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DAVID MCNAUGHTON

REPARATION AND ATONEMENT

The Christian doctrine of the Atonement has been interpreted in several ways. In *Responsibility and Atonement*,¹ Richard Swinburne offers us a version of the sacrificial account of Christ's redemptive work. This version claims that in the life and death of Jesus we have a gift of great and fitting value, which God himself has made available to us, and which we can in turn offer to God as reparation and penance for our sins. My paper has two main parts. In the first I shall argue that his account is conceptually incoherent; in the second that it is morally flawed. I then briefly suggest that the exemplary theory can capture, better than can the reparation theory, those features which Swinburne believes to be desirable in any account of the Atonement. I take Swinburne's account as my target because it is the best modern exposition of the theory, but my argument is intended to have wider significance.

Swinburne's account of the redemptive activity of God in Christ is rooted in an analysis of the concepts of guilt, atonement and forgiveness as they apply to mundane human transactions. In brief, this view holds that in doing wrong one acquires guilt, which is a bad state to be in. The removal of guilt normally requires action both by the wrongdoer and by his victim. The wrongdoer must, to some extent, atone for his crime and the victim must forgive. However, it is possible for the wrongdoer to remove guilt by his own actions alone, should the victim remain obdurate in repeated refusals to forgive despite full atonement. Atonement is an attempt to annul, as far as is possible, the bad consequences of the wrongdoing, which are of two kinds: first, the harm done to the victim; second, the morally reprehensible attitude towards the victim displayed in the wrongdoing.² There are four elements in atonement: repentance, apology, reparation and penance. By repenting and apologizing the wrongdoer distances himself as far as possible from the attitude displayed in his act. In making reparation he does what he can to repair the harm done, and in penance he gives something over and above strict reparation in 'token of his sorrow' (p. 84).

Since Christ's life and death are, on Swinburne's account, offered by us to

¹ R. G. Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989). All page references in this article are to this book.

² A wrongdoer often displays a hostile attitude to his victim, but he need not do so. There can be negligent wrongdoing in which I display indifference or lack of concern, rather than hostility, to the victim. I owe this point to Brian Smart.

God as reparation and penance for our sins, we need to examine his account of these two elements more closely. The best reparation, which may take the form of goods or services, is repair or restitution; that is restoring the *status quo ante*. If I can mend what I broke or replace what I lost then the victim's position at the end is, in that respect, indistinguishable from what it was before the wrong was committed. If that is not possible the wrongdoer must provide compensation, although in many cases there may be no precise way of calculating the amount. The full cost of reparation takes into account not only the original loss or harm, but also whatever cost and inconvenience flowed from that loss or harm. That element which, 'for want of a better term' (p. 81), Swinburne calls penance, also involves the giving of some good thing to the victim, over and above what is owed to him. The best penance 'is that which more than makes it up to you in the respect in which I harmed you ... because penance, to be good, must evince a concern that a particular harm was done which was done' (pp. 156-7). Thus I might, for example, buy you a better vase than the one I broke.

As Swinburne concedes, this is not the normal sense of penance. Standardly, the penitent performs a symbolic act of contrition, addressed to an audience (whether God alone or some wider community) whereby he, at some cost to himself, expresses his remorse. It need involve no direct benefit to the victim, or anyone else. Thus Samuel Johnson did public penance in Uttoxeter market place, for a wrong done to his father, who had since died. In so doing he did not seek to provide a benefit to his father. Nevertheless, the possibility of giving more than what is due to the person wronged, in token of our repentance, is clearly a genuine one – even if penance is not, perhaps, quite the right term to describe it. My main argument against the reparation theory will be that it does not make sense to claim that a sinner can offer Christ's life as a benefit to God which can serve as reparation for his sins. If this argument is sound then, *a fortiori*, the sinner cannot offer that life to God as penance, in Swinburne's sense. Since the same argument will serve against both claims, I shall concentrate on reparation in the remainder of the paper.

Swinburne claims that there are two elements standardly present in a wrong act: harm to the victim and the display of a reprehensible attitude to him. This raises the question of whether someone might wrong another without doing harm to him. Intuitively, there seem to be such cases; although any final determination would depend on a full discussion of the notoriously difficult concept of harm, which is beyond the scope of this paper. For example, I have wronged you if I deliberately or negligently exposed you to an unjustified risk, even if you emerged unscathed. In such a case, on Swinburne's account, apology and repentance would be in order, but reparation and penance would not be required since, as we say, no harm was done.

