy Spirit restored it from sin to holiness, so that after his death he was able to reunite it with God.

- 66 -
There is then, in Erskine’s view, an objective element in the atonement, but it must not be overemphasized so as to exclude subjective religion. Christ is the head of humanity, and all that he does and suffers must be repeated in the members of his body. As the representative he performs his work on their behalf, but not in their stead, for as the human nature has been redeemed in Christ’s person, so his followers must repeat his work in order to be brought likewise into a holy state.

A. Representation as a Prospective, and Substitution as a Retrospective Emphasis.

Turning then to the two concepts to be discussed representation and substitution, an article by G.B. Mather in The Canadian Journal of Theology entitled, "The Atonement: Representative or Substitutionary?" suggests that they "may properly be regarded as different emphases of the same fundamental truth". Substitutionary could be combined successfully with representative ideas for neither term exhausted the relation between Christ and humanity: it is the emphasis which determines whether Christ is seen as a representative or a substitute. Looking at Erskine’s earliest writings from the same standpoint, that the two concepts were not mutually exclusive but simply different aspects of the process of atonement and redemption, one looking to the past and the other to the future, we notice his forward-looking emphasis. He differed from his orthodox contemporaries only in that he saw future righteousness rather than substituted punishment as the fundamental truth to be grasped in connection with the atonement.

To see substitution as a retrospective focus, and representation as a
prospective one, is to put the problem at its simplest and most abstract. Broadly speaking it is reasonable to see them as complementary, for substitution is traditionally linked with the backward aspect of the atonement, the removal of guilt and the expiation of past sins. It speaks of the sufferings of Christ which were vicarious and endured in man's stead and of a work completed by Christ alone.

Representative theories, on the other hand, while often basing themselves on Christ's finished work and the remission of past sins, stress the personal and prospective aspect: the redemptive value of Christ's righteousness as brought to bear upon the sinner, and his own participation in the development of holiness. If it is the stress that counts, then from Erskine, whose concern throughout his life was to restore an interest in the perfection of men and women rather than their acquittal, we should expect to find a representative theory.

Erskine's views were still considered orthodox during this early period, and this was clear from the public reaction to his books. Even those who contended most vigorously for the doctrine of substitution did not deny Christ's representative function or explain it to mean nothing. His first book Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the Truth of Revealed Religion (1820) was an instant success: it passed into nine editions and was translated into French and German. The public liked his presentation of this more inward and ethical aspect of Christianity, and it must be remembered that he was asserting the importance not of representation only but of representation also as a function of Christ's person. These two concepts are jointly used: in one sense Christ's work was a finished process and Erskine uses all the old language of penal
substitution, but the salvation completed in Christ was the cause of a similar process to be perfected in his followers. The ultimate object of the atonement then is ethical, and it is that the individual should acquire a character and life resembling God's character and conduct.

Newman was one of the few readers who seemed at this point to have doubts about the soundness of Erskine's views, although he claims there were others at Oxford with similar misgivings. He remarks in a letter written in 1883: "I knew when young Mr. Erskine's first publications well. I thought them able and persuasive; but I found the more thoughtful Evangelicals at Oxford did not quite trust them. This was about the year 1823 or 1824".

Simeon, on the other hand, felt a real affinity with some of Erskine's ideas, in this early period, and he wrote to tell him so. Erskine replies: "It could not fail of gratifying me exceedingly to hear your favourable opinion of my work, especially when given under your own hand. I desire to praise God if he has blessed it to the spiritual comfort of any of his children."

With such a favourable start Erskine could not have anticipated the weight of theological opinion which would eventually unite against him in Scotland, when he began his search for truth and put down his ideas with their distinctive practical and forward looking emphasis in his first literary effort, an essay entitled "Salvation", written in 1816.

(i) "Salvation": an Example of a Prospective Emphasis.

There is no direct discussion of either representation or substitution in this essay, but it illustrates well Erskine's prospective emphasis and is his earliest known work. Already he had made a strong link between religion and ethics,
and the essay also raises certain points which will determine which of the two concepts he will eventually prefer to use as expressing best the significance of Christ. We can begin to recognize also some of the ideas which were to appear later, in more developed form, in McLeod Campbell's book *The Nature of the Atonement* (1855).

Erskine begins by asking the meaning of the term salvation, suggesting that the Greek word σωτηρία has many meanings, some people supposing it to refer merely to the pardon of past sins and some to an undefined happiness in a future state. Often these two types of salvation are cojoined, "thus a man is imprisoned on suspicion of a crime, and in consequence of the unhealthiness of the place is seized with a jail fever - at last he is acquitted, and his liberation is followed by restored health."⁵

Of these two kinds of salvation Erskine enquires next which is primary and which is subservient to the other, and concludes that the ultimate object is that which salvation properly refers to. He writes, "If a man is simply in danger of being lost in a shipwreck, his ultimate object is to be safe on dry land; but if the fear of this danger has deprived him of his reason, then the recovery of his mental health becomes the ultimate object, and the salvation from the shipwreck becomes merely a step to the salvation of his reason".⁶

When applied to the atonement there are two sides which are connected: pardon through a saviour and the recovery of spiritual health. The pardon deals with the actual sentence of God against men on account of their disobedience and Christ wins their acquittal through the blood of the atonement. By becoming man, he took upon himself the judicial sentence and gave himself as a ransom for sinners. The ground of hope, therefore, is the
sacrifice of Christ for the sins of the world but, and this was to become a crucial point, he wins a pardon which is universal.

Because all are pardoned, Erskine goes on to explain, it does not mean that all are saved. Man has acquired a character in opposition to God's character, and mere pardon would be of little consequence in itself if man's unhappiness rose out of his character. Resemblance to the character of God is inseparably connected with true happiness in man; heaven and hell are opposite types of character.

Erskine's views are not one-sided or defective in this essay, although he does emphasise one side of the atonement more than the other, yet he stresses that restoration to spiritual health is not the ground of confidence before God. In itself it cannot atone for past transgressions and every day the individual is involved in faults and sins, and must look continually to the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of the world. This is the food on which the soul feeds in its growth towards holiness; this is the act through which the individual receives the gift of eternal life.

Yet while all must live under a present sense of what Christ has done for sinners in the objective or substitutionary sense, the ultimate purpose of the atonement is to produce Christian character. The concept of character lies at the centre of Erskine's thought. Henderson, who wrote a short biography of Erskine, tells us that at seventeen Erskine read John Foster's essays On a Man Writing Memoirs of Himself, and the idea that life was given for the education of character made an indelible impression on his mind and influenced him powerfully to the last. The death of Christ, his sacrifice, the cross both reconcile God and make an intense impression on the individual so as to excite
his love, and unless he loves he cannot become like God. To resemble God is the important thing, and no one can resemble him without loving him.

(ii) A Prospective Emphasis in "An Essay on Faith."

Again assuming then that representation stresses the side of the atonement which substitution neglects, let us examine how Erskine deals with the concept of faith in his earliest period. His thoughts on the subject of the Christian faith are developed most clearly in An Essay on Faith (1822). Faith, he says, looks in two directions towards God and towards man: it is connected both with the pardon of sin and deliverance from the power of sin.

Faith, Erskine says, is not a necessary condition of pardon and it certainly does not create or produce it. He thus combats the idea that faith can be taken as a kind of good work for which justification is the reward. This needed to be pointed out for according to the journal The Morning Watch the ordinary method of preaching "speaks of faith as if it changed the mind of God towards the sinner". It altered his state before God and made him an object of love instead of an object of hate. Erskine says, on the contrary, faith is "the mere belief of good news", which seems very near to Calvin’s phrase, "it is the office of faith to assent to the truth of God".

Faith then as assent is an intellectual act in that it is the acceptance of certain facts about ultimate reality, yet it is not exclusively so. Man is not justified solely by a mental act but by an active response. The operative concept is not detachment but certainty that leads to both love and surrender to God's work within. "The joy of a free deliverance softens and expands the heart. It is thus prepared to look at the blood which was its ransom, with tenderness and gratitude - and
thus it was led to rejoice in the love of Him whose blood was shed.\textsuperscript{11} Faith as it looks towards man and brings the gospel to act on the mind is the instrument of sanctification.

We can then make the following comments on Erskine’s view of faith. As faith looks in the direction of God and towards the forgiveness of past sins it may be said to be passive. Erskine writes, "Faith as it looks to God, as it is the recipient of the glad tidings, marks the freeness of grace; for what act could be more void of merit, or of moral qualifications in general, than the mere belief of good news?".\textsuperscript{12}

As it looks towards holiness and is connected with a real relationship as it develops between God and man, it may be said to be active rather than passive. It is related to interior renewal, for salvation is not simply deliverance from the condemnation of sin but from the influence of sin. The object of the atonement is to steep man’s soul with the image and likeness of God. The manhood of the representative, as the agent of God’s purpose is of vital importance. Christ gave visible form to the character of God and made it intelligible to man’s understanding.

It may also be observed that while the ground of representation is Christ’s finished work, and his substitution in the place of sinners is not denied, yet representation is in the foreground since this secures for the believer eternal life, and without it substitution serves little purpose.
B. The Sense in which Substitution was understood in Erskine’s Day: an Explanation of Penal Substitution.

So far we have been discussing substitution in a very broad sense as a word or a single idea standing on its own. If, however, we add the word penal to that of substitution we come up against a complicated system with a central concept and a group of supporting ideas. The central concept, of what is known as the forensic theory of the atonement, is that Christ suffered God’s judgement upon sin instead of the elect, he was punished in their place, and this enabled God to forgive sinners. Some of the ideas that are connected with it are those of satisfaction, imputation and a limited atonement.

In this period, which we call his second stage, Erskine’s constructive theology led him into conflict with penal substitution, and the movement towards a true representative theory, which he himself had probably still not envisaged, to us is becoming evident. In October 1827 he returned to Scotland from the Continent and prepared for the press a book which he had been working on while abroad. The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel was published in 1828 and it excited an immediate interest after the popularity of his former works. Gradually, however, intense alarm arose over the contents of this book, and over what seemed to more cautious members of the Church of Scotland to be a new and dangerous doctrine. The concept which caused most offence was that of universal pardon or that Christ, by his finished work, had won pardon for everyone who had ever existed or would exist in the world.
(i) **Federal Calvinism.**

What more exactly was penal substitution? Penal substitution had developed against a long background of Reformed teaching which had undergone many developments since the death of Calvin in 1564. Particularly relevant for Scotland was the teaching of Beza and his disciples which came to be known as High Calvinism, and the later modification known as Federal Calvinism. The Westminster Confession contained elements of both High and Federal Calvinism.

Federal Calvinism was a type of theology which had arisen in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, and had come to be seen as orthodox by the Church of Scotland. It made the question of assurance highly problematic because it limited the atonement to a few. Conflict with some of its tenets led to the so called "Row Heresy." As it had dominated Scottish theology for about 250 years, some explanation of it can throw a great deal of light on the meaning of penal substitution.

Essentially it was a covenant transaction whereby an elect people were given to Christ, who as their superior and in their place, accomplished a work of satisfaction and substitution. It is based on the concept of the two Adams, the first Adam including every individual of the human race, and the second only "those who are Christ's." There is a sharp distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, a distinction incidentally which James Torrance remarks was a movement away from the theology of Calvin, who always spoke of two forms of the one eternal covenant. The first person in Scotland to put forward this idea of a covenant of works was Robert Rollock, the first Principal of Edinburgh University, in his books *Some*
Questions About the Covenant of God (1596), and Treatise On Effectual Calling (1597).

According to this conception, God made Adam holy and engraved the moral law on his conscience and entered into an agreement with him as the federal head and representative of the race, promising to him and his descendants immortality on condition of his perfect obedience during a probationary period and threatening eternal death on him and his descendants if they disobeyed. The test of Adam's obedience was not to eat of a certain tree, and Adam broke the covenant of works by eating the forbidden fruit, closing his probation and that of the race, who were represented by him. The penalty of disobeying the divine law is usually described by the term death, but in it is included all penal evil. God, however, in his grace, did not destroy the human race but elected a number for himself and made a covenant of grace for them in Christ.

Of particular interest is an explanation of the three words natural, federal and penal, a clear explanation of which is given by A.A. Hodge(1823-1886) in his book The Atonement. Hodge explains that in the natural relation the law is unchanging, obligatory, incapable of being intermitted so that it is impossible that the obligations of one person can be assumed by that of another. "In respect to this natural relation to the law . . . Christ did not and could not, take our law-place. In respect to the inherent and unalienable claims of right, it is purely impossible that the obligations of law can be removed from one person and vicariously assumed by another."14

It was into the federal relation to the law that Adam was brought at his creation. This federal relation, which contains a period of probation, is by its very nature temporary, being closed by the reward of obedience, or the
penalty in the case of disobedience. It is then, "neither intrinsic, perpetual nor
inseparable from the person concerned."\textsuperscript{15}

When Adam sinned he went from the \textit{federal} to the \textit{penal} relation to the
law, and as all human souls were in Adam representatively as their federal
head, his sin and punishment were imputed to them, so that they too were
liable for the penal consequences of his act. Adam then lost everything not
only for himself but for all mankind. God, however, decided to be merciful
to some, the elect, and he allowed Christ to suffer as if he had been a
transgressor, and Christ voluntarily put himself in their place. In relation to
this system then penal substitution had a very technical meaning, and we must
go on to explore some of the terms associated with it.

\textbf{(ii) Explanation of Terms Associated with Penal Substitution.}

Central to penal substitution is the scriptural teaching on the holiness and
perfection of God, his hatred of sin and above all his justice. Thus McLeod
Campbell writes of John Owen and Jonathan Edwards, on whose teaching the
traditionalists also took their stand: "they set forth justice as a necessary attribute of
the divine nature, so that God must deal with all men according to its requirements, they
represent mercy and love as not necessary, but arbitrary, and what, therefore, may find their
expression in the history of only some men."\textsuperscript{16}

Because the atonement is seen in terms of legal justice, with its images of
the law court, another term closely associated with that of substitution is that
of surety. To put it in purely legal terms, if a person by the non-fulfilment of
a contract incurs a penalty he must discharge the penalty or offer something in
place of it. If he cannot pay his debt, a surety may offer himself and the
creditor can demand it from the surety.

God demanded punishment for sin for, as Hodge puts it, "it is an intrinsic and immutable attribute of sin that it ought to be punished." It is impossible for any human being to atone for his own sins, and he is therefore left with a burden of guilt he can never escape from, and a load of debt he can never discharge. Christ, however, voluntarily took upon himself the suretyship for men and satisfied justice in their stead. He occupied the place of some sinners (the elect), suffering their punishment and discharging the obligations of these persons for whom he had made himself responsible. He made the payment for their redemption, and occupied their law place and God graciously accepted the substitution. It would be correct to say then that Christ became the representative and surety of the elect and was substituted in their stead.

Also underlying the penal substitutionary theory is the idea of satisfaction, a word which comes from Roman law, and the concept of which first found systematic expression in Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*. Again it has to do with the demands of divine justice and the retribution which results from sin. God demanded satisfaction for Adam's sin which was imputed to his descendants and was the legal ground of their penal treatment. The supporters of substitution said this was no fiction, because it simply recognized their legal oneness with Adam and their responsibility for his public sin. Christ's death and suffering gave satisfaction to the justice and honour of God. He offered himself for the sinful as a surety and endured their punishment.

As the Moral Government theologians began stating their views, there was a great deal of discussion on the relation of satisfaction to propitiation, for it inevitably raises the question of theodicy or the justification of God. How
could the sinless Christ morally be made responsible for the guilty?

The traditionalists insisted, however, that his sufferings were penal, but they were punishment not for personal but for imputed guilt. The sins of the elect were imputed to Christ, but neither their sin nor that of Christ was of a personal character, but rose out of legal responsibility for Adam's sin. Charles Hodge takes care to disassociate himself from the speculative theologians of the school of Schleiermacher where "humanity existed as a generic life in Adam. The acts of that life were therefore the acts of all the individuals to whom, in the development of the race, the life itself was communicated. All men consequently sinned in Adam, by an act of self-determination. They were punished, therefore, not for Adam's act, but for their own."18

On the contrary, Charles Hodge says that he is simply stating the scriptural doctrine of legal substitution, which entered into Paul's view of justification. It is a forensic term, and when Christ bore the legal responsibilities, and forfeitures and liabilities of the elect there was no transference of sins so as to make Christ, who was innocent, into a sinful person. A writer in the Edinburgh Christian Instructor explains: "the church does not represent God as considering Christ to be what he is not. He considers him to be, and acts towards him as being, that which he really is - the representative of his people, standing in their place, sustaining their person, but only by substitution, and bearing their iniquities, but only by imputation."19

Specifically then Christ could be called a ransom. His offering of himself as a sin-offering is the equivalent of making himself a ransom for the elect. "We were in debt; he paid it. We were in bondage; and he gave the ransom. We were slaves; and he purchased us with his own blood. Hence comes the 'stock-jobbing theology', that 'we are not our own, for we have been bought with a price', and though it will no doubt add to the disgust which our refined modern theologians feel for such market phrases, we must add that the price
This brings us to another term bound up with penal substitution, the idea of expiatory sacrifice. A.A. Hodge describes sacrifice in the mosaic economy as "a poena vicaria, a vicarious punishment, the life of the victim being substituted in the stead of the life of the offerer." The effect of the sacrifice, in Hodge's view, was to expiate the guilt of the offender and to propitiate God. Christ's function as a sacrifice was interpreted in this literal sense by the traditional Calvinists: the death of Christ was a propitiatory sacrifice to the Father for the sins of the world.

Penal substitution then, in its essence, was a judicial transaction and Erskine disliked it because he thought, like his friend John McLeod Campbell, that there was a "substitution of a legal standing for a filial standing as the gift of God to men in Christ." When he tried to break with some of these specific supporting ideas, which constituted penal substitution, intense alarm arose over Erskine's interpretation of substitution and the new ideas which he combined with it. Also a root question had begun to appear in Erskine's writing, and in the end became the centre of his thought, and it had to do with the extent of the atonement. Does the alteration in status and being which came about through Christ's substitution in the atonement apply to all men or to the elect only? Is Christ everyone's substitute? Whom does he represent?

Orthodox Calvinists believed that Christ was the substitute and representative only of the elect and he suffered and died for them only. This left a vast multitude of sinners for whose sins no atonement had been made, and whose guilt remained unc cancelling. Erskine was putting forward the view that by Christ's act on the cross all are pardoned and the individual stands at
the beginning of the road towards salvation. As one of his supporters put it, "The forgiveness of sins is the thing stated - the restoration of fallen man to the likeness of God is the object that is contemplated, and the good that is promised".  

(iii) **Universal Pardon.**

The concept which gave immediate offence then, and which was thought to be completely incompatible with penal substitution, was that of universal pardon, or that Christ had won pardon for every one who has ever existed or will exist in the world. In Erskine faith or repentance are not the conditions of pardon, for the condemnation was removed from all men when Christ died upon the cross, and the pardon is therefore a thing past. He writes in *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel*: "A very common idea of the object of the gospel is, that it is to show how men may obtain pardon, whereas in truth, its object is to show how pardon for men has been obtained ... It is to present this important truth ... to some who may not have thought of it before, that I have published this book".

Erskine expounded this idea, which he had already put forward in his earlier works, at length, saying that the atonement is universal in extent, and there is now no barrier by which a person's sinfulness can prevent a return to God. For pardon is not given as a premium for believing the Gospel; it is a free gift of God and as such is universal, unconditional and unlimited: "Man neither makes it nor merits it. God reveals it".

Pardon, he says, has been represented as dependent on faith, and is sometimes mistaken for its reward. Erskine makes it clear that this is an error: "Pardon is entirely irrespective of all varieties of human character, it belongs to man as a sinner". The pardon always remains; the door is kept open: "the invitation
is always urgent; but those who do not come in are not transformed". That all are pardoned and Christ is the substitute of every sinner was a provocative statement. Erskine's opponents did not believe it possible that Christ could be the universal substitute. They acknowledged that the invitations of the Gospel are addressed to all, but they did not believe that it was the purpose of God to save any but they elect. They argued that, "If Christ died for all men, and yet many are lost, it is evident that none are saved by the death of Christ: their salvation must proceed from some other cause". In penal substitution the atonement is made by the death of Christ. He dies in the room of, and behalf of sinners: "According to the new system, it is the exercise of the power which every man has of coming to God if he chooses, and does not flow from the death of Christ".

Another frequent question which Erskine was asked was: what kind of pardon is it that admits of a person being finally condemned for an offence for which he has already been pardoned? Others argued like this: "If Christ died for all, he must have died alike for all alike - consequently every human being without exception shall enjoy the benefits of his death. But all do not enjoy these benefits - therefore Christ has not died for all".

Of course it is quite possible to believe that Christ died for all mankind in a general sense, without believing that all are pardoned. This, however, presented as many difficulties to Erskine and his followers as the rigid Calvinistic theory. The individual, he thought, needs to hear, not of a general atonement with a special reference, but of one that is personal, and belongs to him, and is therefore certain. The Row School, as it came to be known, believed that "such a general truth has no life in it, but to the man that believes that there is salvation for himself individually".

- 82 -
The orthodox replied that a past universal forgiveness was not the message of the gospel. Penal substitution had a definite reference to particular individuals on whose behalf Christ interceded, and it was not for all men; pardon could not be separated from salvation without undermining the doctrine of imputation: "Righteousness was inherent in him, but imputed to us; sin was inherent in us, but imputed to him." Righteousness could not be imputed to unbelievers because it gave access to sanctifying grace.

By 1830 the religious dispute had developed into a full-scale controversy, and Erskine had begun openly attacking the opinions of his opponents. He was calling the orthodox system "a system of pure selfishness" where "God is sought not for Himself but for His gifts". It is "a false gospel", "a leprosy which has overspread the land", and "man's religion". "Man's religion... This I believe to be the prevalent religion of our land - taught from the pulpits and received by the people".

This was the period too when the followers of the "new theology" became a party in Scotland. William Knight suggests that in fact Scotland at that time "was bordering on a religious revival of an extraordinary character", for in 1830 the Gareloch was not only the home of a new religious movement, but the scene of the gift of tongues and spiritual healings, so that many thought there to be a revival of some of the supernatural gifts of the early Church. According to the critic in The Christian Guardian, it was spreading even further afield, and quite a number of minds were now in "danger of being beguiled by a heresy no longer confined to Scotland, but rapidly spreading to England".

To sum up: Erskine's view was that faith belonged to justification and not to pardon, while his opponents insisted that "pardon is the effect of being justified". In acrimonious exchanges, Erskine argued for a universal and
unconditional forgiveness of sins, while the orthodox argued that if Christ made atonement for all men generally, and each man individually, "by his dying 'as the substitute of sinners', how is it possible that any of them can come into condemnation without the punishment of the sin being inflicted, first in the person of the substitute, and next in the person of the sinners themselves? An unconditional amnesty or pardon must, if it have any meaning, be a freedom from all the consequences of the sin pardoned. If the pardon is made to depend on anything whatever in the sinner's after conduct, it cannot be unconditional".37 On these grounds they charged Erskine with teaching unsound doctrine.

Erskine appealed to the catechisms, the Reformers and to his own interpretations of Scripture. He believed, for instance, that the Church of England catechism contained his view because it says "... I learn to believe. . . in God the Son who hath redeemed me and all mankind".38 An example taken from the Reformers was that of Luther. Erskine had been reading the life of Luther by Erasmus Middleton which was prefixed to his Commentary on The Epistle to the Galatians. While he was at the Augustan monastery at Erfurt, Luther held many conferences with an old monk on the subject of the remission of sins. It was when it was explained to him as "the express commandment of God that every man should believe his sins to be forgiven him in Christ" that Luther was able to receive the meaning of St. Paul, "We are justified by faith". 39

One of Erskine's more interesting reinterpretations of biblical texts is based on his belief that to be baptised into a doctrine is the ordinary phrase of the New Testament. Thus in Acts ii.38, instead of "Then Peter said, repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Christ for the remission of sins", as in the Authorised Version, Erskine produces, "Repent, or rather change your minds, and let
every one of you be baptized into the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake.\textsuperscript{40}

Erskine had his answer to the accusation that his views were opposed to prayers which contain a petition for the pardon of sins: "I think the pardon which is asked, is a sense of pardon, a sense of the divine nearness and love and not a repeal of the sentence of exclusion, which I conceive to be contained in the primary and universal proclamation of Christ to the world."\textsuperscript{41}

To conclude then, we can say that in this period Erskine's constructive theology based on a past universal forgiveness led him into conflict with the traditional supporters of penal substitution. Substitution when treated simply as an abstract term or word is different from penal substitution which was bound up with theological conceptions which went far deeper. We are faced here with two opposing and incompatible models of the atonement, and a crisis occurred over the implications of some of Erskine's ideas. Even those who advocated a general atonement with a special reference did not agree that this implied universal pardon.

Universal pardon undermined particularly the doctrine of imputation which was the basis of the substitutionary system. In substitution sin was counted and imputed to Christ and believers have the benefit of his righteousness. They are treated as righteous in the sight of God. Erskine was soon to reject this law centred system altogether.
C. Some Attempts to Redefine the Doctrine of Penal Substitution by the Moral Government Theologians: a Reinterpretation of Substitution by Erskine and Irving

By 1830 even some members of the orthodox Evangelical Party in Scotland were extremely concerned about the current perversions of the doctrine of substitution, and were anxious to recover it and present it at its highest. They saw great danger in language that suggested things like a transaction between the Father and the Son, or that Christ changed the will of the Father, or that God punished Jesus. Some of them, like William Urwick, who in 1831 wrote *The True Nature of Christ's Person and Atonement* in reply to the views of Edward Irving contained in *On the Human Nature of Christ* (1830), claimed that their ideas were caricatured by the opposite camp, so as to make their views seem monstrous and shocking.

It was not taught, Urwick declared, that there is a discordance among the persons of the Godhead, "one being propitiously inclined towards us and the others disposed to take vengeance on us." What was taught, he explained, "was that the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ is not the procuring cause but the glorious result of divine mercy to our guilty world." "We believe that 'God is love', and we believe that 'God is light and in him there is no darkness at all'. We believe, that he is a being of infinite rectitude as he is of divine compassion..."

A writer in the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor* for 1831 called Erskine and Campbell "false accusers of their brethren." The clergy of Scotland, he declared, do not teach that "the atonement by the blood of Christ was intended to render God merciful, or to operate any change on his essential nature." On the contrary they
"believe and teach, 'that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.'"46

Yet another writer denied the conditional character of the orthodox evangelical scheme which, Erskine claimed, made faith necessary in order that the individual be pardoned: "the faith for which we plead as necessary to salvation, and which is frequently denominated saving faith, is not presented by us as the procuring cause of that salvation, but merely as the act by which it is appropriated."47

(i) The Moral Government Theologians.

The most revisionary party, however, were the moral government theologians, who were both English and Scottish, and who put forward a modified Calvinism, and sought to rehabilitate substitution. This school believed that God was a righteous Governor and everything he did must be just and right; punishment must attach itself to sin, in order to make the distinction between sin and holiness. Yet while he is a just God he is at the same time a saviour; he cannot permit the violation of the moral law, but at the same time out of his boundless love he sends Christ who stands in the sinner's place thus demonstrating his mercy, and his determination to maintain the dignity of the law inviolate. Prominent in the group were John Pye Smith, Thomas Jenkyn, Ralph Wardlaw, Richard Payne and Joseph Gilbert, and these men wanted to maintain penal substitution but to strip it of injurious associations and make it worthy of a God of love.

They were especially interested in the idea of equivalence, a subject much discussed by the schoolmen who speculated at length about whether Christ's sufferings were identical with those the elect could have expected had not Christ taken their place, or whether other sufferings were substituted instead
of them. For Anselm there could be no relaxation of the law but satisfaction demanded a strict and literal equivalent, not identical but of strictly equal value; Grotius on the other hand was content with the idea of a nominal equivalent.

The main point about equivalence is that it stresses the quantitative rather than the qualitative aspects of sin. John Owen had stated "Christ made satisfaction by undergoing the punishment which, by reason of the obligation that was upon those for whom he made satisfaction, they themselves were bound to undergo". He modified this by adding, "I mean essentially the same in weight and pressure, though not in all accidents of duration and the like". Thomas Jenkyn modified it even further, "the atonement of Christ did not consist of bearing the identical punishment threatened to the sinner". He thought there was not a "substitution of persons only, but also a substitution of sufferings".

George Payne felt that to say that Christ's sufferings were "the same amount although not in kind" was an abandonment of the principle on which the atonement was based, "that it smote the substitute instead of the sinner, and smote him as it would have done the sinner". He adds ambiguously that it was sufficient to say that he suffered the measure of suffering necessary to preserve the efficiency of the moral government.

(ii) Ideas of Irving and Erskine.

The field of inquiry was narrow with both strict Calvinists and the modified school, and attention was focused on the death of Christ and not on his life and teaching. It was in this area that Edward Irving exercised a powerful influence on Erskine. Both had already attacked penal substitution,
Irving describing it as a "stock-jobbing" theology and a "legal fiction". Irving's positive contribution, however, was his view that the atonement was not effected by the death of Christ, but it was the achievement of his life.

The atonement then, according to this thinker, was not made by the shedding of Christ's blood, but by the union of the two natures in his person. Erskine too began to shift the emphasis into other areas and denied that the word substitution was only appropriate to the death of Christ. "What they all maintain is this, that Christ did and suffered only what we ourselves have to do and suffer: he as the head doing that first which we as his members do after him; we deriving from him, for the performance of our work, that strength in which he performed the same; that the thing to be done was the restoring of the human nature from sin to holiness, from death to life eternal".

Christ took man's nature in its sinful state into union with himself, and the union with the divinity, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit sanctified it. He restrained the sinfulness of the human nature, reconciled in himself the two hostile natures and rose again because of his faultless life, "Hence substitution is explained to mean, not the putting of an innocent Christ into the room of guilty sinners, but the Son of God becoming man, and taking up obligations as man which he was not under as God, and so substitution means incarnation".

"The Son of God became . . . the new head and bond . . .", wrote Erskine, "This is the real substitution, Christ is substituted for Adam who is the type of him who is to come". Christ's representation rests on this headship of the human race. He does not stand apart from humanity because he is the head of humanity, and all that he does in a sense is done by them and must be reproduced in them, so that their fallen nature is raised to its original state of righteousness.
In this period then Erskine finally rejected penal substitution, in its strict and proper sense, with its images of debtor and creditor, its conception of merit and with its central idea of the sinless one suffering in the room of the guilty. Substitution consists of a change of headship, from Adam to Christ but the work effected by Christ was not done as a substitute but as a representative and exemplar of that which was to be done in all the saved.

"Substitution always supposes that the person suffering in the place of another is quite distinct from the other . . . yet he took our nature, and became the man Jesus . . . He actually stood Himself . . . as a participator of that flesh which lay under the sentence of sorrow and death . . . He could only deliver them, by being delivered Himself . . . to the great injury of his person . . . This is one man suffering for others, but it is not substitution".56

(iii). The Characteristic Ideas Surrounding Erskine’s Representative Theory.

In conclusion I would like to say something about the characteristic ideas surrounding a representative theory. The most important factor behind Erskine’s journey from substitution to representation was his new understanding of what it means to be in Christ, and to be one with him. The unity of Christ with mankind is inclusive as he both contains all and enters into all.

It is highly misleading, however, to suggest that inclusivity is in itself the keynote of a representative theory. Substitution in Calvin, for instance, is held alongside a strong doctrine of the body of Christ: "everything which the Father conferred on Christ pertained to us for this reason, that 'he is the head', that from him the whole body is 'fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint
Moreover, as Paul van Buren points out, this inclusive aspect of Christ's work is not a secondary theme but is central to Calvin's thought on the atonement. "The unity of the flesh that we have with Christ is enough to assure us that his work is applicable to all men. The unity is no mere figure of speech for Calvin, for he is able to say that Christ, in dying on the Cross laid down 'our flesh'."  

We might feel that this idea does not fit in too well with the doctrine of election, and indeed Erskine and his followers went far further, in the development of this concept. A special idea which Erskine taught tirelessly was that of the race as the body of Christ. As head of the race he represents in himself all humanity and has atoned for the whole nature which he assumed, not part of it. He says repeatedly: this is the gospel, "a message to every man - a Christ to each man - a Christ in each man". It is preaching Christ tabernacled in the flesh of every man. This is the gospel. This unity, this fact that Christ was in every man went far beyond the acceptance of Christ by the individual person. "He has tabernacled in your nature", "he is in you as the root is in the branch", "he is your head".  

During this period Erskine had also begun to explore the implications of the expression very man, and suggest that certain errors had occurred in the professing church which had divinized the manhood. Like Edward Irving Erskine believed that Christ inherited man's fallen human nature; he did not maintain like the strict Calvinists of his day that Christ took the nature of Adam before the fall. Irving explains:
... the point at issue is simply this: whether Christ's flesh had the grace of sinlessness from its proper nature, or from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. I say the latter. I assert that in its proper nature it was the flesh of his mother; but by the Holy Ghost's quickening and inhabiting of it, it was preserved sinless and incorruptible.  

Erskine also insisted on Christ's complete and perfect humanity for, he believed, the possibility of a humanity restored in Christ depends on the completeness of the assumption. He wrote, "it is only when we regard Christ as thus living by faith, that we can understand his character as forerunner and leader".  

When he is viewed as walking by faith and drawing a provision out of himself, it can be perceived that the call to follow him is really open to all. They must follow him step by step and drink the same cup if he is to be their representative. " He is the 'forerunner who is for us entered', not to dispense with our entering, but to open the way for us and to keep it open".  

Erskine wanted to get rid of the "legal fiction" by which a man was treated as that which he was not, but the orthodox believed this made substitution into an absurdity. It meant, they claimed, that there was "no such thing as substitution. When he has contacted the guilt that he may be able to die for it, without a legal fiction, he then surely dies for his own guilt, and not by imputation of ours."  

In examining critically the theology of his day, however, Erskine saw the most fatal error as that concerning the nature of God. Erskine's idea of God profoundly affected his other religious teaching. It determined, for instance, his attitude towards the satisfaction theory of the atonement; he refused to acknowledge that the sufferings and death of Christ could render any satisfaction to God. God was not a judge but a Father, and the world not a
place of trial and probation but a school for the training of individuals in righteousness.

None of these ideas in themselves signify representation, but they harmonize and arrange themselves well around a keynote of representation. Julia Wedgewood remarks that Erskine lived through a period of great development and theological change, "and in looking back now we can see that it was a lofty peak that reflected the morning light so early". It was because he was ahead of his time that his books sometimes cause considerable confusion to the reader: he seems inconsistent because he had not yet fully thought out his theory of the atonement. For a long time he kept many of the old technical terms in which substitutionary atonement theology was expressed, although he sought to modify them in line with his own ideas.

Even, for instance, in The Brazen Serpent he saw the suffering of Christ as penal because the wrath of God against sin was a reality, yet its purpose could only be understood by those who saw God's forgiving love in it, "a love which manifested itself in afflicting and torturing and slaying the beloved One, that afterwards it might highly exalt him".

Sin deserved punishment, but the concept of retributive justice needed to be rethought: "He who sees love in affliction, learns wisdom from it, whilst to him who sees nothing but displeasure in it, it is the sorrow of the world, working death."

Erskine did not think that the penal substitutionary theory of the atonement was untrue in itself; he knew why people wanted to hold it and he acknowledged the evidence of its fruits. Considered at it highest it showed what sin involved and what love meant.
In this way the justice of God and his love were magnified. His justice in demanding the full penalty of the law, and his love in providing a substitute to stand in the place of the real offenders. I believe that the Spirit of God has made this view of the Atonement spirit and life to many souls.

He was well aware of the issues bound up in the problem and he told Principal Shairp, more than once, that almost all the deeply devout men he had ever known had been brought up as Calvinists. Yet, he thought, substitution was a defective truth and "a darkness in the minds of many."

Erskine was to live for another forty years after the publication of The Brazen Serpent, but its publication marked the end of the earliest phase of "Broad Churchism". He was fortunate in that he soon met others who thought as he did, and in the spirit of true fellowship they exchanged ideas, mutually influenced and learnt from each other. Irving died in 1834, but Erskine matured and perfected his ideas on a representative atonement in the company of that other gifted man John McLeod Campbell. They were soon joined by F.D. Maurice, Bishop Ewing of Argyll and the Isles, Dean Stanley, Benjamin Jowett and many others. Their ideas, which never really caught on in Scotland, became the heritage of the Broad Church Party of the Church of England.
Chapter One.


24. Erskine. *Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel*, p. 120.


31. Lay Member of the Church of Scotland, *A Letter to the Author of "The Gareloch Heresy tried", occasioned by his Reply to the Lay Member of the Church of Scotland*, (Greenock: R.B. Lusk, 1830) p. 16.


46. Ibid.


54. Ibid.


57. Calvin. *Institutes,* Bk.II. Ch. XII.1. p. 410.


59. Erskine. *Brazen Serpent,* p.82.


61. cf. F.D. Maurice : "It seems to me that the living and holy God is the ground of theology, and sin the departure from the state of union with him, into which he has brought us . . . ". Frederick Maurice, ed. *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice,* Vol.1. p. 450.


Chapter 2. Representation and Substitution: a Comparative Study from "Salvation" to "The Brazen Serpent."

The present chapter, which is complementary to chapter one, treats the subject of representation systematically, showing the principles of divine government which it assumes, its pattern and main associated ideas. The plan is also to compare and contrast it with substitution, a concept with which it is closely connected, both having the common idea of vicariousness, or the standing in the place of or acting on behalf of "the many".

In his early works Erskine does not separate substitution from representation but uses them both together: nor does he ignore the old terminology connected with substitution and the category of law. God is not only a loving Father, but also a righteous Governor and a just Judge. Erskine only gradually reached the position of seeing God as only love. In the beginning he held a moral government theory of the atonement highly ethicized, and in line with that school of thought he makes no clear cut choice between the concepts of representation and substitution. One implies the other and they sometimes seem to mean the same thing. "We are not received into the favour of God at all on the ground of our own deservings, but on the ground of the satisfaction made to Divine justice by the death of Christ as the representative of sinners; and the belief of this mercy, by its natural operation, gradually subdues the heart to the love and obedience of God."1

By about 1830, however, the situation in Scotland had changed, because Erskine and his party were accused of using the term substitution in conjunction with erroneous views of the gospel. Theologically the two terms
were no longer seen as complementary or interchangeable because they had attached themselves to certain opposing subsidiary ideas, or points of view. Substitution, which had to do with the penalties caused by sin, was still bound up with the concepts of propitiation, satisfaction and a limited atonement. It was soon supported by a great number of pamphleteers such as Dr. Robert Burns, A. Robertson and Drs. Hamilton and Thomson, and these theologians began presenting their arguments with the rigid strictness of their school, and in highly technical phraseology, full of subtle distinctions.

On the other side supporters of the "new" theology led by Erskine, Campbell and Storey were putting forward the idea of representation in conjunction with universal pardon and assurance of faith and priding themselves on their ordinary everyday language by which "these traders in five points and catechisms have their ideas completely bewildered."² A great deal of argument in this bitter controversy revolved round the question of definitions, and while Erskinites did not at first reject substitution, they gave that word a very different meaning from that which was normally taught in Scotland.

A similar and equally virulent battle was going on between Edward Irving, Henry Drummond and A.J. Haldane and Andrew Thomson on the true humanity of Christ, the imputation of Christ's righteousness and substitution. Henry Drummond, for instance, was asserting that substitution and imputation are figures, which A.J. Haldane said was absurd, irreverent and an error:

"There is nothing figurative in the terms. Substitution means a person or thing being put in place of another. Now, when Christ was wounded for our transgressions, when the Lord made to meet upon him the iniquities of us all, there was a real, not a figurative substitution; he was put in our place. When we say one man is substituted for another, that he takes the place of another, what figure do we use? We state a fact; and how can it be stated more literally?"³ Haldane accused Drummond of unorthodox teaching on the atonement, and of
removing the very foundation of the Gospel, "by his denial of the reality of Christ's substitution for his people; of the imputation of their sins to him; and of his righteousness to them."4

What appeared to be happening then was that the concept of representation was becoming separated from substitution and was tying itself to these "new" ideas, while substitution remained bound up with the the orthodoxy of the age, introducing a schismatic controversy. The question to be investigated is whether the split is a fundamental one, or whether the particular conjunction of ideas underlying each theory and which was causing turmoil in Scotland, was simply a product of the times and no more.

A. The Incarnation.

Following then the holy Fathers, we acknowledge, and all with one consent teach, One and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in His Godhead, perfect in His Manhood . . . recognised in two Natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation: the difference of the Natures being in no part annulled by reason of the union, but on the contrary the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and Subsistence.5

Based on the christological confession of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD it was the common faith of the British churches in the nineteenth century that Christ was human and divine. One person comprehended in two natures, each perfect and entire and distinct from the other. There was not a great deal of discussion of how this could be, for to these theologians it was a mystery and not a problem. It transcended human experience and was not explicable by reason. Newman, for instance, described all the revealed doctrines of the
Christian religion, such as the trinity, the incarnation and the atonement, as mysteries, and he believed that to accept them as such was "the badge or emblem of orthodoxy." 6

The incarnation then was the basis on which both parties proceeded, and on which their theories of representation and substitution rested. So it was as a divine person that the mediatorial work of Christ was done, for as the humanity belonged to the Son of God, so his actions were performed as the Son of God.

It is at this point that a divergence occurs: Erskine never denied that in his mediatorial function Christ acted as God-man, yet he did not place an undue emphasis on the divinity as the supporters of substitution did. He continually points out that his life on earth should be seen as a genuinely human life.

The traditionalists, on the other hand, were asserting that Christ had assumed a better humanity, and that the human nature of Christ was a new creation. Haldane used such expressions as the "likeness of flesh of sin", 7 and he said that the manhood "which the Son of God took, was not of any man whatever". 8 Thomson declared, "the Son of God did not take to him a human body, such as is found among the children of men". 8 Henry Drummond comments, "Dr. Thomson says the man Jesus was not capable of sinning, and had not a capacity for it: our nature is capable, and has a capacity". 10

The incarnation then was an insoluble mystery, but on the basis of these and similar statements made by the orthodox, it was the conviction of Irving, Erskine and their followers that these strict scholastic Calvinists had in fact failed to guard the mystery, and that the current doctrine on the subject of Christ's human nature was heretical and unsound. The Irvingite party felt that if Christ's incarnation did not take in the whole of human nature, the redemption which he made possible for mankind could not cover the whole of
man's nature. They felt that one weakness of the professing church was that it was so absorbed in protecting the true deity of Christ that it failed to guard against possible errors as regards the manhood. Yet a right understanding of the incarnation was the basis of a sound substitutionary as well as a representative theory, and indeed the very foundation of the whole scheme of redemption.

It was Irving who started the controversy on the human nature of Christ, and at first A.J. Haldane was his main adversary. Haldane first refers to it in a letter written on 19th June 1828: "Mr. Irving lately brought forward a very pernicious sentiment, that the flesh of Christ was, like ours, disposed to sin, although he was preserved from sin by the power of the Holy Ghost." 12

James Alexander Haldane (1768-1851), whose elder brother Robert was also a controversialist, was famous as a lay preacher and because he had established The Society for the Propagating of the Gospel at Home (1797). He was originally a member of the Church of Scotland, but later a congregationalist and finally, in 1808, a baptist. He published a book A Refutation of the Heretical Doctrines promulgated by the Rev. Edward Irving respecting the Person and Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Henry Drummond (1786-1860), a founder of the Irvingite church and a supporter of its journal The Morning Watch, joined in with A Candid Examination of the Controversy between Messrs. Irving, A. Thomson and J. Haldane Respecting the Human Nature of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Haldane published a response, Answer to Mr. Drummond's Defence of the Heretical Doctrine Promulgated by Mr. Irving (1830), Drummond a Supplement to the Candid Examination; Irving replied at length with a book entitled The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature (1830), which filled Scotland with alarm.
This book was in turn refuted by the Irishman William Urwick, who after a visit to Dublin by Irving in September 1830, became acquainted with his views and wrote *The True Nature of Christ's Person and Atonement* which was published in 1831. Marcus Dods also produced his *Incarnation of the Eternal Word,* in the same year, in which he accused the Irvingite party of Nestorianism, of making two persons of Christ because the language which they used of the flesh of Christ could not be applied to God. Charles Simeon too was shocked by some of the ideas of the Irvingites, describing their view on the humanity of Christ as "fearful and horrible indeed."

David Brown (1893-1897), who was later to become Principal of the Free Church College, Aberdeen was one of the few who took a middle view. He was unable to sympathize with Irving's view of Christ's human nature, but at the same time totally convinced of Irving's belief in Christ's perfect holiness.

The controversy was reflected in the journals of the day. *The Morning Watch,* beginning with its opening number in March 1829, poured out lengthy articles and discussions from its *Theological Department.* *The Evangelical Christian Instructor* and *The Record Newspaper* supported Haldane and Thomson. As the majority of Erskine's discussions on the humanity of Christ during this period come in *The Brazen Serpent,* it can be assumed that his views rose at least partly out of this controversy.

(i) The "Who" Question.

Who is Jesus Christ? Basing his argument on his understanding of the Chalcedonian formula and the scriptural tradition, Erskine described the mystery of Christ's Person in two ways. First of all he was a man, and in his childhood he grew and developed like any other man and lived under human
conditions: "Jesus was a man — and we know that he grew in wisdom as well as in stature, and therefore we are not to start away from the expression that he learnt obedience from the things that he suffered".  

This assertion of the full humanity is accompanied in Erskine by the belief that Christ inherited man's fallen human nature. He did not maintain, like the professing church of his day, that Christ took the perfect nature of Adam before the fall: "...he came to declare the truth of God's character, and to put truth into the fallen nature, by entering it Himself".  

For Erskine's chief concern was that Christ should be a proper representative of humanity, and if this was to be achieved it must be a through his true humanity.

Irving points out, "these men, with whom we argue this great point of the orthodox faith, do teach, that in the act of conception his flesh underwent a change, which put it altogether out of the category of sinful flesh, into that of sinless flesh; so that it could be under another law. And whence had it this infusion? They dare not say from the Divine nature, which they have learnt from the catechism must be kept distinct — ".

He goes on to accuse Haldane and Thomson of implicitly denying that Jesus was a man: "It is a new act he is to do, not a new substance he is to create ... there is not in the whole of the Scriptures the shadow of a reason for their imagination, or rather fiction, that Christ's human nature was a new substance".

Christ then is true man for it is man who is to be redeemed, but he is also God. Although Christ's representation is through his humanity, it is not based on the teaching that he is a mere man, a prophet or an inspired teacher. Erskine argues, following Anselm, that while the atonement cannot be made by one who is not man, at the same time it cannot be made by one who is less than God. It must be made by one who is human and divine - the God-man.
And yet it is true, that he had done a work for man which none but He could have done—a work without which no man could have been saved—a work, to attempt to do, or to add to which, is to crucify the Son of God afresh, and without which no man ever did or ever could have done any of those things which his leader and head and God calls on him to do... And that was the great work of atonement,... At first sight it may appear contradictory to say that man is called on to do what Christ did, and yet to say that it is profanity to do what He did. But the meaning is this—a soldier is quite right to follow his general's footsteps, when he is commanded so to do, and yet it would be a capital offence to do these things in the assumption of the general's office. Now the exclusive character of Christ's work lay in his personal Godhead. And so to attempt to do what He did, as God, is to attempt to be God.

For without the incarnation Jesus becomes a mere example or a teacher sent from God or a human martyr. He becomes of the same order as the Hebrew prophets, or the many saints who lived after him. His death is not of ultimate importance to mankind, for it can neither give peace to the conscience, nor impress upon individuals the malignity of sin. "We thus lose the whole benefit of Christianity as a palable exhibition of the Divine character, and are thrown back again on the inefficiency and vagueness of abstract principles." In fact, Erskine adds, "If Jesus Christ were merely a man", as the Socinians claim, "the greatest part of the Bible is mere bombast".

Even Newman agrees that Erskine, unlike Jacob Abbott, whose views in his book Corner Stone, he contrasts with Erskine's, was not a Socinian. For he "admits into the range of divine facts such as are not of this world, as the voluntary descent of Christ from heaven to earth, and his incarnation." "

(ii) Representation and substitution contrasted.

It was the duty of both parties to be true to the scriptural tradition, and to
the guidelines laid down in the Chalcedonian definition, and both sides believed firmly that theirs was the correct teaching. Each believed the other had sacrificed one half of the great central truth, just as Apollinarius and Eutyches had erred on the one side and Nestorius on the other. This particular dispute, which can be duplicated in many periods of Christian history, has been described in some detail, however, because it highlights a prevalent distinction between substitution and representation: while representation is preoccupied with the reality of the manhood of Christ, in substitution attention is focused on his deity.

Representation emphasizes the common nature between the representative and those he represented. Erskine says Jesus was "bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh." He was genuinely human, "every man's brother." He took flesh and blood because those he came to represent and save bore it, and he was in every respect like them. He was tempted like them, and thus he was able to feel with them and, by his experience of human sufferings, understand their needs. As their representative and the captain of their salvation, he went through life and death to enable his followers to come after him.

In substitution also it is Christ's humanity that is the instrument of man's salvation, but it is essential that he acts as God-man if he is to substitute in the room of sinners, to render the obedience they had failed to give, to bear the penalty to which they had become liable, and to remove the wrath of God from them. Thus A.J. Haldane in denying that Christ assumed sinful human nature explains, "Such a view of the humanity of Christ is incompatible with his making satisfaction for the sins of others." The opposing camp, on the other hand, began by arguing for the oneness of Christ's person: they pointed out that although he had two natures he was only one Person, and that Person was divine. A typical work by a supporter of
penal substitution is that of Daniel Dewar, minister of the Tron Church Glasgow, *The Nature, Reality and Efficacy of the Atonement*. We detect immediately, in this writer, who spoke against John McLeod Campbell at his trial, a heavy weight of soteriology, and always the thought of Christ coming into the world from the side of God.

Even a cursory examination of this book reveals many phrases which show the strong hold which propitiation, imputation and legal substitution had on the minds of Scottish Calvinists: "He placed himself between them and the wrath of offended justice, and gave himself up for them, so as to die in their stead." The whole debt which they owed to the justice of God was extracted from him the Surety, and he was made answerable. The punishment due to their sin, the Father transferred and laid upon him.

On the moral side, while the consent of Christ is freely given, Dewar stresses that it was necessary that Christ had the power both to give a valid consent and to carry out his work. A mere man could not substitute himself in the place of another, or present an infinite righteousness and a just God could not accept his service and sacrifice. Christ is far removed from other men and women: "The work of saving sinful men and women is represented as most arduous and difficult. It is spoken of as a work peculiar to God, which required for its performance almighty power, unerring wisdom, and unwearied faithfulness and love; a work which in its greatness and in its results, surpasseth the original creation."

Because he was God he did have the power to do this work, and both to lay down his life and to take it up again. "Paying our debt," "bearing our sins", "enduring our penalty", "suffering in our stead". all these are unique acts which cannot be performed by a fallen man at least in the same sense. As Denney was later to put it his death "was a solitary phenomenon in the universe."

It is easy to see how such opposing conceptions can lead to conflict: the orthodox charged the Irvingites with Nestorianism, that is of denying the unity.
of Christ's person. Henry Blunt, for instance, in his *Discourses Upon Some of the Doctrinal Articles of the Church of England* (1835) speaks of the "modern revival of the heresy of Nestorius, which, by asserting that the nature of the blessed Lord was a 'fallen nature' and his flesh 'sinful flesh', applies language to the flesh of Christ, which even they would not apply to Christ himself, thus making two persons in Christ, which was the very essence of Nestorianism..."  

The Morning Watch, on the other hand, accused Thomson and Haldane of confused notions of the natures of Christ, that is of asserting of one nature what is only true of both conjoined, like Eutyches, an abbot of Constantinople condemned by the Council of Chalcedon.

To Erskine then there was no acceptable doctrine of Christ that did not recognize him as "very man", and he believed that the orthodox party was so absorbed in protecting the true deity of Christ, that it failed to guard against possible errors as regards the manhood. It is true that Erskine taught the personal sinlessness of Jesus, but by this he did not mean that Christ had a special nature resembling that of other men, for that would have destroyed his relationship with them. "Jesus makes intercession for himself as one of us and with us, and therefore it is truly intercession for us, for our nature, for that nature that he hath united to himself for ever".  

While maintaining that Christ was entirely free from sin, Erskine believed his sinlessness was not derived from any inherent holiness of the flesh but from the Holy Ghost. For it would seem, and here again Erskine's ideas were similar to those of Irving, that Christ did not act in the power of his own Godhead but in the power of the spirit communicated to him.

"Christ was not born the righteous Head: he earned that glorious dignity by the work which he finished; he was consecrated for it, or made perfect through his sufferings unto death..."
And he also had a provision independent of his work, and existing previous to it, in the strength of which he was to do it, - namely, the love and favour of the Father to himself personally. His reward was to be earned - his provision was not. . . . For he is truly our forerunner and leader, - and he calls on us to follow his steps; . . .".33

In turn he leaves every individual an unearned provision: or the power from him to repeat his work also in the power of the spirit. "Christ in you . . . this is the provision."34 His followers identify with him and depend upon him: they begin where he left off; they follow where he leads; his victory is their provision, and they have work to do in the strength of that provision: "the work is to have eternal life in us, and to have the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus, which is the salvation, that we are to work out with fear and trembling".35


Sin consists in the absence of the love of God from the heart . . . so sin is not so much an action as a manner of existence. It is not necessary to go to the expense of an action in order to sin, - the habitual state of most minds, - of all minds indeed naturally, - even in their most quiet form, - is sin.36

Orthodox theologians would have agreed with Erskine that sin is an actuality and that all men are sinners. The Church of Scotland of his day, following Calvin, held a doctrine of the total depravity of human nature. Erskine also believed in the inherent sinfulness of man apart from his individual actions but, introspective by temperament, he approaches sin rather differently. He begins with his own experience, and starting with the Christian conscience sin is seen internalized as guilt.
Of course this aspect was prominent in Calvin's thought as well and he called it self-knowledge. Erskine does not deviate from Calvinist theology then in his very real sense of the seriousness of sin, for he is aware of its effect on character and knows, from personal experience, the powerlessness of man to free himself by his own efforts and find comfort and peace.

Principal Shairp, who later exchanged frequent letters and conversed often with Erskine, and became his personal friend, confirms that Erskine had no low thoughts of sin: "No man I ever knew had a deeper feeling of the exceeding evil of sin, and of the Divine necessity that sin must always be misery. His universalistic views did not in any way relax his profound sense of God's abhorrence of sin". To Erskine then sin was very real, and although he believed his contemporaries mistook the true nature of sin, he still thought that Christ's work was to save mankind from sin and its consequences.

Henry F. Henderson in his biography of Erskine tells us that Erskine did not like any of the brands of Calvinism that were in vogue in his day. He neither liked the school of Thomas Boston, harsh and uncompromising in its doctrine of the divine sovereignty and the divine wrath; nor on the other hand, Moderatism with its benevolent face and its interest in ethics, but promising no benefit to anyone outside the circle of the elect. Especially though he objected to the middle courses, such as the Marrow theology with its universal offer of benefits not intended for all. These schools of thought had it in common that they preferred to speak of Christ as a substitute in discussions of his work in relation to sin.

Behind these prevailing parties, lay the theology of Calvin (1509-1564) and behind him that of the much earlier thinker Anselm (1033-1109). Anselm's central idea in *Cur Deus Homo* is sin: man is sinful, God demands either satisfaction or punishment (*aut poena aut satisfactio*). In this book Anselm
argued that sin cannot be condoned because it is an offence against God's honour and deserves equivalent punishment. The term used to describe God's attitude to sin is "wrath", and the current thinkers interpreted "wrath" as "anger." Erskine, however, saw this as an unworthy view of the divine character, for he could not accept the justice of God's "wrath" in a way that made it inconsistent with the idea of a loving Father.

(i) Father or Judge? : Two Different Starting Points in Dealing with Sin.

All parties agreed about the general Fatherhood of God, but this fundamental problem, posed by a God whose nature is love, did not present itself to them in quite the same way as it did to Erskine. Erskine came to see God as infinite love: all his other attributes are functions of love. His opponents thought this showed a restricted view of the character of God. They thought he showed inflexible justice as well as compassion and mercy, and like Calvin they stressed other attributes besides love such as his greatness, his glory, his sovereignty, his majesty and his power. In his Institutes of the Christian Religion Calvin describes the attitude towards God which the Christian needs to attain salvation.

To reverence his majesty, aim at the advancement of his glory, and obey his commands - regarding him as a just judge, armed with severity to punish crimes ... he embraces him not less as the avenger of wickedness as the rewarder of the righteous ... Besides it is not mere fear of punishment that restrains him from sin. Loving and revering God as his Father, honouring and obeying him as his master, although there were no hell he would revolt at the idea of offending him. Such is pure and genuine religion, namely confidence in God coupled with serious fear. 39
Erskine admired Calvin, especially his stress on the helplessness of man and his dependence on God for salvation. With both these thinkers everything starts with God and with his initiative. Yet Erskine believed that the relationship between God and man was that of Father and children, and how with such "serious fear" of God could they learn to love and trust him as Father? He also parted from Calvin because he came to believe that God, having brought all men into being, could not forsake any of the human family. Man, as a race, had the victory over sin because God had not created anyone for destruction.

It must be pointed out again that Calvin's emphasis on law as the foundation of the atonement does not mean, at the same time, that he neglected love. He is eloquent in his expression of the mystery of the love of God towards man through the work of Christ. Jansen points out moreover that "the phrase 'Christ is the end of the law and the prophets' is recurrent in Calvin's writings". It is also true though that Calvin's thoughts continually return to the greatness and majesty of God, and to his judicial character.

Modern supporters of penal substitution saw justice as the primary attribute of God's character, but Erskine then saw God as a loving and personal Father whom the individual can love in return. This change in the conception of God ultimately made the forensic and transactional theories of the atonement unsatisfying or even impossible for him; he sought something less legal and more relational. He felt that it is what Christ does in the individual as well as what he does for them that gives the gospel its power. His work in overcoming sin is achieved with them and is part of all Christian experience.

What was the work of Christ? High Calvinists believed that it was the endurance by Christ of the punishment for sin which all those who are saved by it would otherwise have endured. This aspect of the work of Christ was their great interest, but moderate Calvinists were more guarded in their language, and took care to stress equally the moral effects of the atonement and the new life in Christ. In the beginning Erskine may be described as a moderate Calvinist. In line with this he often uses the term governor of God and he sees him as a powerful but amiable being, a benefactor as well as a king. In the Internal Evidence (1820) God is set forth both in the character of a gracious Father and a just Judge. His guilty children are brought before him and condemned; they have contacted the disease of sin and breached the fundamental law which binds creatures to resemble their creator.

In this book Christ's substitution in place of these sinners is not denied: he stands in their place, and undergoes the penalty due to them because they have broken the law. Yet Erskine is already putting forward the idea of universal pardon, although it is illuminated less clearly than in his later works. "God gave his equal and well beloved son, to suffer in the stead of an apostate world, and through this exhibition of awful justice, he publishes the fullest and freest pardon".41

To say that he suffered instead of man is to say that he is man's substitute. He bore man's sufferings, which otherwise he himself would have had to bear, and there is no question of participation because the pardon is not merited, and extends to unconverted sinners. For it was already Erskine's deepest conviction that the individual can only begin to trust God and be made free from sin, when he is first forgiven.

There is, however, a passage which shows that Erskine was already reacting
strongly against the type of external substitution where merit is transferred to the sinner, and the equivalent of man's punishment tendered to Christ. This was not unusual for other moderate Calvinists, like Ralph Wardlaw, were also troubled by the theory that there is a balance between the amount of punishment suffered by Christ, and the offences of all the sinners it was meant to save. In his book *Discourses on the Principal Points of the Socinian Controversy* (1814) Wardlaw wrote: "My mind, I own, revolts from this sort of minutely calculating process on such a subject." \(^{42}\)

Erskine felt that the identity between the punishment due to the elect, and the sufferings endured by Christ as their substitute made the atonement into a legal satisfaction for sin only, and this was a misrepresentation of the character of God. The Christian God was a God of holiness and love and this view of God was inconsistent with the idea of justice as simply retributive, without any thought or care upon whom the judgement falls, whether on the sinner or on some one prepared to take his place. This allowed the enemies of Christianity to present their case against it in the form of a caricature somewhat like this:

"that according to Christianity, God indeed apportions to every instance and degree of transgression its proper punishment; but that, while he rigidly exacts this punishment, he is not much concerned whether the person who pays it be the real criminal or an innocent being, provided only that it is the full equivalent; nay that he be under a strange necessity to cancel guilt whenever this equivalent of punishment is tendered to him by whatever hand". \(^{43}\)

Erskine's belief that the doctrine of the atonement had been "inaudiously stated" and that ideas of commutation were not scriptural, were taken exception to by James Haldane who communicated his views to Dr. Charles Stuart. Erskine defends himself in a letter to Dr. Stuart on 1st February 1821.
"Mr. Haldane says that the comparison of the atonement to the payment of a debt is common in 
Scripture. He gives no reference, and I have in vain looked for it. When sin is compared to a 
debt, it is said to be freely discharged as in Luke vii 42, and in the parable of the debts of 
10,000 talents and a 100 pence etc. I do not believe that the atonement of the Saviour is ever 
compared to the repayment of a sum of money".44

In spite of his criticisms of these perversions of the doctrine, in this early 
period there is no clear cut choice between the word representative and the 
concept of substitution, but one implies the other and as in the orthodox 
thology they are used together: " the Eternal Word, who was God, took on himself the 
nature of man and as the elder brother and representative and champion of the guilty family, he 
solemnly acknowledged the justice of the sentence pronounced against sin, and submitted himself 
to its full weight of wo, in the stead of his adopted kindred. God's justice found rest here; 
his law was magnified and made honourable".45

Erskine is still a typical Calvinist in that he focuses a great deal of 
attention on the death of Christ, and on God as a just judge. Nevertheless the 
two terms judge and Father are not necessarily exclusive or in competition. 
The term awful justice may be taken as expressing a penal element in the 
atonement but it is also a negative aspect of God's holiness. In the light of 
God's perfect justice and goodness sin stands revealed and stresses its link with 
misery. Erskine acknowledges that there is an objective barrier in the way of 
the sinner's return to God, and this must be removed before Christ is able " to 
show us the Father".

While admitting to this penal element in his thinking, it must also be said 
that Erskine dwells a great deal more on the aspect of Christ as an example, 
for the regeneration of character is the final aspect of the atonement. He 
points out repeatedly that the great argument for the truth of Christianity is
the sanctifying influence of its doctrines. Doctrines, according to Erskine, are principles which excite and animate performance, and indeed Franks has compared him to Schleiermacher and Coleridge in his interest in doctrines on their experimental and practical side.  

This interest is reflected in his frequent use of the word representative, in a relational sense. He is "the representative of our race", "the representative of sinners", "the head and representative of his people". Christ stands in a living relationship to his followers whom he involves with him in the work God has given him to do, and the object of his representation is to help them to make their way towards the divine perfection and to bring them to everlasting life. He stands forth as an example of righteousness but he does more than this, for the divine government does not skim the surface, "but comes close to the thoughts, and carries its summons to the affections and the will and penetrates to those recesses of the soul...".  

(iii) Absolute Love Versus Divine Law in "The Brazen Serpent."

Ten years later when Erskine wrote The Brazen Serpent (1831) he has come to see love as "God's nature." God is love: love is of a different rank from all his other attributes: his justice, for instance, is subservient to love. If God's love is infinite and he is willing to forgive sins unconditionally, he does not need to be propitiated or appeased, but takes the initiative in approaching man. We do not know that God is love through speculation, but because of an actual event - the coming of Jesus Christ who died upon the cross and accomplished vicariously for all men what they could not do for themselves.

The free forgiveness of sins revealed the inextinguishable love of God, and it is incompatible with the retributive demands of divine law: it "is the first part of the gospel, and the key to all the rest." It shows "what love is, and that God is..."
love, and that the glory of God is love, and that there is no love but of God. Universal
pardon means that God forgives the sinner without transactions or bargains or
conditions: "God loved every man, even in the loathsomeness of his pollution, even in his
state of bitterest enmity, - with a love that made Him willing to taste death for every man."51
From the manward side repentance follows, for "the knowledge that God has loved us
and forgiven us, is necessary to our having confidence in God, and so opening our hearts to let
God in."52

Representation and substitution then became the keynotes of two opposing
systems; they became no longer complementary but mutually exclusive. If
God is able to pardon all men and women while they are still unreconciled
sinners, Christ could not have died to satisfy God's retributive justice. God
clearly required no satisfaction in order to exercise mercy; he did not need to
punish in order to forgive.

Erskine's interest was in a personal cure for sin, and not in the transference
of guilt to another. He called substitution and imputation legal fictions
because he perceived them as precluding individual holiness. He also
considered penal substitution to be defective in that it failed to show God's
love to the race, to mankind, to the world. "For it never could be gospel or good
news to one man, to tell him, that Christ was in another man, or in another class of men."53

This new emphasis meant a reconsideration of the meaning of Christ's
death, and in The Brazen Serpent Erskine denied the doctrine of penal
substitution. Yet as in traditional Calvinism, not only death but also suffering,
continued in Erskine's view, to be an important element in salvation. Why
must Christ suffer? Why are the human race saved through Christ's sufferings?
Does God really take pleasure in the sufferings of Jesus for, Erskine points
out, the Bible does say, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him".

First of all Erskine rejects some of the favourite ideas of transaction and
merit put forward by the supporters of substitution at that time: Christ did not undergo these sufferings in any quantitative or mechanical sense of undergoing so much pain for so much sin. It was not analogous to a debt of money, which must be discharged either by the debtor or his substitute. "The father's pleasure in the sufferings of Jesus then did not arise from their being a just satisfaction to the law, in the sense of their meeting the law in its demand of so much punishment to answer so much sin". 54

Nor should it be thought that salvation is connected to Christ's Godhead in the sense that it "gave a character of infinity to his sufferings, so as to make them infinitely exceed in weight the deserved sufferings of all the individuals of the human race." 55

The sufferings of Christ do not derive their value solely from their giving support to the law which provides a certain penalty for sin. Sin, thought Erskine, could not be measured in that quantitative way, or be transferred to another, or be voluntarily assumed by them. If God can freely forgive and only be satisfied by man's redemption, punishment must be educative and remedial rather than retributive. If the justice of the suffering is admitted the love of the law must also be seen. What God demands is not a fictitious imputation of merit, or the fulfilment of an abstract and impersonal justice, but an actual response to his goodness in Christ and a return to positive righteousness.

Erskine also tries to grapple with the problem of why on the cross an innocent man suffered for the guilty. Even an earthly judge would not have considered it ethical, he thought, to accept the sufferings of an innocent person as the satisfaction for the punishment of a guilty one. Is it a censure on God's justice that Christ should be a substitute for the sins of others?

Many centuries earlier Anselm had tried to answer the same question in his dialogue with Boso: "that God should permit Him, however willing, to be thus treated,
Erskine reaffirms the answer which both Anselm and Calvin had already arrived at: not only the initiative but the whole of the saving work is God's, it is God there upon the cross, suffering for mankind and taking upon himself the sins of the world. God made the propitiation to himself; it was God himself that suffered.

Well, look at the cross. What do we see there? A man suffering a most agonizing and shameful death between two thieves, to signify that his death is specially penal. Now, why does that man suffer? Is it because God hates him that he has thus bruised him? No. That man is the well-beloved, only begotten Son of God. He is himself God in flesh. And why does he thus torture and kill the flesh which he has assumed into so near and indissoluble connexion with himself? Why, just that he may raise it to the throne of heaven, and make it capable of partaking of the glories of Godhead, and that he may fit it to become a fountain of eternal life for that whole nation, of which it is a part, and in which he personally dwells.

The doctrine of the atonement tells of "love surpassing thought" and "love in perfect consistency with a holiness which cannot look upon iniquity". Erskine agrees that God cannot pass over sin and the demands of the moral law must be satisfied, but the law must never be seen as antagonistic to the love of God. If Christ had not suffered and died to remit the penalty of the law none could be saved. Yet it is the new life which they receive which really saves them, and it is a new perception of the love of God which is the ground of their confidence.

There is no vengeance connected with the sacrifice which appeases, for it really proceeds from the divine love. Love is prior to law for it is God himself who removes the barrier which must be removed if sinners are to be re-instated in his favour. In that sense, Erskine explains in his last book The
**Spiritual Order**, it is not a propitiation after all for there is under the wrath, "an omnipotent righteous love which uses that wrath for its own purposes, and of which it is only the needful expression".  

C. Salvation : Sanctification in Christ.

Reader, let me press it on you - you must have a spiritual life in you, before you can do a single action which is not rebellion against the Kingdom of God. And don't deceive yourself by thinking that that life can be in you without your being well aware of its presence - as well might a lighted candle be unrecognised in a dark room. That new life is light and the old life is darkness. If you don't know that the life is there, it is because it is not there. And if it is not there, you are yet without God, without Christ, without hope.

How is the death of Christ related to sin so as to bring about man's sanctification? Erskine saw this relation in a rather different way from the common teaching of his church. The theory of orthodox Calvinists of his day was externalised and objectivised in that it attached itself to the forgiveness of past sins, and to the imputation of righteousness to believers. There was what seemed to Erskine to be an almost mechanical shifting of the punishment due to men on to Christ, and of the perfect righteousness of Christ on to men. Erskine's theory is internalised and spiritualised because he stresses penitence: Christ's exhibition of love through the cross kindles a corresponding love in the hearts of men and women and lifts them out of sin into righteousness.

In chapter one we discussed these two ways of looking at Christ's atonement, the backward looking aspect which included man's deliverance from past offences, and the forward looking one which includes his deliverance from sinfulness in preparation for a future in the coming kingdom. Thus John
McLeod Campbell was later to explain that the atonement expresses,

"retrospectively . . . the condition of evil from which it is the purpose of God to save us,
and prospectively . . . the condition of good to which it is His purpose to raise us". 61

The two though not identical do generally form a unity. They correspond
to salvation through Christ and in Christ: through his work he overcomes sin,
and by the inclusion of believers in his body he brings them also into
everlasting life.

A comparison of Erskine and Calvin reveals that they talk a great deal
about both, for Calvin had written at length on the prospective value of the
atonement and the subsequent sanctification of believers. Many blessings are
received by the individual because of Christ dwelling in him by the Holy
Spirit. Calvin calls the Holy Spirit "the internal teacher", "the key by which the
treasures of the heavenly kingdom are unlocked" and "his illumination the eye of the mind by
which we are enabled to see". 62

Nevertheless it was the characteristic of Calvin following Anselm, and even
more of the Calvinism of Erskine's day, to stress the retrospective aspect, for
the wrath of God had to be appeased: "So paramount are the claims of justice, that
neither the personal character of the surety, nor his supreme dignity, nor his father's love
for him, availed to abate one jot or tittle of the law when, being 'Made answerable', it was
exacted of him." 63 The punishment for sin was eternal death and all men were
justly condemned. For them the centre of their faith was the sinless one
standing in the room of the sinful, and the innocent instead of the guilty, as a
propitiation for sin.

In contrast to this Erskine seems, in some respects, to stand in the tradition
of Abelard (1079-1141), who felt that redemption was of a spiritual nature and
stressed the ethical rather than the legal aspects of the cross. Abelard
proclaimed love as the motive of God's work of reconciliation, and he felt that
the obstacle to the forgiveness of sins lay within the sinner himself. In his Epistle to the Romans he sets forth as the benefits of Christ's death both the forgiveness of past sins and the awakening within the individual of a love of Christ. It is, however, this kindling of the love of Christ within his heart that frees a person from the bondage of sin. Franks comments, "Abelard ... views the remission of sins as the direct result of the kindling of love, and so as the indirect result of the death of Christ ... He refers to the words of the Lord. 'Her sins are forgiven, because she loved much.'" 64

Erskine also refers to the story of the woman who washed the feet of Jesus (Luke 7. 47-50), pointing out even more emphatically that it was love that was her salvation, but he changes the interpretation along the lines of his own thinking on universal pardon. "Her sins which are many are forgiven, therefore (as the true meaning is) she loved much ... Her many sins were forgiven - that was her faith. She loved much - that was her salvation". 65

The implication of universal pardon is that Christ's death achieved something objective, unconditional forgiveness for the whole human race, but all the same it is for Erskine a background thing, "a thing already past and recorded in heaven". 66 It is of historical rather than of present interest. Christ procured for all a judicial acquittal, but the essential thing is that they die with him and live with him. "Pardon is the starting-point of the Christian course: the saints' rest is the goal. Pardon precedes the race, the saints' rest crowns it". 67

(i) Regeneration is the Goal.

For this pardon is neither happiness nor heaven. Happiness and heaven consist in holiness; and pardon is only so far profitable to us, as it produces holiness. It is contained in the gift of Christ, and in him; it is laid down at the door of each heart; but it cannot enter separate
from him, and until it enters it does nothing. When it enters it then becomes justification.\textsuperscript{68}

While pardon is free and universal,\textsuperscript{69} Erskine says, salvation and eternal life are things quite different from pardon. No one is pardoned because of their belief in the pardon, but they are sanctified because of their belief in it. God is not indifferent to right or wrong, and heaven is not proclaimed to sinners, but only to those who hate sin: "Pardon, then, is not heaven — any more than medicine is health. Pardon is proclaimed freely and universally, — it is perfectly gratuitous, — it is unconditional and unlimited, — but heaven is limited to those who are sanctified by belief of the pardon".\textsuperscript{70}

Erskine does not deny the importance of the pardon, for sin is the evil which God hated and for which Christ died. He agrees with the Scottish Calvinists that Christ died for mankind in the juridical sense to cancel the penalties due to sin. Thus he is able, in his early writings, to say that man is "justified by his blood" and he calls the human race, "blood bought and well beloved children".\textsuperscript{71} but in his later works these sort of phrases appear less and less frequently. This is the initial salvation but the ultimate aim is reconciliation or the return to spiritual health.

He talks, therefore, less about how forgiveness of sins may be obtained than he does about how righteousness may be acquired. God saves the individual by striving to make him like himself. For there really is no conceivable way, Erskine reflects, of escaping from sin except by the individual himself becoming righteous, and this cannot be done by another in his stead. Because Erskine was concerned mainly with the ultimate effect of Christ's work, the idea of representation can be said to be the best expression of his thought on how the work of Christ saves mankind.
Christ is the representative because he is the root of all righteousness, and in connection with the development of this righteousness in man, Erskine often uses the phrase *abiding in him*. The mercy and justice shown in the sacrifice of Christ provide the food for the soul in this growth towards holiness. Love is the obedience which God requires, and this love in the heart of the individual can only proceed from a continued sense of the holy compassion of God shown on the cross: "The belief of the morning, if it is confined to the morning, will do us no good through the day. He that believes is saved, not he who has believed. The sole object of Christian belief is to produce Christian character, and unless this is done nothing is done." 72

(ii) Imputed and Imparted Righteousness.

Erskine then began to develop the concept of what it means to be in Christ; Christ works continually in the believer imparting to him his own righteousness. While he always makes it clear that it is Christ's righteousness that is imparted, yet it is no longer imputation in the exterior or mechanical sense. The question which was concerning Erskine was whether the imputed righteousness, as understood in the Scotland of his day, was real righteousness.

There seems to have been a lack of clarification in Scottish Calvinism, of the precise nature of the connection between imputed righteousness, and the progressive change in man's individual nature leading to personal sanctification. Imputation, taken by itself does not imply the transference of moral character, for those who supported it did not claim any transfusion of righteousness into the believer to make him inherently righteous. Those chosen by God for salvation are not subjectively, but externally or forensically righteous, because Christ has satisfied the demands of the law on their behalf.
According to Charles Hodge it is the relation of man to God, and not the man himself who is changed.

It does not teach that his [Adam's] offence was personally or properly the sin of all men, or that his act was, in any mysterious sense, the act of his posterity. Neither does it imply, in reference to the righteousness of Christ, that his righteousness becomes personally and inherently ours, or that his moral excellence is in any way transferred from him to believers. The sin of Adam, therefore, is no ground to us of remorse; and the righteousness of Christ is no ground of self-complacency in those to whom it is imputed. The doctrine merely teaches, that in virtue of the union, representative and natural, between Adam and his posterity, his sin is the ground of their condemnation, that is of their subjection to penal evils; and that in virtue of the union between Christ and his people, his righteousness is the ground of their justification.\textsuperscript{73}

Calvin sometimes seems to speak of the transference to believers of Christ's merits, without much suggestion of their being made sharers of Christ's righteousness in the sense of personal growth in Christ. For instance he writes in The Institutes: "He will be justified by faith, who, shut out from the righteousness of works, apprehends by faith the righteousness of Christ, clothed in which he appears in God's sight not as a sinner but as just".\textsuperscript{74}

Yet at other times he adds that this imputation is accompanied by a continuous ethical growth within each individual, and the implication seems to be that the two are separate but contemporaneous: "as the blessing of the first-fruits is spread over the whole harvest, so the Spirit of God cleanses us by the holiness of Christ, and makes us partakers of it. Nor is this done by imputation only, for in that respect he is said to have been made to us righteousness; but he is likewise said to have been made to us sanctification. (1 Cor.1.30.)"\textsuperscript{75}
Calvin taught that the change of state brought about by the imputation of righteousness and the change of character necessary for the development of sanctification are joined together, and thus "those who boast of having the faith of Christ and are completely destitute of sanctification deceive themselves . . . we cannot receive through faith his righteousness without embracing at the same time that sanctification, because the Lord in one same alliance, which he has made with us in Christ, promises that he will be propitious towards our iniquities and will write his Law on our hearts (Jer.31.33; Heb.8.10; 10.16.)"76

Erskine differed from Calvin in that he believed that righteousness in the sense of the non-imputation of sin was imputed to everyone, whether they believed or not, because of Christ's finished work as the second Adam. It lasted during this dispensation, or until the final judgement, when each person would be judged according to their actual character. For real righteousness, or moral change, is not imputed. While the individual is made a partaker of Christ's righteousness, yet Christ was sanctified, and his righteousness imputed to him, only in order that a similar process of salvation might be brought about when he believed.

The righteousness which is by faith is no imputed thing, in the ordinary sense given to imputation in man's theology. In that sense - namely, in the sense of being an outside thing, a non-imputation of sin - it belongs to every human being during "the accepted time"; but, in its true sense, it is an inside thing, being in fact the same thing as the life, even that good thing the possession of which prepares a man to meet that day of just judgement, when the wrath of God will be poured out on all unrighteousness of men.77
(iii) **Union with Christ.**

In Erskine, the journey towards sanctification *in* Christ the Representative is given an enormously important role. The mystical body had no great prominence in the Scottish Calvinism of his day, and this intense interest in the corporate Christ is one of the aspects in which his theology seems to resemble that of Schleiermacher. Erskine does not mention Schleiermacher during this period and it seems unlikely that he had read any of his books. We know, however, that he travelled widely on the Continent in the 1820s, and that in 1822 he was learning German. In 1848 he wrote to "the English Schleiermacher" F.D. Maurice asking about translations.

Maurice replied on February 1, 1848: "Schleiermacher, I am afraid, is not translated, at least only one of his inferior, merely controversial books". This must have been Thirlwall's translation of the critical essay on St. Luke's Gospel.

Like Schleiermacher Erskine believed that mankind share in an organic or spiritual life derived from Christ. Scottish Calvinists tended to think of Christ in an individualistic kind of way, but Erskine returned to the Johannine and Pauline concept of union with him.

John compares this unity to the tree and the branches: "I am the vine, and you are the branches". (John.15.5.), and this is a metaphor often used by Erskine to explain how Christ could act as man's representative. He comments: "the Bible relates more to what God has done for grafting man again into the vine, than to what he requires from man as a duty".

It is impossible for man to perform independently a single spiritual act for, "the branch torn from the tree ceases to have its vegetable life, and is no longer capable of performing the functions of that life, because the sap of the root no longer circulates through it". Man cannot make the sap himself, and he is therefore made to be a continual receiver.
Humility is another name for spiritual order. It teaches the branch to abide in the vine, and to open its veins to receive the sap of the root. . . . Humility is nothing but truth, - and independence is nothing but a lie, for it honours the branch above the vine, and the member above the body, and the creature above the Creator, - it calls a stream a fountain, and a planet a sun.83

As man has nothing of his own which is good, blessedness consists of his being a receiver of God or a branch of the true vine. " The sap of a tree requires no laws to instruct it as to the nature of the fruit which it should produce. It is a law unto itself. If it were the wrong sap, no law could keep it right. So the law is just to let us know whether we have got the right sap or not in us. It describes the fruit of the true sap."84 Through the representation of Christ " the sap of the root circulates through every branch and leaf of the tree".85

Erskine remarks that religion has been called a life, and it really is a life, because man is taken off from his own root and grafted on to God:" The pearl of great price is eternal life . . . it is the being grafted on to the true vine . . . and the soul cannot be grafted on to the true vine unless it be first cut off from its own root. All, therefore, that we have to sell is self, and this must be sold before we can possess the pearl."86

(iv) Christ as the Universal Representative.

Finally we can conclude these remarks on the link between the prospective side of the atonement and the concept of representation, by making the general observation that Erskine's view of salvation as identical with sanctification seems incompatible with universal salvation. As he never asserts the universality of the atonement independently of character, the benefits of the atonement are connected with a belief in the atonement. Erskine admits that in
this sense Christ cannot be a representative of those who are not partakers of his life: "He is not the righteousness of those who do not believe in him, and this not from his unwillingness, but because it is impossible, for he cannot be the confidence of those who do not confide in him, as he cannot be the nourishment of those who do not feed on him." 87

Yet because in the incarnation God and man are made one in Christ, Christ is the prototype of the unity which is to be accomplished in the whole race:

"The love of God which gave Christ, is the immense ocean of the water of life, and men's souls are as ponds dug upon the shore, connected each of them, in virtue of Christ's work, with that ocean by a sluice; belief is the allowing the water to flow in, so that the pond becomes one with the ocean, and man becomes partaker of the divine nature, and has one life with the Father and the Son." 88

People are not meant to be separate units but to form an organised body under a head and representative who unites them to God and to each other. The gospel is for individuals, and yet there is a sense in which it is not an individual thing: "It is the voice of one common life-blood, as it circulates through the body, seeking to force its way into the numbed members which resist its entrance." 89

Accordingly, Christ has two roles: the first, in relation to believers, as "the elder brother of his disciples, and as head and high priest over the church of God." 90

His second role is to unbelievers as the Saviour of sinners, and the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. As his life progressed Erskine came to stress more and more the second of these roles, the role of Christ as the Saviour and representative of all. While accepting the fact of sin and its seriousness he came to believe in the finality of Christ. Christ had brought something new into the human race, and accomplished a work within the human nature which purged sin at its very root.

By the time of *The Brazen Serpent* Erskine was claiming, unlike Calvin,
but like the earlier thinkers Irenaeus and Athanasius and his contemporary Irving, that man's salvation is accomplished primarily in the very fact of the incarnation and only secondarily in Christ's death.

Melville Scott commented that Athanasius, in his mature life, added to this conception, and expressed it in an even fuller way, because he made the discovery, "that man's redemption was effected not so much upon the Cross, as in the Person of the Crucified; and that, while the Cross was receding into the dim past of history, the Humanity of Christ, perfected through suffering, was a lasting present. 'The things which he suffered for our sakes have passed away, but the things which belong to Him as Saviour remain for ever.'" 91
Notes

Chapter Two.


11. cf. Gregory of Nazianzus. "Anyone who has placed his hope in a human being who lacked a human mind is himself truly mindless, and does not deserve a complete salvation. For what was not assumed was not healed. What is saved is that which has been united with God. If it was half of Adam that fell, then half might be assumed and saved. But if it was the whole Adam that fell, it is united to the whole of him who was begotten, and gained complete salvation." ep.101.11. Quoted from Henry Bettenson. The Later Christian Fathers. (London: OUP, 1970) p. 109.


42. Ralph Wardlaw. *Discourses on the Principal Points of the Socinian Controversy*. (Glasgow: printed by Andrew Duncan, 1814.) p. 213.


51. Ibid.


55. Ibid.


69. Most reviewers of Erskine's books did not grasp the vital significance theologically of universal pardon. For instance one English critic asks: "Why is it easier or simpler to believe that God has already pardoned all the world, than to believe that he is, at all times, ready to pardon those who approach him in a spirit of penitence and faith". (British Critic & Theological Review. Vol. 5. No. IX. 1829.).