It is central to Swinburne's account that an act of reparation can be seen by both parties as a morally significant part of the wrongdoer's taking seriously the need to atone for the wrong done, and thus as an important step on the way to the removal of guilt. On the part of the wrongdoer, an attempt at reparation is a necessary component of sincere atonement: 'I remain guilty if I do not do what I can to remove the harm I have done you' (p. 82). On the part of the victim it is, for the sake of the wrongdoer and the victim's future relations with him, justifiable to withhold forgiveness until (some) reparation has been made. To forgive without sufficient atonement on the part of the wrongdoer would be to risk trivializing his offence, to treat him, and his offence, as being beneath notice. '[T]he victim can insist on substantial reparation, and sometimes it is good that he should do so... for that allows [the wrongdoer] to take seriously the harm that has been done' (p. 86).

On Swinburne's account, no-one can atone for the wrongs or sins of another. But that does not mean that others may not help him to atone. In particular, a third party may give the wrongdoer the means to make reparation if he lacks them. It is even possible, Swinburne claims, that the victim himself might provide the means whereby the wrongdoer makes reparation. These less standard cases are crucial to Swinburne, for he models two (complementary) versions of his account of the Atonement on them. I shall analyse them in rather more detail than he does but, before doing that, it will be useful to set out more formally the conditions that apply in a paradigm case of reparation. We can then see which conditions are not fulfilled in the non-standard cases, and what modifications need to be made to the analysis.

W makes reparation to V when

- (1) W has wronged V
- (2) V has been harmed as a result of W's wrongdoing
- (3) W provides V with a benefit in any or all of the following forms:
 - (a) money or goods which W owns
 - (b) services which W provides
 - (c) the services of a third person which W owns or has the right to dispose of as he wishes
- (4) W supplies these goods and/or services to V, at some time after W has wronged V, with the intention of restoring V's position to what it was before the harm was done, or compensating V for the harm which W has done him.

We should note that reparation typically involves the transfer of some good from W to V. It is costly for W because it involves his giving up some good. V, in consequence, obtains some good which, but for W's act of reparation, he would not have had.

It is because reparation and penance are, in the standard case, costly to the wrongdoer that they have the moral significance which Swinburne

attributes to them. Swinburne makes this very clear in the case of penance. '[B]y doing something which costs him time, effort, and money, [the penitent] constitutes that act as a meant and serious act. To give what we cannot too easily afford is always a serious act' (p. 84). Similarly, in the context of the ruptured relationship between the victim and the wrongdoer, the fact that the wrongdoer's act of reparation is costly to him makes it a distinct element in serious and sincere atonement, above and beyond repentance and apology. It is this fact which explains why it may sometimes be that the victim should insist on (some) reparation, even when he could easily afford to waive his right to it.

I turn now to the less standard cases, and begin with the more unusual of them, where the victim himself supplies the means whereby the wrongdoer makes reparation. Swinburne gives the example of a child who breaks his parent's window and cannot pay for it. The parent may give him the money to pay to replace the window 'and thereby make due reparation' (p. 149). The parent may refuse to accept the apology until the window is mended, in order to encourage the child to take his wrongdoing seriously.

It is important to be clear as to the precise nature of the child's act of reparation. Swinburne offers two possible versions of the story which could be interpreted in quite different ways. In one the child is given 'a cheque made payable to the glazier which he can then use to pay the glazier to put in the window' (p. 149). What act of reparation does the child perform in this case if he carries out the parent's wishes? He provides the parent a service in taking the cheque to the glazier and making the arrangements, rather than the parent having to do it himself. But the parent has not received *financial* reparation from the child. It is surely significant that, in this version of the story, the cheque is made out to the glazier. The child has only two options: to use it to pay the glazier or to make no use of it at all; he cannot put it to his own use. As far as the cost of paying the glazier is concerned, neither of conditions 3 or 4 in my definition is met and so no reparation has been made. The parent is financially no better off, and the child no worse off, than before the alleged act of reparation.