James Torrance points out that he was making the important distinction between evangelical and legal repentance. He makes this comment (he is speaking of McLeod Campbell who also taught universal pardon): "Thus, if, following Calvin and the Marrowmen, he interprets 'evangelical repentance' to mean - 'forgiveness, therefore repentance'; and NOT 'repentance, therefore forgiveness', in terms of the doctrine of the atonement he sees with Augustine and Calvin that the order is - 'forgiveness, therefore atonement' and NOT 'atonement, therefore forgiveness'. . . In his own language, the filial is prior to the judicial; NOT the judicial prior to the filial". ("The Contribution of McLeod Campbell to Scottish Theology" in Scottish Journal of Theology. 26.3. August 1973.).


74. John Calvin. Institutes. 3.2.2.


PART II. THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.


A question much discussed, at this time, was the extent of Christ's work, whether he died equally in the room of all so that all had free access to it, or whether his atoning work had a restricted reference and was accomplished only for the elect. High Calvinists believed that it was a particular redemption, for Christ's love was special. In his death there was a limited and specific purpose, and those for whom he died were infallibly saved.

Some of the Moral Government theologians, on the other hand, zealous in the cause of missions, held that the atonement was general; Christ's death removed certain obstacles in the way of the guilty obtaining pardon, but the pardon was only given upon their repentance. Christ laid the ground of salvation, and it was offered to all without any special reference to classes or individuals or to one person rather than to another. The limitation came when it was applied. Ralph Wardlaw for instance, believed that election was posterior to the atonement: "The place for election lies in the application of the remedy."¹

Particular redemption then was not always regarded as an essential part of penal substitution, although it was an essential tenet of high Calvinism or of hyper-Calvinism. In England Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) had struggled against the hyper-Calvinism prevalent among the Particular Baptists and helped to spread his views through the publication of his book The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation (1785). In Erskine's day though many were still attracted to
this system, and William Rushton, a baptist from Liverpool, wrote a response to Fuller in 1831, entitling his book *A Defence of Particular Redemption Wherein the Doctrine of Andrew Fuller Relative to the Atonement of Christ is Tried by the Word of God.*

While the question of the extent of the atonement remained then open to argument, there was one type of doctrine which made the salvation of any except the elect an impossibility. This was a pecuniary atonement when salvation was defined as an exact equivalent. In this theory sins were compared to a debt, and Christ undertook his work for a certain number of individuals discharging exactly what they owed. Andrew Fuller thought this was opposed both to the free bestowment of pardon, and to the general tenor of the Bible:

>If the atonement of Christ were considered as the literal payment of a debt; if the measure of his sufferings were according to the number of those for whom he died, and to the degree of their guilt, in such a manner as that, if more had been saved, or if those who are saved had been more guilty, his sorrows must have been proportionably increased; it might, for aught I know, be inconsistent with indefinite invitations. But it would be equally inconsistent with the free forgiveness of sin, and with sinners being directed to apply for mercy as suppliants, rather than as claimants. I conclude, therefore, that an hypothesis which in so many important points is manifestly inconsistent with the Scriptures, cannot be true. ²

In the early nineteenth century some theologians still stood up for this type of literal infliction of an identical punishment, but they were gradually becoming fewer, and by 1842 Marshall was able to comment: "I am not aware that there is now any individual of note by whom it is avowed."³
A. For Whom did Christ die?

(i) Universal Pardon.

Basically then Erskine's interest was in the very live question: for whom did Christ die? The central point he raised was this: was the atonement of Christ offered for all or only for those who were to be saved by him? Did he suffer and die for all men and women without exception or limitation or did he, as some holders of substitution claimed, suffer only for the benefit of his people, his sheep, his church. There was no question in Erskine's mind that Christ died for all, which in itself was regarded as a heresy by nearly all the religious teachers in Scotland, but he added to this his peculiar view that every member of the human race was pardoned unconditionally irrespective of his character and before he believed. Pardon, however, is not salvation: pardon is "laid down at the door of each heart", but sanctification is produced by belief in that pardon.

Up to the time of the publication of The Unconditional freeness of the Gospel (1828) Erskine had been held in high esteem for, as a reviewer of The Morning Watch No. VI remarked sourly "he was a kind of favourite with the religious public of Scotland, until he provoked his best friends to give him up". Moreover his sincerity and deep piety was acknowledged even by his enemies.

From this time, when he very explicitly set forth his belief in universal pardon, opposition steadily built up against Erskine. The British Critical and Theological Review felt his views rendered penitential devotion useless and weakened the doctrine of judgement and retribution.

Brought up as an Episcopalian, Erskine was willing to attend any church from which he received spiritual benefit. At this time he went to Ward Chapel Congregational Church Dundee in the company of his sister David and her husband Captain Paterson. Dr. Russell, a moderate Calvinist and the minister.
of Ward Chapel Congregational Church, Dundee asked Erskine to withdraw from the communion of his church, although he did it reluctantly: "it sustained the lofty character of a disinterested sacrifice to conscience and to duty". 8

(ii) Salvation not Universal.

Although at this time Erskine was not a universalist, he had already begun to express sympathy with the doctrine. Yet he could not reconcile it with the many texts in the bible which seemed to argue against universal restoration. The doctrine of election also was a stumbling block, and his continued adherence to it prevented him from drawing a universalist conclusion. On the other hand, he felt, if God was omnipotent love he must, in some way, be able to fulfil his purpose of saving every sinner whom he had created for love.

Erskine began to express universalist hopes in his letters as early as 1827, and Hanna seems to think that he had already cherished them for some years.9 He wrote to his cousin Miss Rachel Erskine in January 1827: "I have a hope (which I would not willingly think contrary to the revelation of mercy) of the ultimate salvation of all. I trust that He who came to bruise the serpent’s head will not cease his work of compassion until he has expelled the fatal poison from every individual of our race."10 He expressed the same sentiments to her again in April of that year: "You know the universality of my hopes for sinners. I hope that He who came to bruise the serpent’s head and to destroy the works of the devil, will not cease his labours of love till every particle of evil introduced into this world has been converted into good".11

In spite of these hopes expressed to his cousin, Erskine seems perplexed, in this period up to the publication of The Brazen Serpent, about how to interpret the biblical references on the question of whether any are finally lost, or whether all will be led to assent in the end to the truth of their actual forgiveness in Christ. In a letter written to Mr. and Mrs. Money in January
1829 he seems to conclude that the biblical evidence is against the ultimate salvation of all.

The Bible always charges man with being his own destroyer. It always charges man with resisting and refusing God’s love, even when that love is entreating him to return: Rom. 11. 4, 5. The Bible declares that God’s love embraces the whole human race, and that Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world: John 11. 16, 17; 1 John 11. 2; 1 Tim. 11. 1-6; 2 Cor. v. 19, 20, 21. Are all then redeemed or purchased by Christ? Yes. What, are all saved? No, only those who believe: Mark xvi. 16. Are any then of those for whom Christ died lost at last? Yes the Bible speaks of such: 2 Peter 11. 1. There we read of some who brought themselves swift destruction by denying the Lord who bought them. ... Why then does one man believe and another not? Faith is the operation of the electing grace of God. No man yields to the truth until he is compelled by this electing grace of God. This is the proper place for election; faith is given through the channel of election. But the atonement is for all, and the invitation and to command to believe in and enjoy it is for all. When a man is condemned for unbelief, you cannot suppose that it is for not believing in God’s love to others; assuredly it must be for disbelieving God’s love to himself, for disbelieving that Christ died for him; and if he is condemned for disbelieving it, must it not have been indeed true that Christ did die for him, for otherwise it would not have been wrong in him to disbelieve it? So the Bible says to you and to me: ‘God so loved thee as to give His Son to be a propitiation for thy sins’. I cannot see how one can arrive at a steady assurance on any other ground, for we cannot know our election except from marks in ourselves, and that is not the way of true assurance. 12

For Erskine then universal pardon seems to have been a half-way house to the true universalism which characterised his later thought. Henderson describes this universal forgiveness as one of Erskine’s peculiar ideas; 13 and
indeed in holding it he differed from both moderate and high Calvinists because they believed that the sequence to belief is pardon. Erskine, on the contrary, declared that the pardon of the gospel was for all men, independently of their character and whether they believed it or not. It could be possessed apart from the sanctification which is produced by the faith in the pardon healing the spiritual diseases of the heart.

B. **Origin of the Idea of Universal Pardon.**

(i) **Comparison with Arminianism and the Theology of the Marrow Men.**

Erskine believed then that Christ died for all men and laid down his life for all alike; the unlimited and general invitations of the Gospel, he felt, confirmed this view. Grace must be shown then in the actual application of this to the elect. In his discussion of the subject, like the Marrow Men before him Erskine was anxious to avoid anything approaching Arminianism, for he believed this system set forth man and not God: "He said that Arminianism was a wolf in sheep's clothing, but Calvinism was a sheep in wolf's clothing."¹⁴

According to the prevailing popular understanding of Arminianism, Christ died for all men and every man, for those who will perish as well as for those who will ultimately be saved, thus putting them by the exercise of free will in a position to save themselves. James Arminius (1560-1609) died before his views could be formally stated but they were put forward by forty-six ministers at Gouda in 1610 in the Five Articles, and it is by no means certain that they can be read as saying that everyone has the freewill to accept Christ without the grace of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

This, as in Erskine, still leaves us with the problem of the mystery of election but Erskine's quarrel with Arminianism was in fact about another

- 142 -
point. He called it man's religion when pardon is not regarded as a thing already bestowed, but as an ultimate object to be obtained by prayer, or faith, or holiness: "... every religion which does not declare forgiveness to be already past, but teaches that it is to be attained by faith, or prayer, or repentance, and which thus makes it an object of hope, and not of faith, - that every such religion must in the nature of things be false, because its necessary tendency is not to produce love, but selfishness, and to train the mind in the very element of rebellion". 16

Henderson supports the view that neither the doctrine of Erskine, nor that of his friend John McLeod Campbell, belonged to the controversies between Calvinists and Arminians. At his trial Campbell, "explicitly guarded himself against being so misunderstood. 'No two doctrines', said he, 'can be more widely different. Arminianism is the sanctifying with the name of religion pure selfishness. After a man is supposed to have repented and believed on that system, he is only then in that condition of right to come to God with confidence in which according to the true doctrine of the Scriptures, he was placed by the sacrifice of Christ, as a propitiation for his sins; ...".17

Erskine's ideas were opposed then not only to the views of the strict Calvinist who believed that God loved the elect alone, and held the doctrine of particular redemption, but also to the Arminians who believed that Christ died for the sins of all mankind in general, and every individual in particular, but that sin continued to be imputed to the individual until they believed in him.

His views also differed profoundly from those of the Marrow Men, such as Hog, Thomas Boston and Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine for, unlike Thomas Erskine, the theologians of the Secession did not use the expression "Christ died for all" but held the doctrines of special grace and effectual calling, believing that by these means "those given to Christ from eternity by the Father are in due time brought into a saving union with Christ and his work." They did, however, contend for the doctrine that Christ "was dead for all", in order to bring out the gospel
doctrine that Christ had made a universal atonement, in sufficiency and merit, and that there existed no barrier on the way, which could prevent man's coming to Christ. What they were anxious to avoid was the idea of special relationship, as all the elect were chosen from eternity by an irreversible decree: "...the Fathers of the Secession were accustomed, along with other orthodox divines, to restrict the terms, - substitute, - representative, - surety, - to Christ as undertaking for the elect; and hence they scrupled not to affirm, that he represented and suffered for them only."^{18}

(ii) **Comparison with Moise Amyraut and James Fraser.**

On the other hand Erskine's doctrine had real resemblances to the views of Moise Amyraut (1596-1664), a French theologian who was tried for heresy and acquitted. His views are known as hypothetical or conditional universalism or the double-reference theory of the atonement; he combined an ideal universalism, and an actual particularism, a particular election of God's love and a particular redemption by Christ's death. He changed the phrase used by the Canons of Dort from "Christum mortuum esse sufficienter pro omnibus, sed efficaciter pro electis" to "Christum mortuum esse sufficienter sed non actualiter pro omnibus", thus putting forward a hypothetical universalism and a real limitation on those actually saved.

God wishes the salvation of all men, and none are excluded from it by any divine decree, so every person then could say that Christ died for him and was his substitute. The unbelief of a sinner could not alter the fact of Christ's dying for him. Yet as no person is able to believe of their own free will, the universal intention does not determine the actual salvation of anyone. God elects some, and grants them a special measure of his spirit and saving faith.

The central question at the trial of Amyraut was, what changes the
hypothetical universal reference into a real particular reference? Is it the action of God or man? Or is this salvation, as in the popular interpretation of the Arminian system, partially accomplished by God, but supplemented by the faith of the believer? Amyraut said God, because he thought that human beings would not of their own initiative repent and believe, and so did Erskine, and so did Campbell when these questions were raised at Row in 1831. Yet in Amyraut’s case it was held that his views did not differ in any important respect from the divines at Dort and he was allowed to continue in his professorship until his death in 1664. McLeod Campbell’s teaching on universal pardon, on the other hand, led to his deposition from the holy ministry in 1831. It raises the question of whether the battle was simply one of words, for Amyraut took care that he did not impugn any of the Five Points as set forth in the Synod of Dort.

An even more interesting comparison can be made between Erskine’s doctrine and that of James Fraser (1639-1699), commonly known as Fraser of Brae. We know that Erskine had studied the teaching of Fraser because some extracts from Fraser’s Treatise on Justifying Faith were appended to Extracts of Letters to a Christian Friend by a Lady, a book to which Erskine had contributed an introductory essay. Fraser of Brae, although an ultra-Calvinist in many respects, yet held that Christ’s work had a certain universal reference.

Andrew Thomson who produced his book The Doctrine of Universal Pardon Considered and Refuted in 1830, with a long appendix entirely devoted to refuting the views of Erskine, disputes that Erskine’s doctrine at all resembled that of Fraser: “Mr. Erskine’s doctrine makes no account of faith as of getting pardon; but Mr. Fraser makes faith absolutely necessary for that purpose . . . Mr. Erskine makes salvation and sanctification the same; but Mr. Fraser includes pardon under salvation . . .”

In fact an examination of Justifying Faith shows a remarkable resemblance
between Fraser's ideas and those of Erskine, though Fraser does not use the term universal pardon, or put across his thoughts in quite the same terms. Fraser begins by asking about what the grounds of believing are, and his answer is the promises of the gospel. A promise, he goes on to say, is different from a donation for with a promise we have something in hand given to us and have the ground to expect more. The Covenant is called a promise and it gives title and claim to the thing itself.

Fraser admits that it is commonly denied that unbelievers are in any way involved in the Covenant of Grace, and the benefits flowing from it until they believe: "the promises confess no right to the thing promised until they are clothed by faith". 20 Yet he wonders if this view can be quite correct: "the promises are said to belong to them, even those for whom Paul had great sorrow and grief of heart; they cannot promise themselves benefits from the gospel till they believe . . . yet they have such interest in the privileges of the Gospel, as they may lawfully seek, call for, take, receive and make use of the things that are offered; in respect of which title and right, these things are said to be theirs and belong to them". 21 Like Erskine he feels that assurance is based on the universality of the promise and that faith flows from it: "if the promises were not absolute which convey the inheritance they could not be sure or certain, seeing they depend upon something in us". 22 He goes on to write: "You will say, Is not faith the condition of the promise? ANSV. Faith properly is not the condition of the promise, for the promise is given before faith, and is the seed of faith . . .". 23

He adds, "the absolute promise of life and salvation through Christ is the seed and ground of faith, and not grounded on faith." 24 Yet he cautions unbelievers, in words that could have been written by Erskine: "though you have meat in your house and it belong to you, unless you eat it, it will not preserve your life". 25

Fraser's Treatise on Justifying Faith was considered so controversial that
the first part was not published until 1722 and the second in 1749. According to James Walker it caused quite a commotion in two communities in the middle of the seventeenth century, the Cameronian and the Antiburgher. Two of the five ministers in the Cameronian presbytery agreed with Fraser, and a minister of the Secession was deposed for holding his views.

Thomson, who seemed to dislike equally Erskine, Fraser and the Lady, comments with the venom of tone and rancorous spirit that seemed to characterise the whole controversy: "I wonder Mr. Erskine did not look better about him before he allowed such an Appendix to appear under the sanction of his name — though, indeed, that need scarcely be wondered at, after he has given such marked approbation to the epistolary effusions of the deceased Lady — which are about as poor specimens of theology as any living lady of his school is capable of producing".

C. Controversy Over Universal Pardon.

(i) Evangelical or Legal Repentance?

Both sides in the dispute over universal pardon felt strongly that the views of the opposite side were demonstrably false, and their antagonism was sincere and complete. Simeon, in spite of his earlier admiration of Erskine, was vehement in his opposition: "this doctrine, in its extremes as held by Erskine, is fearful." It was, he said, "a fatal heresy, and will cost a man his soul." 28

The author of an anonymous pamphlet published in 1830 called universal pardon "unspeakably shocking!": "those unhappy and guilty men, who go down to hell with the free and full forgiveness of God in their right hand." Surely he asks, "the blotting out of sin is not before, but in believing the Divine testimony." 29

Erskine who was not so much interested in speculative doctrine as in felt intuition, admitted sometimes his faulty logic and he once remarked: "This view
may be bad logic; that may pass with a friend: I know it to be true. His intuition and his religious feeling told him that God could not call upon men and women to believe unless he first forgives their sins. He called it conditional forgiveness when they were required to have faith in order to be pardoned.

James Torrance has pointed out the tendency, in the Scottish church, as indeed at times in all churches, "to turn God's covenant of grace into a contract. . . . In the Bible, the form of the covenant is such that the indicatives of grace are always prior to the obligations of law and human obedience. 'I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, I have loved you and redeemed you and brought you out of the land of Egypt, therefore keep my commandments'. But legalism puts it the other way round. 'If you keep the law God will love you! If you keep the Sabbath day and carry the yoke of the Torah, the Kingdom of God will come! ' The imperatives are made prior to the indicatives. The covenant has been turned into a contract, and God's grace made conditional on men's obedience.31

This was precisely what Erskine believed had happened in the common system of his day: the Scottish Calvinists had made law prior to grace, and thought of grace as a reward for merit. Because pardon was made conditional upon an individual having faith, that person set out to acquire faith and pursued a certain course of conduct to demonstrate that he had faith. Faith in turn was made into a meritorious act, just as much as the doctrine of justification by works. Erskine called the notion "that man must do something, or feel something, or believe something in order to make God love him"32 man's religion.

For until a person knows himself to be actually forgiven, he must either forget God altogether, or occupy himself with efforts to obtain that forgiveness. This means that the individual is not serving God, or loving him for himself, or glorifying him, but following his own selfish interests and seeking God to secure his own safety.

Erskine adds, that unless the work of Christ has already put away sin, and
unless a person is already under grace because Christ has the Holy Spirit for him, and unless Christ is already within him as his representative, he is not actually in a condition to receive God's word. Erskine still adhered to the doctrine of the total depravity of human nature, believing that man lacked the power or inclination to return to God apart from divine grace. "No man, then, can do a single act which is not in itself sinful, until he knows himself forgiven."33

In Erskine's theological system the love of God is the primary truth, and it is on the character and word of God that personal assurance of salvation rests. God is looking on everyone with fatherly love. No one has to earn that love, so forgiveness or pardon comes before repentance: "the love of my God is not diminished by his disapprobation of me."34 If pardon is free and unmerited, it must also be universal.

Behind the idea of universal pardon then lay the truly biblical distinction between evangelical and legal repentance, and behind them both the question of assurance of faith. Erskine and his followers felt that if all sins are not forgiven, no one can be assured of their personal forgiveness. "Unless you know that God has forgiven you, and that He loves you, you cannot have confidence in Him, you cannot have peace with Him, you cannot open your heart to Him, you cannot love Him. It is the belief of His forgiving love to yourself which alone can open your heart to Him. This is the true meaning of the doctrine of personal assurance."35 It was this reason that the Gareloch heretics declared that no one could be a believer who did not know that his sins are forgiven him, and that God had pardoned him in particular.

(ii) Universal Pardon as the Basis of Assurance.

At the time Erskine wrote The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel there were two main views on the subject of assurance: the first group believed that assurance of personal salvation arose from holiness of life, and it was based on
the teaching of Edwards, Dwight, and Bellamy and held by the majority of contemporary British thinkers.

This school thought that sanctification and good works provided a sign of election, and they examined their lives for signs of the fruits of the spirit in order to discover whether or not they were among the elect. While they were told that many had to wait a long time for infallible assurance of personal salvation, nevertheless it was possible to obtain it, "by the Spirit enabling them to discern in themselves those graces to which the promises of life are made, and bearing witness with their spirits that they are the children of God, . . ."36

Yet Calvin had admitted that this was "an inferior aid, a prop to our faith, not the foundation on which it rests."37 He insists that the individual turn his gaze away from himself for assurance relates to the object of faith, and rests on God's mercy alone. With a limited atonement, however, the problem remains: if and how one may be certain that one is a child of God. How can anyone know that they are among the elect? How can anyone be sure of their salvation? There can be no firm assurance, according to Calvin, by good works: "they begin to estimate it by their good works, nothing will be weaker or more uncertain; works, when estimated by themselves, no less proving the divine displeasure by their imperfection, than his good-will by their incipient purity."38

The second group held a different view of the basis of assurance, rejecting the way of self examination by way of introspection for signs of grace, and insisting that justifying faith necessarily carried an assurance of salvation with it. They taught that faith not only produced the objective belief that Christ died for sinners, but the subjective belief that Christ died for me.

This school is associated with the names of Hervey and Marshall, and it was popularised in Scotland by The Marrow of Modern Divinity, written by Edward Fisher of Oxford, and first published in 1646. The Marrow men
taught that assurance of faith is necessary to a Christian, and that it was part of the direct act of faith to believe that Christ died for me. Henderson notes that Fraser of Brae, who we have already noticed made a lasting impression on Erskine, was "much helped in his religious difficulties by Luther, Calvin, and others, but more than all else 'by that book called The Marrow of Modern Divinity.’"39

In Bellamy’s Letters and Dialogues between Theron, Paulinus and Aspasio, the opinions of both these opposing parties were voiced through dialogues between Theron and Paulinos. Theron, in quotations from The Marrow of Modern Divinity and Hervey’s Dialogues, begins by supporting the view that assurance is given to all true believers, and gives their definitions of saving faith: "It is a real persuasion in my heart, that Jesus Christ is mine, and that I shall have life and salvation by him; that whatever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for me." - "And the language of faith is this; 'Pardon is mine; grace is mine; Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine.'"40 Paulinus in return shows Theron that his belief is built on a false foundation, and that assurance must stand the test of self-examination, and the appeal to fruits, or it can easily result in Antinomianism.

Erskine first became interested in the question of assurance when he wrote "An Introductory Essay to the Works of the Rev. John Gambold" in 1822 which was published in the Collins’ Select Author series. He felt that Gambold (1711-1771), member of the Holy Club and friend of the Wesleys, especially illustrated the morbid nature of much Calvinistic religion, and the part which joy in the assurance of faith plays in salvation.

The question of assurance then was Gambold’s problem, and in the introductory essay to his works he describes how Gambold had tried to gain perfect goodness by his own efforts, but could not advance a single step. During a period of deep despair it was suggested to him by a Moravian brother
that a full satisfaction had already been made by Christ to the broken laws of the moral government. Guilt could not be taken away by any scheme of his own but Christ's blood had done it, and this pardon was universal.

Through this new understanding of God's measureless love to all, Erskine went on to explain, Gambold gained the peace and joy of the assurance of his love towards him personally. He gave up his own unsuccessful efforts to obtain holiness and walked by faith, taking a child-like joy and gladness in universal pardon and in sin blotted out. It was the assurance that God forgives men their sins freely and that all sin is pardoned that enabled Gambold to feel certain that his own life was accepted, and to make progress along the Christian path.

Over the next ten years intense alarm arose in Scotland over this concept of universal pardon and assurance of faith, for Erskine had made it much more explicit in _The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel_. The Marrow men did not hold the opinion that pardon is universal, for they acknowledged that no one is pardoned until they believe, but they thought that in the act of believing it becomes true.

Erskine then was now leading a third group, which has to be distinguished from both of the others, for neither based assurance on a pardon extending to every member of the human race before they believed. To Erskine pardon was a free gift, and it was essential to faith and came before faith; it was the antecedent and not the consequent of faith. For faith itself rests on a confidence reliance, not merely that Christ "is a Saviour, but your Saviour; not merely... that he is willing to save, but that he will save you."41

Dislike of the Gospel taught by Erskine and his party centred on the doctrine of assurance: "No man is warranted to regard himself as an object of divine love, till he actually believe on the Son of God","42 declared William Hamilton for the
orthodox side. To which a follower of Erskine replied, "Infinite wisdom and love has 'designed Christ for me', that is the truth believed by every man who believes in the Gospel. Christ is not his in consequence of any change wrought upon him; but in discovering that Christ is his, by the free gift of God, - he is changed - he enters into rest - he is reconciled to God".  

It developed into a bitter and vituperative conflict with Andrew Thomson complaining that the erroneous concept of universal pardon rose out of this "high doctrine of assurance of faith... The doctrine I refer to consists in making the assurance of a man's own personal salvation to be the very essence of his faith."  

John Mcleod Campbell was calmer and more reasonable and was careful in fact to distinguish assurance of faith from assurance of salvation believing them to be two distinct things. Assurance of faith could be required from all believers for based on God's love and the universal atonement, there is present in the mind of the individual the certainty that he is the object of God's love, has the Holy Spirit and has received all that is necessary to lead a life of holiness.

"It is no doubt, when abounding in the assurance of faith, that, if the eye turns inwardly, and the thoughts are directed to our own state, we shall also enjoy the assurance of being in a state of salvation." Yet the converted person can not necessarily always enjoy a continuous confidence of being in a state of assurance of salvation, for there may be dark periods when the consciousness of being a redeemed child of God, and an heir of glory, are not present. Both the orthodox party and the moderates considered, in any case, that universal pardon as the basis of either assurance was unscriptural, and they united against John Mcleod Campbell in the Row controversy.

John McLeod Campbell stood firm in this severe controversy for he found, in his parish work, that the Federal Calvinist belief that Christ was the
substitute only of the elect brought little joy, for the individual lacked the assurance that he was in fact among the elect. This knowledge of the religious state of his people, to whom he could bring little comfort when they were sick, bereaved or in spiritual distress because they doubted their own election, convinced him of the importance of his teaching on assurance.

Campbell felt, like Erskine, that unless all sins are forgiven no one can be assured of their personal forgiveness. "Many said 'Believe that Christ died for you, and your faith will be an evidence to yourself that you are one of those for whom Christ died'. He said 'Believe that Christ died for you because he died for all mankind'.

(iii) Controversy Over Universal Pardon Spreads to the Scottish Methodists.

That this question was causing great agitation among other religious denominations besides the national Church, is shown by several letters in the Scottish correspondence of the Methodist, the Rev. Jabez Bunting (1800-1857). A letter from John Partis Haswell (1790-1870), who was superintendent of the Edinburgh Circuit from 1830 to 1833, reveals the progress the new opinions were making in Scotland.

Perhaps you may have heard if a new divisity scheme now making rapid progress in Scotland - called here the Rowe Heresy from the name of the place where Mr. Campbell first propagated the sentiment to their scheme. Jesus died for all - the world is in a state of pardon - A pardon is the object of faith, not the Atonement - You were pardoned 1830 years ago - all you have to do is believe it - the sentiment is spreading especially among the higher classes. I have just heard that Mr. Erskine one of their principal men is to preach in the house of an Advocate in the New Town today at 2 o'clock - the Churches are shut against them though they declare they do not separate from the Church of Scotland.47
John McLean from Leith, wrote for advice: "A few of our people in this circuit have lately been professing certain opinions which I think contrary to sound doctrine. One or two persons whom I greatly respect think I am mistaken & contend that the views in question are not only scriptural but in perfect accordance with our standard works in theology. ... They hold that in virtue of the death of Christ God is now reconciled to all men - that this fact ministers are commissioned to publish to the world; and the belief of it brings men into a state of justification". 48

He goes on to formulate the points on which he would like an opinion:

1. Is there any difference between saying that God is reconciled to the sinner, and that the sinner is forgiven?
2. Is it proper to say to ungodly sinners that they are already forgiven, or even to penitents?
3. Is remission of sins the object upon which faith lays hold; or does it take place after we believe?
4. Are forgiveness and justification two distinct blessings, so much so that the former may be enjoyed without the latter?

There is a mighty stir creating in all parts of Scotland by the opinions above stated. It seems probable that a large secession will take place from the Kirk and other bodies, headed by Mr. Erskine and Rev. Mr. Campbell of Row. 49 Some of the Methodists at Leith thought that the new views were in accordance with Methodist theology, and particularly with Wesley's Notes on the New Testament and his first four volumes of sermons. 50

We know now that this large secession did not take place, but the period after 1830 were critical years when excitement grew and opposition to the new ideas, which had now become linked with the actual reappearance of the spiritual gift of speaking with tongues, ran high. Pulpits were used to combat the supposed heresy and many hostile letters were sent to journals. Even the fairly liberal Edinburgh Review contained an article entitled "Pretended
Miracles - Irving, Scott, Erskine. This was the time of the heresy trials and interference from the church courts.

It was a critical time partly because of the theological issues involved, and while there was not a secession they nevertheless attracted a great many followers particularly in the western counties of Scotland. Part of Erskine's attraction, as The Morning Watch explains, was that he had taken "the great truths of revelation out of the slang phraseology of the meeting-house", and because of his sincerity and zeal and undoubted literary gifts had made them personal. This newspaper goes on to comment: "The nomenclature of Calvinism is easily learnt most correctly", but it is for "each individual to examine himself as to his principles, separated from the terms in which he may have imbibed them". Erskine's ability to help his readers in this process may account for the immense popularity of his books.

D. The Question of a Limited Atonement.

Not all the parties anxious for reform in Scotland agreed with Erskine about universal pardon; there were those who urged a middle course and an avoidance of extremes: "If Erskine and Campbell place you beneath the burning rays of the south, so that you are well nigh scorched to death, by and by, Hamilton and Burns place you beneath the very fringes of the polar star, amid regions of eternal ice and snow, and there you can stand cold as an iceberg." Moderate Calvinists desired to preserve substitution, but they felt that a limited atonement marred the character of every attribute in God. It made his mercy inadequate and exclusive, and presented him as not ready to forgive. It impaired his justice, and undermined his benevolence, and the biblical idea that
God is good, and that he loved the world and gave his son that the world might be saved. The Bible represents God as having thoughts of peace and good-will and not of evil towards all people.

Moreover, they felt, it clashed with a sincere invitation of the gospel. Can you call sinners to repentance on the ground that perhaps they are elected? They argued that the call of the gospel is universal, it invites all to Christ and the death of Christ therefore concerns every person in the world.

(i) Substitution and a Limited Atonement.

The question we have to return to then is whether an atonement universal in its design, but limited in its result, is compatible with the doctrine of substitution. The thesis of a book published by Thomas Jenkyn in 1833, and entitled On the Extent of the Atonement in its Relation to God and the Universe, was that there was no intrinsic connection between substitution and an atonement limited in its design to a chosen select number, although for historic reasons this was the type of atonement preached most often in the Scotland of his day.

The opposing party, on the other hand, of whom A.J. Haldane was a spokesman, argued that although Jenkyn and his school used the word substitution their system did not seem to require it, and they gave it a different meaning from that which it bore in orthodox theology. To the high Calvinists substitution was a theological term which they interpreted in a very strict sense: they held that if Christ's work is conceived of in terms of a general reference and a particular application, the nature and character of his work is so changed, that it ceases to be substitution.

For instance, an atonement for sin in general cannot be vicarious, for it does not apply infallibly to any member of the human race. One thing that is
implied in the term substitution is that Christ's sufferings are vicarious: he stands in the room of the elect or in their stead. To take another example, an indefinite atonement avoids imputation: if the individual's sins are not transferred on to Christ, or the pardon on to the offender, how can God's justice be said to be satisfied? High Calvinists felt that any scheme of salvation which did not include the idea of imputation had to be rejected, for it destroyed the concept of atonement altogether.

Jenkyn, on the other hand, considered the idea that God loved every man to the extent of sending his son to die for him to be of crucial importance. He did not think that there is ever any hint in the scriptures that the persons for whom Christ does not intercede are the persons for whom he did not die. Christ's intercession is limited on other principles, but not by the atonement:

"there are many references to classes for whom he died in vain."54

Nor does he think that Calvin in his Institutes ever spoke of a limited atonement: "I have consulted The Institutes for the very purpose of ascertaining this point, and I could not find one passage that asserted any such doctrine as that Christ died for the elect only, or that he did not die for the reprobates . . . he thought the doctrine of predestination safe and invulnerable without the abutment of particular redemption".55

The debate is still continuing: notable books published recently are R.T. Kendall's Calvin and English Calvinism (1979) which argues for a universal atonement, Paul Helm's Calvin and Calvinists (1982) which takes the view that Calvin taught a limited atonement and Charles Bell's Calvin and Scottish Theology (1985) which discusses in particular the connection of these opposing concepts with the doctrine of assurance.
(ii) **Schools of Thought in Scotland.**

It has already been explained that there were generally speaking three different schools of thought in Scotland at this time, and Erskine and his party became a fourth. A declining number of Calvinists tended to represent sin as a debt, and set forth the atonement in terms of the literal payment of that debt. The number of the saved and the degrees of suffering of Christ were connected together; if they varied in number, or had their sins been more or less in amount, he would not have suffered the identical punishment due to them. He suffers for a certain number of offenders only, for the others no penalty is suffered and no promise made for their salvation. This system is what Jenkyn called, "the commercial redemption which degrades the Gospel, and fetters its ministers: which sums up the worth of a stupendous moral transaction by arithmetic, and, with its span, limits what is infinite".\(^{56}\)

The second class of atonement theology was gaining ground, and had many similarities to the first, except that its exponents professed to have given up the old weight and measure system, and commercial views of the justice of God. This was the version of particular redemption set out in the later works of A.J. Haldane and it spoke of the *infinite sufficiency* of the atonement, but *definite intention* or *limited destination*. Haldane believed that immediately after the Fall God divided mankind into two families, the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, and salvation was limited to the one and not to the other. While the atonement was *sufficient* for all, it had a speciality of design, for it was the intention of God to save only a certain number of people, and it was these in whose place Christ stood, and for whom he made propitiation.

This school believed, then, that it did not follow that because Christ died for all, the salvation of all was among the objects of his death. He died for all but not in the same sense or to the same extent; all were not equally atoned

- 159 -
for or equally redeemed. This argument of course, led their opponents to assert that without this speciality of purpose for them, a large proportion of mankind were never in a salvable condition.

A third type, known then as *the new system*, was that of the moral government theologians, and they put forward a view of indefinite or universal atonement, with a special or particular application. Their dispute with the second school was not about the number saved for both admitted that it was only the elect who were saved, and they agreed that the gospel was addressed to every one, and could be preached to every creature. The point at issue in their discussions was whether the atonement was made for all, or whether it was made only for the elect.

These last two groups quarrelled particularly about the use of the term *sufficiency*, and George Payne later wrote a pamphlet about this problem entitled *Remarks Upon a Pamphlet, entitled "The Doctrine of the Universal Atonement Examined"*, ascribed to David Thomas of Mauchline. (1844) Payne felt that an atonement without a design to save all men could not be a *sufficient* atonement for all men: "... if the death of Christ - without a purpose to save the non-elect - constituted a sufficient atonement for them, then, I ask, what is atonement? What is its essential element? In what does it consist? Whatever be included in it, it is as manifest as that two and two make four, that a purpose to save is not included in it; for here, i.e. in the case of the non-elect, we have an atonement without a purpose to save."\(^57\)

Again both schools admitted that God is sovereign in the bestowment of salvation. Faith is the gift of God, and it is election and divine influence that ensures salvation. The moral government theologians admitted that had there been no election there could have been no salvation. They affirmed, however, in contrast to the second group that Christ made atonement for all mankind,
and the chosen were saved by faith produced by the operation of the Spirit. Their critics were quick to point out that this still could be interpreted as partiality or favouritism on the part of God, as grace is presumably withheld in the case of the reprobates. 58

(iii) Substitution in Relation to these Three Schools of Thought.

Turning to substitution and its relation to these three systems, in the first, which is generally called hyper-Calvinism, Christ is the substitute of the elect only, for in "this pitiful process of commercial reckoning" 59 if other sinners desired salvation it could not be obtained, because of the very nature of the redemption. If more were to be saved, Christ would have had to endure more suffering by making a second atonement, for the precise amount of the debt must be paid.

The second system, that of infinite value and unlimited sufficiency but limited design, still makes the salvation of those for whom it was not intended impossible. Even if there is a superfluity of merit in the atonement, if Christ did not substitute himself for them they cannot be saved for justice would be violated.

Payne accused the second group of confused thinking on this point. If there can be no salvation without substitution, he reasoned, and if Christ is not the substitute of the whole world, but only stood in the room of a certain number, then the atonement could not be sufficient to save the whole world.

"I ask Mr. Thomas how - if Christ was the substitute of his own people merely, if he redeemed them, and them only - how this atonement can be in itself sufficient for the salvation of the whole world? What! sufficient for the salvation of those whose substitute he was not? - of those for whom he paid no price of redemption? How can that be?" 60

Payne himself in common with members of the new system, argued that
Christ made atonement for sin and not for individual sinners. He made
atonement for all mankind without exception, for those who will not be
eventually saved, as well as for those saved. He is then a universal substitute
in that he laid a basis for the deliverance of all people.

If there is no limitation placed on the atonement, either in sufficiency or in
destination, the difference between the elect and the non-elect cannot be found
in the atonement itself. These moral government theologians argued that the
system of the second group, which spoke of an atonement unlimited in its
intrinsic value but destined for the elect alone was, in many respects, on the
same footing as the exact equivalent or limited sufficiency theory. They gave
precedence, therefore, of the atonement to election, although still adhering
firmly to the Calvinist doctrine of necessity.

(iv) Controversy between Haldane and Payne.

This thoroughly Calvinistic position in the matter of necessity and freewill
could not satisfy Haldane in view of some of the other issues. Haldane argued
that the idea that election was posterior to the atonement bypassed substitution
altogether, for it follows that if men and women are saved not by the
atonement itself but by its application, then the Holy Spirit, not Christ, is the
Saviour: "although the death of Christ is admitted to be the basis of salvation, if sinners
are saved, not by the Atonement, but by its application, the Spirit, who applies it, is
undoubtedly the Saviour."61

The work of Christ, continued Haldane, in its several parts can be
distinguished but cannot be separated: the atonement and redemption are one.
In the atonement Adam's sin is imputed to Christ, and Christ's righteousness
imputed to the sinner. How could Christ be the substitute of all if all their

- 162 -
sins were not laid upon him? How could Christ be the representative of all if his righteousness was not imputed to all?

Payne admitted that in his scheme it is in the first instance a *conditional* substitution, and that only if a person repents and believes the gospel can Christ become his *personal* substitute. Yet, he believed that only in this way could the universal offer be supported and the benefits of Christ’s death be available to all: "there is now no obstacle on the part of God to the salvation, no barrier between any individual of the human family and eternal life, but his want of will to go to the Saviour." He could not of course confirm that any person would go to the saviour without divine influence, because of the destitution on the part of man of the will to do good.

(v) Erskine and the Rowites.

We now come to the fourth group, and it was the problem of personal assurance which was concerning Erskine and his friend McLeod Campbell. They were not satisfied with infinite value theory of the second group, or even with the general belief of the third school that the atonement was intended for all: "You are not satisfied with the simple belief that God is a merciful God; and that he pardons the sins of the most unworthy... No, all this goes for nothing unless the man can unhesitatingly say that Christ died for him..." said Dr. Burns in his attack on Erskine. Burns thought that if the belief that Christ died for all implied speciality of purpose for all, it also meant universal salvation.

Erskine and his followers made it quite clear that their concern was with the question of whether Christ had died for each man personally, and they declared that they could not assent either to the general belief taught by the Moral Government theologians, because it was contrary to the teaching of the Reformers. One of Erskine’s supporters issued this challenge:
And this is what you call assurance of faith - the belief that there must be salvation in Christ, that there is redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Pray, wherein does this differ from the faith of the DEVIL set forth by the martyr LATIMER? ' The devil has a general faith: he believeth that Christ has come into this world, and hath made a reconciliation between God and man: he knoweth that there shall be remission of our sins.'

Erskine was much more impetuous than Campbell, and when possessed of an idea would go far beyond Campbell's position. Campbell could not always go along with Erskine's speculations, and he is more cautious in his interpretation of what is meant by universal pardon: "the judicial barrier which guilt interposes between the sinner and God" has been removed; "so making the fact of being a sinner no hindrance to his coming to God as to a reconciled Father."

(vi) Universal Salvation?

Up to the time when he wrote The Brazen Serpent, then, Erskine was still thinking in terms of a final judgement, and of a choice between "the narrow way which leads to life, and the broad way which leads to destruction." Yet there are real difficulties in taking the position that all are pardoned by the death of Christ, and yet he only effectively saves some. As John Stevens put it, "And in that final day, many will go away into everlasting punishment; in ample proof of their guiltiness, and of Christ's never having suffered for their sins according to the scriptures. And how absurd is it, to stand asserting, that Christ has redeemed from the power of the devil, a people over whom the devil continues to reign, to the end of their days!"

Again, if universal pardon reached beyond the individuals actually saved by it, then it did seem that it was a general benefit rather than a work in the very room and stead of the individual. Moreover, if there is a need for individual response to ensure salvation as distinct from pardon, then faith itself becomes a
work supplementary to that offered by Christ.

Erskine tried again and again to deal with some of these problems and to put into words his religious unsettlement on the whole subject. He insisted, for instance, that no one was condemned for having broken the law, for the pardon of the gospel delivers all from the condemnation of the law. They are condemned for the rejection of the love of God which is the very substance of the gospel: "... they shall not be condemned for a broken law ... and shall be condemned for a rejected gospel." This idea may have come from Fraser of Brae who also believed that reprobates, in their rejection of the gospel offer, become subject not to law but to gospel wrath.

Later Erskine gave up this mediating position because the universality of God’s love became his deepest conviction. If this God of love created man, as a race, for eternal blessedness how could he abandon his intention in creation and condemn some to everlasting punishment? He came to believe that God could not accept the destruction of his original plan whereby all men and women would grow to know him and be like him.