In the other possible version of the story the parent gives money to the child and the child pays for the window. Has the child made financial reparation to the parent? I think the answer depends on the manner in which the money is given. If the parent is simply giving the child money to pay the glazier, rather than a cheque, and if he instructs the child to take the money to the glazier, then the case is analogous to the case where a cheque is given – the child is not paying for the repair, the parent is. True, there is this difference, that in this case the child could steal the money rather than take it to the glazier; but that just underlines the fact that the money remains the parent's. Suppose, however, that the parent gives the money, perhaps in the form of weekly pocket money, to the child for the child to spend as he wishes,

and that the child then offers to pay for the window. Here there is financial reparation which is a convincing sign of genuine repentance on the part of the child. Conditions 3 and 4 are met. The victim can supply the means whereby the wrongdoer can make reparation if he genuinely transfers his ownership rights to the wrongdoer who then returns (some part of) the gift to the victim.

I turn now to the case where some third party (T) is involved in the provision of compensation or restitution to V. I begin with the case where W plays no role and T is not concerned with W's wishes; T is solely concerned with helping V who has been harmed by W's wrongdoing. Here T can help the victim by providing him with goods and/or services, with the intention of restoring the status quo or compensating him, in full or in part. Has T made reparation to V? We may have conflicting intuitions here. On the one hand, the root of reparation is repair. He that repairs or restores, on this construal, has thus made reparation. On the other hand, we may feel that to describe what is being done as reparation carries with it an assumption that the person who is compensating the victim is responsible for the harm; in which case one may prefer to describe T's act simply as one of restitution or compensation. Thus we have a Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, rather than a Reparations Board (though I have heard it argued that even this title is a misnomer). Fortunately, for the purposes of my argument, nothing hangs on this issue.³

We are mainly interested, however, in cases where W does play some part, cases where T could be said to assist W in making reparation. There seem to be various possible degrees to which W might be involved. (For simplicity, I restrict discussion to cases where W is in no position to make good the harm done, and T provides all the goods or services.)

- (1) W might seek out T and ask him to compensate V.
- (2) T might make an offer to W to provide compensation for V, provided that W wishes him to do so, and W might accept that offer.

W's involvement might, however, be even more minimal. T may propose to act, or have acted, to compensate V without W's being consulted. W might then, on hearing of this, express the wish to be associated with the deed, and T might agree. This case subdivides, depending on T's intentions.

- (3) T acted in the hope that W would wish to associate himself.
- (4) At the time of acting, T did not care whether W would later wish to associate himself or not.

How should we describe the roles played by T and W respectively in each of these four cases? In (1) and (2) T could be described as acting, in part,

³ If we take the view that a third party can provide reparation to the victim we can express this in terms of our definition by substituting 'T' for 'W' in all its occurrences in clause 3 and in its first occurrence in clause 4.

as W's agent, for he is only acting because W has requested him to do so or, at least, because W wishes it. Here, I suggest, T is making reparation to V (or, at least, compensating V) *on W's behalf*. In (4) T is clearly not making reparation on W's behalf, for W's wishes played no place in his decision to act. In (3), however, T might be said to be prospectively acting on W's behalf, as it were, since the thought that W might later associate himself with his act plays a role in his decision to act.

Is W making reparation to V in any of these cases and, if so, in what respect? In the first two cases W's wishes play a causally crucial role, for whether T acts depends on his asking T, or on his accepting T's offer to act. Here it seems reasonable to say that W does play a part in making reparation to V. As in the example of paying for the broken window it is important, however, to determine in what, exactly, his reparation consists. Does he provide restitution or compensation to V? No, T does that, for the goods or services provided are his. W's reparative role is restricted to asking T to compensate V, or accepting T's offer to do so. He plays a part in setting the process of compensation in motion, but that is not to say that he compensates V himself. In the last two cases, where T acts independently of W's wishes, W can do no more than associate himself with the reparation; he makes no reparation himself. All these cases are to be contrasted with one where T, for whatever reason, freely gives money, goods or services to W to do with as he wishes. If W uses what he has been given to compensate V then, as in the corresponding version of the broken window case, it is W himself who alone makes reparation to V, although he could not have done it without T's help.

I turn now to the use to which Swinburne wishes to put these examples of assisted reparation in his account of the Atonement. Each of us has sinned by failing in his duty to God to obey His commands and live a good life. Each of us, therefore, requires God's forgiveness and thus needs to atone for his sins. While there would have been nothing wrong in God forgiving those who sincerely repent and apologize, without any requirement of reparation, it is good that we do try to make reparation and good that God expects this much from us before forgiving us. As we have seen, in expecting reparation God is taking our sins seriously and giving us a chance to make (partial) repayment. It is hard, however, for sinful humans, who are already deeply indebted to God (who gave us everything we have) to find any adequate means even of partial reparation. 'Only when I owe you nothing can I give you something' (p. 157). God however offers us just such a means in the life and death of Christ who, being God, owed God nothing. We can offer up to God this sacrifice, of 'a lived life of obedience to God, and a laid-down life on the Cross' (p. 152) in reparation and penance for our sins.

Let me briefly deal with one possible objection to this account, before considering whether Swinburne has described a situation in which the sinner can be seen as making reparation to God. We saw earlier that there might

be cases where we could wrong someone without harming them. This would obviously be the case if there were a being to whom we owed duties, but whom we could not harm. It might appear that God is just such a being. There are two reasons for claiming that God cannot be harmed. First, whereas harm to humans usually involves physical injury or a loss of life, liberty or possessions, none of these misfortunes can happen to God. Second, God is a perfect being. It is arguable, however, that suffering loss or harm is incompatible with remaining perfect, since a being who has lost some good is in a worse state than before the loss, and so can no longer be perfect. If God cannot be harmed then the second clause of my definition of reparation does not apply and reparation is inappropriate. I am inclined to think that these objections can be met. To the first objection it can be replied that these are not the only ways in which someone can be harmed. I mention two possible ways in which our sins and disobedience may be said to harm God. First, they lead to the frustration (at least for a while) of His projects. Second, our sinfulness, and the unnecessary suffering it causes, might be thought to cause Him to suffer. To the second objection we can respond by pointing out that being harmed in these ways is compatible with His retaining His traditional perfections – omnipotence, omniscience, etc. If this reply is unsatisfactory, there is an alternative response open to the theist. He can deny my suggestion that someone can be wronged without being harmed by tying the two together conceptually and claiming that to be wronged is itself a way of being harmed, for which reparation is appropriate.

My summary of Swinburne's account of the Atonement makes it clear that what he has in mind is a version of two-party assisted reparation, of which the glazier case was supposed to provide an example. We have already seen that such cases are possible, if what is offered in reparation by the wrongdoer now belongs to him because it has been given to him by the victim. Can we, however, make sense of the claim that God has given us the life of Christ in a manner which allows us to offer it back to Him as reparation?

God can certainly be understood to have given us the gift of the life of Jesus in the sense that God freely chose to become man in Christ and thereby offered us access to the truths that he taught and the inspiration that his life affords. In this sense, however, the gift of Christ's life serves only as a foundation for an exemplary and not a distinctively reparatory account of the atonement. Reparation by the wrongdoer in the two-party case consists, as we have seen, in the offer of goods or services, which are at the disposal of the wrongdoer, to the person who has been wronged. But God's gift of Jesus is not a gift of property, and so it is hard to see how Jesus' good deeds and wise words are at our disposal to offer back to God. They cannot be transferred from one owner to another, in the way that money or real estate can be.

It might be objected that Jesus' life is God's, to dispose of as He wishes, because it is a life of service dedicated to God. But, on this understanding of what it means to say that Christ's life is (peculiarly) God's, it makes no sense to suppose that God might give it to sinners to return to Him or not as they choose. In the sense in which a life belongs to the person to whose service it is dedicated it remains that person's and cannot be made over to others; i.e. dedicated to someone else.

Nor will it help to appeal to the fact that Jesus' deeds are God's deeds because Jesus is God incarnate, for in the sense in which each person's deeds are his own it does not make sense for him to give them to others or for others to offer them back to him. We seem to have reached an impasse. What we are apparently offered in Swinburne's account of our act of supposed reparation is a 'transaction' in which nothing is transacted. Nothing is given up by the sinner and nothing is received by God.

There is, moreover, a further difficulty in this account. In the standard case, if a wrongdoer makes reparation to the person wronged by offering him some particular benefit then that benefit has been handed over to the person wronged and is thus no longer available to be offered again in reparation for another wrong committed either by the wrongdoer himself or by another person. Yet, on this account of the Atonement, Christ's life is repeatedly available, to be offered up by each new sinner, as reparation for his sins. It is as if the same cheque were to be made repeatedly available to pay fresh debts.