He began to see the loving compassion of God for all as a higher truth than the seeking of personal salvation often tainted by selfishness and the desire to secure individual comfort. He suggested that everyone had a place in the body of humanity under Christ, and that one day they would all be able to take that place and attain salvation. All is not immediately accomplished in all men, it may take endless ages to accomplish, but it is yet anticipated in the purpose and foreknowledge of God.
Notes.

Chapter Three.


10. Ibid.


- 166 -
36. The Larger Catechism agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster with the Assistance of Commissioners from the Church of Scotland. A. 80.
37. John Calvin. Commentary on 1 John v. 3-7.
38. Calvin. Institutes Bk. III. Ch. 4. 19.
41. Lay Member of the Church of Scotland. A Letter to the Author of "The Gareloch Heresy Tried. p. 10.

43. Lay Member of the Church of Scotland. A Letter to the Author of "The Gairloch Heresy Tried" occasioned by his Reply to the Lay Member of the Church of Scotland. (Greenock: R.B. Lusk, 1830). p. 12.


46. John McLeod Campbell. Reminiscences p. 27.


64. Lay Member of the Church of Scotland. A Letter to the Author of "The Gairloch Heresy Tried p. 15-16.


Chapter 4: Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of Election.

Listed among the five points of Calvinism, and therefore an essential part of the Calvinist system, was the doctrine of unconditional election. Election was a popular subject in the late 1830s: Stanley Faber's book on election was reviewed in the same article in *The British Critic and Theological Review* as Erskine's, and George Payne, the moral government theologian, had first published his *Lectures on Divine Sovereignty, Election, the Atonement, Justification and Regeneration* in 1836.

In his earlier teaching Erskine had declared the love of God towards all men, and that God had forgiven every individual and that each person might find in God's character the perfect ground of assurance. Yet he had continued to hold the doctrine of election, where all but the individuals chosen in Christ are placed outside the reach of salvation, and it was a stumbling-block to these beliefs. The choice of God from eternity of a certain number of the human race to everlasting life could not be reconciled with the new unconditional forgiveness, and it menaced the assurance of salvation. Andrew Thomson had pointed this out repeatedly in his book on universal pardon: "The verb elect means to select, or choose. When God is said to elect an individual, the simple import of the phrase is that he chooses that individual;" but why did the substitutionary death of Christ avail only for the few? Why did God choose the elect only? It was inconsistent, in Erskine's view, with the act of a moral
person to elect some sinful men that they might become holy and leave aside the rest. Why did God give the blessing to one man and withhold it from the other?

Although he remained unsatisfied with the common doctrine and had an intuitive aversion to it Erskine, nevertheless, reluctantly held it for many years, "modified, however, inconsistently, by the belief of God's love to all, and of Christ having died for all - and yet, when I look back on the state of my mind during that period, I feel that it would be truer to say, I submitted to it, than that I believed it". He did so because he could not see how the 9th chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and a few other passages, could bear any other interpretation.

He felt also that there was something in the doctrine to which he could respond, namely that there was no good in man apart from the spirit of God. Because Erskine saw God as the sole author of man's salvation, he could not receive any argument against it "on the grounds of an inherent self-quicken
ing power in man." Calvin had written: "By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation . . .. Erskine refused to believe that Calvin was right to divide the human race into two branches, the elect and the non-elect, the saved and the lost. This doctrine of double predestination, to life or happiness for some and to death or misery for others, could not, in Erskine's view, be reconciled with a loving and righteous Father. It presented instead a picture of an absolute God who insisted on man's complete submission to his will, indifferent to whether man sympathised or not, and unwilling to reveal his reasons for what he did.

Erskine's thoughts centred particularly on the question of rejection, in view
of the many passages in Scripture which speak of the equality and righteousness of God's ways and his desire that man should be able to comprehend and appreciate his righteousness. Unconditional election, without a provision made by God to save any of the non-elect, was something to which Erskine's conscience did not consent, and while he remained in this state he was aware, "that I am not believing in it, and that I am only bowing to it." He could not rest in this condition but sought a new interpretation of the doctrine of God's election.


Erskine begins his consideration of this doctrine by defining the term election in relation to the subordinate doctrine of predestination. He gives the orthodox Calvinist definition, that by election is meant that God has from the beginning chosen in Christ, and predestined to salvation, a certain number of individuals and these he visits by a special operation of his spirit bringing them to everlasting salvation. The rest he passes by, leaving them to their sins and their punishment. This holy influence of the spirit is held to be "irresistible and indispensable in the work of salvation, so that those to whom it is applied, cannot be lost, and those to whom it is not applied, cannot be saved."8

(i) Single or Double Predestination?

It should be noted, that there is no mention of election to damnation in this definition, and the moral government theologians taught single predestination to salvation only. They held that non-election is something purely negative and not the subject of a positive decree. George Payne, who belonged to this
school was careful to point this out: "the object of the electing decree is to secure
good - infinite good - to man, and not evil. In other words, it is the choice of some to
salvation, ... and not the choice of any to damnation."9

The Arminians believed, on the other hand, that it necessarily implies
unconditional reprobation, and indeed the Westminster Confession contained
the clause, "the others foreordained to everlasting death."10 In any case, non-election
is not a negative term if "those to whom it is not applied, cannot be saved", and they
argued that the two stand or fall together.

John Wesley agreed that in holding one, you must hold both and he asks:
"Is any man saved who is not elected? Is it possible, that any not elected should be saved?
If you say 'No', you put an end to the doubt. You espouse election and reprobation
together."11 If God elected some to grace and to eternal life, it is difficult to
deny that he did not elect the others or take any steps to bring them to
salvation.

Writing in the 1820s Richard Watson (1781-1833), the Methodist, objected
also to the Calvinist view of election as destroying all freedom of moral action
in the individual, and he put the Arminian position in his Theological
Institutes. Following Wesley, he argued that the Calvinist doctrine involves
"the absolute and unconditional reprobation of all the rest of mankind."12 He believed
that God's choosing of a set or determinate number of people which cannot be
decreased or diminished, as well as the unconditional nature of election,
reflected upon the sincerity of the Gospel offer: "On the Calvinian scheme the offer
of salvation is made to those for whose sins Christ made no atonement."13

Payne thought this was a false view of the doctrine of election: "where God
does not act - where he does nothing, he determines nothing ... Non-election is a negative
term, not electing; but to decree a negation is as absurd as to decree nothing, or to decree
not to decree." The elect are assured of salvation, but this implies nothing about the fate of those he passes by.

(ii) **Foreknowledge or Foreordination.**

If we turn to Erskine's definition, it can also be observed that the cause of God's purpose to save the elect is not to be found in the elect themselves. All are sinners by nature and hate God, and if it was evil in the individual person that prevented election then no one would be chosen for deliverance and salvation. It was not because they were holy, but in order that they might become holy that they were elected. The difference between the elect and the non-elect is not the sin or holiness of either, but it lies in God's sovereign will and free mercy and good pleasure. "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth". (Romans 9.18.). On the other hand, where it is held that there is predestination to death, the reprobates have no right to complain since sin is the meriting cause of the decree of reprobation.

In Calvinism everything that happens is bounded by the will of God and is foreknown and foreordained by him. The Arminians, on the other hand, held that God foresees all events and actions that will come to pass, but they deny that he fore-ordained them. In Erskine's day Wesleyan Arminianism tried in this way to steer a middle course between Calvinism and Pelagianism. God elects men on the basis of his foreknowledge, for he foresaw that some men would repent and turn to God for salvation.

Watson for instance quarrelled with such phrases as "God hath from eternity, chosen in Christ unto salvation", for, he believed, it was nonsense to say "that some men were personally chosen to believe and obey, even before they existed." Election was an act of God done in time; there was no eternal election but only an eternal purpose to elect. Actual election had respect to faith, and men were chosen as
believers. One of the challenges to theologians holding this Arminian position was to explain the source of the faith by which some men and women were brought to salvation. John Wesley, for instance, although he held the total fall of man, and denied natural free will managed to give the glory to God by using the concept of prevenient grace: "But, indeed, both Mr. F. and Mr. W. absolutely deny natural free-will. We both steadily assert that the will of man is by nature free only to evil. Yet we both believe that every man has a measure of free-will restored to him by grace."16

Orthodox Calvinists resisted any modification of the doctrine of the doctrine of election because they desired to guard, above all else, the principle of God's freedom and his sovereign grace. Erskine also rejected Arminianism, and accepted God's sole initiative in salvation, and he was therefore careful to guard against the notion of conditional predestination based upon foreseen faith. He would not have gone along with Watson's ideas for the additional reason that he considered that pardon came before faith. Yet, he felt, that while God's sovereignty is incontestable, this doctrine as applied by the Calvinists of his day, made God appear to be lacking the moral attributes of justice and mercy, and it made man into a creature of necessity without real responsibility.

Erskine could not bring himself to believe that God saved one part of mankind, and left the other without help or hope, and in his Letters he occasionally sought for other definitions. In 1829 he wrote: "Election does not consist in God's making the light of his love shine upon one and not upon another, for He loves all, and gave Christ as a ransom for all. It consists in this, that when all refused to open their eyes God forces open the eyes of some, and leaves others to their own obstinacy."17 Otherwise he was generally reticent about the subject until he came to write his book on The Doctrine of Election, causing Thomson to comment, "I cannot
conclude this note without remarking, that the slight notice Mr. Erskine has taken of election, and the strange out-of-the-way corner he has assigned it in his system, afford sufficient proof of his dislike to the doctrine . . . it is called by the name, but has lost all the reality and meaning of election."^{18}

(iii) **Characteristics of Westminster Calvinism and Areas of Conflict with other Groups Summarised.**

While it can be deduced from Erskine's definition that it was the orthodox Calvinistic doctrine of unconditional election with which he was basically wrestling, there were many variants of the doctrine, and a divergence of views on the extent of the atonement. Examples have already been given of the Arminian alternative, as well as the opinions of the Moral Government theologians, but it may be well to briefly summarise the orthodox position and point out arguments against it put forward by those who resisted Westminster Calvinism.

One of the fundamental propositions of Calvinistic election is that it is eternal, the choosing of the elect being made before the creation of the world, although it is effected in time. Thus Thomson writes: "If there be anything clearer than another, it is this, that the election was made before sinners could be subjected to any trial of their willingness to accept of that manifestation of redeeming love, which is set before them in the gospel."^{19}

This emphasis on the eternal aspects of election led sometimes, especially among the hyper-Calvinists, to the kind of antinominianism where there was a discouragement of evangelism since if an individual was a reprobate preaching the gospel would in no way change that fate, and it was not seen as possible that any should be lost who were chosen in Christ.

There were two rival schools of thought on the order of the decrees of
God, and both were considered to be within the limits of orthodoxy. Some preferred the supralapsarian opinion, of Beza and others, where the decree of individual salvation preceded the decree to permit the fall. In this system the fall was decreed by God, as part of his original purpose from eternity, and thus the decree to elect and save men came before the decree to create them, which contemporary critics said made God the author of sin.

Those who held the sublapsarian view, on the contrary, believed that the decrees of election and reprobation started after the fall, and from God's contemplation of man in a state of guilt and sin. The supralapsarians then held that it was unfallen men, and the sublapsarians fallen men, which God had contemplated when he elected some to life and passed by the others.

Edward Copleston, writing in 1821, said that the majority of theologians no longer held the supralapsarian view, and by the 1830s Payne, for instance, was disclaiming it in the strongest terms: "supralapsarianism talks of God's decreeing certain individuals to condemnation and punishment, who are, at the very moment, held to be innocent . . . one system decrees guilty, and the other innocent, beings to punishment." Karl Barth comments that while it was the supralapsarian position which was most often sharply attacked, and a few Calvinists have contended as if it was a vital point, the controversy was never really fundamental or likely to disrupt the Church. He himself finally settles for the supralapsarian doctrine, although only when he has reinterpreted it along new lines.

Another area of controversy with the Westminster Confession is the conflict between the doctrine of liberty and necessity. In strict Calvinism election proceeds entirely and absolutely from the divine will, that is to say it is not determined by the foreseen condition of sinners believing and repenting. It supposes all to be in the same condition (total depravity), and all equally deserving God's punishment, and God selects the elect from his own sovereign
pleasure and without respect to foreseen faith or good works. Faith is the effect and not the cause of election; it is the result of God's work of grace. As J.I. Packer puts it, "where the Arminian says, 'I owe my election to my faith,' the Calvinist says, 'I owe my faith to my election.' Clearly these two concepts of election are very far apart." The elect, in the Calvinist system, are chosen before any condition is imposed, if they are predestined to be forgiven.

This view was not morally acceptable either to the Wesleyans or to most theologians of the Church of England. Calvinism had been seriously weakened in the English Church in the last two centuries. George Tomline, Dean of St. Paul's, London, for instance, writing at the beginning of nineteenth century, had pointed out that reprobation was irreconcilable with many passages of the New Testament which declare God's love for the world in general terms, for how is God loving to a reprobate or to a person who is not elected? "How can God be said to love those to whom he denies the means of Salvation; whom he destines, by an irrevocable decree, to eternal misery?"

Election then, in the rigid Calvinist doctrine, is selective, and opposed to all forms of universalism: not every person is the object of Christ's interposition nor does he become the universal substitute. He substituted himself in the place of a definite and distinct number of men. These men and women form a community or fellowship which in its organised form is the visible Church. All mankind are not the people of God: "The 'church' also is a term of limited meaning. No one would think of calling the whole world by this name. There is a body of men called the church; and there is a body of men, in contradistinction to them, called the world. And we are told that 'God has purchased the church with his own blood'; and that 'Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it.'"

This was disputed by the Moral Government theologians like Wardlaw who
held that Christ was the substitute of all men in his death, and that election was posterior to the atonement. It was also to become a point of argument in the atonement controversy in the United Secession Church between 1841 and 1845, when James Morison was accused of teaching, "Election comes in the order of nature after the atonement." The implication of the Presbytery's charge was only too clear. To hold that atonement was prior to election in the order of God's decrees was to assert that Christ atoned for all men, election being a secondary consideration having reference to the application of the atonement and not to its provision.  

In spite of what has just been said about Christ's church and his people, election is still individual, and this too was an area of conflict with the Moral Government theologians, some of whom held that Christ made an indefinite atonement for sin. The decree to election is in regard to a particular person, and not to a mass of men or to all those who will believe and persevere. By this is meant that the individual comes before the group, in contrast to election in the Old Testament where, for instance, God shows a preference for Israel over all other nations. Tomline writes: "In the Old Testament, the whole nation of the Jews, including both good and bad, is said to be elected or chosen by God, . . . 'The Lord thy God has chosen thee to be a special people unto himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth.'"  

B. Methodological Considerations.

When he came to look at this doctrine, the first question Erskine asked himself was how election was taught in the Bible, but he never allowed himself to forget that "the Scriptures were given, not to supersede or stand in place of the rational conscience, but to awaken and enlighten it, and consequently that no conviction as to their meaning ought to be considered as rightly arrived at, unless confirmed and sealed by the
In a sense Erskine was in line with the Westminster Confession which stated that the witness of the Holy Spirit guaranteed the truth of scripture, but they did not mean by this statement quite what Erskine did and, unlike Erskine and the Quakers, orthodox Calvinists were not prepared to make an ultimate stand on it. Barclay had pointed out that the divines at Westminster, who began to be afraid of and guard against the testimony of the spirit, because they perceived a dispensation beyond that which they were under, beginning to dawn and eclipse them, were very reluctant to add this clause but they could not get by this.

Nevertheless the Westminster Confession does state that while the holy scripture doth abundantly evidence itself to be the word of God; yet notwithstanding our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our heart.

Erskine felt that his contemporaries had no expectation of receiving this guidance by the spirit; as they saw the Bible as the infallible word of God they felt no obligation to test its contents by the light in their conscience. I do not mean that a man is to sit down to the Bible, in the spirit of a judge rather than a disciple, but I mean that the true discipleship consists, not in a blind submission to authority, but in the discernment and love of truth. Christ in his conscience and the spirit then were to Erskine the infallible guides in interpreting the biblical material.

Barclay had distinguished between, a revelation of a new gospel, and new doctrines, and a new revelation of the good old gospel and doctrines: the last we plead for, but the first we utterly deny. Like Barclay Erskine believed that the inward revelations of the spirit and the outward teaching of the Bible should coincide, the outward word receiving the sanction of the inner word: what we learn from the Bible should harmonize with the light of our consciences. He adds that God is a loving and righteous Father to everyone and not only to the elect, and
do not see the righteousness of the doctrine, I cannot be sure that I am not putting a wrong interpretation on the inspired text. . . . ~34

When Erskine met something in the Bible to which his conscience did not consent, it persuaded him that he had not rightly understood the meaning of it. He meditated, weighed the matter according to the light in his conscience, consulted translations and commentaries, took account of the whole tenor of the discourse and tried to arrive at an interpretation which would satisfy him. The scriptures were originally given, he felt, by the same light that was in him and new illumination is possible from the spirit from which they came.

F.D. Maurice said that this searching of the scriptures for enlightenment and new meaning was one of the habits he learnt from Erskine: "the chief tendency I feel he has awakened in my mind is to search them more and more." ~35

C. The Potter and his Clay (Romans Ch.9).

The ninth chapter of Romans has been the focus of frequent and strenuous controversy, and from time to time Erskine read "this dark chapter" ~36 and pondered on its meaning. He continued to rebuke the doubt in his heart and yet remained unsatisfied. He noticed moreover that there were many passages in the Bible against the received doctrine of election. For instance in the 18th chapter of Ezekiel God expresses a desire that the wicked should give up their evil ways and be saved: "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways and live?" ~37

In other passages God pleads his cause and his righteousness which is of a kind that men can judge. In the 5th chapter of Isaiah God asks: "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" ~38 Erskine concluded that while
God’s sovereignty is incontestable, yet his righteousness is beyond doubt and must be exercised in conjunction with the eternal rules of justice.

The two crucial verses are Romans 20-21: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that replieth against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour."

It led Dodd in his commentary on verse 20 to remark, "of course the objector is right. Paul has driven himself into a position in which he has to deny that God’s freedom of action is limited (not now by physical or historical necessity, but) by moral considerations. ‘Has the potter no right over the clay’ it is a well worn illustration. But the trouble is that man is not a pot; and he will ask 'Why did you make me like this?' and he will not be bludgeoned into silence. It is the weakest point in the whole epistle."

It seems inconsistent with divine justice that while all men are guilty in God’s sight, a deep gulf should be made in their eternal destiny. With his deep perception of ethical values, Erskine could not go along with the customary argument that if there is no injustice in punishing all guilty beings, there can be no injustice in punishing some guilty beings chosen out of that number.

Edward Irving had meditated on the same question, with special reference to how the gospel can be preached to reprobates, if Christ’s finished work has no application to them. If Christ is the substitute of his people only, and his death affects the elect only, the end of preaching a gospel to all cannot be attained. This led him to the belief that Christ must have brought some benefit for all if the gospel must be preached to all.

His personal view was that the general and universal aspects of the atonement must be separated from the special question of election and regeneration. Just as unfallen creation stood represented in unfallen Adam, so fallen creation stood represented in Christ. Mankind as a whole therefore is
no longer in the condition which they were brought into by Adam's fall, although there is a second part which is elective, the applying of Christ's righteousness to individual persons. He admits this concept must be unintelligible "to all those who consent to the sufficiency of the debtor-and-creditor theology; or have been sucked by Satan into the heresy that Christ had a humanity in some way diverse from ours." 40

(i) **Election of Particular Individuals or of Certain Characters or Nations?**

Returning to Romans, in relation to the 21st verse, Erskine was particularly interested in the reference to the 18th chapter of Jeremiah.

The word came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and behold he wrought a work on the wheels, and the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel". (ver. 1-6.)

At first sight this passage did seem to Erskine to give confirmation to the Calvinist interpretation of the doctrine of election. It seemed to give God the right of marring the character of some men without any reason other than his sovereign pleasure. Is God not then the Father of every man? Are his attributes of goodness and mercy and justice to be restricted to a part of mankind? Erskine was still puzzled about this verse from Romans and others since have agreed with him.

O'Neill remarks: "a thoroughly immoral doctrine ... The objection is entirely
warranted, and the reply does nothing to answer it. Of course a potter is free to make different pots for different purposes, some noble and some ignoble, but he cannot find fault with the ignoble pots for their menial purposes.41

Yet when Erskine began to meditate on the next five verses of the chapter from Jeremiah, he thought he could throw new light upon them, and a solution was suggested to him. He saw that the future prospects of men were placed by God in their own hands and that God's threatenings were addressed not to individuals but to characters and nations. "Thus saith the Lord, Behold I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you, RETURN YE NOW EVERY ONE from his evil ways, and make his ways and his doings good".42

Cunningham has remarked that there are really only two positions that can be taken upon this particular point of controversy. "Did God from eternity, in contemplating and arranging about the everlasting condition of mankind, choose certain men out of the human race - that is, certain persons, individually and specifically . . . or did he merely choose certain qualities or properties . . . with a purpose of admitting to heaven all those men, whoever they might be, that should possess or exhibit these qualities . . . ? This question really, and in substance, exhausts the controversy; and the second of these positions must be maintained by all anti-Calvinists.43

Erskine then in saying that God did not choose particular individuals for salvation or damnation, but rather made men and women responsible for their actions or characters, was clearly an anti-Calvinist. The next step in Erskine's reasoning, however, is interesting for he then saw that the right of making a thing bad was not contemplated in the passage about the potter, but rather the potter had a right, "if a vessel turned out ill in his hands, to reject that vessel, and break it down, and make it up anew into another vessel".44
(ii) Election in Christ: Reprobation in Adam.

Erskine concludes then that far from teaching double predestination, Paul is teaching the universal extent of the atonement. In the action of God, the great potter, the first vessel represents the fallen state of man and the second vessel the resurrection state of man. The two vessels which he made out of the same lump are Adam and Christ, but he did not make them both at once. He did not divide the lump in two, but the whole of the clay appeared in the mould of Adam, the first head, and the whole was again represented in Christ.\textsuperscript{45}

Christ was elected into the place of the first Adam; the one is the elect head, the other the reprobate head and every individual can join himself to one or the other. As the whole of mankind is considered as one thing in Adam, so the whole human race is one in Christ, and those who follow Christ partake of his election. The decree of election is not the determining of some to election and some to reprobation: the election is to righteousness, and if a person becomes righteous and sanctified through Christ he shares in his election. God judges people according to their character. He rejects the carnal mind and chooses the spiritual mind; he rejects the flesh and chooses the spirit.

The Jews trusted that the clay had originally been cut into two lumps, continued Erskine, and their nation was one and the Gentiles the other. They thought themselves the elect because they were the type of the elect, shadowing the true election of the spiritual mind. Yet if they reject the spirit, God is under no obligation to retain them in that relation.

Erskine supports his argument by reinterpreting a number of parables. For instance the natural history of a grain of wheat (John XII.24.) is a type of man's condition and the way from the first vessel to the second vessel. The germ is the hope of the new plant which cannot develop if the outer substance
is preserved whole. The outer substance is the flesh and the inner germ represents the spirit. Man, however, has a personality to choose of which there is nothing parallel in the wheat. He can consent or resist the process of casting him into the ground that he may die.\textsuperscript{46}

Man is neither flesh nor spirit but they are seeds sown in him, and they are continually drawing him in opposite directions towards God or towards self, there are "two cords attached to every heart, the one held by the hand of Satan, the other held by the hand of God. . . . Thus man, in all his actings, never has to originate anything, he has only to follow something already commenced in him; he has only to choose to which of these two powers he will join himself. Here, then, I found that which I had approved in Calvinism, and which I required as an element of every explanation of the doctrine which should be set up in opposition to Calvinism, namely, a recognition that there is no self-quickening power in man, and that there is no good in man but what is of the direct acting of the Spirit of God".\textsuperscript{47}

(iii) Free Grace.

In general though on the question of election Erskine differed profoundly not only from the Calvinism of his day but from Calvin himself. Orthodox Calvinists spoke of irresistible grace for the elect, which meant the denial of saving grace to all men universally. Erskine thought that the grace of God is given to all, through Christ's all-sufficient death, but receiving or refusing it lies with man personally. Grace must be received as grace, that is as a supply to which the individual has no claim, but it can only be sustained by consciously receiving its supply from the fountain. No one can come to Christ unless the Father draws him, and those who are disobedient to that drawing "find Jesus a stone of stumbling, instead of a sure foundation stone."\textsuperscript{48}

Calvin had written, "What if I should, on the contrary, object that predestination to
grace is subservient to election unto life, and follows as its handmaiden; that grace is predestined to those to whom the possession of glory was previously assigned, the Lord being pleased to bring his sons by election to justification? Erskine on the contrary thought that anyone who is lost is lost by refusing the grace which he might have used:

"I believe that Jesus is the one Elect, and that those who by thus taking part with Jesus become members of his body, become also members of the election, and those who continue to resist Him shut themselves out from the election. In this way also I believe that, as Christ was really given to men immediately after the Fall, all are elect in Him. He being in them all, and all are reprobate or rejected in the first Adam; but we can make either our election or our reprobation sure by joining ourselves either to the one party or to the other. I believe that God takes the first step to every man, and draws every man by His Spirit, and that man's part is acceptance and yielding." Erskine thought that in this way he had established the reality of free choice, without impinging on the doctrine of grace: all salvation is in Christ, as the one Elect, and God's grace and man's freedom are brought into harmony. Man's part is to allow Christ to be his representative, and in that sense his relation to salvation can be said to be completely passive. Yet he still retains his free will in that he must ally himself with one side or the other, with Adam or Christ. Erskine thought this view gave a proper place to God's free grace, while still maintaining the liberty of man. The Calvinist doctrine of election, however, has always proceeded from the premise that all are guilty, and all are sinners, and that there is no gift of spiritual life given to them as a race in Christ which would make this individual choice possible. Erskine, on the other
hand, believed that Christ or the true light is in every man; man has simply to recognise something already there and join himself to it to be saved.

Most assuredly there is in Jesus Christ a general salvation for the whole race, inasmuch as in Him, they are lifted again into that state of probation from which in Adam they had fallen, and are provided with spiritual strength to go through their probation, whether they use that strength or not: but none becomes personally a partaker of salvation, except by personally turning to God. And, in like manner, there is in Jesus Christ, a general election for the whole race - inasmuch as, in Him, they are lifted out of the state of reprobation into which, in Adam, they had fallen; but no one becomes personally elect, except by personally receiving Christ into his heart.51

C. Criticism of Edwards' Book "Freedom of the Will".

We have seen that differences had developed between Erskine and the orthodox Calvinists about whether man's redemption lay entirely with God, or whether man's free will played a part in it. Erskine claimed to believe in the total depravity of man, but as he believed the true Light and the Spirit are in everyone, this meant that each individual had in fact a measure of free will restored to him by grace. Erskine never denied that everything was of grace, but in Calvinism man's freedom was often reduced to a fiction. Wesley seems to be describing the same experience of the relationship of grace and free will when he wrote: "Have you not often felt, in a particular temptation, power either to resist or yield to the grace of God? And when you have yielded to 'work together with Him', did you not find it very possible, notwithstanding, to give him all the glory."52

- 188 -
(i) Necessity and Liberty.

One of the difficulties about the necessitarians versus free will arguments seems to be that there is no general agreement about what exactly is involved in human free will. Part of the conclusion of The Doctrine of Election is devoted to a criticism of Edwards' book An Inquiry into the Prevailing Notions Respecting the Freedom of the Will. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), the American Enlightenment theologian, was born in Connecticut and became a student at Yale where he studied the philosophers and especially Newton and Locke. His book on free will was directed against the Arminian argument that the concept of total depravity, and the divine control of human action, is incompatible with man's freedom.

Erskine does not dispute his gifts of reasoning and logic, but he believed that his whole argument was constructed on false premises, because it rested on the incompleteness of his definition of liberty on which much of the rest of his reasoning was based. Erskine was seeking to prove of course, that a true definition of human liberty required conditions which could not be held together with the high Calvinist exposition of the doctrine of election.

Edwards sees all men as standing in the state of helplessness into which Adam's fall had brought human nature, and being effected by the redemption of Christ only in the sense that God applies the benefits of it to those whom he chooses. God pursues a design of the salvation of the elect in giving Christ to die, but Edwards sees no gift of grace or light or life given to man as a race through the atonement.

All are born into a state of total depravity, and are possessed by a corrupt will. Nothing, in Edwards' view, but a special power from without can rescue them from that evil. Yet he persuades himself, Erskine points out, that this condition is consistent with true liberty and responsibility by adopting a
definition of liberty which makes no reference whatever to the moral condition of man, and which could apply equally to the liberty of an animal.

The subject on which Erskine challenges him is on the nature of liberty. The definition Erskine gives, based on Edwards, is as follows: "Liberty is the power or advantage that any one has to do or to conduct as he pleases".53

This definition, Erskine thinks, is much too broad for it requires nothing more than the inclination to act, and the power to act according to that inclination. Moreover, Edwards tests it by man, as conceived by the high Calvinist, as destitute of all means and inclination to resist evil. Because there is still left to the non-elect person the inclination to do evil, although lacking all means to resist it, Edwards regards him as thoroughly responsible.

Erskine gave an illustration to accompany his comments on Edwards' theory of free will: "If I wish to remove an animal from one part of a field to another, I have only to remove his food, and the animal, following his own natural impulse, and exercising 'the power to do as he pleases', goes to the place which I have destined for him. According to Edward's definition of liberty, this animal is perfectly free; but surely it is not free, with a liberty which we could consider suitable to a moral being".54

The definition is too wide, Erskine points out, and allows things to pass through it which ought not to be allowed to pass through it. Although the animal acts according to its own purposes, it is unacquainted with the real dominant purpose which is to be fulfilled by its acting.

Man in fact differs from that animal, Erskine goes on to explain, because he is capable of a higher freedom. The animal is incapable of entering into my real purpose of wishing to remove it from one place to another, so it is necessary to use a subordinate motive quite separate from my real purpose. Men are capable of entering into the purposes of their ruler, and if that purpose embraces their interests as well as his own, by disclosing it too them
he does not need to employ subordinate means to influence them.

If the ruler succeeds in his aims then men become free in relation to him and his purpose; they act with a conscious view to that object which is the real ultimate object of their acting. The idea of liberty, Erskine goes on to say, which we glimpse here consists of a sympathy or agreement of choice with the ruling or directing mind which appoints our acting. A capacity for liberty consists of a capacity for such sympathy. No definition of liberty is just or complete which does not embrace this principle. In relation to God if he has a purpose more dominant than that with which we are acquainted then we are still in bondage.

To be free we must embrace the principle entertained by God and be animated by a desire to pursue it as contributing to his glory and our ultimate good. If we have not such minds as are capable of entering into that purpose, Erskine concludes, we are incapable of moral freedom. This view of liberty does away with Edwards' attempts to prove that the theory of election is consistent with human liberty. Man cannot be free while lying under a decree of reprobation, and abandoned by God to the power of the evil spirit.

Erskine believed that man could only be free under two conditions: firstly he must have the spirit of God in order to be able to enter into God's purposes and secondly God's purpose must be one that embraces man's good so that he can be capable of sympathising with it. Unless, therefore, we make common cause with God in the work of righteousness, "we renounce our high calling of being fellow workers with Him, and we compel Him to use us as blind tools, and to draw His own ends out of the ruin of the projects which we are vainly cherishing".55

(ii) God's Omnipotence and Man's Freedom.

What Erskine is putting forward is not freedom in the absolute sense, but
may be described more accurately as Paul's understanding of the freedom of the Christian man. He quotes from John viii, "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed". He adds: "This then is the only perfect liberty, and it is the liberty which God intends for man, and He has given him the capacity for it, in giving him the gift of the Son". 56

Erskine was, however, beginning to abandon his position that Christ died for all but all would not eventually be saved. It had been essentially a transitional option, a halting place on the road between a limited atonement and a true universalism. The problem for him was a different one from that of Edwards; it was that of retaining fully human freedom in conjunction with a doctrine of universal salvation and in harmony with a God who does not use force and whose nature is love. Under these conditions universal salvation can only be brought about by a voluntary response to God's love for the aim, according to Erskine, is to have the mind of Christ, the great Representative.

This attempt to work out final restoration without an infringement of human freedom really belongs to a later period of Erskine's thought. It can only be observed at his point that no one was more conscious than Erskine of the problem of sin, which he defined in general terms as self-seeking and making self the great centre. Goodness, he believed, had to do with making God the great centre. Christ too was a real man and had a self in him that sought its own, but he lay down self at every step. The atonement is the sacrifice of self at the root of humanity, but this process must be reproduced in every human being before the restoration process can be completed.

Central to Erskine's thought was the idea, and it was also to be in the forefront of F.D. Maurice's theology, that the world had already been redeemed by Christ - once and for all. He held this together with the idea that the education process does not involve putting something new into a
person from the outside, but bringing out something that is already there. Man was created in the divine image, and the Son now in the depth of every man’s being, continues and will continue to protest against sin, until he brings each individual back to God.

Many other members of Erskine’s group including Bishop Ewing, John McLeod Campbell and F.D. Maurice cherished a hope of the final salvation of all, but they stopped short of universalism because of the problem of free will. Erskine believed that God sees the end from the beginning, and would never have created any spirits which he foresaw would resist his purpose in bringing them into existence. Vidler confirms this:

Maurice was not a universalist, as the term is commonly understood. Bishop Alexander Ewing recorded that McLeod Campbell of Row differed from Erskine of Linlathen "in one respect, feeling it possible that a free human will may eternally escape the Divine longings, which Erskine thinks incredible". In this respect Maurice was nearer to Campbell than Erskine."
Notes.

Chapter 4.


10. The Confession of Faith agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster. Ch. III. III.


- 194 -


42. Erskine. Doctrine of Election. p. 16.


Chapter 5. How can Christ Represent the Whole Human Race?

The leading idea of the book is that each individual man is a little world in which that whole history which took place in Judea 1800 years ago is continually reproduced. Each of us is, or has been, that world spoken of in St. John 1.10, "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not". I believe that the light which shines in each man's conscience is the real presence of Jesus, "the Word which was with God and was God", and that the egoism and vanity and hypocrisy, and worldly and fleshly desires within us, are represented by the Scribes and Pharisees and Sadduces, Herod and Pilate, etc. I believe that the presence of Jesus within us, with His quickening (viviflant) spirit, gives to each of us the power, whether we use it or not, of joining and taking part with Him against the evils of our own hearts, and I believe that in as far as we do so we become partakers of His nature and members of His body". 1

The book referred to in this letter, written to Madame Forel in November 1838, is The Doctrine of Election. Although Erskine does attempt to explain, in this book, what he thinks is meant by the term election in the Bible, the title expresses only one of its themes and not the whole of its contents. It is also a very long book (572 pages) and sometimes Erskine thought he would like to re-write it and make it more compact and orderly. He never achieved this, but the conclusion was separately republished under the title The Internal Word, or, Light becoming Life in 1865.

One of the additional themes of The Doctrine of Election then is that the orthodox Calvinist doctrine of election has obscured the oneness of all mankind in Christ, for every individual is a member of his mystical body and this unity is at the heart of all things. At the same time, as including all, Christ is within
each person as an ever-present life; he is a voice speaking in their conscience and through him they can have immediate contact with God.

In the letter to Madame Forel, he suggests that another title for his book could be "The Doctrine of Conscience". He goes on in the same letter to try and make his meaning clearer: "I believe also that as each man is a world, and a resemblance of the large world, so the whole mass of individuals constitute another unity, another world, and that as Jesus is in each man, so He is the new and heavenly root of spiritual life to this larger world, and that what He did outwardly for the larger was for the purpose of bringing this life and light inwardly to all individuals".² He adds, "My object is not to make out an intellectual system, but to show that all the Christian doctrines are already in man's heart, though undeveloped and not understood... so also, all religion, which is true religion, must be adapted to the nature and constitution of man".³

The work of Christ, Erskine points out, is both historic and present. The outward historical facts of Christ's birth, life and death are familiar to every churchgoer, but what they often do not understand is that there is hidden within them the Christ of personal experience who repeats this life, death and resurrection spiritually in every individual, when he is stirred into activity.

He claims that he desires to stress this corresponding reality because he wants to restore the lost equilibrium, and bring out the part of Christ's work which he felt had been neglected in his own time. Because of Christ's presence within the individual in his conscience, he can have immediate contact with God, and progressive growth into his likeness. What Erskine has discovered, through introversion, seems to be the presence of archetypes: "there is set up in the hearts of all men, a living representation and type of the work which was completed in Calvary, where Jesus tasted death for every man".⁴

Each man, Erskine goes on to say, is a microcosm, a miniature representation of the larger world. Every human being is a little world in
which the birth, the crucifixion, the death and the resurrection of Jesus are again enacted and reproduced. God operates in two ways, externally in a person's life and internally in his conscience. Erskine attempts to express this divine immanence in man in terms of the inner light which is in every person, and from which they can receive life. The light is Christ, and it shines in every conscience, although there is a distinction between "the inward voice and the knowing Him whose voice it is. We cannot rightly understand what the voice means, unless we understand the Utterer of it. But the voice is given us, to draw us to the Utterer - as the law is a Schoolmaster to lead us unto Christ." Because he had developed this immediate, intuitive awareness of God, Erskine says that although some dismiss him as "a mere rationalist . . I know that I am not so."

A. Erskine as a Rationalist.

Erskine had shown no marked mystical tendencies in his early life, but had been mainly concerned with ethical truth or reason as the tests of a religion. Nevertheless, rationalism is an ambiguous term, with a variety of interpretations, and Erskine was never a mere rationalist if by that is meant purely abstract demonstrations or proofs of, for instance, God's existence. He thought reason must harmonize with experience and lead to moral living:

"Whatever principle of belief tends to promote real moral perfection, possesses in some degree the quality of truth. By moral perfection, I mean the perception of what is right, followed by the love of it and the doing of it."7

(i) Rationalism in "The Internal Evidence"

Newman had called Erskine's brand "a very peculiar and subtle form of rationalism,"8 and he illustrated it by quoting many passages from Erskine's first
book Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the Truth of Revealed Religion (1820). Erskine's argument in this book is that the evidence for the truth of a religion may be demonstrated, apart from all external evidence, by its conformity with the moral constitution of the human mind, its effect on the character of the believer and by its coincidence with the circumstances in which man is found in the world.

Individuals are comparatively little affected by absolute truths in morality, and the traces and patterns of the divine being in nature have been disregarded by them. The advantage of Christianity is that it presents its information in action, and harmonizes with human experience. God placed before people a series of actions in which his moral character is fully embodied, and in order to provide a model for all to imitate. The eternal word became flesh so that mankind could know as fully as possible the character of God, and comprehend the principles of his government.

Erskine goes on to say that the acts attributed to the divine government are usually termed doctrines, and doctrines have relevance to the moral life and demonstrate some important feature of the divine mind. The moral tendency of doctrines provide proof of their authenticity. "The object of a true religion must be to present to the minds of men such a view of the character of their great Governor, as may not only enable them to comprehend the principles of his government, but may also attract their affections into a conformity with them". ¹⁰

The doctrine of the trinity, for instance, when philosophically stated, is made to bear upon the divine essence, and the mysterious existence of three persons in one, and these abstract ideas cannot develop character or make any moral impression on a person's mind. The way it is stated in the Bible, however, is very different for there it is made subservient to the manifestation of divine character, and God's justice and mercy in the redemption of sinners.
It comes in a form like this: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Or this, - 'But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things." 11

Similarly, the doctrine of the atonement demonstrates both the just God and the Saviour; its design was to make mercy consistent with the honour and holiness of the divine government. Erskine accepted that Christ's sufferings were penal and substitutional, and satisfied both the honour and the justice of God: "the Eternal Word, who was God, took upon himself the nature of man, and as the elder brother and representative and champion of the guilty family he solemnly acknowledged the justice of the sentence pronounced against sin, and submitted himself to its full weight of wo, in the stead of his adopted kindred. God's justice found rest here, his law was magnified and made honourable." 12

Erskine does not hesitate to say that Christ made "a propitiation through his blood" 13, and that blood-sacrifice was necessary for the forgiveness of sins. It seemed to him, at that time, that man could only be delivered by the death of another as their substitute: "Christ hath redeemed us from the condemnation of the law, having endured that condemnation in our stead." 14 While God is love, his love cannot override his holiness: "in this wonderful transaction, mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other. It was planned and executed, in order that God might be just whilst he justified the believer in Jesus." 15

(ii) A Mystical Dimension added in "The Doctrine of Election."

This inward and rational view of Christianity is still present in Erskine's later writing, but he had developed a distrust of reason taken by itself, and without the aid of feeling and intuition. By itself the intellect is an inadequate instrument, and doctrines, for instance, are meaningless unless they can be
transformed into a language the heart understands, and meet with a tally in the living consciousness. In The Doctrine of Election he writes: "For a church may have very confused doctrinal notions, but still if its members are meeting God in their hearts, and giving themselves up to Him, it is a standing and living church; and, on the other hand, a church may have clear and correct doctrinal notions, but if this personal intercourse with God, and surrender to him be wanting, it is a falling dying church."¹⁶

It is the inward witness, by which the individual apprehends God directly, that is now important to Erskine. He does not deny the role of Christ as God-man in the work of redemption, but he is primarily "a leader in the walk of faith."¹⁷ There is a finished aspect to Christ's work, but Erskine asks his readers to look upon "God as the forgiver of sin, from moment to moment."¹⁸

Parts of The Doctrine of Election are permeated with mysticism. God is love and all men are one; there is a unity at the heart of the whole universe. It is mostly biblical mysticism, of the type of St. Paul, but occasionally he reaches beyond that to a philosophical mysticism where the whole universe is seen as a vast organism, where every person has a part to play, and no one can die or be lost. In 1862 Erskine wrote to his friend Mrs. Blackwell:

This view of the condition of our race on the face of the earth has led me to believe in a doctrine of Election, though a doctrine different from that which generally goes under the name. I believe that the whole human race is as a great colossal man, and that every individual is created to fill a place in that body, and that his original construction and the circumstances in which he is placed are all appointed with the purpose of fitting him to fill his destined place. He has the power of co-operating in or resisting this purpose of God (for goodness consists in choosing to be good, not in being good whether he will or not), but I believe that God will persevere in His training until every child of Adam is harmoniously
united to Jesus the God-man, the head of the moral creation, however long the process may
be. 19

B. Influence of William Law.

The writer who led Erskine in the direction both of a mystical doctrine of
the atonement rather than an ethical and rational one, and of a representative
theory rather than a substitutionary one, was William Law (1696-1761), a
mystic and non-juror, who had had a marked influence also on the Wesleys
and Whitfield. In November 1827 Erskine wrote to his cousin Rachel Erskine,
"I wish you would read the 'Spirit of Prayer' and the 'Spirit of Love', two works by Law,
the author of the 'Serious Call', and tell me what you think of them. I have been much struck
by them. . . . They are, however, very mystical, and if your taste is much averse to mysticism,
you may not like them. But I think that you could scarcely help liking them, such a view they
give of the love of our God, and of that intimate, and blessed, and glorious union with
Himself, to which He hath called us". 20

In The Spirit of Love Law advises his readers that the way to find salvation
is not to look for an outward guide, or a perfect system of theology. The
individual must not look without, but within, for it is there that he will find
the inner light, the oracle, the temple of God, the Christ who is always there
and waiting to receive him. Spiritual knowledge then is not to be attained by
"taking up your travelling staff or crossing the seas to find out a new Luther or a new Calvin,
to clothe yourself in their opinions. No! The oracle is at home that always and only speaks
the truth to you, because nothing is your truth but that good and evil which is yours within
you." 21

It may have been the breadth of the mystical outlook which attracted
Erskine; the Christ in every man fitted the hopes which he already had of the
final restitution of all things. Commenting on the living word he writes:

"It is not a preacher that sows it - it is not a man instructing another, even though he were authenticated as an inspired teacher, - and it is not a book though that book be the Bible, - but it is the Son of man Himself, within the heart; it is the true light that lighteth every man."²²

Like Law, Erskine expresses his belief, in The Doctrine of Election, that every man is capable of knowing Christ experimentally, for he is actively present within all and the task is simply to recognize that he is there.

"The light which lighteth every man, is a living light - a light whereby he may live."²³

The Spirit of Love and The Spirit of Prayer were written in what is known as Law's later period, and were strongly influenced by his reading of the German mystic Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), and by his contact with contemporary Quakerism. Stephen Hobhouse comments in fact that Boehme's doctrine of the inner light "was not far removed from the 'light within' proclaimed by George Fox and his followers."²⁴

(i) Adam, the Natural Head, Christ the Spiritual Head of the Race.

The Scriptural doctrine of the two Adams was a great favourite with Law and Erskine, and they both saw that in this concept there lay the possibility of the redemption of the whole race. Before the Fall God and man were united by the bond of love but Adam, the original head and representative of nature, fell and the bond of love was broken. Christ, the second Adam, the second representative, restored the communion between God and man, and became the new substituted head of humanity: "all that the one lost, the other would restore."²⁵

Erskine and Law believed then that Christ represented the human race in the same way as Adam. Every person had their situation radically changed by the coming of Christ, for the free gift of grace through Christ fully meets, and
extends as widely, as the Fall. Erskine does not speak of the imputation of sin through Adam, but rather of the propagation of a corrupted nature. Christ by a real participation in that nature restores it to its original righteousness.

Law says that when Christ took human nature he became, "a fountain of the first heavenly life to the whole race of mankind." Erskine adds to that, in that he believes that all are now under Christ; what is accomplished in Christ will finally be accomplished in every individual whose nature he assumed.

In neither of these thinkers is the victory brought about primarily by substitution. Law says that Christ was "given for us" in the sense that he was "given into us." All "stood under Him as their common father and the regenerator of heavenly life in them." This unity at the root of the nature to Erskine is a guarantee that all will eventually come to Christ, although he forces none:

"Christ as the root of the new nature calls himself the vine; and he seeks individual wills, to be the branches, through which he may manifest himself, and bear his fruit." A problem for today centres on the sense in which Erskine and Law understood the Fall, for many of their contemporaries thought it to be literal history. Speaking of Law, and the doctrine of the Fall, Hobhouse comments, "...it is not perhaps of great consequence whether or no we place such a condition at the beginning of human history. Law himself says that the fall 'is not an historical matter', but a fact of present experience."

Erskine too seems to sometimes represent the fall as figurative rather than historical. The first Adam is older than Christ being the first head of the race and first in possession of the heart of man. The second Adam comes into the heart of man as into a field occupied by another. He acts as a pattern, as a representative and as a model of righteousness. Yet he is more than this, for the spirit of life in Christ is a living principle reproducing itself in the hearts of those who receive it.
(ii) **Love Mysticism.**

We have already noted that Law was a disciple of Jacob Behmen (or Boehme). In 1827 Erskine, writing from Albano, Italy, expressed a desire to read him too. There did exist a translation of Boehme’s works by Law himself, but Erskine clearly wished to read the original for he comments, "I must re-learn German in order to fit myself for it." Twelve years later in 1839 Erskine encountered a disciple of Boehme’s at Geneva, and he spoke to me for I daresay three hours without intermission . . . I found him agonised in his spirit about the destiny of the fallen angels; there is something very interesting in this for the heart, and his love for these beings does not interfere with his love for his own kind."

In his "Reminiscences of Thomas Erskine", Principal Shairp was later to compare Erskine to Boehme: "There is a saying of Boehme’s which he loved to quote: 'The element of the bird is the air, the element of the fish is the water, the element of the salamander is the fire, and the heart of God is Jacob Boehme’s element.’ As I heard him quote these words I used to think, 'Thou art the man that Boehme describes himself to be.'"

A central insight of all of these mystics is that love is the very nature of God, and they all tried to penetrate personally the depth of that love. Not only is love the highest thing in God, but through love man meets God. Because it is the Christian God they are seeking, and as his nature is essentially ethical, the aim of life is to become like God.

God then to Erskine is personal, and in him there is spirituality, so it follows that God desires to be loved and he wants union and fellowship with all men. In a supplement to *The Brazen Serpent* entitled "On Love" Erskine says that man can only love by knowing that God loved him first and has forgiven him. This knowledge does not produce the love but it opens the door of the heart and lets love in: "God is himself the love. And when He enters us, we shall love Him with Himself, with His own Love, just as we see the sun with his own light, that is..."
with himself. We love God, because He first loved us; as we see the sun because he first shone on us".37

We are commanded also to love our neighbours, continues Erskine, and this means having God in us, so the command to love is the same thing as the command to receive God into ourselves. "We are not called on to love our fellow creatures, because God loves them, but as God loves them, with the very same love, that is with God in us loving them".38

(iii) Comparison of Representation and Substitution.

It can be commented that this personal apprehension of God as the living God, fits in much more naturally with representation and headship than with substitution. Law in fact had completely rejected penal substitution, when seen in narrowly forensic terms, describing the "philosophy of Debtor and Creditor, of a Satisfaction made by Christ to the Wrath in God" as "the grossest of all Fictions".39 He added:

The innocent Christ did not suffer, to quiet an angry Deity, but merely as co-operating, assisting, and uniting that Love of God, which desired our Salvation. That He did not suffer in our Place or Stead but only on our Account, which is a quite different Matter. And to say that He suffered in our Place or Stead, is as absurd, as contrary to Scripture, as to say, that he rose from the Dead and ascended into Heaven in our Place or Stead, that we might be excused from it.40

Erskine says that "Jesus is not the substitute for men, but the head of men,"41 and he condemns substitution as a "fiction of the law." Yet if the ultimate goal of the theologian is to comprehend the whole of the atonement, it is clear that neither of these two concepts (or models) can do so alone. Substitution speaks of a
finished transaction but representation deals with an internal process.

Substitution looks to the outward historic Christ, the Galilean Jesus: living without, crucified without, risen without. Representation speaks of the archetypal Christ: dead within, living within, ascended within. As Law had put it: "And we are to suffer, to be crucified, to die and rise with Christ, or else His crucifixion, death and Resurrection will profit us nothing."\(^{42}\)

Of course the question is much more complex, in both these thinkers, than the quotation of individual passages would sometimes make it appear. Orthodox Calvinists would have agreed that the substitute should also be the representative, yet these compromise positions remained under constant stress, on both sides, from connecting circles of ideas. Each thought the other was giving undue emphasis to one part of the atonement, rather than the other, and this stirred debate and finally controversy.

It sometimes seems that all Erskine and his followers were striving for was the redress of the balance between the doctrine of union with Christ, and his substitution for us, in order to bring about a right understanding of the atonement. This is suggested by an article in The Morning Watch:

"The doctrine of union is quite as essential as that of substitution, by taking which later alone the 'Stock-Exchange' divinity has been produced."\(^{43}\)

Erskine's more moderate critics held that the \textit{ground} of salvation is to be found in what Christ did \textit{for} men; when the believer lays hold on the redemption achieved by Christ alone, then Christ becomes the representative, and his death becomes the believer's death, and his resurrection the believer's resurrection.

Yet Erskine is gradually moving beyond this position, and representation is becoming opposed to substitution, for even the retrospective side of the atonement is beginning to assume a representative aspect, because of Christ's
close identification with man, within the body of Christ. He no longer stands in man's stead for when he died, all died with him and, as the representative his is no longer a finished work, for the journey with them towards salvation is an on-going process. Law had said the same thing, calling Christ,

"our representative, acting and suffering in our name, binding and obliging us to conform to all that He did and suffered for us." 44

Erskine does not ignore Christ's historic death on the cross, but he calls it the act of all humanity. His real interest is in Christ as a present and living reality, and he writes: "no man can arrive at the end, without travelling the road; no man can obtain the crown of life, except by striving according to God's way,... If we die with Him, we shall live with Him, if we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him." 45

He goes on to speak of, "the vain babblings of men who would teach that there is an easier way to glory,... who say that, because Christ is dead and risen, we may save ourselves the pain of this daily dying,..." 46

C. Erskine and the Quakers.

There are only two brief mentions of the Quaker movement in Erskine's letters, but nevertheless by the time of the publication of The Doctrine of Election it is clear that he had come very strongly under Quaker influence.

Reviewers of The Doctrine of Election, most of whom seemed to be preoccupied with God's transcendence, and to be hostile to mysticism, disliked it. The Presbyterian Review accused Erskine of being, in his religious views at least, a Quaker. Their critic showed particular distaste for such expressions as "Christ coming into the flesh of every man"

Or "obtaining life not as our substitute, but as our leader" OR "we are all on the cross".47

Moreover he made a point by point comparison, in opposite columns, of Erskine's phraseology with that of William Penn and Robert Barclay. The
points of comparison which he makes, from which we must omit the extensive quotations, are the following:

1. Mr. Erskine, with the Quakers, advocates "the light within", to the disparagement of the Bible.

2. Mr. Erskine maintains, with the Quakers, that the object and foundation of faith, is not the Scriptures, or Christ revealed in them, but "the word within" or "a Christ within".

3. Mr. Erskine has adopted the Quaker notion of "waiting for the light".

4. Mr. Erskine holds, with the same sect, that we are redeemed and saved, not by the death of Christ, but by a sort of self-crucifixion, in imitation of that death.

5. Mr. Erskine, like the Quakers, confounds justification with sanctification and the new birth.

6. Mr. Erskine, like the Quakers and all others that hold a general redemption and a fruitless love, fetters the free promises of the gospel with conditions and limitations, and would thus cut away all the hope which they offer to the awakened sinner, and all the comfort they afford to the humble saint.

7. Mr. Erskine, like the Quakers, assigns only a subordinate authority to the Holy Scriptures. 48

(i) The "Inner Light."

Quaker theology centres on the words of St. John: "It was the true light that enlightens every man who comes into the world". (John 1.9.) Man, they believe, was created by God with intellectual understanding, but also with a special spiritual faculty which made him able to know things which cannot be known solely by reason, but rather by immediate experience. This light or divine energy dwells in everyone; it is given to every member of the human race. Some people, however, receive more than others, but in whatever amount it is given the light
grows in everyone who attends to its influence. All are called to be faithful to
the measure of light within them, for it was given to redeem and save them.

Following the Quakers then, Erskine's answer to the question of how Christ
can represent the whole human race is that he represents them through the
"inner light". George Fox (1624-1691), the founder of the Quaker movement,
had sometimes called it the light of Christ within, because he believed that the
light proceeded from Christ, and Erskine also sometimes says that the inner
light is Christ. Woolman had another way of expressing it, he called it
"pure wisdom". 49

The seed was also a common expression among the early Quakers for this
deep inward principle given to everyone. Barclay, for instance, in his Apology
explains that Christ is not in all men, "by way of union, or indeed, to speak strictly,
by way of inhabitation", but he is in all men "as in a seed". 50 If the seed is allowed
to grow, Christ is formed in that person. Erskine too says that the inward
witness, "is a seed sown in the heart of men, and if it is unused it lies dormant." 51 The
seed then is in all but Christ is not formed in all; nevertheless all are capable
of this development should they allow the seed to quicken within them.

Erskine illustrates the principle of the seed by reinterpreting the parable of
the sower. The four different kinds of ground represent the four different
ways in which every person may hear the word. They do not, he claims,
represent any original and unalterable distinctions between people. The seed is
sown everywhere whether it is received or not: "the seed is the seed of God, and
whilst it is in man, however dormant, it puts him in the place of a son, ..." 52

Erskine speaks sometimes of two seeds within every man, and he uses the
parable of the tares to warn his readers about two sowers which are in
everyone's heart, one leading to God, and one leading away from God. One
or the other is continually gaining ground, and by these two seeds
"the little field of man's heart is occupied, and this is the garden which is entrusted to
him, to dress and keep it, that is, to cherish the good plants, and to keep down and eradicate
the evil".53

(ii) The "Light" and the Conscience.

Returning to the image of the light, Erskine agrees with the Quakers that it
must not be identified with the conscience. In the preface to The Doctrine of
Election he admits that he has not always made this distinction clear, or kept to
the same meaning of the term conscience. Sometimes he has used it "to signify
the spirit of God in man" and sometimes "to signify man's own apprehension of the mind of
the Spirit in him, which is a very different thing".54

Erskine sometimes refers to "the light in our consciences"55, and the Quakers
would agree with him, if by this he means that the light informs the
conscience. They sometimes define the conscience as the organ by which they
see, rather than the light itself. It is not a natural light or man's conscience as
such: man's conscience can be in error, but the light cannot be in error. A
person could be fallible in their reception of divine guidance, but the error
would not be in the light but in his understanding of what was revealed.
Similarly Erskine sees no falsity in the light itself. Jesus, he points out, told
his followers to try what he himself taught them by the light within, and his
followers should try, by the same light things that have come down to them.56

Erskine himself poses the question which he must have anticipated to be
rising in the minds of many of his readers: does the central place given to the
inward word sown in the heart distract from the importance of the outward
manifestation of Christ, and make it less important? What is the relationship
between the "inward" and the "historic" Christ? The Quakers had grappled
with the problem, never too successfully, and it was one of the aims of a thesis

- 212 -
by Maurice Creasey to show, "that the Quaker doctrine of the inner light is a
Christological rather than an anthropological doctrine".57

In Erskine it is definitely christological, for the light or word does not
belong to man's own nature. It is only on the ground of the outward
manifestation of Christ, the Word, fulfilling all righteousness that the inward
Word is given to man. The Christ within is the Christ of history; he is the link
by which man again is united to God. This link means that there is a living
open channel by which the inward word is communicated to every individual
in the human family. The light is conferred on every person, and there is then
in all men a witness for God.

(iii) The "Inner Light" and the Bible.

In Erskine's day the Bible was widely interpreted in a literal way as a
supernatural book, and it was used by religious people as a rule and the
fundamental basis of faith. To Erskine, in contrast, its divine authority does
not rest on an external and infallible guarantee of its truth, but on the witness
it bears to the spirit or inner word. God teaches through the light of Christ in
the heart, and the Bible can only refer the individual to this inward counsellor,
or as John Woolman had put it, "the pure spirit which inwardly moves the heart."58

It is Christ, then, or the spirit in the heart which is the infallible guide; the
scriptures are a subordinate or secondary rule because they were written by
means of the spirit. Thus William Barclay (1648-1690) wrote in respect to the
weight to be attached to the Bible in relation to the inner word:

"The scriptures are only a declaration of the fountain and not the fountain itself . . . Yet,
because they give a true and faithful testimony of the first foundation, they are and may be
esteemed a secondary rule, subordinate to the Spirit, from which they have their excellence and
certainty."59
Because a seed of spiritual life is given to everyone through the merits of Christ's death, it can, according to Erskine, benefit those who know nothing of the Bible, and whom a missionary has never reached: "I am responsible for the use which I make of the advantage of being born in a land of Bibles - but I could not be held responsible for the circumstance of being born out of the reach of a Bible; though, in such a situation, I should still be responsible for the use I made of the law written in my heart."60

Erskine believed that the great importance of the Bible is its ability to awaken a corresponding living consciousness in the individual. It prepares the way into his heart where Jesus Christ, the great representative and heavenly counsellor is waiting to deal with him. Woolman wrote in his journal about the experience of his mind being "livingly opened":

"Oh, how safe, how quiet, is that state where the soul stands in pure obedience to the voice of Christ, and a watchful care is maintained not to follow the voice of the stranger! Here Christ is felt to be our shepherd, and under his leading people are brought to stability; and where he does not lead forward, we are bound in the bonds of pure love to stand still and wait upon Him."62

The Bible is the test by which the individual person may try the word within them, for it contains a tally corresponding to what is in the hearts of all men. Yet each man should act according to the inward knowledge opened up to him "the true authority of God in relation to every man, is the man's own perception of righteousness".63

The Bible draws attention to the inner word, it points to Christ and has its own intrinsic aptitude for producing faith, but "it appears,- that the authority on which the gospel is to rest, is the authority of truth recognized and felt in the conscience, and not any outward authority however purporting to be of God".64

Since the gift of Christ no one need do anything in his own strength; the strength of God is communicated to him in the word sown in the heart. Jesus
Christ is man's chart, and shows in his own history a pattern for each person to walk by, and the narrow way is the way of following him in the present moment. Erskine does not neglect the Christ who has been crucified, or to use his favourite metaphor of the vine, that the new sap is a substitute, yet the emphasis is on Christ as the representative and the captain of salvation:

... I do not mean to confound the root of a tree with a branch, but only to mark their connection, when I speak of them as having the same sap circulating through them both; for though I thus speak of them, I do not forget that the sap is originally concocted not by the branch but by the root, and that the branch could have no sap at all, unless it had a root, by which the sap might be prepared and communicaed to it. ... Now, God in our nature, - that is, Christ, - is the ... root, which connects the whole tree of man with God and heaven, as the carnal Adam is the root which connects it with Satan and corruption; - for the tree has two roots and two saps, and the atonement is just the acting of Christ, the new root, that voluntary dying; or shedding out by him of the old sap, or corrupt will of man. ...

D. The Relationship of Christ to the Human Race.

(i) The Theological Basis of Universal Salvation: Christ the Eternal Word.

So "I directed the people to turn to the place in their Bibles, and I recited to them the words of John, how that 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God: all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. (So all natural created lights were made by Christ the Word.) In him was life, and the life was the light of men: and that was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.'" And Christ said of himself, John viii, 12, "I am the light of the world:" and bids them "believe in the light", John xii.36. And God said of him
by the prophet Isaiah, ch.lix.6, "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth. So Christ in his light is saving. And the apostle said, "The light, which shined in their hearts, was to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ:" and that was their "treasure in their earthen vessels."2 Cor.iv.6,7.66

It was the Prologue of the Gospel of John that Erskine used as the starting point for his profound insight into the work of Christ as the representative of the race. Like George Fox, in the passage above, he begins by stressing the original relation of Christ to the human race in creation; he uses John's words and ideas, interpreting them so as to bring out the original organic relationship in creation between Christ and mankind.67 The story of Jesus does not begin with his historic appearance; it begins with the logos or divine word.

The word was in the beginning; he was with God, he was God. Everything was made by him; the word not only created the world but he sustained it in being because he was the principle of life or light within it. "The Word who was with God, and was God, and in whom there is life, hath come into man's nature - into the whole mass of the nature, - as a fountain of life, to quicken every man, and as a living cord, to draw man up to God".68

Erskine then has provided the cosmological setting for the inclusion of the whole race in Christ, and then speaks of the historical occasion of Christ's coming,69 which is to provide a standard for, and be a representative of, every member of the human race. "In the former dispensations, it was the spoken word that gave the light, but now it is the substantial word, the word made flesh. But our knowledge of the power of the light, and of its intensity, and of its extension, is intimately connected with, or arises mainly out of, the word being made flesh. Actions are our only measures of mind and feeling. And, therefore, whilst the word continued to be only a spoken word, we could not
rightly enter into the mind and feelings of God towards us. But God did not content himself
with uttering sounds or sending messages to us. He came himself - ".

In the course of time then, this divine light or word took flesh and came
among men, and it was through Christ's coming that the inward word is given
to every member of the human family. "This is the True Light which lighteth every
man that cometh into the world."(John 1.9.) This means that not only has an
atonement been made, in the external or substitutionary sense, but there is
within everyone Christ as a representative and witness for God:

"we have not to wait for the appearance of spiritual life in a man before we can venture to
determine that the germ of life is in him, and that we ought not to take its non-appearance as
any sign that it is not there. It is there like the germ in the wheat, whether it appears or
not."71

The outer word draws attention to the inner word, but until it receives the
consent of the inner word it cannot give life to the soul. No one gave more
thought than Erskine to the problem of evil, but although the individual may
turn away from God, the light continues to shine in the darkness. The word
does not cease to be the light to man because he has chosen darkness.

"And every man, in like manner, is a little world, where Jesus, the true Light, the quickening
Spirit, is, though unknown. There He stands at the door and knocks; and thus He fulfills the
word, 'where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.'"72

(ii) Natural Theology.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines natural theology as "a theology based on
human reason apart from revelation", and Karl Barth seems to be in agreement with
this definition when he writes, "natural theology is the doctrine of a union of man with
God outside God's revelation in Jesus Christ".73

It is, therefore, not surprising that a critic accuses Erskine of "a bold
innovation on the established modes of speech and meaning of words. For instance, he affixes to the phrase Natural Religion an import not only quite unjustified by the practice of good writers, but apparently inconsistent with the etymology of the terms.74

Looking carefully at Erskine's meaning then, we find that he opposes natural religion not to supernatural or revealed religion, but instead to conventional religion, "that is, religion adopted on external authority, without any living consciousness within our heart corresponding to it."75

Erskine demonstrates truth from religious experience and from the nature of man, but it is a supernatural revelation which he finds in the heart of every human being testifying to Christ. God is known through the conscience, but the voice in the conscience is not part of man's own nature, and Erskine advocates "a patient waiting"76 for this voice or light and then attending to it.

Erskine also speaks of the spirit as the voice within, and of the "the oneness of Christ with the Spirit in the conscience of man".77 St. John, he says, identifies Jesus with the spirit or the light in man's conscience, and in John 1.9, it is made clear that Christ and the spirit dwell in all men. The individual becomes aware of the spirit rather by an expansion of consciousness than by the implanting of anything new from the outside.

The voice in man's conscience then is the actual presence of God in him; it is the voice of Jesus Christ in him; it is the light of the spirit in him. Erskine felt it was not wrong to speak of the real presence of the spirit in every person; he had a dispute with a woman called Mrs. Burnett about that very question in 1840.

Mrs. Burnett disapproved of some extracts she had read of Law because he said of an unconverted man "that 'Christ is in him' or that 'the Holy Spirit is in him.'"78 Erskine asks how otherwise can a person be blamed for refusing to believe the truth of God, for spiritual things can only be discerned by the
spirit. He adds: "It appears to me that the difference between an unregenerate and a regenerate man is mainly this, that the first is resisting the Spirit of God which is striving with him, and the second is yielding himself up to be led by it". Think of it, continues Erskine, as a tree with two roots, Adam and Christ:

From each root a sap ascends and visits every branch and twig of the tree; the branches have the power of choosing which sap they will admit and which they will shut out. The old sap is in possession to begin with, but the heavenly sap presents itself at the door, and asks admittance, and has a witness within each branch that it ought to be admitted, and by its presence there confers a power on the branch of accepting its aid in expelling the old sap and giving itself up to the new.

(iii) The Eschatological Aspect.

Erskine had found in John 1 a formal theological starting point into which to translate his deep intuitive sense of the solidarity of the human race in Christ, he had linked it with a natural theology which put every one in the race on the same footing and he now needed to connect it with eschatology to include those who do not respond in this life. Without denying that the way the individual lived his life vitally mattered, he gave up the idea of retributive suffering. Death did not seal the individual's fate for ever, nor was the moment of death all important.

He opposed the general nineteenth century view that the individual's fate was sealed at death. For instance Pusey, in a letter on the subject of the word everlasting, written in 1881 for the guidance of a person in difficulties, claimed, "there is no change from bad to good or from good to bad after this life; 'as the tree falls so it lies'".

Erskine centres his argument that change occurs after death on his
conception of God. God is a teaching God who has created every one for the purpose of training them into a participation in his own righteousness. He is infinitely patient, and will never cease to desire, and try to bring about, the righteousness of his children.

Erskine concentrated more and more on the eschatological aspect as he grew older, but usually in the form of parables or wisdom sayings rather than formal theological argument. Principal Tulloch, in a letter written to Rev. H.B. Story from Linlathen, gives a very vivid picture of Erskine explaining his views on this subject.

Our old friend here is full of spiritual wisdom as ever. The long pauses among the damp autumn leaves yesterday afternoon, as he expounded and re-expounded his favourite idea of the spiritual education under which every man and the whole race of men are, and of God as a teaching God, were very picturesque, but not very comfortable... All men are undergoing this education; but some - the most - are doing so unconsciously, feebly; scarcely at all. But all are destined to the full realisation of their spiritual dignity... What a cheerful, hopeful, yet pathetic confidence he has.82

According to Julia Wedgewood, Erskine did not see mankind as being very advanced towards the triumph of good. The redemptive process is slow, and many more stages of development lie ahead of the individual before God's purpose can be accomplished. "I see a process, I do not see it completed. The bricks are being fashioned. I do not see the house being built".83

Erskine always felt himself to be the greatest of sinners, and he often thought there "may be a teaching through sin, an instruction in righteousness through sin, which perhaps could not be given in any other way".84 He remarked to Julia Wedgewood: "Atheism might be a misfortune. It might be a state of education through
which some spirits had to pass... it might be the will of God for a time to hide Himself from them." 85

This world is only a preparation for the triumph of good. The final goal is the restoration of the love of God in the heart, and the subordination of self under it. The new self formed within is Christ: "unity is not oneness, solitariness: it is completion." 86

E. Conclusion.

It is clear, in this chapter, that Erskine's view of the atonement has become a very partial one; much of the retrospective and external aspect has been set aside because of his concentration on the internal and the spiritual, and the Christ in each man. It contains many valuable insights, such as the doctrine of the headship of Christ, his unique relationship to the race, and on man's side, the necessity of an internal response to God's word in the Scriptures. If the ultimate object of the theologian, however, is to comprehend the whole then clearly Erskine fails, not because of what he actually says, but because of what he leaves out.

It has often been remarked that the New Testament contains not a theory of the atonement but theories of the atonement, and this brings to mind the work that has been done on theological models. Ian Barbour, for instance, discusses as complementary christological models, humanity/divinity, Messiah/Logos, etc. 87 Substitute/representative seem to be two atonement models which could be considered as complementary, as together they express well the significance of the life of Christ and of his death.

Erskine was not a systematic thinker, he viewed the atonement from his own particular standpoint, and even his best friends described him as one-
sided. Principal Shairp comments on the vehemence with which he "flung himself on the thoughts that had once taken possession of him." Contrasting him with John McLeod Campbell he remarks, "Mr. Erskine, whatever truth possessed him, threw himself wholly into it, became absorbed in it, expounded it with gentle yet vehement eloquence, and illustrated it with a wealth of ingenious illustration which was quite foreign to Mr. Campbell's habits of thought."

While a perfect theory of the atonement would presumably use both concepts, and discuss them in relation to each other, this was foreign to Erskine's method of thinking, and in him representation is the dominant model. He did not deny substitution, in a broad sense, but he saw his particular vocation as that of witnessing to moral and spiritual truth. He wanted to know God, and he cannot be known simply by reason alone or by the intellectual inference of his presence. A true religion, of the understanding, he felt, could still not be a true religion for him unless there was an awakening in him of that inner consciousness by which "we may not only wish to walk in the way of righteousness, but that we may also discern wherein righteousness consists, and patiently and lovingly walk in it."

The concepts of representation and substitution contain different kinds of insights, and actions and attitudes. Representation is very good at ordering human religious experience, and at the conceptual expression of personal relations. The nineteenth century theologian John Cotter MacDonnell, for instance, finds the chief difference between the two in the "ascription of substitution to things, and representation to persons." Originating, as he points out, in ideas of barter or purchase, "the idea of substitution is more commonly connected with our Lord's acts than with his person. We speak of his obedience or sufferings as a substitute for those of men."

Substitution and representation, as two linked models, can add new
dimensions of meaning to a particular event. For instance, supporters of substitution almost always suggest that Christ's unique achievement on the cross exempts the individual from the necessity of discharging the same function. This is how they interpreted vicariousness: the taking the place of, or standing in the room of, the other. Erskine, on the other hand, speaks of Christ not as delivering the individual from the cross, but as in the penitent thief, carrying him "through the cross, into his kingdom." Interacting models thus help to reconcile seemingly opposing levels of thought, and while preserving the integrity and autonomy of each, aim to bring them into a higher unity.
Chapter 5.


   A letter to the editor of The Christian Observer in 1820 compares favourably Erskine's view of the purpose of doctrines, accompanied by many vivid associations and scriptural references, with the coldness and frigidity of scholastic divinity. (Nov. 1820 pp. 720-24.)


33. In 4 vols. (London, 1781.)


38. Ibid.


46. Ibid.


67. cf. F.D. Maurice: "We see beneath all evil, beneath the universe itself, that eternal and original union of the Father and the Son. . . The revelation of that primal unity is the revelation of the ground on which all things stand, both things in heaven and things on earth". (*The Doctrine of Sacrifice*. 2nd ed. Macmillan, 1879. p. 194.)

69. cf. F.D. Maurice: "The Fall of Man is commonly regarded as the foundation of theology - the Incarnation and Death of Our Lord as provisions against the effects of it. Now St. Paul speaks of the Mystery of Christ as the ground of all things in Heaven and Earth, the History as the gradual discovery or revelation of this ground". *The Prayer Book and the Lord's Prayer*. Sermons originally preached 1848. Macmillan 1880. P. 118-119.


89. Ibid.


PART III. CHRIST, THE REPRESENTATIVE.

Chapter 6: Substitution and Representation from Themes in the "Letters".

We need to realise that Christ is indeed our life - as the life of the vine is in its root. Though the idea of Christ being our substitute has been a darkness in the minds of many, yet surely it is a blessed truth, that in looking to Him we see the Father's purpose towards us, that we should be one with Him. And we see that pure and holy life, from which in all our wanderings, and in all our fears and sorrows, we may draw our supply of strength and recovery and consolation, even as the branch from the vine. He is our peace and our hope of glory.1

It has been suggested, at the end of the last chapter, that representation and substitution could be discussed with greater understanding if we stopped thinking of them as alternatives, and recognised them as models, each yielding its own insights, and with its own particular problems and limitations. It is not being argued of course that the two warring factions saw them as such, for it is certain that the orthodox Calvinists, at least, thought there was a literal substitution of Christ in the place of sinners.

When we say one man is substituted for another, that he takes the place of another, what figure do we use? We state a fact; and how can it be stated more literally? A man enlists in the army; he repents, and applies for his discharge; he is told he must find a substitute; he procures one, who is accepted, and the man is free. Where is the figure in all this? It is a simple fact - a plain unvarnished tale from which we learn that another took the place of the man who had enlisted. When Christ bore our sins in his own body on the tree - when by his
stripes we were healed - when we had gone astray like lost sheep, and the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, there is nothing akin to figure; it is a fact which God has revealed, that Christ took our place, and suffered the just for the unjust. ²

Nevertheless an approach to the subject by the way of metaphor, or models, may provide a new basis for understanding their role in atonement theology. Barbour distinguishes between the two words by saying, "a metaphor is used only momentarily, whereas a model is used in sustained and systematic fashion,"³ and we are, therefore, suggesting that they are models. Presumably, the model (or models) which is most influential in a particular thinker is determinative of the way in which the atonement is regarded.

The matter, however, is highly complex for, it has often been pointed out, one model seldom appears by itself but is accompanied by a cluster of linked models, and together they yield a variety of insights into the life and death of Christ. Moreover, while these two key models which we are discussing do each seem to select specific aspects of Christ's work for deeper understanding, and to be associated with different patterns of thought, yet at certain points they interpenetrate rather than exclude each other. It would be reasonable, therefore, to see them as complementary models, for while each has its own particular way of attempting to order reality, and its own strengths and weaknesses in interpreting distinctive types of experience, yet neither is adequate by itself to ensure a full understanding of the atonement.

Every thinker then chooses the models which give prominence to the type of experience he considers important, and which give emphasis to his own particular way of looking at things. In a thinker like Erskine, in the period we are now studying, they are chosen partly to meet a variety of practical needs, rather than to provide a picture of the whole reality.
From 1838 to his death in 1870 Erskine published no books, and the only source we have for his ideas are his letters. It must be remembered that these letters are a record of actual human experience and although there is theological reflection on, and interpretation of, that experience, the ideas rising out of it are not so much theoretical as consolatory or devotional.

Erskine puts into the background those divine attributes such as immutability, sovereignty, power or omnipotence which he sees as of no immediate use for faith or Christian living. He brings out instead God's moral qualities like goodness, wisdom, love, mercy and truth. Erskine's idea of God is concentrated then, in his letters, on the ethical contents of His personality. Christianity is the revelation of the character of God and the love of him as a person.

In such a setting we can see that there is little room for a model of substitutionary punishment or vicarious satisfaction. If the essential notion of redemption is ethical and spiritual it draws to itself quite naturally ideas of personal responsibility, trust, co-operation and of the working together of God and man towards a good end. Erskine's characteristic analogy of Fatherhood contains within it thoughts of a sympathetic and complete mutuality between God and his children.

Many of Erskine's letters were written to the sick, bereaved, suffering or dying and with this background the titles of representative, redeemer, counsellor, friend, shepherd and guide is of special value. "I thank Him that He has given us His Son to be our permanent Head, through whom we have continual access to Him, and continual return to Him after all our wanderings, through whom you have strength given you to drink the bitter cup put into your hand, and to find it water of life".

In contrast to the finished work of Christ bound up with the model of substitution, Erskine stresses his unfinished work, the long process of spiritual
teaching which must go on while God is working out with mankind, through Christ their representative, the great salvation. It would take endless ages to achieve but the education would go on, Erskine thought, until all realized their true destiny. He remarked on one occasion: "We are to be fellow-workers with God, I suppose and believe, for ever."5

A. Linked and Excluding Christological Models.

(i) The Fatherhood of God and the Sonship of Christ.

Most supporters of substitution were, by this period, quick to deny its less moral aspects, and were anxious to avoid a collision with the individual's ethical convictions and the judgement of their conscience. The atonement was now seldom seen as the means of appeasing an implacable and vindictive being. They were moving steadily towards a broader outlook and more tolerant-spirit than that which characterised the older holders of the penal theory, who stood all but unanimous against McLeod Campbell at the time of the Row case.

McIntyre has described one of the functions of models as normative: fatherhood, for instance, regulates the kind of statements that can be made about God.6 This can be illustrated in Thomas Crawford, who in his lectures on The Fatherhood of God published in 1866, points out that in the light of fatherhood the atonement cannot be seen as a means of inclining God to be merciful or persuading him to exercise towards sinners a compassion with which he would not otherwise have shown towards them. The death of Christ worked no change in God, and the atonement is not the cause of God's love and mercy to sinners but the manifestation of his pre-existing love and mercy. Christ's substitution does not dispose God to be merciful but allows him to
exercise that mercy in a way that is compatible with his holiness. The atonement had its origin, concludes Crawford, in God's willingness to save sinners and proceeds from fatherly love.\(^7\)

With Erskine also the starting point for a theology of the atonement is God as love. We know that God is love, he says, because he sent his Son into the world: "We have good reason to trust Him who hath not spared His own Son, but given Him up for us all, and not for us only, but to us, to be a living Head, in whom we have all things, guidance and strength, and participation in the very life and nature of God".\(^8\)

In its relationship to man this love of God can be compared to that of a good human father: "Are we not in His hands, and are not His hands, a Father's hands?"\(^9\) We note then that while fatherhood is becoming a compatible model with both substitution and representation, a question which still concerned Erskine's Calvinist critics was, Is he a father towards the whole human race?

Theologians like R.S. Candlish held that there does not exist as such any proper relationship of fatherhood and sonship apart from the relationship of those who are children of God through Jesus Christ. Candlish did not believe that the primary and original relation of God towards mankind was paternal. He argued that the evidence in scripture did not support the idea that God simply as creator is a father of all his creatures. "Standing to them in the relation of their creator, he must of necessity stand to them in the relation, as thus explained, of their ruler; their sovereign lawgiver and just judge. . . . But the paternal relation, the fatherhood of God, has no place among them."\(^10\)

Crawford did not agree, and this was one of the points of a controversy between the two thinkers in the late 1860s. Crawford criticised the position Candlish had taken in his Cunningham Lectures published under the title The Fatherhood of God (1865), in his own lectures given as part of a course of instruction in systematic theology at Edinburgh University and published the
next year also under the title *The Fatherhood of God*. Candlish in due course produced a supplementary volume containing a reply to Dr. Crawford.

Crawford distinguished between the general fatherhood of God which extended to all mankind because they owed their existence to him, were created after his likeness and retained some traces of his image, and the evangelical relationship. All in the first sense were sons of God, but there was a special and higher sonship pertaining to those who were *the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ*. Admission into evangelical sonship was by adoption and regeneration.

Not all supporters of substitution then were agreed on interpreting the atonement through the model of fatherhood, for some believed that as Christ did not atone for any filial offence the atonement was purely legal, forensic and judicial. They did all, however, completely oppose the view that the work of Christ could be regarded as a manifestation of the love of God without any expiation of human guilt or satisfaction of divine justice. Some of the representative school of thinkers argued that the atonement did not remove any obstacle on the part of God to forgiving men, and provided neither compensation nor satisfaction. The atonement was the historical means of showing men and women that God loved them and this subdued the enmity of their hearts against him, and inspired genuine and intense penitence.

There also seemed to be a division among the two parties about the amount of weight to be given to the two biblical expressions, *in his image, after his own likeness* and the word *adoption*. Erskine writes, "when a child is born into a family he is by birth the brother of the other children in the family; they have nothing to do to make him their brother. They cannot benefit by their relation unless they receive him as a brother, but the relation itself stands independent of him. So also God is our Father . . ." Adoption, on the other hand, means the introduction into a
family of a member who does not belong to it by birth, it is "significant of a forensic, or at all events of a federal, transaction." Supporters of substitution then tended to see fatherhood primarily as a new relationship, and ineretns to the doctrine of representation saw God's purpose as a restoration of the primal closeness present before the fall.

Crawford wrote, "The proper object of faith is, not the fact that we are sons of God, but the revealed truth that Christ is able and willing to make us so." Erskine and Maurice declared that evangelical sonship was conferred on every member of the human race as Christ was one with every man. Human nature is inside rather than outside the divine. Referring to a dinner in which a toast was proposed to himself and McLeod Campbell, Erskine wrote to Bishop Ewing: "the proposer, who is a very able man, and who seems very anxious to make the Church of Scotland understand the sin and blunder she committed in regard to Mr. Campbell thirty-eight years ago. . . . All that class of men condemn the deposition of Mr. Campbell. And yet I believe that neither in the Church of Scotland nor in the Church of England is the root of the question then agitated understood to this day.

Is a man to become a child of God, or is a man a child of God in virtue of his being a man?"

(ii) Fatherhood and Judgeship.

Erskine contrasted the fatherhood of God with his judgeship, and argued for the incompatibility between paternal and judicial modes of dealing. He thought that substitution, in which God is conceived as a just law-giver, was based on wrong ideas of the character and government of God: "If God will do what is called justice to me, I could have no trust in Him. . . . I should look on Him not as a wise and righteous Ruler and Father, but as a sort of Justice Clerk, who was merely the
Some supporters of substitution were now tending to put forward the view that these two roles of God were harmoniously united, and interpenetrated rather than conflicted with one another. Crawford, for instance, thought that the atonement was a transaction in its proper nature, but that it flowed from the compassion of God: "God does not love sinners because Christ died for them. It is, on the contrary, because God loved sinners with a warmth and tenderness that are altogether inexpressible, that He gave His only-begotten Son to be the propitiation for their sins... It is doubtless as a judge that the atonement was exacted by Him; but it was, no less surely, as a father that He provided it."  

Candlish tends to be nearer to the older absolutist views referring to "the dread transaction of Calvary". The two thinkers were agreed that Christ's righteousness was a legal righteousness, and his sufferings penal sufferings. They argued about how far fatherhood as a real personal relationship between God and any members of the human family, could or did exist before the transaction and independently of it.

Erskine was preoccupied with another question which arose out of the question of God's fatherhood, and that was whether the atonement was remedial or retributive. Candlish had written in 1845: "It was in the character of one made under the law, and made sin for us, that he endured these sufferings; and therefore, they were, in the strict sense, penal and retributive; and as borne by one, the divinity of whose person, and the merit of whose obedience, imparted an infinite value to his offering of himself, they exhausted the full penal and retributive sentence lying upon the guilty sinners whose place he took." Erskine thought that salvation did not consist in the removal of a penalty, or in the payment of a debt, but in a deliverance from sin. "In contrasting the fatherhood of God with His judgeship, I meant the first to represent
a righteousness which seeks to communicate itself, and the second a righteousness which seeks to vindicate itself, and I intended to say that the second was put in action, in subserviency to the first". 19

Erskine criticised that aspect of substitution which interpreted atonement as the payment of an exact equivalent or as "conscientious and scrupulous fairness", whereas its object is really to make men righteous. The unchangeable fatherly purpose of God is to conform all men to the image of his Son, and forgiveness therefore is not conditional or purchased. Erskine remarked to Bishop Ewing: "that the distinguishing feature of righteousness in God is the desire to communicate righteousness, and not to exact penalties, seems to me a great principle". 20

(iii) The Law Court and the School.

We find then that Erskine had a very different way of looking at the world from the holders of the forensic theory of atonement. They saw it as a place of trial with impending punishment for the guilty, whereas he held it to be a place of education where the individual is gradually trained ethically: "It is a great mistake to call our present state, a state of probation, as if we were here on trial... it makes us feel as if we were continually standing before a judgement-seat, instead of being in our Father's school." 21

Erskine believed that the world is intended by God to form a place of training for the education of individuals in like-mindedness to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God's ideal for man, but while he is a representative figure standing for man he also represents God: "He presents to us our Father's character, He presents to the Father His own accomplished idea and purpose in the creation of man; He stands in that relation to us, that He may make us like-minded to Himself". 22

There is a providence, Erskine thought, which guides and shapes all things
and brings them together for good ends: "A universe without a right and good purpose in creating, sustaining, and guiding it, is a thing which I am sure ought not to be, and cannot be. I believe in good - in the existence of good. I cannot help believing in it; but I am sure good cannot exist without a will, and so I find that my belief in good actually implies my belief in God, the living Fountain of good."23

Every event and duty and joy and sorrow of life is part of this good purpose, and can be used to acquire the likeness to Christ and learn righteousness. Every circumstance of an individual's existence is specially chosen by God to bring about this final end: "That we are actually at each step of life under a divine guidance and purpose seems to me a discovery that has to be made over and over again."24 For some the whole of this life may be taken up in discovering their own evil or weakness. As in the art of healing a large part of the process sometimes consists in making the patient apparently worse: "This is what we see going on. We see the evil being made manifest".25

Erskine observed that suffering rightly used could sanctify. Jesus provides an example of the way to live and die. He was the "Man of Sorrows", and his representation is therefore of special value in a ministry to the sick, bereaved, suffering and dying: he is with them in their sufferings, and speaks to their condition. Just as he suffered for them, so they can suffer with him: "the way of the cross is not only the way in which Jesus walked for us, but also the only way in which we can walk with Him, and that He was a man of sorrows, not that we might be exempt from sorrows, but that we might suffer with Him and sorrow with Him, in the same spirit and to the same result".26

It was clear to Erskine that God met with apparent failure in respect to many people in this life, but he met this objection by extending the process of education beyond the grave. He thought that all learn something here that it was necessary for them to learn: "Everything in our experience seems, if I may say so,
to indicate something very lengthy. God is in no hurry with us, let us be in no hurry with Him."

B. Some Special Models used by Erskine.

(i) The Body of Humanity.

Sometimes Erskine seems to be saying that God permits suffering because a right response to it is educative, and leads to spiritual development. In another strand of his thinking, however, he goes further and says that God sends suffering for his own purposes: "The smallest unnecessary suffering I protest against; but any suffering which is needed to press me into eternal life, eternal righteousness, I accept with my whole reason and choice, however much I may shrink from it whilst it is upon me." It does not come by chance but is part of God's plan to train the individual in the development of righteousness.

Is not broken body and shed blood the supper of our Lord? showing us that it is by that which breaks the flesh and sheds out the blood of man's will that our souls are to be trained and nourished unto eternal life; and shall we not say likewise, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

In this process of acquiring the likeness by every event of life, Erskine describes himself as a "slow scholar". He seems to make "so little progress in this prima philosophia, and occasionally such a weariness - such a sense of nothingness in all that I do or see". He finds he needs others, "our fellow-soldiers" to give encouragement.

His fellow workers were all the human race, for Erskine saw, not only...
Christians, but the whole of mankind as the body of Christ. The body is essentially a relational model: every member of the race is connected and interrelated in such a way that the progress or failure of one member involves all the others. Completion is something for the whole; each member of the body is deprived or enriched by what happens to his neighbour. "We are members one of another; we belong to one great whole; we can never sever ourselves from them, do what we will, . . ."32

All men then participate in the body, as members of the human family and of the one race; each individual is under the one saviour who is the head and representative of all. This is the way man was meant to live; God does not give each person a private stock of wisdom to work out an independent righteousness. For he was meant to live as a branch of the true vine, as a member of the body, and as the loving and intelligent recipient of the Father’s will. "Men forget that they are branches and not trees, and so the fruit is not of the right kind - wild grapes, . . ."33

Man is complete in God, yet in this completeness there cannot be absolute equality. "There is an order of giving and receiving, governing and obeying, blessing and trusting. This lower hemisphere is the Son, continually receiving and returning the Father’s love, giving a sympathising response to every thought and feeling in the Father’s mind. It is a manifestation of love, and the moral creation is appended to the lower hemisphere that it may partake in the spirit of the Son - 'I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.'34

The eternal receiver is Christ, and the eternal giver is his Father and Christ works continually to produce this loving receiving in the whole of creation. Everyone is created to be good, and their goodness comes from the Son who communicates to them his own goodness. This God, who directed all things towards a good end, could not accomplish his purpose if any that were lost
could not be found. "He is the Shepherd, who when He has lost a sheep seeks diligently until He finds it", 35

(ii) The Inner Light and the Universal Conscience.

To the question, how can Christ represent the whole human race?, Erskine answers that he represents it through the conscience or inner light. Everyone is drawn into fellowship with Christ by this true light which is already in them all. God created each individual that he might educate them into discovering the light or the hidden Christ at the bottom of their conscience.

Conscience then to Erskine is not a mere human faculty, and it is not to be confused with the moral law which changes with the times and differs from country to country. Conscience is the organ of God within every person.

Erskine says, "it is there not as a spy or as a taskmaster, but as a loving guide, and helper, and comforter ... This presence dwells in each of us, connecting us with each other, and connecting all with God; thus we are all specimens of that wonderful combination, God and man united, the divine element issuing out of God into us all, not direct from the great Father, but modified by passing through a human heart, and thus full of all holy human sympathies; that human heart is the heart of Jesus. ..." 36 Thus, adds Erskine, he is our head and root and elder brother and representative. Dwelling within us, he leads us to do the will of God, and to seek to become like him.

We can assume then that Erskine is not so much concerned with the retrospective aspect of conscience. He believes, in any case, that every response to do good includes the pardon for past sins. Conscience does, however, witness against and condemn man's present condition, calling him to be reconciled and set free in Christ.

The role of conscience is dealt with most fully in "Reminiscences of Thomas Erskine, by Principal Shairp", which is included in the second volume of
Erskine's *Letters*, edited by Hanna. Shairp first met Erskine in January 1854, when he visited Linlathen, and he made notes of their conversations as they sat in the library, walked along the corridors of Linlathen House or strolled in the grounds when the weather allowed.

Erskine spoke particularly about the conscience during that first visit, of its universal nature and its mystical connection with Christ and his body. He believed that it is because Christ is in all men that conscience is universal in all men.

What is the true guide?

Answer. - I fall back more and more on first principles. The conscience in each man is the Christ in each man. It is the ray of light coming straight from the great Fountain of Light; or rather, it is the eye guided by the Sun; or it is the child's shell murmuring of its native ocean; or the cord let down by God into each man by which He leads each. Often the string lies quite slack; the man is not conscious of the guidance or the guide. Then the string becomes tight, and the man feels the drawing, he is conscious of God. . .

The universal diffusion of conscience through all men is the Christ in all men, - "Christ in you the hope of glory."

He was in the man, and the man was made by Him, and the man knew Him not. This is true of every man by nature. And the great thing is to become conscious of Him, and to Know Him through Himself revealed in conscience."37

Erskine thought that conscience, "this inward light" was not an individual thing; it cannot cut itself off from its source. "It is the nature of conscience not to be individual. Conscience is not mine, I am conscience's. Each man does not possess it, but is possessed by it. It speaks in virtue of a higher light than itself, of which it declares itself to be but a ray. It swells outward to Christ, and finds its fulness only in Him and
God. It is their continual witness, referring back not to itself but to them.  

The true conscience is, therefore humble, and does not set itself up as an independent authority. Yet at the same time it does not accept that which it cannot comprehend, simply on the authority of church or scripture. In this sense it is always individual: "It will say, what you urge me to believe may be true, but I do not know it to be true now. I may come to see it, or I may not, but at present I am not in a condition to witness for it".  

Shairp said that many would recognize these thoughts of Erskine's which he had recorded during the visit, for it was Erskine's habit to return to them again and again. They were "the channels which his mind latterly had grooved for itself, and which it wore ever deeper as time went on". With a sympathetic listener, and sometimes even with those who were not so sympathetic, he would go on for hours with these thoughtful monologues.

(iii) The Language of the Bible.

McIntyre reminds us that the unity of the Bible itself is a model, and he suggests various conceptions of what this unity is supposed to consist of: unity of system, unity of devotional purpose, unity of centre etc. In Erskine's day the application of criticism to the Bible was beginning to destroy the Protestant idea of unity of system, and with it the outward infallible authority of the Bible itself.

Erskine believed that all education begins with authority, but as the pupil advances he gradually begins to perceive truth for himself and to receive it into his reason and conscience. The aim of the teacher is to help the child "to discern the truthfulness of the truth", and the same principles apply to the authority of Scripture. Erskine adds, "I feel that I believe the Bible because of the
things that I find in it, rather than that I believe them because they are in the Bible". 43

If a person believes only on the outward authority of the Bible without discerning the truth for himself, he is, according to Erskine, not truly believing it. It was not given "to be cited as a peremptory authority in anything" 44, but to help the individual to know God, and to turn to him for guidance and strength. Spiritual truth is addressed to the conscience and must be authenticated by the conscience. Nevertheless, he goes on to say, it has to be accepted that there are many who never advance beyond authority, to the ultimate appeal of experience, in this life.

This observation is what determined Erskine's attitude to the growing higher criticism of the Bible, and the destruction of the model of its systematic unity. He believed that those people who accepted the traditional view of the Bible, as an authentic and inerrant historical document, should be guided gradually into the truth and at the same time reassured as to the substantial integrity of its record. He felt nothing was to be gained by the approach of men like Colenso in their zeal for historical truth undermined the foundations of Christianity itself.

John William Colenso, Bishop of Natal 1853-1883, had in 1862-3 published 2 parts of The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined, and had more or less conclusively proved that the Pentateuch contained so many inaccuracies and inconsistences that it must be a composite structure compiled from different sources, and it could not literally be true. There is one undated letter from Erskine to Colenso in which Erskine expresses his dismay at Colenso's lack of thought or care about the feelings of his readers, most of whom accepted the Bible unquestionably as history, and who might have their confidence shaken in the Bible as a guide to matters independent of history.

Erskine admits that there must be considerable truth in Colenso's critical
conclusions about the history and composition of the Old Testament books. He also said that he looked upon the Bible much as Colenso did, and he felt it was possible to abandon the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible without harming its spiritual authority: "Then as to the infallibility of the Bible; it is evident that the object of the Bible is not to teach us to receive things as truths, but to teach us to apprehend the truth of the truths." 45

The problem was that teachers and preachers in Scotland were not accustomed to address the conscience and reason of their people, or to help them towards a fuller knowledge or a surer foundation of their faith. Literal notions of truth were what was commonly found, and Christianity was supposed to stand on the verbal inspiration of the Bible.

He concluded his letter to Colenso with these remarks: "... I feel that I shrink from what you have done, and yet I can conceive your acting perfectly conscientiously.

When I think of your criticisms I often seem to hear the voice of the Great Teacher saying, 'I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now', as a call to thoughtful tenderness for our brethren. I sometimes also consider whether you are prepared yourself for the results of such criticisms on the New Testament." 46 He adds a postscript: "I do not feel myself justified in saying anything by merely knowing that it is true; I feel bound to look to its probable effects on those who hear it". 47

He adopts a similar tone in a letter to Bishop Ewing on Essays and Reviews. Erskine was personally undisturbed by the seven essays published in 1860 under the title Essays and Reviews, but he seems to agree that there were "many very objectionable things in that book" 48 and indeed it caused a controversy which was one of the most bitter in the whole century.

Erskine thought that the revelation of God as a teaching God was the great revelation of the Bible. The purpose of the Bible was "to help man to know God, and to know themselves in His light, and so be led to receive His Spirit, and to become temples ..."
of the Holy Ghost. Surely then, if we find this chief object ignored and unnoticed in
dissertations written to elucidate the character of the book, we must at least admit that by
this omission a very grave mistake has been committed. 49

Ninety-nine out of every hundred Christians in Scotland, explained Erskine, maintained the verbal inspiration of the Bible, and they would have their faith in spiritual things annihilated by the discovery of any contradiction or inaccuracy in it. Erskine acknowledged his own debt to the Bible and the help that he had received from it, but he did not believe it to be a final and infallible standard of truth as many of his contemporaries did. "I see the truth of Christianity, thanks to the Bible; but I do not lose Christianity now, though you took the Bible from me." 50 Its authority, he believed was inward not outward, but nevertheless the transfer of faith from letter to spirit would take time. It must not be done in a way that would destroy their belief altogether, but rather it should gradually be transferred to a new and firmer foundation.

Erskine remarked to Miss Wedgewood: "I think ... we shall learn to value the Bible more as we grow independent of it. I do value parts of the Bible exceedingly, but I do not feel that I depend upon it. ... when I come upon discrepancies in the narratives which are very definite and striking ... I feel that this is not inspiration. The records are the vehicles of principles which are true independently of the records, and which criticism cannot touch." 51
C. Some Reflections on Erskine's Attitude towards Substitution and Representation in "The Letters."

(i) Attitude towards Substitution.

Erskine is not concerned so much in his Letters with the general idea of substitution, as with the view of it as a particular model of human redemption. He discusses it as central to the forensic theory of the atonement which contended that Christ died as a propitiatory sacrifice, and in thus dying sustained the relation of a substitute.

Erskine defined the forensic theory as "the idea that God is compelled by His own essential justice to punish sin, and to punish it as an infinite offence because it is committed against His own infinite excellence, and in order to evade this necessity, which would involve the perdition of the whole race, He has had recourse to substitutional imputation". 52

In this model God is basically a righteous lawgiver and just judge. He may also be a father, and there seemed to be a variety of opinion on this point, but in relation to sinners his primary role is still that of judge. God's law has been violated, and the consequences must be dealt with before he is free to carry out his purpose of love. Man cannot pay the penalties because of his own sin, so Christ freely becomes his substitute, the sin of mankind is laid upon him, and he pays the price demanded to satisfy God's retributive justice.

Erskine found the model of substitutionary punishment irreconcilable with his view of God as love, who created man to be a sharer in his own holiness, and who would cease to be a righteous father if he ceased to desire to bring this about. He writes: "It seems to me that there is a mistake at the very foundation of all this. I do not believe that justice ever is, or can be, satisfied with punishment. I believe that the justice of God is the righteousness of God, and that His righteousness
requires righteousness in man, and can be satisfied with nothing else, and that punishment is
God's protest that He is not satisfied. But it is evident that if this be so the judicial
office is incomplete in itself, and must be subordinate to the teaching office, so that the
condemnation of wrong may minister to the inculcation and acquisition of right. 53

Many of Erskine's contemporaries, like Maurice, Jowett and Kingsley, also
felt that forensic ideas were inadequate to express the work of Christ, and that
they compromised the character of God as a God of love. Benjamin Jowett,
who was a frequent guest at Linlathen, referred to penal substitution as a
fiction and without moral sense: Could Christ really pay the debt the individual
owed to God? "Can He see us other than we really are? Can He impute to us what we never
did? Would He have punished us for what was not our own fault? It is not the pride of human
reason which suggests these questions, but the moral sense which He himself has implanted in
the breast of each one of us". 54

Erskine adds, "One thing, however, I should be sorry to omit, which is, that the
forensic theory has a direct tendency to make men think that salvation consists in the removal
of a penalty instead of a deliverance from sin. I am persuaded that it has had that effect on
the minds of our population very universally". 55

God is a loving Father, and the world a school in which he is educating
immortal beings for eternity. He is a fatherly teacher who sees and orders all.
He longs for the recovery of his lost children, and will go on seeking after
them until all are found. In the place of law and merit and satisfaction then,
Erskine taught a theology of universal grace and redemption by love.
(ii) **Substitution as a general concept and in harmony with Representation in the "Letters".**

From the atmosphere of the law courts, and of substitutionary punishment approved by a judge, we pass in Erskine, on his reconstructive side, to a series of images uniting Christ with the whole human race. Christ is the vine and mankind are the branches; Christ is the root of their being infusing a new sap, injecting his own life.

There is then, in Erskine, a radical change of metaphor, and a transference of interest from legality to morality, from law to conscience. It may be argued that the two analogies of the law court and the vineyard need not and should not be opposed to each other, as if they held exact and distinctly different realities. They can be held to be complementary for the Christ who died for men and women as their substitute, is also the Christ who lives in them as their representative. As Ian Ramsey has pointed out: "A model by its very character will never give us the full story."56

Or, even supposing, as many theologians were now arguing, the concepts of propitiation and expiation are not appropriate terms to describe the work of Christ, there are other understandings of the term substitution. It can be removed from its penal framework for, returning to the model of the vine, new sap is after all a substitute. Man has no part in making the sap but merely receives it. It was in this general use of the term substitution that Erskine was in agreement with the substance of the old doctrine.

Erskine did acknowledge this objective element in the atonement, but he questioned the relation, set forth in penal substitution, of the subjective to the objective, or of Christian experience to history. His interest was in the existential dimension or the living Christ of personal experience, and he felt
the importance of the objective atonement was to bring about the subjective atonement to be effected by Christ through the conscience of every human being.

He often struggled to express what he meant by an objective atonement but experienced "a great difficulty in forming anything like a clear idea of it. It is the redemption of humanity by its purgation in its root - the God-man, through His death and resurrection. I have always been accustomed chiefly to contemplate this in its reproduction, in the spirits of men, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, when it becomes part of our own personal conscious history. I have always felt Mr. Maurice's language on this subject less clear than I can wish. I find this both in his book on Sacrifice, and in the remarks which he makes on Campbell's book in the introduction to his Epistle of St. John. I believe that Christ's work on earth could not have been a mere manifestation of the loving purpose of God but must have accomplished something, and that was the purgation of which I have spoken above". 57

(iii) Characteristics of Erskine's Representative Theory of Atonement.

The historic transition from a substitutionary to a representative theory in Erskine and many other nineteenth century theologians, involved as we have seen a very significant change of models and emphasis. It might be helpful then, at this point, to summarize some of these characteristics, discovered so far, and to set them out simply as they appeared as bound to specific historical atonement theories.

1. Substitution was based on a model of atonement which assumed the necessity of the satisfaction of justice. In representation an ethical idea of Christian character was in the forefront, and the chief exemplar or model was Jesus, the representative. He demonstrates a way of co-operation with God in
transforming the individual into his image.

In this work of transformation both God's aim and man's true interest are the same. Yet man must choose and see where his interest lies; his will must be brought into conformity with God's purpose. Righteousness is what matters more than anything else to Erskine, and goodness is something that has to be chosen. He writes, "I do not believe that a mortal being could be created good; taking goodness in its highest sense. Moral goodness really means choosing to be good, and no man can be made to choose, or made as having chosen; he must himself choose."58

This work to be carried out in each individual is not to be done out of their own resources. To be like Christ is to be saved, but Erskine constantly repeats that it is grace and not works which must intervene to bring about this salvation. By uniting himself to humanity Christ is able to lift it up to his level; everyone can become righteous because Christ is righteous and they can do it in him. Does not, Erskine asks, righteousness consist of a "dependence as the branch has upon the vine, 'living by the sap thence received'? Does not man's wrongness consist in his following his own independent will, in acting from his own resources, in living under the power of self? Faith, confidence, dependence, is the name for man's turning from himself to God. . . . This faith is man's right condition, and it is the righteousness of Christ, as the sap in the branch is the sap from the vine".59

2. Representation is a relational word and involves participation of individuals in the work which Christ had done; they are to be fellow-workers with him in bringing about their own redemption. Atonement is not something achieved by a unique act which happened in the distant past, but it is happening now in the present moment as men and women grow to be more like Christ. There is no finality of attainment, but the Christ-like life already begun has its completion in the remote future: "It took ages to make red sandstone, how much more to educate a human soul".60
In particular Erskine set himself to be a sharer in the cross of Christ; he identified himself with the crucified Jesus. Just as Christ’s victory was through death, so he leads his followers along the same path: “Let us take what He appoints for us, accepting our punishment - like the thief on the cross - for are we not all on the cross?”.

This is in marked contrast to the forensic theory which concentrated on Christ’s physical death at a particular time in history; Denney who was in this tradition was to describe his death as a “solitary phenomenon in the universe”. The important thing for Erskine was man’s participation in Christ’s death and resurrection; he speaks of dying to sin, or dying to self which has to do with the spiritual life. He writes: “The great lesson of love is, to die to one’s self. Christ’s love is always shown through death, just because the death of the self is both the great expression and the only way into love.”

3. Erskine links his conviction that Christ is the representative and not the penal substitute of his people with the concept of the mystical body, and the solidarity of the human race in Christ. Christ assumed the nature not of a single individual but of all mankind. He uses organic metaphors like the vine and the branches, and the head and the body to explain the work of Christ, instead of the legal or commercial concepts which seem to have been widely current in his day. “He is the vine, we are the branches; we have to open the valves, to let the sap flow through us.”

In order that each individual might take his or her particular place in the great body of Christ, a special education has been arranged for each one of them. If man was created not to be tried but to be educated, then the only end of punishment must be reformation. “He condemns me, that He may teach me, and save me. He does not teach me, that he may have grounds to condemn me. All this condemnation is love. His wrath is love.”
In this too he differed from the substitutionary school for to them it was basically retributive or at the very least deterrent. Erskine's contemporary James Rigg, a Methodist, wrote: "But the object of threatened punishment is not merely, or even in the first place, to amend. It is rather to deter. He who makes a law, and enforces it by the sanction of a threatened punishment, does this with the purpose that the fear of punishment may prevent the transgression of law." 66

Erskine wanted to give up these law centred metaphors altogether: "It is this idea which has given its character of substitution to the life and death of Christ, representing it as the ground on which God is justified in forgiving men, rather than as the actings of the root of the human tree, by which sap is prepared for and propelled into the branches... If it were believed that God had created us for education, and not one in a thousand had really received any education, it would generally be accepted without hesitation that the education must necessarily proceed in the next world..." 67

4. Erskine did not believe that there would be any finally impenitent sinners, but every individual would eventually be drawn into participation and fellowship with Christ by means of the true light which is in every human being. "Were there not that true light in man, were not the Son of God in him, where would his humanity be?" 68

He thought the great fault of the common preaching was the entire want of reference to this inward light in man. It was the personal presence of Christ, the revelation within which mattered to Erskine, and no revelation from without seemed of any value to him unless it could give a satisfactory interpretation of what he found within himself. He wrote to Bishop Ewing:

"I cannot admit your comparison of the action of Christianity amongst the great general deposit of common truths in man's heart, to the injection of fiery rocks through the old red sandstone; for I believe that that deposit is in fact Christianity, and that the revelation of Jesus Christ is the explanation of this deposit, showing whence it cometh and whither it
Towards the end of his life Erskine's whole mind became preoccupied with the idea of Christ as the universal representative, and of salvation for all, but it never prevented him from frequently sounding a note of warning. Pardon is extended to all, but only faith produces righteousness, and "whatever is righteous eternally is - there is no other faith in God but that - but not phenomenally is."
Notes.

Chapter 6.


15. Ewing, ed. Some Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen. p. 44.


33. Op. cit. p. 188.
   Vol. 2. p. 212.
47. Ibid.
   Vol. 2. p. 207.
   Vol. 2. p. 49.
   Vol. 2. p. 29.


Chapter 7. (1) "The Spiritual Order": Erskine, the Broad Church and the Deity of Christ.

A comparison of the two concepts which are the subjects of this study has shown that there are diverse views on substitution and representation, and various ways in which the terms can be understood. They also have common elements: traditionally they presuppose the incarnation, for they both included a belief in the deity of Christ.

By 1870, however, both in England and Scotland, there was a widespread unsettlement of religious belief. The Godhead of Christ had traditionally been guarded by the Bible and the creeds, but the conclusions of higher criticism, and the new scientific discoveries pointed to a limitation of Christ's knowledge. There was an uncertainty about how to relate his lack of knowledge of, for instance, the authorship of the Pentateuch to his divinity. If Christ had no special knowledge of history or of science, could he still be God?

This doubt about the divinity of Christ was accompanied by an increased interest in his humanity. There was a tendency to make him into a pattern man, and to ignore his example as God incarnate. The Congregationalist contained a series of articles in 1872 pointing out that this was also a feature of the preaching of the day: "All the incidents of His earthly life which prove that He was really man, are eagerly seized, - His hunger, His weariness, His personal friendships, His temptation in the wilderness, the mysterious dread that came upon Him in Gethsemane." He was seen as a religious leader, or a compassionate friend, or as the author and founder of the Christian religion but often as nothing more.

Orthodox Calvinists of course still continued to attack the findings of men like Colenzo, and to assert that because Christ was omniscient and knew all
things he authenticated the books to which he referred. According to The Daily News, however, there was a "Broad Church epidemic" in Scotland at this time, and a growing number of churchmen with comprehensive views and tolerant opinions. The Scotsman and The Spectator did much to make the new liberal teaching known to the public.

The severity and favour and excitement which prevailed at Row forty years earlier had given way to more moderate and charitable ways of thinking. Even open cases of heresy were treated with leniency, and those departing from the strict Calvinism of the Confession received, on the whole, no interference from the church courts.

A. Religious Tendencies in Scotland in 1870.

Robert Wallace, of Old Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh, in his essay "Church Tendencies in Scotland", published in 1870, counted 14 distinct Churches at that time, although he admitted that only 4 were of importance - the Establishment, the Free Church, the United Presbyterian Church and the Scottish Episcopal Church. When we consider that within all these Churches there was a wide variety of opinion, and sometimes deep doctrinal dissensions, it is hard to generalize about the direction in which religious thought was moving, or to say how revolutionary were the changes which had come about in the conception of Christianity. The Scottish Episcopal Church, for instance, which contained most of the gentry, was largely Tractarian and yet it included men like Erskine's friend Bishop Ewing, of the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles, who taught a broad or liberal theology.

Wallace, who belonged to the advanced school in the Established Church, claimed, that on the whole, there was a movement away from external
authority, such as Church or dogma, towards private judgement and internal experience, and from an objective to a subjective standard of truth. Prejudice and party feeling had given way to more temperate modes of expression, and there was much support from the press for the liberal school of theology.

George Gilfillan of the United Presbyterian Church, for instance, in his writings, openly condemned the Westminster Confession: "'My friend, Dr. Anderson of Glasgow,' he says in one place, 'went down to the Presbytery of Glasgow, three years ago, with a copy of the Confession of Faith, marked in nine places as opposed to the Word of God and to common sense. I think ninety places, instead of nine, could have been thus objected to.'" He was called to account eventually, for some of his statements, by the Dundee Presbytery in February 1870, but they found no cause for further procedure against him, and the case was dismissed. Gilfillan continued to be regarded as one of the most popular and influential members of his Church, and his views were heavily publicised by the Scotsman newspaper.

Even The Weekly Review and Presbyterian Record, which was anything but broad in its sympathies, contained many letters in the first quarter of 1870 supporting Gilfillan. They pointed out that he had not repudiated any of the vital doctrines of the Christian faith, such as the existence of God, the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ and the Atonement. Admittedly, he opposed the Standards of the Church, but so did a large number of other ministers who felt they could honestly continue as members of the Church. The Rev. George Bell, in a letter to the Weekly Review published on January 15 1870, wrote:

But he rejects the doctrine of Reprobation. Well, so do I, and so does almost every minister within the circle of my acquaintance.... Again Mr. Gilfillan believes in Infant Salvation. Well so do I, and so does every minister with whom I have happened to converse on the
subject... Again, Mr. Gilfillan does not believe that the world was made in six days of twenty-four hours each. And I wonder who does believe this? 6

Calvinist orthodoxy then had been extensively undermined by the diffusion of the new opinions, and more liberal and tolerant and charitable ideas had gained ground supported by such distinguished thinkers as Principal Tulloch of St. Andrews, Principal Shairp and Norman MacLeod. There was still conflict, the most notable of which was the case of Dr. Wallace, and William Knight of St. Enoch's Free Church, Dundee, but both these men escaped the verdict of heresy, and did not lose the esteem of their fellow church members.

We are not saying that the new views did not cause serious anxiety, perplexity and distress. Dr. Wallace was accused of preaching doctrines "which would astonish the broadest of Anglican Broad Churchmen." 7 He was ready to go even further than Dean Stanley, defending and glorifying Kant and Schleiermacher and speaking of them in admiring tones. 8 The Weekly Review described him as "a sign of the times, and a sign of the Established Church of Scotland. He belongs to a bold and energetic party, that expects to make the Scottish Church almost as broad as the English." 9

They described Dr. Wallace's appointment to the Chair of Ecclesiastical History at Edinburgh as "a deliberate insult to the Scottish people... His appointment is a great triumph for the Scotsman party in Edinburgh - a set of men who form a permanent conspiracy against the faith and feelings of the Scottish people." 10 There were efforts to persuade the government to cancel Dr. Wallace's Professorship, on the grounds that he could cause immense damage to the students who attended his classes, and could never possess the confidence of the Church as a theological professor.

The Free Church was, on the whole the most conservative, containing as it
did distinguished men like Dr. Candlish, Dr. Guthrie, Dr. Buchanan, Dr. Duff
and Principal Fairbairn, who were able to command the respect and loyalty of
their church members. Even they, however, had their rebels like William
Knight of St. Enoch's Free Church, Dundee. Knight was accused of unwise
fraternisation with the Unitarians, and later of contributing a philosophical
article on prayer to the Contemporary Review which attempted to reconcile it
to the world of scientific men.¹¹

Opinions differed as to how far the Broad Church Party had progressed in
Scotland, but all agreed that the Scotsman was at the centre of this attempt to
revolutionize Scottish thinking: "These theologians of the press . . . are but apostles of
latitudinarianism, and advocates of the loosest ecclesiastical morality. They will allow
ministers of religion to profess anything, and to teach what they please."¹²

South of the border, the clergy of the Church of England had fought for
similar liberty to think as their conscience dictated. Dean Stanley was the
acknowledged leader of the Broad Church Party, and Frederick Maurice in the
biography of his father quotes F.D. Maurice as saying, "Stanley was a 'bigot for
toleration.'"¹³

Leslie Martin in an article in Fraser's Magazine in March 1870 entitled
"The Broad Church" cites Mr. Voysey as an example of the advanced stage of
opinion existing within the Broad Church Party. Voysey, he points out,
disputes the orthodox teaching on the Atonement, Justification by Faith, the
Incarnation and the inspiration of the Bible but is still desirous of remaining
within the Church. Martin adds that the policy of men like Voysey was to use
the old language in a different or new sense, thus enabling them to sincerely
hold views which were logically incompatible with the Thirty-Nine Articles.¹⁴
B. Good and Bad Broad Churchism.

Broad-Churchism is not a system, but a tendency which is fruitful to evil; a faith that leads to loss. But let us not make a mistake. There is a Broad-Churchism which arises from indifference to truth, but there is also a Broad-Churchism which loves the truth for its own sake, and holds it to be greater than human systems; and the one in the present day is often mistaken for the other....

As we have said, it is possible to be Broad Church in a good sense as well as in a bad sense - broad in comprehensiveness of view - broad in sympathy - broad in tolerance of convictions earnestly come by and earnestly held.

The Broad-Churchism, then, which would obliterate the distinction between the true and the false, which makes light of principles, and shapes the doctrines of the Word to suit the taste, and the law of God to suit the practice of a particular age, is the worst enemy of Christ and His Church. Against this error we must oppose that Broad-Churchism which will fight the new enemies of the truth with the newest weapons, and like the children of Issacher - ' hath understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do. 15

By 1870 then a certain section of churchmen in Scotland had taken up what might be called a Presbyterian Broad Church position, with modernised views and tendencies. They demanded that Christianity adjust itself to the scientific movements of the age, to modern culture, literature and philosophic thought; they encouraged historical enquiry and every kind of progress because they saw no contradiction between them and the great truths of the Gospel...

Others, though, demanded some limits to Christian toleration, and they declared that an office bearer of a Church should hold the vital doctrines of the faith, and in the sense attached to them by the Churches to which they belonged. For instance, Rev. C.H. Spurgeon, in a sermon preached at the
Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1872, pointed out: "of late we have heard deniers of our
Lord's divinity spoken of as Christian brethren. Now, my common sense does not enable me to
see how a man can be called a Christian who rejects Christ . . . Without a distinct and hearty
recognition of our Lord's Deity and Atonement, how can a man be a partaker of Christ at all?"16

In this period of great liberality of doctrine charges of heresy began to rise
in the English Church based on the accusation that certain members of the
Anglican clergy held that Christ was not truly and properly God. For instance
one of the accusations brought against Voysey, when he was tried for heresy
before the Chancellor at York in December 1869, was his alleged denial of the
divinity of Christ.17 Even men like F.D. Maurice were not immune from this
sort of attack, the Pall Mall Gazette reporting that some doubted whether he
held to the true divinity, and claiming that he believed only in "the divine
character of man as man."18 It was around this time that Liddon wrote The Divinity
of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (1865), which Don Cupitt described as
the last fully orthodox defence of Christ's divinity, before the Chalcedonian
view of Christ 'began to crumble from within.'19

In face of this faltering confidence in the divinity of Christ, orthodox
Calvinists had begun to admit that it was possible to be broad in a good as well
as a bad sense. They were now ready to accept that men like Thomas Erskine,
John McLeod Campbell and Norman Macleod were responsible and devout
Christians, even while they continued to dissent from some of their opinions.
All these men died in the period 1870 to 1873 and, on the whole, they were
judged mildly and with a measure of leniency. It was acknowledged that their
aim was to preach a freer Gospel than that which they saw set out in the
doctrine and discipline of the Scottish Church; they were praised too for
having the courage of their convictions and for basing their defence on a
direct appeal to the Bible.

- 265 -
A reviewer of Erskine’s book *The Spiritual Order* writing in the *Weekly Review* very much sympathised with Erskine’s outlook, although he disagreed with some of his doctrines:

It is written in a finely reverent spirit; and the author holds many of the cardinal points of the faith, in what may be called the most orthodox manner — such as the doctrine of the Trinity, and the sufficiency of the authority of the Holy Scriptures — we might have added, their inspiration. And he holds too that salvation is by Christ alone. It is the nature of that salvation, and its manner and methods, that he differs from many, from most professing Christians. But in his way of expressing his differences, he brings out much truth that is very precious, and in a manner that is most praiseworthy. . . . Differing as we do, toto coelo, from Mr. Erskine’s ‘theology’ we cannot part with this volume without expressing the feeling of thankfulness which we have, that there is in it so much that is searching and true. Many will read this volume who would not open the page of an evangelical writer; and, amid all its errors, there is much in this book that may lead a seeking soul to the feet of Jesus-Christ. 20

C. Liberalism in France: Erskine and Renan.

Thomas Erskine died in March 1870, aged 81 years, and was buried in the churchyard of Monifieth; *The Spiritual Order and Other Papers* was published, after Erskine’s death, in 1871. Erskine refers to it, in a letter written in 1866, as "this weary book, which never seems to get nearer its conclusion, in spite of continual writing."21 Principal Shairp comments, "The physical labour of committing it to paper, and arranging it was great, almost too great for him."22

Erskine died before the book was finished, but completed chapters were found, and they contain a summary of the truths which had come to him with increasing distinctness and simplicity during the closing years of his life. It
consists of five essays, and eighteen fragments, some as short as a single paragraph and on a variety of subjects. It is the first two essays, "The Spiritual Order" and "The Divine Son", with which we are concerned in this chapter.

According to Principal Shairp, Erskine was aroused to complete his book by the spiritual blindness shown in Renan's Vie de Jesus (1863). Beautifully written, the Vie de Jesus had caused a sensation, and Erskine records that it was read in France with "avidity." He was satisfied with none of the numerous reviews and answers that had appeared, mainly because they threw no light on the divine nature of Jesus, or on the union of the human and divine natures in the Person of Christ, or rather they were unable to attach any intellectual meaning to it.

In the 1830s it was the human nature of Jesus that concerned Erskine, for he believed that only by fully participating in human nature could Christ become a proper representative of humanity. Christ, he believed, took fallen human nature because there was no other to take: he was bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh; he was tempted like us and suffered pain and hunger and weariness; he was capable of learning and improvement and he suffered temptation just as we do. Yet Jesus was constrained by the Spirit to resist these temptations, which the rest of mankind could not resist, and to do the entire will of God.

Erskine and his party had their own favourite metaphors which harmonized with their view that Christ took a nature like ours in order to redeem us. They called him a forerunner: "therefore he must run before us, in the same tangled and perilous path in which we run." They also called him the Captain of our salvation because "he conquered in the same warfare, and ... he himself was made perfect through sufferings like ours."?

In the period between 1830 and 1870 there was a diminishing interest in
Christ's divinity, for it became a feature of liberal theology to favour his humanity. The shock caused by Darwin's doctrine of development, and the conclusions of literary and historical criticism of the Bible raised many doubts about the central doctrines of the Church. In response to this some theologians began to suppress the divinity and stress Christ's brotherliness, his sympathy, his gentleness and his compassion, rather than his majesty, mediatorship, authority and his dignity as God.

Erskine, who had done not a little himself to promote this interest in the humanity of Jesus, began to see that he was now faced with the opposite error. With the publication of the Vie de Jesus he believed that the growth of toleration and religious liberty was leading to scepticism and unbelief. According to his view, Jesus was a man and he was God also: he was the representative of God and acted in God's name.

In 1830 Erskine had declared that he believed the deity of Christ to be the essence of Christianity: "I regard the Divinity, the true Deity of Jesus Christ, to be the one great master truth which contains and sums up all other truths revealed by God concerning Himself." Yet he did not underestimate the real and great difficulties in holding the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation, and he believed, critics of Renan had failed "to throw light on the divine nature of Jesus Christ, and till that is done, Renan, to my mind, remains unanswered".

Without the divinity Christ was no longer qualified to be either a substitute or a representative, but Erskine's problem was to find a way of stating this doctrine coherently and rationally, for to him Christianity was inherently reasonable: "But I am sure that no argument outside of the thing itself can be of much use. We require to see light in the thing, as we see light in the statement that twice two make four".

Jesus was God's Son but he was also the one in man's place; or the one who
acted for his benefit. Yet in what sense was it that he acted for man's good: as an exemplar to show him how to live according to the highest and purest morality? Renan's picture of Jesus as a man at his best was not, Erskine believed, the novelty of Jesus: the peculiarity of his teaching was "certain claims which he made for himself; in a claim to be not a son of God but the Son of God, and in a claim to be the Head and Lord and Saviour of men".30

Erskine repudiated Renan because he thought that the separation of the morality of the Gospels from their doctrinal teaching as to the nature of Christ himself produced an "empty gospel".31 There was no question in Erskine's mind as to whether Christ could represent the human race simply as a good man, a prophet or a saint.

He used to say, 'As you see in many English churches the Apostles' Creed placed on one side of the altar, on the other the Ten Commandments, so Renan would divide as with a knife the moral precepts of the Gospel from their doctrines. Those he would retain, these he would throw away. Can anything be more blind? As well might you expect the stem and leaves of a flower to flourish when you had cut away the root, as to retain the morality of the Gospels when you have discarded its doctrinal basis. Faith in Christ, and God in Christ, is the only root from which true Christian morality can grow.'32

Renan, Erskine says, speaks of the beautiful morality of the Sermon on the Mount, without considering whether it would be possible for men and women to obey the ethic of Jesus by their own efforts. The Sermon on the Mount calls for "inward humility, inward purity, inward love of God and of men, even of our enemies."33 These spiritual qualities cannot be produced at will. No one has within themselves the power to love those they dislike, to be humble and pure in heart, to be without ambition, or pride or covetousness. Man needs help
from the outside, beyond what he can find in his reason or conscience, and this is the purpose of the Gospel. The real Gospel is described "as being the power of God unto salvation, that is, as containing the dynamics, so to speak, the spiritual lever, and ropes, and pulleys, and wheels by which the human spirit may be lifted out of the horrible pit and miry clay of sin and selfishness into a harmony with the mind of God, . . ."34

(i) The Doctrine of the Father and the Son: Erskine's Answer to Renan.

Renan's Vie de Jésus caused widespread shock in Britain then because Jesus was not presented as a divine person, or as the son of God. Maurice called the book "detestable, morally as well as spiritually," and he added, "when I look at the book . . . I can see nothing but plausible and graceful falsehood."35 Erskine's initial reaction seems to have been less one of alarm than of admiration of Renan's genuine talent, and the charm of his style:

When he first read Renan's book he exclaimed, "This is beautiful! If it is to be answered at all, it should be answered in French, as fine as its own French, and by another Pascal! Throughout the book it is evident that the author entertains a far higher idea of Christ than he likes to confess even to himself."36

Yet he saw the spiritual inadequacy of Renan's picture of Jesus, he recognised that Renan had lost sight of the three Persons within the divine being, and he set out in his second essay, "The Divine Son", "to explain genuine Christianity, its reasonableness, and its blessed strength and consolation."37 To Erskine Christ was divine, God incarnate and he wanted to prove the rationality of such a doctrine. He wished his readers to see its truth for, according to Erskine, no doctrine simply received on authority, and not in contact with the
spiritual understanding, could rightly influence man's character.

What does it mean, asks Erskine, to say that Jesus is the eternal Son of God? Is there anything apart from the "self preaching", condemned by Renan, which guides us in the first place, to the idea that there is a Father and a Son in the divine nature? Erskine's argument is in two stages: the first "I am sure there must be a distinction in the divine nature analogous to that of Father and Son, whether Jesus be that Son or not"; the second, Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. He decides to argue from the question of goodness for did not Jesus say, "None is good, save One, that is God", as the declaration of an absolute truth, then wherever we see goodness we ought to consider it as belonging to Him and flowing from Him, and as a manifestation of His presence.

From this principle Erskine conducts his readers to another, the idea that in every active form of goodness there must be a corresponding recipient form. "There is a goodness in trust, as there is a goodness in trustworthiness; there is a goodness in receiving, as there is a goodness in giving; there is a goodness in obeying rightly, as there is a goodness in ruling rightly. Most assuredly these are both forms of goodness, but shall we say that they both exist in God?"

Or must there be two personalities representing the two forms? Can anyone be trustful or grateful or obedient in himself? Can anyone love without an object to love? Saying that God is love then implies mutuality, it implies distinctions within the Godhead, it means communication between persons and the intimacy of a relationship.

Erskine draws the conclusion then that there are, as it were, "two hemispheres in the Divine nature, - upper and under, active and passive, Giver and Receiver, Father and Son. Unity is not singleness but rather completeness, and love can only, by minds like ours, be considered complete when it has sympathy."

If the idea is added that the whole spiritual creation stands in the Son, then
there is an assurance of God's fatherly relation to all men. The Son communicates to them the character of his own goodness, and thus Christian morality is dependent upon Christian theology.

(ii) Is Jesus Christ that Son?

Erskine then made his transition to the second stage of his argument, "Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Here he abandons the narrow boundaries of formal reasoning to include a wider appeal to spiritual intuition, and offers in addition the personal experience of countless Christians throughout the ages.

Erskine thought no doctrine should be received simply on authority; it must be apprehended by the inward understanding or it cannot with propriety be said to be believed. He had often wondered, he said, at the general acceptance of the doctrine of the divine nature of Jesus: "I have asked myself whether this acceptance was due to a blind and unreflecting following of authority, or whether there is some deep principle in our nature which responds to it and welcomes it as that which satisfies its craving." He thought the last explanation was the true one.

Men and women need one whose guidance they can trust; moreover, "this discovery of the Son seems to open to us the structure of the spiritual world; it helps us to understand its organization, and to see that its unity arises out of the principle of trust or recipiency, - the loving, dependent recipiency of the Son." If God was to act in this unique way, the land of Judea with its line of psalmists, lawgivers and prophets was a suitable place for the revelation to be made.

Yet while Erskine insists on the uniqueness of the revelation in Christ, he holds it together with the universal will and purpose of God to save all men. He says nothing about the claims of other faiths outside Christianity which is a central problem today, but his general thinking is along the lines of Christian inclusivism. As the incarnate logos all religious truth belongs to Christ and he
is the universal representative through which all are led, in their own
particular way, towards salvation. Like the Quakers Erskine believed that
there is that of God in every man, and while Christ's high claim seems at first
sight to be for himself alone "yet on examination it proves to be a claim on behalf of
every human being to be the child of God."44

(D.) Conclusion.

It is clear, then, that Erskine was among those who wished to retain the
classical orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation. He was not among those
theologians of the Broad Church who were prepared to put Christ's deity aside
as unprovable, nor was he willing to cast in his lot with scholars like Colenso
who, he thought, were taking criticism of the Bible to extremes. He and his
group have sometimes been described as the early "Broad Church school or party," 45
but Hanna has pointed out that depth was far more important to them than
width, and they had no desire "to weaken or dilute the faith,"46 or to make light of
the great truths of Christianity

Research has shown how they developed their own distinctive ideas of what
Christianity should teach, and almost without exception they made holiness a
test of the genuineness of that teaching. Religious faith should lead should
lead to a good character, for if it does not make those who embrace it better,
it cannot be of God. They stressed the internal aspects of religion, and the
direct call to a new life, and devalued appeals to external evidences which had
resulted in no real individual change, or no evidence of an inward following
of Christ resulting in churchgoers becoming devout men.

Maurice disowned the name "Broad Church man", but if, as Tulloch
suggests, one of the things it denotes is "a species of universalism - or a breadth of
doctrinal sentiment."^47 then both Maurice and Erskine were broad - in the good
sense.

In face of the new rationalist movements which were threatening the very
foundations of the Christian faith, because they involved the sacrifice of its
central dogmas, Erskine emerges as only a moderate "Broadchurch man", and
we suggest that perhaps Needham was wrong to describe him as ending up as a
"classic Victorian Liberal."^48 Erskine wanted to show those who read Renan’s
book with the greatest grief and alarm, "what a real gospel he puts away, . . . and
what a true rationalism there lies in what he rejects as untenable in reason."^49

It is true that his first books heralded change, but he was an apologist for,
and not an assailant of Christianity. In his later life he often expressed a wish
to remove the impression made by the severe words in his earliest book, "about
the leprosy of the Church of Scotland . . . as hurting without healing."^50

In some ways he was thankful for the Calvinism which had surrounded him
since his childhood, although he thought it contained some very false ideas on
the nature of the atonement, and "the justice of God had been confounded with the
justice of a sheriff-substitute."^51 He also had leanings towards the old
Christianity, and believed that "there are many who speculate on religion, not with the
desire of arriving at truth, but with the purpose of finding an apology for a bad freedom."^52

A question which was dividing his contemporaries, and which Erskine also
found unsettling, was this: "Has God revealed himself to us as one whose 'ways are not as
our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts?' or, Do we evolve out of our own inward light the
existence of One who personifies our own highest conceptions of moral good?"^53 The
Calvinism which he had "insensibly breathed from childhood"^54 predisposed him to
favour the first.

Finally perhaps we should say something about those members of the Broad
Church who could not share Erskine’s belief in the orthodox doctrine of the
Incarnation. Can Christ adequately carry out his representative function as a unique man in his relationship with God, but not in himself truly God?

Certainly the term representative can find a place in the new alternative Christologies. It is more equivocal, and less precise than the substitutionary doctrine of the atonement. Christ's representation of man as a pioneer, forerunner, exemplar, or, to add a different dimension as the way or light, and his representation of God as his agent or deputy, could certainly contain these christological views which see Jesus as totally and exclusively a man, through whom God acted in a unique way.

What would be left out is the ontological basis for reconciliation between God and man which includes the forgiveness of sins. Erskine thought that "a sense of unforgiven sin is incompatible with the trust which constitutes filial goodness." It is the unique incarnate Christ who overleaps the gap between God and humanity:

- He claims them as having been created in him; he claims them as their Head, as the vine claims the branches, assuring them that they possess in him both a status of sonship and a communion of the spirit of sonship.
- He thus opens up to us the spiritual world, revealing that self-sacrificing love is the law which binds its elements together. The Father sacrifices self in giving up the Son - the Son in giving himself - and from him the whole spiritual creation, constituted in him, as its organic head, is supplied with the same spirit of self-sacrificing love, which can alone maintain order and harmony throughout.
Notes.

Chapter 7.


8. Ibid.


29. Ibid.

30. Erskine. The Spiritual Order. p. 3.


40. Ibid.

41. Op. cit. P. 36-37,


Chapter 7 (2). Scottish Calvinism, the Westminster Confession and Spiritual Religion.

Over the period of forty years since the Row trial the whole mode of thought had begun to change from transcendentalism to immanence, from law to ethics. Those who brought this about were few in numbers but great in courage and boldness, and motivated by a most intense religious earnestness, and by their conviction that there was "the possibility of the existence of doctrinal Calvinism, correct withal to a certain point, without a vestige of genuine Christianity lying beneath it."¹

Some reformers blamed not so much Calvinism in itself, as the Confession of the Westminster Assembly, which was the creed of all the Presbyterian Churches. Calvinist orthodoxy, in the first half of the nineteenth century, used this creed to suppress all individual views and speculations. A.J. Scott, for instance, in October 1830 before the Presbytery of London, declined to sign the Westminster Confession because he believed the Confession required him to affirm that redemption is of the elect only. He did agree to sign the original National Confession of Knox.

I acted unhesitatingly then, and after thirty years I doubt not at all that I was right. I still find my justification mainly in the Confession as a whole, which refers to no atonement except for the elect, but compendiously in the words, "To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption He doth certainly apply and communicate the same." (Confession, viii, 8.) To me these words are the negation of the Gospel.²
By 1870, however, while some still saw attacks upon its creed as a conspiracy against the discipline of the Presbyterian Churches, others felt the Westminster Confession to be out of harmony with the changing current of ideas of their day. Gilfillan, for instance, thought that it merely reflected the religious ideas of the period in which it was written, and it could not be binding upon ministers from generation to generation. Creeds, he said, are "chiefly interesting as moral milestones, showing the course and rate of advancement the ages have made."3

Nevertheless, the implications of the teaching of the Row Group and their successors for the Calvinist system as a whole was revolutionary, and the orthodox continued throughout the 1840s and 1850s to treat it with unqualified dislike. Scottish theology continued in these years to be polemic, with each side contending for those truths which they felt they could on no account give up, and both parties remaining hopelessly estranged from each other. R.S. Candlish in his Examination of Mr. Maurice's Theological Essays (1854), says that Christ, by acting as their substitute, brought the elect out "of the position of condemned criminals into the position of acquitted free-men, of adopted children."4 Erskine and his group refused to make this sharp distinction between nature and grace, for they believed that God was the loving Father of all men.

A. Christ in the Conscience.

In 1865 an abridgement of Erskine's The Doctrine of Election was published as The Internal Word or Light becoming Life. It was edited by Alexander Ewing, Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, who had found parts of The Doctrine of Election of great value to himself, particularly what it had to say about the relation of nature to grace, and the difference between the knowledge of divine things which rests on authority only, and that which is
discerned by the conscience. Because it was felt that Erskine's thoughts about authority were likely to be of interest to Roman Catholics, as well as to Calvinists, it was translated into French and Italian.

There is nothing new in this pamphlet, which consists of less than 40 pages, but it is of interest as condensing Erskine's view of the natural relation of Christ to all men; its publication was timely also when taken in conjunction with the spiritual awakening which was at that time taking place in Scotland, and which was producing a theology unconnected with the Westminster Standards.

Erskine begins by saying that human beings, as a race, possess the capacity to know God, and to have true spiritual union with him. This innate capacity is in every individual and is not limited to certain classes of men, either by baptismal grace or by election.

God speaks in the conscience, and this voice in their conscience enables men and women to receive and to judge, and it is the indication of God's actual presence in them. Though they themselves are imperfect and weak and guilty, yet it brings the infinite strength and perfection of God within their reach. Thus the source of all goodness lies not in solitaryness but in a relationship, in divine kinship.

The end of education is to awaken, and call forth, and develop this innate capacity in all men, and to teach that it proceeds from a being distinct and separate from themselves, yet one who is seeking to be one with them. In this way they may ascend together to heaven, for there is no other way to heaven than by this union.

Morals and religion, then, do not belong to two departments of life but to one, for the spirit of Christ in the conscience witnesses to both moral and spiritual truth: "we may disregard, or pervert, or overlay it, so to be even unconscious of
its presence; nevertheless it is there, and it is given to all, to lead us to perfection, and it is the only power which can do so.⁵

Men and women take their status as spiritual beings from their creation, and religion has a living root within them all.

The light must become life. It can do so only when we recognise, in that inward radiance which is in the hearts of all men, the presence of Him who was born as a babe in the stable of Bethlehem. He who came there outwardly as the Light of the world is the same Christ, the same Word of God who shines within our hearts. When we know the voice which we hear there to be His voice, then we have power to become sons of God.⁶

It will readily be seen that Erskine was at variance with the Calvinist view that the primary knowledge of Christ is through the New Testament. Erskine did not think that the inward revelation made men and women independent of the outward one, but he did think that the New Testament could not properly be understood unless it was read in the light of the knowledge revealed in the conscience. Moreover, Christ was not seen by Erskine as the substitute of those elected from eternity, but the head and representative of the race because he had incarnated himself within the life of all humanity. As a reviewer of The Spiritual Order in The Spectator put it: "The God to whom the conscience bears witness is not enforcing on us a law from without, but pressing on us the full acceptance of a nature which we share with him."⁷

B. Theology and Ethics.

If right conduct flows from right doctrine, then Erskine and his circle provided positive evidence of the soundness of their teaching. From the beginning even their bitterest opponents were forced repeatedly to
acknowledge the Row Group to be leading Christian lives: "The greater part of Dr. Andrew Thomson's tenth sermon, on Universal Pardon, is taken up with guarding his hearers against the errors to which certain expressions of Mr. Erskine are calculated to lead, on the particular ground of the eminently Christian character of these gentlemen." The Rowites lived the Gospel, and we may assume his hearers had begun to wonder if Erskine's teaching on God's universal forgiveness could be entirely bad when it produced such fruits.

Of course, the writer in the Morning Watch goes on to admit there are, "many very amiable and excellent men who have held heretical opinions," but the very necessity the opponents of the Row Group felt of removing the impression made on the general public by their character, showed how powerfully it affected their hearers.

Quoting from Thomson, he showed how strong and resistless that moral impression seemed to be, and how anxious "one of the most virulent writers that ever existed" was to counteract the influence which their saintliness had in reinforcing their personal message, concerning the nature of righteousness and how to attain it: "When piety and holiness are ascribed to them, I cheerfully concur in the commendation. If all the tribute that is claimed has respect to their personal and spiritual worth, that is a tribute which is justly due, which I pay at this moment, not merely without reluctance, but with pleasure; and I only wish they could be prevailed upon to cast away the heresies to which they are so eagerly attached, in order to make our esteem unqualified: and that many who censure their zeal in propagating these, would imitate them in their heavenly conversation, their devotedness to God, and their benevolence to men."

Scotland had always been good at instructing people in the faith, but a truth may be grasped by the intellect without being firmly taken into the heart. Erskine had seen around him Calvinists who were zealous in their support of traditional doctrines, and regular in their religious observance, but without any
understanding of Christianity as a living faith affecting the feelings, the will, the conscience and the character. To him moral conduct was absolutely inseparable from true religion, for he had a deep sense of the evil of sin and an abhorrence of it.

If love in men and women can only be produced by the knowledge of God's love, and love is the fulfilling of the law, then assurance of that love is of the essence of faith. Yet how could any one be sure that God loved him, or that Christ died for him when God's love is limited to the elect, and his mercy only to a few: "the number of the elect is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished." (Confession Ch.iii. Sec. 4.) A current of feeling against the Confession was undoubtedly perceptible in Scotland by 1870, and its doctrines tended to jar on the minds even of those who held sound views on the central dogmas of Calvinism.

When the question was put in the Weekly Review as to why "Scotland, the most religious country in Christendom, is also noted for its drunkenness and unchastity?" it excited a great deal of interest, and a pile of correspondence. One reader, who signed himself as Scotus, suggested that there was an intrinsic connection between Calvinism, or rather the Calvinism of the Confession, and immorality. He claimed that it was no solution to separate the converted and the unconverted into two antagonistic classes, for while the truly converted are not immoral, yet "there are thousands in Scotland who manifest religious zeal, and can be easily stirred to a pitch of feverish excitement on religious questions - Popery, the Sabbath, the Union of the Churches, or an alleged heresy - who yet remain immoral." He attributed this to the "doctrine of universal, unconditional, and unfrustrable foreordination, according to which, as every child is taught, 'God has for his own glory foreordained whatever comes to pass.'" This made it a matter of indifference to some Scottish people about how much they sinned.
It has been said to me, "If I am to be saved, I shall be in God's good time and way, whatever I may do to the contrary; and if not, the less I think about the matter the better; especially, moreover, as the 'effectual call is to God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man who is altogether passive therein until' etc."

(Confession Ch. 10. sec. 2.)

C. The Kingdom of God: a Spiritual Kingdom.

While the uniformity of belief, formerly enforced by the authority of the Standards, was gradually undermined, a new religion had begun to assert itself which was essentially spiritual, rationalistic and moral. Erskine, one of its chief representatives, appealed not to traditional authority but to practical knowledge, and profound personal experience: "If any one should declare," he once said to a friend, "that these tables and chairs are creations of my own fancy, I should have much to say against it, but I am not so sure of their having an existence independent of me, as I am of that which the conscience bears witness to."

Man, according to Erskine, is a spiritual being capable of knowing and loving God, and having communion with him. The Kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom, and Jesus came to proclaim the kingdom, to explain its nature, and to call men and women into it, and apart from that purpose his life cannot be understood. Moreover he came to reveal the Father, the king of that kingdom, and to teach that he was the loving father of all men.

Erskine sees the kingdom of God as a present spiritual reality; it is present in the sense that there is a spiritual order, as well as a social order, to which every one, as a human being, at all times, belongs: "I belong to both, but the spiritual is deeper; it underlies the other, and is independent of it; yet the two are not unconnected, for I find that I cannot perform any ordinary social act in a way that satisfies my conscience unless it is done according to that spiritual order."
A mere social order requires an abstention from actions which harm society, and it requires men and women to do actions which benefit it. The spiritual order demands right feelings and intentions as well as right actions. Erskine assumes that this spiritual consciousness is universally existent at a certain level of man’s being and that Christ, the representative, by his redemptive work, speaks to it.

The spiritual order differs from the social order in that relations are absolutely essential to its life. A family man, for instance, can do all sorts of things on his own and without his family, and this is even more true of a citizen. As members of the spiritual order, however, everyone must work in a relationship:

Thus a tree is composed of branches and twigs, which, while they continue in their proper relation to it, bear leaves and flowers and fruits; but lose the power when separated from it. Their vitality does not reside in themselves but must be received moment by moment from the root, and thus their vital completeness depends on the continuation of their healthy connection with the tree. Our spiritual completeness or incompleteness depends on the same principle, namely, the maintenance of relation to our order.¹⁸

There must be then, as Erskine puts it, "relations contained within the Being of God"¹⁹ for no one can love a law or an abstraction. It is a dependent relationship, but this should not be seen as a defect, but as a means by which all spiritual good can come: "He does not intend that I should feel it as a weakness or a bondage, but on the contrary as a strength, and an honour, and a joy; indicating as it does, the nearness and dearness of my relation to Him."²⁰

This then is the Kingdom of God, and Jesus Christ is the chief exemplar and the way into it: "He is the Vine, and it is only by abiding in Him that we can bring
forth spiritual fruit. He is the Bread that came down from heaven, and it is by feeding on him that the soul is nourished unto eternal life. He is the Shepherd of the sheep; he is the Door through which alone they can enter the fold." As the "Truster, the Believer, the Receiver" he is the channel of life to the whole spiritual order.

D "The Purpose of God": Erskine's Condemnation of Penal substitution.

As Erskine lay dying he turned to Miss Gourlay and said, "I want the paper in the tin box - the one on Education and Probation - to be printed separately as a tract, and I want it to be prefaced by these words: 'This principle of Education lies at the very basis of the Gospel, for it contains in it, or expresses, the everlasting purpose of God towards us, to make us partakers of his own righteousness.'" His instructions were carried out, and it was published separately in 1870 under the title "The Purpose of God"; it also became the third chapter of The Spiritual Order.

One of the doctrines Erskine opposed in this essay, was the substitutionary endurance by Christ of the penalties due to the elect for their sins. The doctrine of substitution had undergone many changes since Erskine began his criticisms of it in the 1830s. These modifications showed themselves even in orthodox Calvinist writers like, for instance, Thomas Crawford whose book The Doctrine of Holy Scripture Respecting the Atonement was reviewed in May 1871 by the Weekly Review, a few months before the same periodical reviewed The Spiritual Order. Crawford attempted to clear a mid-path between Ultra-Calvinism, on the one side, and a purely ethical or spiritual interpretation of the doctrine of salvation on the other. Ideas of law and justice were still prominent, and the book was thoroughly Calvinistic in its outlook, yet Christ's suffering and death were not isolated from the individual's personal appropriation of these benefits, and the terms representation and substitution were explored within a larger context which
embraced them both.

Erskine, however, had grown up under a theological system of a very different kind, in which substitution alone had played the important role. He had reacted strongly against the view of Christ as a propitiatory victim, bearing man's pain to save him from it and the part which the idea of probation played in the atonement. In his essay "The Purpose of God" he argues that God's purpose in creating man was basically educative and not probationary, and probation must always, therefore, play a secondary role: "No education can go on without trial; but we are tried that we may be educated; not educated that we may be tried." 24

The individual, Erskine says, possesses capacities, both moral and intellectual, which require development. He also possesses a conscience and a voice in it. This suggests that the purpose of God is to train the individual into a participation in his own righteousness, in order that he should take his place in a spiritual society.

(i) Erroneous Views of the Character of God.

James Grant in a letter to the Weekly Review on May 4, 1867, said that one of the chief defects of Scottish theology had always been the lack of prominence given to the love of God in the scheme of redemption. It was strikingly absent from the authorised Standards of the Presbyterian Church. John 3.6. ("God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.) is never quoted in the Shorter Catechism. It is quoted once in the Confession of Faith (Ch. vii.3.), and once in the Larger Catechism (Quest.32.), but never, "to prove the love of God, but simply to indicate faith as the means of salvation." 25

The love of God in redemption is also largely ignored, he goes on to say,
in the pulpits and religious press of the country. "Jonathan Edwards in his 'History of Redemption' speaks in that able and, with few exceptions judicious work, of Christ having purchased the love of God towards us. Other divines, some of whom stand at the head of the Evangelical school, represent the love of God as the fruit of the voluntary substitution of the Son. The love of God is spoken of by others as having been caused by the interposition of Christ on our behalf, instead of Christ's substitution being the effect of the love of the First Person of the Trinity."

In this way hard thoughts were formed of God: he was looked upon as an "austere master", "an angry Jehovah", "a frowning God." His law and his justice forbade any love towards mankind until reparation for sin had been made by Jesus, who became incarnate, suffered and died in the room of the elect. These misconceptions of the character of God then were bound up with his judgeship, and with the predominence in Scottish theology of the metaphor of law.

Erskine says, that while God is both a judge and a father, his fatherhood is the basic relationship. If the paramount relation of God to man is that of a judge it becomes impossible to trust him. The justice of a judge consists of his complete integrity, and any confidence the individual has in him is really the confidence he has in himself that he is innocent. Yet, in fact, in relation to God man can have no such confidence in himself for he has many sins and shortcomings. The essential character of the love of a father, however, is that it is inextinguishable. If God is a loving father whose purpose is to make all men and women good, he will persevere in this purpose until it is accomplished.

Erskine admits that some of the crude notions of God the Father, involving his separation and opposition to the Son, sometimes attached to a substitutionary atonement when he was young, have been gradually corrected,
but he believed that it could not be disentangled from the idea of law. To say that the individual is forgiven on condition of his believing in Christ, who is judged in his place, only varied the form of his trial. The question became, Are you a believer? The individual must now place his confidence in his performance of the task of believing, to make him acceptable to God, and no one can ever be quite sure whether he has accomplished this task or not.

Moreover it necessitated a self-justifying spirit. Men and women became more preoccupied with the consequences of sin than with its moral evil, more preoccupied with escaping punishment than with the hope of becoming righteous. Even more serious was the absence of anything in the concept of penal substitution which suggested that God is the loving father of all men. This truth, which might be said to be the centre of Erskine's theology, was that men and women were not called "to make themselves His children, but to be his children", in other words, "to walk worthy of their high relationship."  

(ii) Substitution, Representation and the Problem of Evil.

The concepts of substitution and representation are both concerned with the problem of evil, and are ways of dealing with the barrier between man and God caused by sin. Erskine was no luke-warm liberal, and he never underestimated the power of sin, or played down God's hatred of evil. The Calvinist error, he thought, was in not perceiving God's unchanging purpose to deliver every individual from it. God did not create man that he might simply stand aside and observe what he would do; he had a purpose beyond merely testing him.
The assurance that the righteous Creator can never cease to desire and urge the righteousness of His creature is the eternal hope for man, and the secure rest for the soul that apprehends it. For if this be His purpose for one, it must be His purpose for all. I believe that it is His purpose for all, and that He will persevere in it until it is accomplished in all. 29

Erskine believed that everyone had a moral sense which made him feel that he should be better than he was; this gave him a potentiality and capability of being a fellow-worker with God in carrying out God's purpose. Every man and woman was created in Christ, elected in Christ and would in the end be justified in Christ. "The success is as sure as the intent, - the issue as certain as the drift" 30; universal salvation was Erskine's own confession of faith.

Erskine agreed that he saw evil everywhere vastly exceeding the good. He was conscious also in his own inner self of an overshadowing of evil just as he saw it in the outer world. What convinced him that God was opposed to all evil was the intuitive perception that God's condemnation rested on it, and a call to take part with God in his conflict against it. Erskine believed that this same witness of God against all evil was present in all hearts although often unheard and unattended to. He believed that all true religion was an explanation of man's own conscience and life.

(iii) Mankind are by Nature God's Sons.

Erskine differed fundamentally from Calvinism on the question of nature and adoption: every member of the human race, he taught, is God's son or daughter by nature and not, as the Calvinists taught, in virtue of the Covenant of grace. "We are by virtue of God's will and purpose in the relation of children, and are therefore not called on to make ourselves children, but in the knowledge of a relationship which already exists, to yield ourselves to our Father's instruction so that we may become His
righteous children."31

F.D. Maurice also held that the relationship of God to humanity, as Father, was not restricted to the baptized, but was from eternity: "The Catechism, which we teach to all children who have been baptized, tells them that they are members of Christ, children of God, inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven... Human beings are treated as redeemed, not in consequence of any act they had done, of any faith they had exercised; their faith was to be founded on a foregone conclusion; their acts were to be the fruits of a state they already possessed."32

Erskine, who explicitly taught that it was God's unchangeable purpose to save every one, like Maurice links the relationship of all men and women to God as children, with their creation. "The sonship is not a new relation communicated through faith [or any other subjective means], but is itself coeval with man's creation; and although those on whom it was bestowed have forgotten it and have wandered from their Father's house into a far country, yet when they learn to know the evil of their ways and remember that they have a Father, because they are sons God sends forth the Spirit of the Son into their hearts, crying "Abba, Father".33

Candlish points out the implications of their teaching for the whole system of Protestant theology. Justification can no longer be seen as a forensic or judicial act, introducing the individual into a new state; it can be "nothing more than the vindication or recognition of a state or relationship previously existing."34 There is no "new seed" implanted in the heart; the seed was already there even if lying dormant. The future state is "nothing more than a continuation of the present". "There is no day fixed, - nay, there is no prospect of a day, - when the most faithful followers of Christ shall be rewarded by their present chequered experience coming to an end; and a new era coming in, to introduce a new condition of life, with no more sorrow in it, and no more sin."35

Moreover, he continues, "Judgement, again is not a trial, - a judicial process, with a view to the pronouncing of final sentence, and the separating of men into two classes. It is
merely an unveiling or uncovering, such as may be expected on our passing into a clearer light, disclosing and revealing to us, more and more, both God and ourselves.\textsuperscript{36}

Looked at through Candlish’s eyes representation and substitution seem to be irreconcilable systems: redemption in the representative theory has become a gradual spiritual process involving the whole of mankind, rather than, as in substitution, a once and for all transaction completed for the elect. It is a deep-seated and fundamental difference, one side concentrating on a change of state brought about by a judicial transaction, and the other taking the more spiritual view of the recovery of the sinner by amendment and reform and by a return to his original righteousness: "surely His condemnation of our sin necessarily implies His demand for our righteousness, just as condemnation of darkness necessarily implies a demand for light."\textsuperscript{37}

E. Conclusion

In his essay "Church Tendencies in Scotland" Robert Wallace pleaded for the formulation of a true theological faculty in the Universities, and to some extent in local gymnasia, so that theology may be prosecuted as a science, by investigators free to think and express their thought, and not as at present by creed-bound and sectarian functionaries, whose work is simply to discover or invent arguments calculated to impart plausibility to foregone conclusions.\textsuperscript{38} He himself was in 1872 appointed to the Chair of Church History at Edinburgh University, winning a battle for free thought and speech against the party which saw it as the duty of every minister to defend the Westminster Confession, and Calvinism as the final system.

Even so, Scottish Calvinism was very different in 1870 from when Erskine was young. It was acknowledged that if the Confession was rigidly applied, and if ministers were honest about their opinions, there would be hardly a minister remaining in the Churches of Scotland. Charges continued to be
hurled against the liberal party in the Church, but it was more and more acknowledged that there is an infinite variety of opinion on Christian doctrine, and even if some of these are wrong, fair and free discussion would rectify them better than an infallible code of doctrine from which there is no appeal.

In the face of biblical criticism, and new scientific discoveries, it was the task of the age to reconcile old doctrines with new facts. Basically Erskine was an apologist for Christianity, and his method was to magnify the internal and spiritual work of Christ. We are not suggesting that he kept the various truths of Christianity in accurate proportion, but merely that his work contained important truth, successfully handled, and in harmony with the needs of his time.
Notes.

Chapter 7 (2).


9. Ibid.


11. Ibid.


14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.


18. Ibid.


27. Ibid.


Chapter 7 (3). Biblical Scholarship, Religious Autonomy and the Nature of Righteousness

The second half of the nineteenth century was an age of biblical scholarship from the new point of view of authenticity, and comparison of texts. Numerous scholars were studying things like variations in the manuscripts of the Old and New Testaments; they were looking at and comparing the text of the Authorised Version, the Vulgate and Septuagint.

New light was being cast upon the Scriptures by asking such questions as what in the Bible was literal, and what metaphorical, what was allegory and what was fact. Researchers were putting together the chronological grouping of particular epistles, and discovering the composite origin of several Old Testament books. Through the agency of pamphlets, magazines and newspapers the results of this research were being made known to the public.

In rapid succession there had come Benjamin Jowett's controversial work The Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, Galatians, Romans, the profoundly unsettling Essays and Reviews, and Colenso's book The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined in which he proved the unhistorical character of the first six book of the Bible. While, on the one hand, Christianity was assailed by what was considered the questionable theology of "the essayists, Maurice, Stanley & Co." who "fight under the guise of Christianity"¹, members of the same religious party were receiving positions of high authority in the Church. Stanley was even suggested for the See of Canterbury.² Nor was this liberal party absent in Scotland: the very influential Gilfillan, for instance, was described by the Weekly News as a "very, very broad churchman."³
Good ladies . . . find the Dean of Canterbury in the "Sunday Magazine" making hundreds of corrections on the texts of the Gospels, and some of their favourite texts — promises as they would call them turning out to be due to King James's translators, and not to the Holy Spirit of God. . . .

Those weak in the faith, "have been staggered at the wounds inflicted on the Divine word, often, alas! inflicted, as Dr. Colenso's book sufficiently shows, much more by the indiscretion of its professed friends, than by the craft and venom of its most malignant foes." It was against this background, when the weakening of the authority of the Bible was robbing men and women of all hope in God, that we have to consider Erskine's fourth essay "The Bible in relation to Faith."

A. Christ, the Teacher, and the Bible.

The scholars of the Enlightenment had been very fond of making the distinction between autonomy, or true human freedom, and heteronomy, or the imposition of authority from the outside. One form in which heteronomy expresses itself is in slavish obedience to divine commands from an external source such as the Bible, or the Church, or the Creeds. The bitter and unloving spirit which had characterised the Row trial had arisen out of the question of ecclesiastical authority. When they signed the Westminster Confession ministers entered into a contract to hold certain sets of opinions which they might not have held if they were free. The authority of creeds had been openly challenged in the forty years since the Row verdict, Tulloch, for instance, claiming that creeds were "mere human expositions of divine truth," and should not be elevated to the position of infallible standards of doctrine.

The Scriptures, however, held a higher position than the creeds, at least in theory, for they had been regarded by many as completely trustworthy,
uncorrupted, infallible records of divine truth. When A.J. Scott defended his position against the General Assembly at Row, he asked for permission to make a direct appeal to the Scriptures, and his line of argument was: "our confession confesseth itself to be nothing, save as it is sustained by Scripture; the church commandeth every one who findeth anything in her confession, not consenting with Scripture to bring it forward, and promiseth him satisfaction from the Scriptures; therefore, though there were nothing at stake, I am entitled to have this issue between the Presbytery and me tried by the Scriptures." In the face of the ongoing historical-critical and scientific study of the Scriptures, however, the Bible itself was under attack, and Erskine found that contemporary men and women were deeply disturbed and alarmed, "for they imagine that if the ground were to give way in the smallest matter it would really give way entirely."

Erskine begins by pointing out the great difference between receiving something because we perceive its natural truth, and receiving it simply on authority. "When I ask myself what reason or right I have to believe that the great Being who made and orders all things really cares for men and has a purpose of good for them in all the circumstances of their lot, it is not enough to answer that I have read this in a very ancient book, or been taught it by a very venerable Church."

That it requires a more thorough answer is acknowledged in every department of knowledge, but often not in religion, because it is thought more reverent to receive divine truth simply on authority. Also there is a misconception, Erskine continues, about the nature of faith which is seen as unquestioning obedience and as opposed to knowledge, rather than as the spiritual faculty which receives divine truth.

Man has within him, Erskine continues, an innate original capacity for apprehending spiritual truth and it is to this faculty which the Bible addresses itself. This happens in an absolutely parallel way in science when, for
instance, Kepler and Newton in their exposition of the laws of the material world addressed the intellectual capacity. Just as the discoveries of these men are not accepted on their personal authority, but on the ground of their discerned truth, so it should be with the Bible.

The Bible, Erskine goes on to say, is intended to be used as an instrument of education rather than to be quoted as an authority. It is true that all education begins with authority, but it is meant to be only a stepping stone to inner verification and experience. The duty of a soldier is simply to obey the orders he receives from his commander, but if instead of a commander we have a teacher, then the object is very different. With a teacher the task is not so much to ensure that things are done as to make the pupil wiser and better by doing them. In the same way, a spiritual teacher who offers his own guidance instead of helping the pupil to rely on his own light is calling him away from God.

Soelle, in her book *Christ the Representative*, describes Christ as the true teacher, who keeps the "pupil's place open for him" until "he finds his place." Erskine makes the same point about the relation between the authority of the Bible, and Christ in his role of inner teacher and representative.

The soldier who questions or judges his commander's orders is guilty of a breach of duty; the disciple of Christianity would be defeating the whole object of his teacher, if he did not question and judge, that is, if he did not seek to apprehend for himself the light and truth contained in the teaching. The officer and teacher must not change parts, neither must the soldier and the disciple. If they do, it will be under the penalty of confusion and defeat.

In Erskine then the Bible is subordinate to the light of Christ within, and he insists on two principles. Firstly that Christianity is not the creation of the
human mind but represents an eternal reality, as real as the physical facts revealed by Galileo and Newton. Secondly, human beings have faculties capable of discerning this spiritual reality, when it is revealed, in the same way as they have faculties capable of apprehending physical realities. It is to this spiritual capacity that the bible addresses itself.

Autonomy means self-governed, but this, in Erskine, does not mean self reliance which he would have considered to be synonymous with sin. Rather, there exists within every man and woman an ability to recognize eternal truth and handle it when it is brought close to them; everyone has this capacity to receive divine communication and apprehend its truth and meaning.

I am sure that the Bible was not given to me that my knowledge of it might stand instead of my knowledge of God, nor was it given merely to help me to form an opinion of Him or to stimulate my imagination to form a picture of Him; it was given to help me to find Himself, and to know Him as a reality altogether independent of the book; as a man whom I have been seeking after is independent of the directory which guides me to his house. I do not perceive the real value of the Bible until in this way I become independent of it. 12

B. "Thoughts on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans".

Erskine toiled long and hard over his fifth essay, "Thoughts on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans", for he felt there were great difficulties in it especially in the later part of the third chapter. He was particularly interested in the alternative ways of looking at the word righteousness, as he thought there was considerable indistinctness as to its meaning and nature, some seeing it as imputed and therefore as basically legal, and others as an ethical quality
because the divine love shown in the atonement affects human hearts, turning them from themselves towards the perfection of God. McLeod Campbell wrote in 1868: "whether he will ever satisfy himself with the adequacy of his own bringing out of the apostle's teaching in the Epistle to the Romans so as to publish it I know not, but he still labours at this work."13

The distinction between the two kinds of righteousness, which Erskine makes, has been the concern of many scholars. The kind of questions they discussed were along the lines of, Is the righteousness which Paul refers to a judicial righteousness, or is the justified man declared to be right with God because he is really right? Allowing that the sacrifice of Christ produces a change of condition, is it not also true that holiness is much more than the deliverance from guilt and the forgiveness of past offences because it usually refers to Christian character?

In his exploration of these possibilities, Erskine gave no place to man's own achievements, or to salvation by works any more than did his Presbyterian opponents. Both sides avoided Pelagianism for they believed that the grace of God and redemption by Christ was the foundation of all true righteousness, and that justification was entirely gratuitous. The two opposing views of righteousness, one of which was linked with substitution and the other with representation, however, presented very big differences of conception as well as of emphasis. Erskine saw Christ's death as basically having its effect on the individual character, while the Calvinist opposition saw it as an objective act prior to any moral experience in men.

Whilst some have supposed that justification means the rectification of a man's spiritual and moral nature in relation to God and man, produced by a belief of God's fatherly purposes concerning all men, others have held that it does not refer to character at all but to
position, and that the justified man is a man to whom righteousness is imputed in virtue of his connection with Christ to whom he becomes united by faith, and who therefore, though not himself righteous, is treated by God as if he were so, for Christ's sake.14

According to which of these two concepts is held then, Christ is basically either a representative or a substitute but not a mere example, which the individual strives in his own strength to imitate. Erskine thoughts dwelt on the atonement as essentially neither an expiation of sin, nor a propitiation of God, but as a manifestation of God's love towards sinners. He believed that the only way men and women could be brought back to righteousness was not by an objective substitutionary act but by trust in that love. The appearance of Jesus Christ is the expression of an infinite love already existing in the Father's heart and unchanged by the sin of men. The individual is called, 'at once (ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ζῶντας θάνατος) i.e. in each successive present moment) to trust God as our Father, and thus to come into a righteous state. On this fact faith may always rest, and from it faith may always take a fresh start, into whatever sin we may have fallen.'15

(i) The Atonement not an Expiation, but a Manifestation of Love.

Today there has been a renewed interest in substitution following Camfield who has argued that only substitution can deal with sin at its deepest level:

"There remains always the fact of sin and its irreparability - the fact, that is, of guilt. Sin is not forgiven when the past is simply left standing."16

Erskine would to some extent have agreed, for he always held that there is a retrospective side to the atonement, but he also thought that the term in our stead restricted the death of Christ to the pardon of sin: "forgiveness in its deepest sense does not mean deliverance from a penalty or the reversal of a sentence, it means the
continuance of a fatherly purpose of final good, even through the infliction of the penalty and
the execution of the sentence."  

In Erskine's day, this view that the atonement originated in the love of
God, was beginning to be acknowledged by more and more holders of a
substitutionary theory. Yet they continued also to stress God's justice, and
Christ's suffering endured in man's stead, and to use such terms as guilt and
acquittal from guilt which refer to a particular moment in time. Erskine, on
the other hand, thought Christ's work was acceptable because of his goodness,
as well as because of his suffering, and he emphasised the gradual
development, through successive ages of individual perfection of character.

This had never been the view of the substitutionary school. Charles Hodge
(1797-1878), a Reformed theologian of Princeton Theological Seminary, wrote:
"that the righteousness for which we are justified is neither anything done by us nor wrought
in us, but something done for us and imputed to us."  

Orthodox Calvinists then saw righteousness as fundamentally one of
condition; the elect are made righteous judicially because the righteous of
Christ is imputed to them. Erskine objected to this stress laid upon the legal
side of the atonement, because he saw it as alien to the spirituality and
universality of the Gospel.

Robert Haldane (1764-1842), of Scotland, confirms that it is condition and
not character, past offences rather than a present revelation of the divine
character which form the chief element in the atonement: "man, having lost his own
righteousness, and thereby fallen under condemnation, God has provided for him a righteousness
- the complete fulfilment of the law in all its threatenings and all its precepts - by which,
being placed to his account through faith, he is acquitted from guilt, freed from condemnation,
and entitled to the reward of eternal life."  

Erskine held that it was neither Christ's substitution, nor the imputation of
righteousness, which was the ground of each person's confidence but the love of God. God desired to train all his children gradually into a real righteousness which involved a participation in his character. It was this ultimate purpose of God, to restore men and women after his image, which faith rested on, and it was this which made the individual, who felt himself to be under condemnation, able to make a fresh start. "No suffering of a penalty due to sin either by ourselves or by another in our place can put sin away, for sin is a spiritual thing and can only be put away by a return to righteousness; and as sin has also a strictly individual character, it is only by becoming righteous ourselves, and not by another being so in our stead, that sin in us can be truly put away."20

(ii) An Illustration from Romans 3 Verse 25.

(whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forebearance of God.)

Calvinist scholars had admitted that Romans 3. 25. was a very difficult text, and had interpreted it in terms of appeasing the Father or of punitive substitution. This idea is implied, for instance, in Calvin when he writes that God," without having regard to Christ is always angry with us - and ... we are reconciled to him when we are accepted through his righteousness ... he hates our uncleanness which has extinguished the light of his image. When the washing of Christ cleanses this away, he then loves and embraces us as his own pure workmanship."21 Some of Erskine's contemporaries
then continued to see this passage on justification as related to a sacrifice, a
substitution or a satisfaction. Charles Hodge writes: "we are justified by a
propitiatory sacrifice ... It is something done for us, not something experienced, or
produced in us, or performed by us."22

Erskine, on the other hand, saw The Epistle to the Romans as essentially a
treatise on ethics, and interpreted chapter 3 verse 25 in the light, not of a
propitiation in the Calvinist sense, but of his own absolute trust in the fatherly
love of God. To Erskine justification by faith was man's faith in this fatherly
purpose. Christ's work then is not substitutional or vicarious in the ordinary
sense but it, "is a work done for men in a sense applicable to the work of no other human
being. He does nothing instead of us; nothing i.e. to save us from doing it; he does things
for us that we also may in him have the power to do them."23

God educates each individual by ways which they do not fully understand,
but they do know the end to which he is leading them. Erskine wished to
establish the ultimate salvation of the whole human race, and the final triumph
of good over evil. With these preconceptions in mind he produced "exceedingly
ingenious" interpretations of scripture, which even his best friends, and most
ardent admirers, readily admitted were sometimes of little scholarly value:

It often seemed, as if the interpretation was born from within his own thought, rather than
gathered from impartial exegesis. So strong was the heat of his cherished convictions, that
before them the toughest, most obdurate text gave away, melted and fused into the mould which
his bias had framed for it.24

1. We turn then to Erskine's exegesis of v. 25; "faith, and the righteousness of faith,
have been the theme of the epistle hitherto, and Jesus has been presented to us as the model of
it, so that we ought to be prepared for what appears here to be the announcement that the
propitiation consists of faith carried to its highest power, faith whilst shedding out the life blood... In the expression διὰ τὸ ΠΑΡΕΧΩ the faith spoken of is Christ's own faith, not the faith of believers which was the usual interpretation in Erskine's day. The preposition διὰ, necessarily by the construction connected with ΠΡΙΓΤΕΩ, indicates faith as the process or instrument through which the propitiation was effected, or rather through which Jesus became a propitiation. But no one can suppose that that could be through our faith. Christ makes the propitiation by his own faith.

2. ἐν τῷ Αυτῷ Μισέω. If it was Christ's own faith it could not be "faith in his blood", but must be "faith whilst he was shedding his blood." Whilst the usual interpretation was that God sent forth his Son "as a propitiatory sacrifice to make satisfaction to his justice", Erskine saw it as "a manifestation of the righteousness which He desires to see in man. The righteous character of the act made it a propitiation; and as God desires to see righteousness in all men He in fact desires to see that propitiation in all men." Erskine connects this with the clause "whom God sent forth" and thus he writes: "God sent His Son into the world because foregone sins were passed over, and did not stand out as hindrances to His fatherly intercourse with men."
"Fragments": Two Different World-Views.

The rest of the book consists of fragments of which there are eighteen; the following are quotations containing Erskine's last thoughts on the subject of righteousness.

Is righteousness absolute or is it relative? Assuredly it is difficult to conceive of a righteousness without relations; perhaps it is impossible. When we think of the righteousness of God, we think of it as eternal and unchangeable, yet not as altogether independent of relations, for we can scarcely think of it except as characterizing His purpose in creation and His treatment of His creatures, which implies the idea of relation. God sees every human being different from every other, and His thought and acting towards them are righteous, because He has respect to this difference.

Righteousness is not constituted such by authority, but by everlasting truth. In one of Plato's dialogues, the question is raised, "Whether is an act holy because it pleases the gods, or does it please the gods because it is holy?" and although no final solution is arrived at, yet it is manifest that the author intends his readers to choose the second alternative.

So long as we think of men as a mere mass of individuals, we shall find it difficult to form a definite idea of righteousness or justification. But when we think of them as members of a family of which God is the Father, the difficulty is removed; righteousness is then seen as healthful order. Manifestly also this order is not righteousness in consequence of its being judged or imputed as righteousness by God, but is so essentially, making itself felt by the man who possesses it to be his right state, just as a dislocated joint at once feels its justification or rectification when it is restored to its proper position.
When St. Paul spoke of justification by faith, he meant to say that filial trust in God as a loving and righteous Father is the real essential righteousness of man — that it will make him a good man, a good neighbour, a good citizen; and he also meant to say that no man could have this trust except through the conviction that God is unchangeably his Father. There is no room here for imputation, in the sense usually given to that word. Its sense in the Bible itself is simply that in the judgement of God such filial trust is righteousness.  

This is no question of words, for if the righteousness of faith be a mere conventionality, though God Himself were the author of that conventionality, it cannot be the ultimate good intended for man; it cannot permanently satisfy his spirit. It is moreover evidently absurd to suppose that his faith is followed or rewarded by forgiveness, for it cannot exist without the assurance of forgiveness, that is, without the assurance of an infinite and unchanging love, which even in punishing seeks our good. 

A love which does not seek return is not really love, and a righteousness which does not seek to make others righteous is not really righteousness.  

The righteousness of God towards man consists in this loving purpose, and the righteousness of man towards God consists in his faith in that purpose, a trust which makes man a fellow-worker with God in carrying it out.  

The sentence of sorrow and death is not to be set aside, but passed through, and the forgone sins, though pretermitted and passed over, — that is, not regarded by God as reasons for abandoning His purpose of training us in righteousness, — must yet receive their penalty. 

When we look back at these quotations from the "Fragments", it is easy to see how, when the balance of event and process is lost, and the scale is tipped
in one or the other direction, it can lead to two different world views. In Erskine of course the stress is on redemption as a process, and on the ethical aspect of salvation. It means future righteousness even though its basis is a past event which happened 2,000 years ago. Underlying this is a preoccupation with the problem of assurance for without it man cannot begin the journey towards salvation. Filial trust is "the real essential righteousness of man", and no one can have this trust "except through the conviction that God is unchangeably his Father." Man has lost his place in the spiritual order by ceasing to believe in God's love. He needs to regain the assurance that whatever sins he commits God remains always a loving father. This assurance is the starting-point and until he believes in it he can "never pray a son's prayer." It is absurd to say that "this faith is followed or rewarded by forgiveness, for it cannot exist without the assurance of forgiveness." We must have this assurance as our starting-point in the path of righteousness, we must begin by having it, we cannot make a single step without it, because filial trust is our righteousness, and filial trust is impossible without an absolute and unwavering assurance of forgiveness. Forgiveness, therefore, must be a permanent fact in the relation of God to man; not a thing which our faith creates, but a thing which exists whether we believe it or not, a condition of things in which we live, and which our faith rests on.

There is no room, in this view, for the ideas of penal substitution or imputation, or the sonship only of believers. The revelation of the Son is the revelation of universal sonship, "a sonship which has not been forfeited by sin." Christ is the "Fountain of sonship" to the whole spiritual order. "He claims them as
having been created in him; he claims them as their Head, as the vine claims the branches, assuring them that they possess in him both a status of sonship and a communion of the spirit of sonship. 46

True morality can never be separated from an acknowledgement of this place which man holds in the spiritual cosmos. "Blessed are the poor in spirit" means there is a blessing on those who know and keep their place of dependence on the Son. This is righteous, healthful order but it is "not righteous in consequence of its being judged or imputed as righteousness by God." 47 It is not a legal or commercial transaction, or something that has long ago been concluded, but relational and on-going and present for "God sees each human being as different from each other, and His thought and acting towards them are righteous, because He has respect to this difference." 48

D. Conclusion.

We note then that during this last period of Erskine’s religious development, his views had deepened, become simpler and more real, but not radically changed from the 1830s, when he published The Brazen Serpent and The Doctrine of Election. Still of vital importance to him was assurance of faith, the universality of the love of God and the salvation of Christ; his universalist hopes had developed into his idea of a divine education, extending not only throughout this life but beyond the grave. The last years of his life were dominated by this idea, and, he believed, the success of this process of education was certain, although every man and woman must first enter into sympathy with God’s aim, and make his purposes their own.

During his long life he witnessed the Disruption of the Church of Scotland, the rise of the High Church party in England, the coming of enlightened criticism and advanced science to Scotland which shook confidence in the
contents of the Bible. He lived through the positivism of Auguste Comte, Renan's assertion that all miraculous narratives are false, Colenso's arithmetical calculations proving that the Pentateuch was written for a religious and not an historical purpose and Darwin's theory of evolution which threw doubt on the biblical record of creation. He thought he had found an answer which would relieve the minds of those who had had their religious faith shaken by these publications and events, and he offered it to any who wanted help in their journey along the spiritual way.

I was brought up from my childhood in the belief of the supernatural and miraculous in connexion with religion, especially in connexion with the person and life and teaching of Jesus Christ; and like many in the present day I came, in after life, to have misgivings as to the credibility of this wonderful history. But the patient study of the narrative and of its place in the history of the world, and the perception of a light in it which entirely satisfied my reason and conscience, finally overcame these misgivings and forced on me the conviction of its truth. A good deal of this cannot perhaps be fully communicated to others, but, of that which I can, I wish to record as distinctly as I am able what, having found helpful to myself, I think may perhaps be helpful to them.49

One of the most satisfying truths which Erskine found in the Bible was that of God as holy love, and he found those texts especially appealing in which Christ is said to have come to reveal his Father's love as being unlimited and unbounded, and extending to the whole human race. This universal love he saw set forth particularly in the Epistle to the Romans, where in the 5th chapter the benefit of the redemption by Christ is declared to be in extent parallel to the evil introduced by Adam.

The Calvinist teaching that God will have mercy only on a few, Erskine
thought, was not agreeable to the biblical revelation of God as the righteous Father; God created all men and women to teach them righteousness, and he must persevere in this purpose if he is to remain a righteous Father.

Mrs. Oliphant speaks of Erskine’s "gentle faith, tempered ... by exceedingly keen perceptions, and a sudden gleam now and then which revealed the insight in him, his veiled eyes and benign but dreamy countenance." Some of this insight is shown in his anecdotes and sayings, and Dean Stanley recalls a few of them in his Lectures on the History of the Church of Scotland.

"What is human existence? It is not probation, it is education. Every step we take upwards or downwards is a stepping-stone to something else." "What is the proper use of religion? The sun was made to see by, not to look at." "What is the effect of Revelation to us? It is the disclosure to us of our true relations to God and to one and another, as when an exile, after long years' absence, returns home, and sees faces which he does not recognise. But one in whom he can trust comes and says, "This aged man is your father; this boy is your brother; who has done much for you; this child is your son." "

E. Epilogue.

We can now devote a few paragraphs before the end of this chapter to the general topic of the relation of substitution to representation which can be gleaned from the discussion. There are many different sides to Christian doctrine, and it may be suggested that Erskine and his Scottish Calvinist opponents, one using substitutionary models and the other representational ones, were not expressing concepts which were necessarily inconsistent. We could agree with the substitutionary school that it was from God’s wrath which man needed to be saved; and with the representative school that it was God’s righteousness, leading to moral renewal and real goodness of character, which
was revealed in that salvation. Indeed it is certain that Erskine, in some respects, did not see them as contradictory: "It is clear that this lifting out of sin into righteousness is the chief meaning here of the term 'salvation' although deliverance from the results of sin is also included."52

It is to be noticed that often many models are present in theories of salvation history, expressing one or other side of a common reality. Christ's death, for instance is described as an historical event, a unique and completed act, external to the human race, and at the same time as internal and inclusive, in that the whole human race were created in Christ and the things Christ does for the race are also the things the race does in him. A rather different way of putting it is to say that the atonement is historical in character and accomplished once and for all, and at the same time spiritual and contemporary, to be repeated in all members of Christ's body producing an inward, real and personal relationship with God which Erskine calls sonship.

Yet we can say that there are still ways in which one excludes the other: both sides stressed the love of God in the death of Christ, but with the orthodox Calvinists it was an electing love and not a love of everyone. Erskine differed from them in his doctrine of the real and proper sonship of every man, and his belief that flesh and spirit are co-existing elements in the being of every individual. Grace operates: "not by annihilating the flesh or by making it better, but by enabling us to have our habitual thoughts and desires and interests, not in the flesh, but in the love of God, and in fellowship with Him."53

Those who follow the flesh are still children of God: "The prodigal did not cease to be his father's son when he went into the far country, and nothing but the thought that he had still a father in the old home-land could have brought him back."54

Moreover some subsidiary ideas, predominant in the substitutionary theory, such as vicarious obedience, expiation, propitiation, satisfaction, imputation,
when combined in a certain way had produced a theory which, Erskine felt, was not true to the New Testament. God needed no satisfaction before he could forgive. Christ did not come "to obtain the Father's forgiveness, or to justify Him in bestowing it." God's righteousness did not express itself in the negative way of punishing sinners, but positively for while, "the death of Christ was his acknowledgement, as Head of the race, that the sentence was righteous. The misunderstanding consists in not apprehending that it was our Father's love which gave the law and ratified the sentence, and that the sentence itself is remedial, being part of the process by which He would train us into His own likeness."56

We have to conclude then that substitution and representation are multi-faced concepts. Salvation, as conceived by the two sides, can in general terms be seen as complementary but the pattern of ideas which was contained in the formal theories made them often radically opposed. They belonged to different thought worlds far removed from or in opposition one to the other.
Notes.

Chapter 7 (3).


17. Erskine, "Thoughts on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans". p. 140.


35. "Fragments."(V) p. 239.


40. "Fragments." (V) p. 239.

41. "Fragments." (V) p. 239.

42. "Fragments." (V) p. 239.

43. "Fragments." (V) p. 239-240.

44. "Fragments." (IX) p. 244.


52. "Thoughts on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans." p. 120.


**Conclusion.**

A. **Summary.**

Part I shows how far Erskine had progressed in his development of a representative theory up to the time of *The Brazen Serpent*. It discusses the standpoint of his representative theory, and how it differed from one associated with substitution. The main difference is that the retrospective aspect is in the forefront in substitutionary theories, while in representation there is a prospective emphasis. Substitution is more closely linked to a particular school of thought than representation, and as J.I. Packer points out even more so when "further meaning is added" and "Christ's substitutionary suffering is called penal."

Erskine began by thinking that the term substitution had been given perverted and misleading interpretations, and his first thought seems to have been to recover it in line with the wider insights of Calvin and the churches of the Reformation. He came to believe, however, that although the thought that Christ bore man's sins as a penal substitute had brought peace to some, for many it had become a stumbling block on the road to salvation. The idea of God as a wrathful judge, of Christ's death as a penalty for sin, the concept of a substituted equivalent, of Christ as a victim offered to reconcile God to the offender, all these ideas had shaken the doctrine to its very roots.

In his early books Erskine modifies the term substitution by giving it a more spiritual and less technical interpretation, and while the judicial aspect is still prominent, and there is no rejection of substitution in itself, he removes gradually its hard legal core. He puts aside imagery that suggests a punitive justice, and the transference of merit as an external transaction leaving the sinner internally unredeemed.
Erskine agrees with the more enlightened supporters of substitution who saw it as a supreme revelation of the love of God, but turned away from those who held the idea that something had to be paid or sacrificed in order to change the mind of God from wrath to love. The Bible, he reflects, never represents the atonement as effecting any change in the mind of God. He rejects the view that what Christ passed through his followers escape; Christ died not to save men and women from punishment but to redeem them from sin. He is the pattern, the leader, the forerunner, the representative of his people, and the great captain of their salvation, acting on their behalf and accomplishing what they could not do, manifesting God’s character in the fallen human nature, but they in turn must follow in his footsteps.

On the positive side, Erskine’s deepest interest had always been in the ethical and mystical side of the atonement and in the development of character, and he therefore approaches the atonement from a different point of view to the Scottish Calvinists. The real contrast between a substitutionary and a representative theory, at that time, seemed to be the way each conceived the nature of the atonement: while penal substitution concentrated on what Christ’s death had done for men and women in its dealing with past sins, the core of a representative theory may be said to be that of fellowship with Christ in his life, death and resurrection.

Part II is concerned with the extent and efficacy of the atonement: whom does Christ represent, and for whom does he substitute himself? Orthodox Calvinists believed that pardon and regeneration are inseparably connected, and pardon is peculiar to the people of God. Erskine and his party taught that everyone, without exception was in a state of forgiveness and pardoned for Christ’s sake. It was a common benefit or free gift, conferred on all mankind, and in a sense Christ was the representative and/or substitute of all men.
The validity of the pardon does not depend on whether a person believes it or not; if an individual does not believe he is still pardoned but he is not saved. Salvation is transformation of men and women into the divine likeness: belief in the pardon produces such a view of God’s love as to change the life of the sinner, remove his natural enmity, reconcile him to God and enable him to walk in the ways of righteousness and holy living.

Erskine explores what this means for the doctrine of election, and, as we have seen, he was concerned mainly to refute the high Calvinist view, at a time when there were many contending parties, with different theories, who still held in common a belief in the propitiatory and substitutionary character of Christ’s death. At one extreme, there were those who taught that God fixes the number of the elect from all eternity, and provides an atonement for them only, and Christ is the substitute and representative of the elect alone. On the other hand, some of the moral government theologians stressed God’s love for the race as a whole, and for-all sinners universally, and they argued for a general or indefinite atonement. They taught that atonement precedes election and not election atonement, and that Christ in one respect was the substitute and head and representative of sinners in general, but in a special way the representative of believers or those chosen to salvation. Not all holders of penal substitution then believed in a limited atonement, although all held to a special application.

Erskine’s understanding of election was closely connected with the doctrine of universal pardon, and with view he was already putting forward that all men and women must eventually come to Christ, because all are already essentially one in him. While his concept of election centres round the idea of Christ as the elect head, and Adam as the reprobate head, and the individual’s ability to choose the one or the other, yet the bias is in favour of universal
election. At times he gives a very wide meaning to Christ's representation as, for instance, in a letter written in 1833, when he wrote: "each man is a member of a body, of which the Head is a continual reservoir of life; and when he refuses to be acted in by this life he is not abandoned by it, for it still remains in his Head, and is continually coming upon him, by pulsation after pulsation, seeking entrance."²

The key to Erskine's teaching on how Christ is able to save the whole human race is his doctrine of the indwelling Christ, the Christ in every one. The Son of God, the Word, is the condition and ground of every man's being: no one becomes a member of Christ, because they already are part of his body. Again, conversion or turning to God does not make God our Father, for he always was and is our Father.

God is my Father, Christ is my head; and the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son is breathing into my conscience. This is true, whether I believe it or not.³

Every one remains a member of the head, even if not living members, until they are ready to turn from self to God. Erskine calls the inward consciousness of the Christ within natural religion, and he declares it to be synonymous with true religion. It became Erskine's faith that God would never give up his purpose of making everyone holy, although his work must continue to be carried out on the other side of the grave.

The first chapter of Part III considers representation and substitution as models, and an examination of how models function has revealed that they do not basically assert priorities. Their aim is to facilitate talk about God, and each have their own areas of applicability, and their own distinctive insights, in line with the kind of discourse they are intended to develop.

- 322 -
In particular, representation evokes the images of presence and activity: it gives attention to man's response to Christ's work, and to God as a living, moving, acting God. Erskine felt that the dominance of the concept of substitution had made God into a mere abstraction or "a bundle of doctrines." This brings us to a second point about models, the need for what Ramsey calls "checks and balances", and for "multi-model discourse."

By 1870 many supporters of substitution felt keenly some of the old difficulties associated with the term, and sought to rehabilitate substitution in conformity with the changing current of ideas, and with the culture of their time. We noticed the gradual disappearance of the earlier conflict between God's justice and his love, although supporters of the evangelical theology still thought Erskine's views were defective, because he "regarded the divine character as purely and entirely love." Sub-Christian ideas bound up with the doctrine, and which made the model untenable, such as the idea that God punished Jesus instead of the guilty, or that Christ was offered to propitiate God, had undergone modification, in order to make substitution congruous with a God's true Fatherhood, but "the difference between us and the school of Erskine is, that while they make that fatherhood and its blessed consequences natural and universal, we regard it as special and gracious."

Erskine thought God's unchangeable and unalterable purpose was to make everyone righteous, and that he made all men and women to educate them and not to judge them. "A state of probation!" - he exclaimed in one of his outpourings - 'God looking at us to see what we are going to do! What nonsense that is.' To Erskine the atonement was moral and spiritual and not merely legal, and he therefore understood reconciliation as healing, and redemption ultimately as sanctification.
B. Some Characteristics of a Representative Theory.

We must conclude then that substitution and representation can sometimes be taken together, and at other times be seen as conflicting with, or excluding, each other. Much depends on whether substitution is viewed in the old rigid and narrow sense as part of commercial or judicial transaction, or whether it is accompanied by, because it is seen as inseparable from, its subjective effect of righteousness, love and the development of a new life.

Little is gained by defining either word, for they have a complexity of meanings, often adapt themselves to fit in with other doctrines, and moreover bear the imprint of their age. Historically they have allied themselves to particular theological schools, and have often been seen as exclusive because of the interaction of the ideas with which they have been connected.

Certain ideas group themselves around the concept of representation: the Fatherhood of God, the vicarious humanity of Christ, and a view of the atonement as stirring up love within the hearts of men and women. The solidarity of the race with Christ made him able to offer in his person what was the offering of the whole race, and this lays a basis for identification with him. He is the head and they are the members; he is the vine and they are the branches. These ideas are noticed as special aspects of a representative theory; orthodox Calvinists disliked the term mystical union but it is pushed to the forefront in Erskine's writings.

It is easy to see how representation and substitution can come into conflict: Christ's suffering and death has been conceived, by the supporters of penal substitution, as removing some obstacle which prevents God from forgiving, or induces him to forgive. On the other hand, it is seen by the representative school as a manifestation of God's love and a declaration of the fact that God is always ready to forgive, or that every one is already forgiven. These two
points of view are radically opposed: one speaks of propitiation of God, or the expiation of sins, and the other of grace from which the universal forgiveness proceeds. A common characteristic of the two systems is the centrality of an incarnational theology. A substitute or a representative must be a divine person for whilst Christ's humanity was of utmost importance, his divinity was also vital to his representation of all men. Just as no mere man could expiate sin or be responsible for the sin of another, so also no mere man could have been the root of humanity, and the head of the spiritual creation able to communicate to all his relationship of sonship.

Because Christ is not just a man but also God, humanity is able to act in and through him. He leads the way back to God, and is the representative of the whole race before God. The real contrast with substitution, as Erskine understood it, was that Christ's work was not done instead of theirs, but his trials and sufferings were an example of how their trials were to be met.

A leading idea is inclusivity: Erskine stresses the mystical idea of the solidarity of the human race in Christ. While in the common system it was believers who were members of his body, in Erskine all died in him, but more important, all live in him through his resurrection and Christ lives and works every day to effect the salvation of all.

In this Erskine resembles not so much Anselm, whose main idea as respects the atonement is one of satisfaction linked with substitution, as Athanasius. Athanasius makes inclusivity one of his main ideas and illustrates it with many apt similes: "Just as when a great emperor has entered into some large city and dwelt in one of its houses, such city is naturally deemed worthy of much honour, and no enemy or bandit any longer descends upon it to overthrow it, but rather it is deemed worthy of all respect because of the emperor dwelling in one house there; so, too, is it with the monarch of all."
Athanasius and Erskine use similar phraseology when they speak of "all dying in him", of Christ as the "Head of all men", and "the Captain of their salvation."

C. The Pattern of a Representative Theory.

If we turn to the pattern of a representative theory, it has been noticed in this study that it is distinct from a one associated with penal substitution. The main point of difference is the equal stress which Erskine and his followers began to put on Christ's life, death and resurrection. In penal substitution the emphasis is on a single point: the death of Christ and the offering to God for sin. At his death he became the substitute of his people and their surety, standing in their room and bearing their guilt, for God requires satisfaction before he can pardon sin.

Erskine in his earlier books had attached, like Calvin and his orthodox contemporaries, great importance to the death of Christ and to his passive obedience. The nature of God's law, and his displeasure against sin, demanded that he receive some sort of satisfaction before it could be pardoned. By the time of The Brazen Serpent, however, this pattern has changed. There is equal stress on his active obedience, the time before his ministry when he grew in wisdom and understanding, his ministry and the revelation which he made of the Father, as well as his last sufferings and his death. The incarnation develops naturally into the atonement and through the atonement into the resurrection, the coming of the Holy Spirit and the positive gift of sonship and daughterhood in Christ.

We can now look more closely at Erskine's mature theological system, and draw some conclusions about how it differs from that of the opposite party which supported penal substitution. We note again that while, in his own day, Erskine's doctrine was termed a novelty, a new discovery, a new system or a
heresy, yet it has a close resemblance to the earlier thinkers Athanasius and Irenaeus.

1. To Erskine Substitution means Incarnation.

Erskine continued to hold the doctrine of the two natures of Jesus. Jesus was God and he became man in order that a great work be accomplished within the humanity. The purpose of that work was to save mankind.

This work was not accomplished, as in penal substitution, by sacrificial blood-shedding, but by the infusion of a new life, this divine life entering the human nature like new sap in a tree: "If you would have a branch bring forth fruit different from the natural fruit of the tree, you must first infuse a new sap, for the old sap must produce the old fruit, it can produce no other."\(^{10}\)

By becoming man Christ united fallen creation to himself, he went on to fulfill the whole law in his person and reconciled all to God. As Christ brought the two contrary natures into at-one-ment, so this must be repeated in members of his body.

Both Erskine and the orthodox Calvinists agreed then that an intervention on behalf of humanity had taken place in Christ, but they differed as to the point at which it occurred. Athanasius had written, "He became man that we might be made God,"\(^{11}\) and Erskine follows his lead in making the incarnation the means by which sinners are brought to God. This met with intense opposition from orthodox Calvinists who believed that salvation was purchased for the elect by the blood of Christ.

In The Brazen Serpent Erskine declared that the great work of substitution was that of Christ for Adam, and therefore substitution meant incarnation.

"This is the real substitution. Christ is substituted for Adam who was the type of Him who was to come."\(^{12}\)
2. The Work of Christ is Accomplished as a Representative.

Traditional advocates of penal substitution believed that it was on the Cross that Christ accomplished the work as a substitute for those who would eventually be saved. Erskine, however, excluded substitution as specifically applied to the death of Christ: "Now 'it became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things', that this new substituted Head should be 'made perfect through sufferings.'" He dismisses substitution, on the grounds that Christ was not only in man, but embodied humanity and so stood in a spiritual and organic relationship to the whole human race, so that his work might be said to be with them. He therefore declared that Christ was not a substitute but a head, doing what his members must do after him, and although Christ did much on man's behalf, he did nothing in his stead.

3. The Divine Image.

Christ represents human nature in its perfection, and salvation, in Erskine, involves a change of character in man, so that he becomes like him. Again we see the resemblance of his thought to that of Athanasius whose concern is centred not only on the single saving act of Christ on the cross, but even more on the restoration of the divine image in man: "for as, when a portrait painted on a panel has disappeared in consequence of external stains, there is need for him to come whose the portrait is, that the likeness may be renewed on the same material." God cannot become reconciled to man unless he is changed, and Erskine lays less stress on the remission of a penalty, and more on regeneration so that the individual gradually ceases to sin. Erskine great interest was in the sanctification of man, and after his resurrection Christ was able to begin the actual regeneration of believers.
While in Erskine then there is this strong exemplary stress, and Christ is a model for all to follow, yet more important than individual ethics is Christ's demonstration, by his trust, of the fact that there is a fatherly love in God which cannot be extinguished by sin. Christ is the "model truster". This, Erskine points out, is the right state for all men and women, for only filial trust can produce righteousness: "Thus is Christ's trust the pattern of men's righteousness, not slavishly to copy but lovingly to reproduce by the indwelling of his Spirit."  

Christ lived a life of faith or trust in his Father. As head of the race he trusted in the Father's purpose of pardon for all men. He yielded himself up to that purpose, and it was accomplished in him. This trust must be reproduced in every member of his body.

We can conclude then that Erskine wanted to combine representation with an objective atonement. He therefore did not wish to exclude substitution, but thought it occurred when the Son of God became man, and Christ replaced Adam as the head of the race. His dispute with the orthodox party then seems to have been about the area in which the term could accurately be used, one party confining its use to the death of Christ and the other believing it to occur in the incarnation.

D. The Meaning and Use of the Terms Today.

Supporters of substitution, in the contemporary debate, have tried to get rid of the rather one-sided outlook which characterised the earlier theories. Like Erskine, they object to the idea that the function of a substitute is to take over and exempt his followers from going where he goes or doing what he does. In order to achieve this they have taken over some of the concepts traditionally associated with representation. One of these is inclusivity: thinkers like
Pannenberg find exclusive substitution inadequate by itself, for everyone must suffer and die, even though they find there is an element of it present in the atonement.

Redemption is inclusive, but there is a sense in which it is carried on outside the individual so that he need not suffer the same fate but merely accept its benefits. As Pannenberg puts it, "inclusive substitution contains an element belonging exclusively to the death of Christ. Only he died completely forsaken, while the death of all other men can find safety in communion with him."16

These modern exponents of substitution then, take a far-reaching view of the atonement choosing models which show it to be two-sided, with each model expressing a partial insight into the whole truth. Substitution, in the past, has belonged primarily to the retrospective aspect while representational theories are orientated towards the future. It has come to be seen by these theologians that they have to give far more attention to the prospective reference in order to bring their views into balance. The atonement is concerned with the present and the future, as well as with the past; it is a process as well as a past event. Some theologians would like, therefore, to unify representation and substitution and present them as a single model.

We may call the concept they are aiming at representative substitution (Stellvertretung), and it seems to work very well as a temporary holding-ground, but it is insufficient to contain more radical views on either side. Stellvertretung, of which no one-word equivalent exists in English, can lose its meaning when carried to either extreme, and fail in its object of keeping the two sides in harmony.

Soelle uses the word in her book Stellvertretung: ein Kapital Theologie nach dem "Tode Gottes", and by it she means that Christ represents the individual for a time until he is capable of taking his own place: "the 'place' promised us
remains open - the 'place' of lords of the world, the place he took in order that we might occupy it."17

Barth, on the other hand, uses the same concept to express the finality of Christ's function: "his once-for-all work of reconciliation on our behalf and in our place."18 These two conflicting opinions cannot be harmonized, but are irreconcilable at least on a rational level. The way such confrontations can be avoided is to see them as complementary, rather than as one unified model, and as McIntyre has pointed out, an advantage of this relative independence is that it makes for "greater variety of christological expression."19

A problem which emerged for substitution, when it was presented in the light of the modern discussion, has to do with the incarnation. Both Erskine and his opponents based their theories upon the conviction that Christ was truly God and truly man in the classical sense of the Chalcedonian Formula. Today, as in every age, creative theologians are putting forward new ways of interpreting the person of Christ, some of them so radical that they might rightly be called Pelagian or Socinian or exemplarist. Christ is called the incarnation of God because he is perfect man, an example of faith, a pioneer or a forerunner, without being truly God. The idea of representation is commonly connected with these theories, for it is generally accepted that in all of them his work is for man. The difficulty of including the concept of substitution, however, is insuperable: substitution, as Gunton, points out, "must include, though it is not exhausted by, an 'instead of.'"20
Conclusion


13. Ibid.


BIBLIOGRAPHY.

PRIMARY SOURCES.
A. Books.


[ARTHUR, J.] An Examination and Refutation of the Unscriptural Principles and Sentiments advocated by Mr. Erskine in his Preface to "Extracts of Letters to a Christian Friend, by a Lady." (Edinburgh: J. and D. Collie, 1830.)

BARCLAY, George. Strictures on the "Notes and Recollections of Two Sermons, by the Rev. Mr. Campbell delivered in the Parish Church of Row. on Sunday 8th September, 1829." (Glasgow: George Gallie, 1829.)

BELLAMY, Joseph. Letters and Dialogues between Theron, Paulinus, and Aspasio, on the Nature of Love to God, Faith in Christ, and Assurance of Salvation with an Introductory Essay by Robert Burns. (Glasgow:: George Gallie, 1830).

CALVIN, John. Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847.)

--------------- Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John. Vol.2. (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847.)

--------------- Institutes of the Christian Religion. Translated by Henry Beveridge. (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1846.)


CANDLISH, Robert S. Examination of Mr. Maurice's Theological Essays (London: James Nisbet, 1854.)

----------------- The Fatherhood of God. 5th ed. (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1869.)

----------------- The Fatherhood of God. Supplementary Vol. (Adam & Charles Black, 1870.)

----------------- An Inquiry into the Completeness and Extent of the Atonement with Special Reference to the Universal Offer of the Gospel, and the Universal Obligation to Believe. (Edinburgh: John Johnstone, 1845.)
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND. Confession of Faith. (William Blackwood, 1948.)


CRAWFORD, Thomas J. The doctrine of Holy Scripture respecting the Atonement. 4th ed. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1883.)

-------------- The Fatherhood of God considered in its General and Special Aspects & Particularly in Relation to the Atonement. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1866.)


-------------- The Doctrine of Election. (Edinburgh: James Duncan etc., 1837.)

-------------- An Essay on Faith. 4th ed. (Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1825.)

-------------- The Gifts of the Spirit. (Greenock: R.B. Lusk, 1830.)

-------------- The Internal Word or Light becoming Life: a Short to the Rule of Faith and of Life, being an Abridgement of the concluding Portion of Mr. Erskine's Doctrine of Election; edited by the Bishop of Argyll. (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1865.)

-------------- Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the Truth of Revealed Religion. 9th ed. (Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1829.)

-------------- Remarks on the Internal Evidence for the Truth of Revealed Religion. 10th ed. containing Introductory Essays:
1. To Gambold'd Works.
2. To Baxter's Saint's Rest.

-------------- The Spiritual Order and Other Papers. (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1871.)

The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel: in Three Essays. 2nd. ed. (Edinburgh: Waugh & Innes, 1828.)

EVANGELICAL MAGAZINE. Exposure of Certain Errors put forth in "Notes and Recollections of Two Sermons by Rev. Mr. Campbell, of Row." being Extracts from a Review of Said Sermons in the London Evangelical Magazine with a Brief Introductory Notice by the Editor. (Greenock: John Hislop, 1830.)


FISHER, Edward. The Marrow of Modern Divinity. ed. C.G. McCrie. (Glasgow: David Bryce, 1902.)

FRASER, James, of Brae. A Treatise on Justifying Faith. (Edinburgh: William Gray, printer, 1749.)


HALDANE, J.A. Answer to Mr. Henry Drummond's Defence of the Heretical Doctrine Promulgated by Mr. Irving respecting the Person and Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ; and to his Denial of Original Sin and of the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness. (Edinburgh: William Oliphant, 1830.)

HALDANE, J.A. The Doctrine of the Atonement with Strictures on the Recent Publications of Drs. Wardlaw and Jenkyn [and] an Appendix containing a Reply to Dr. Paynes's Arguments on the Subject. 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: William Whyte, 1847.)


KNIGHT, William. Principal Shairp & his Friends. (London: John MacMurray, 1888.)

LAW, William. Selected Mystical Writings; edited by Stephen Hobhouse. (London: Rockliff, 1948.)


LAW, William. Works Vol VIII (G. Robertson & J. Roberts, printers, 1852)


LAY MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND. Protestant Truths and Popish Errors: a Letter to the Author of "The Gareloch Heresy tried." occasioned by his Reply to the Lay Member of the Church of Scotland with a Postscript addressed to Rev. Dr. Hamilton, Strathblane. (Greenock: R.B. Lusk, 1830.)

LONDON EVANGELICAL MAGAZINE, ed. Exposure of Certain Errors put forth in "Notes and Recollections of Two Sermons by the Rev. Mr. Campbell of Row." (Greenock: John Hislop, 1830.)


MARSHALL, Andrew. The Death of Christ the Redemption of his People; or the Atonement regulated by the Divine Purpose. (Edinburgh: M. Paterson, 1842.)

MAURICE, Frederick, ed. Life of Frederick Denison Maurice. 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1884.)
MAURICE, Frederick Denison. The Doctrine of Sacrifice deduced from the Scriptures. (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1854.)

The Prophets & Kings of the Old Testament. 3rd ed. (Macmillan, 1871.)

Theological Essays. (Macmillan, 1853.)

A MEMBER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD. The Sinless Perfection of Christ's Human Nature Vindicated, being a Refutation of the Unscriptural Doctrine held by Some Popular Divines of the Present Day, Relative to the Humanity of the Son of God. 3rd. ed. (London: James Nisbet, 1833.)

MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD. Tracts for the Times. No. 73. Vol. 3. for 1835-6. (J. G. & F. Rivington, 1839.)


PASSAGES of Scripture and Remarks upon the Universal Pardon from the First Condemnation. (Glasgow: G. Gallie etc., 1830.)


[PAYNE], George. Remarks upon a Pamphlet entitled "The Doctrine of Universal Atonement Examined" ascribed to Rev. David Thomas of Mauchline. (Glasgow: James Maclehose, 1844.)

ROBERTSON, A. A Vindication of "The Religion of the Land" from Misrepresentation; and an Exposure of the Absurd Pretensions of the Gareloch Enthusiasts, in a Letter to Thomas Erskine, Esq., Advocate. (Edinburgh: William Whyte, 1830.)

ROBERTSON, Andrew. History of the Atonement Controversy in Connexion with the Secession Church. (Edinburgh: William Oliphant, 1846.)

ROSS, Alexander J. Memoir of Alexander Ewing. (Daldy, Isbister & Co., 1877.)

RUSHTON, William. A Defence of Particular Redemption, wherein the Doctrine of the Late Mr. Fuller, relative to the Atonement of Christ, is tried by the Word of God. (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1831.)

SMITH, John Pye. Four Discourses on the Sacrifice and Priesthood of Jesus Christ. 2nd ed. (London: Jackson and Walford, 1842.)

STEVEN, John. The Sinlessness of Jesus: being the Substance of some Discourses delivered at Salem Chapel on the Words - 'He knew no sin': to which he has annexed Animadversions on the Rev. E. Irving's Doctrine of our Lord's Humanity. (London: Nicols and Sons, 1830). p. 93-3.


THOMSON, Andrew. The Doctrine of Universal Pardon considered and refuted in a Series of Sermons with Notes, Critical and Expository. (Edinburgh: William Whyte, 1830.)

TOMLINE, George. A Refutation of Calvinism. 2nd ed. (London: T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1811.)


WARDLAW, Ralph. Discourses on the Nature and Extent of the Atonement of Christ. (Glasgow: James Maclehose, 1844.)

Discourses on the Principal Points of the Socinian Controversy. (Glasgow: A. Duncan, M.Ogle etc., 1814.)


SECONDARY SOURCES.

A. BOOKS.

ALEXANDER, William Lindsay. Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Ralph Wardlaw. (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1856.)

ANSELM. Cur Deus Homo. (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1909.)

ATHANASIUS. De Incarnatione Verbi Dei. (London: Religious Tract Society, [n.d.])


- 338 -
BARCLAY, Robert. *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity.* (Glasgow: R. Barclay Murdoch, 1886.)

BARTH, Karl. *Church Dogmatics.* (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark.)


BENHAM, Daniel. *An Attempt to Remove those Objections of Dr. Colenso which are contained in the Second Chapter of his Work, entitled "The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua.* (London: G. Norman, printer, 1862.)


BROSE, Olive J. *Frederick Denison Maurice: Rebellious Conformist.* (Ohio University Press, 1971.)


CAIRNS, David C. *Life and Times of Alexander Robertson MacEwen.* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1925.)


DALE, R.W. Christian Doctrine. (Hodder & Stoughton, 1907.)


DICTIONARY of National Biography. (Oxford University Press.)

DRUMMOND, A.L. The Kirk and the Continent. (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1956.)


FRANKS, R.S. The Work of Christ. (Thomas Nelson, 1962.)


GILLIS, Chester. A Question of Final Belief. (Macmillan, 1989.)


HANNA, William. Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers. (Edinburgh: Sutherland & Knox, 1851.)


HENDERSON, Henry F. Erskine of Linlathen. (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1899.)

-------------------- The Religious Controversies of Scotland. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1905.)

HIGHAM, F. Frederick Denison Maurice. (SCM, 1947.)

---------- Outlines of Theology. New ed. (T. Nelson, 1879.)

JANSEN, J.F. Calvin's Doctrine of the Work of Christ. (James Clarke, 1956.)


KENDALL, R.T. Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649. (OUP, 1979.)

---------- Some Nineteenth Century Scotsmen. (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1903.)

LANE, Laura M. The Life and Writings of Alexander Vinet. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1890.)


MACDONNELL, John Cotter. The Doctrine of the Atonement deduced from Scripture and vindicated from Misrepresentations and Objections. Donnellan Lectures 1875. (London: Rivingtons, 1878.)


MACKINTOSH, Robert. Historic Theories of Atonement with Comments. (Hodder & Stoughton, 1920.)

McINTYRE, J. The Shape of Christology. (SCM, 1966.)

McNAIR, Alexander. Scots Theology in the Eighteenth Century. (London: James Clarke, [1928]).


MONIFIETH ALMANAC, 1898. (Published by late David McRae, Postmaster at Monifieth.)

NEEDHAM, Nicholas R. Thomas Erskine of Linlathen: his Life and Teaching. (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1990.)

OLIPHANT, Mrs. Memoir of the Life of John Tulloch. 3rd. ed. (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1879.)

PFLEIDERER, O. The Development of Theology in Germany since Kant and its Progress in Great Britain since 1825. (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1890.)

RAMSEY, Ian T. Christian Discourse. (OUP, 1965.)

RIGG, James H. Modern Anglican Theology. 2nd ed. (London: Alexander Heylin, 1859.)

ROBERTSON, Andrew. History of the Atonement Controversy in Connection with the Secession Church. (Edinburgh: William Oliphant, 1846.)

ROBERTSON, F.W. Life and letters of Frederick W. Robertson. 2 vols. (London: Henry S. King, 1877.)


SCHAFF, Philip. The Creeds of the Evangelical Protestant Churches. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1877.)


SCOTT, Melville. Athanasius on the Atonement. (Stafford: J. & C. Mort, 1914.)
SELL, Alan P. F. The Great Debate: Calvinism, Arminianism and Salvation. (Worthing, West Sussex: H.E. Walter, 1982.)


SOELLE, Dorothee. Christ the Representative: an Essay in Theology after the 'Death of God.' (SCM, 1967.)


STANLEY, A.P. Lectures on the History of the Church of Scotland. (London: John Murray, 1872.)


STORR, V.F. The Development of English Theology in the Nineteenth Century 1800-1860. (Longmans, Green & Co., 1913.)

--------- The Problem of the Cross. 2nd. ed. (SCM, 1924.)


--------- Forgiveness and Reconciliation. (Macmillan, 1941.)

TOON, Peter. The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Non-Conformity 1689-1765. (The Olive Tree, 1967.)

TULLOCH, John. Movements of Religious Thought in Britain during the Nineteenth Century. (Leicester University Press, 1971.)


VIDLER, A.R. F.D. Maurice and Company. (SCM, 1966.)


WALKER, James. The Theology and Theologians of Scotland chiefly of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1872.)

WALLACE, R.S. Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life. (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1959.)


WRIGHT, S.R. Fathers of the Kirk: some Leaders of the Church of Scotland from the Reformation to the Reunion. (OUP, 1960.)

YOUNG, Frances. Sacrifice and the Death of Christ. (SCM, 1983.)


B. ARTICLES IN JOURNALS.


MACLEOD, Norman. "John MacLeod Campbell" in Good Words. May 1872.


STEPHEN, L. "The Broad Church" in Fraser's Magazine. March 1870.


VAUGHAN, D.J. "Scottish Influence upon English Theological Thought" in *The Contemporary Review*. Vol. XXXII.

WALLACE, R. "Church Tendencies in Scotland" in *Recess Studies*, ed. by Alexander Grant. (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1870.)


C. ESSAYS, ARTICLES, LECTURE ETC. ON THOMAS ERSKINE.


D. THESSES.


**E. BOOK REVIEWS.**

Reference has been made to articles and book reviews in the following periodicals:

- British and Foreign Evangelical Review.
- British Critic and Theological Review.
- Christian Examiner & Church of Ireland Magazine.
- Christian Observer.
- Congregational Magagazine.
- Congregationalist.
- Edinburgh Christian Instructor.
- Eclectic Review.
- Edinburgh Review.
- Expository Times.
- Evangelical Magazine.
- Fraser's Magazine.
- Friends Quarterly Examiner.
- Good Words.
- Messenger and Missionary Record of the Presbyterian Church in England.
- Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature.
- Morning Watch.
North British Review.

Spectator.

Weekly Review and Presbyterian Record.

Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine.

Witness

F. MANUSCRIPTS

Chalmers MS. New College Edinburgh.