Before considering a possible way out of these difficulties, let me turn to a variant account of the Atonement which Swinburne offers. The version I have described so far is based on the two-person model of assisted reparation in which God, as the person wronged, Himself offers us the means of reparation. That is, I think, Swinburne's main account. But, as he points out, how we describe the matter will depend on our understanding of the Trinity. Insofar as Christ is God Himself then the version I have just criticized is the correct one; there are just two participants, God and the penitent. But insofar as Christ is a distinct being from God we can present an account which is closer to that in which a third person pays compensation or makes reparation on our behalf. (In offering both accounts, Swinburne hopes to show that a reparative theory of the atonement is not dependent for its coherence on any particular understanding of the Trinity.) On this version, Christ gives 'the most valuable thing he has – his life... as a present to God, whose benefits will flow to others' (p. 152). He gives it 'for the purpose of removing our sin' (p. 154) but we cannot 'gain the benefit of forgiveness from it until we associate ourselves with it' (p. 153).

Of the four three-person cases of assisted reparation that we discussed this account seems best to fit the third, though we should note a disanalogy between it and the case I was discussing there, which might be thought to

weaken the claim that Christ can be seen as potentially making reparation on our behalf. In the case of the Atonement, there is a reversal of the normal temporal order of reparation. Standardly, the wrong comes first, and the reparation after, just as the crime precedes the punishment. For those who live in the era after Christ's death, at any rate, that order is reversed. The gift of Christ's life to God precedes the sins for which it is meant to atone. This disanalogy may not, however, be fatal to the theory. It is true that one cannot make reparation to, or compensate, someone until he has suffered a wrong which involved him in a loss. But it seems possible that T, foreseeing that it is likely that W will wrong V, might provide a benefit to V, with the intention that it should compensate V for the anticipated harm done to him by W. Only after W has in fact committed the wrong will T's act of benefiting V become an act of compensating him, and only after W has associated himself with T's act will it be the case that T actually, and not just potentially, acted on W's behalf.

If this account of the Atonement fits the third of the three-person cases I discussed then, according to my analysis, it may be acceptable to describe Christ as making reparation on our behalf. But this will not help Swinburne's reparative account of the Atonement. For what is crucial for Swinburne's account is that we should be able to describe the sinner, in associating himself with Christ's deeds, as himself making reparation. Others cannot make my atonement for me; only I can do that. I have to make reparation myself, in order for it to make a contribution to the removal of my guilt. As I have argued, however, to associate oneself with an act of reparation is not to make reparation oneself. It is a sign of genuine repentance, but not itself a reparative act. I conclude that, in his book, Swinburne has not offered an account in which the sinner can be seen as making reparation through Christ's life.

In response to earlier versions of these objections, Swinburne has offered, in private correspondence, an illuminating elaboration and development of the account he offered in his book.⁴ What he offers, to meet my central objection, is an account designed to show how it is possible for good deeds to be owned, and for the benefits accruing from them to be transferred, in a way that will make sense of a reparative account of the Atonement. After summarizing his view I shall state why, in my opinion, this new formulation fails to meet the difficulties I have raised.

The initial point to make is that deeds can be owned, not in the way that real estate is owned, but in the sense that performing such deeds can give one certain rights, as when inventing a new drug or writing a book gives you patent rights or copyright. These rights can then be transferred to another.

⁴ I am most grateful to him both for the points that follow and for kind permission to reproduce them here. I have tried to put the case in my own words as far as possible but, inevitably, my wording is often very close to his.

Consider the following example, which brings us close to issues in the Atonement.⁵ I decide to raise money for my favourite good cause by finding people who will sponsor me to dig old people's gardens. Unfortunately, I fall ill and someone else offers to do the digging for me. The sponsors agree that they will pay up if she digs instead of me. By her benevolent deed I gain the right to claim the money from the sponsors. So I own her good deed in the sense that I own rights which accrue from it. Suppose, however, that my benefactor digs the gardens, but I omit to collect the sponsorship money. Her benevolent deed has been wasted. If I claim the money then I benefit her as well as the good cause, for I ensure that her efforts were not in vain.

The broken window case can also be amended to make a similar point. Suppose that the parent does not give the child an ordinary cheque but a cheque certified by the bank and made out to the glazier, the cost of which is taken from the parent's account at the time the cheque is made out. The money will be lost to the parent, and will not go to repairing the window, unless the child hands it over to the glazier. The child thus has the power to use, or to fail to use, the good deed, which makes it possible for him, if he chooses, to make reparation to the parent by conferring the benefit of bringing the parent's money back into currency.

We can now make use of these points in explicating the Atonement. As we have seen, God has given us the gift of life but we have failed to live the lives which we ought to have lived, and we are in no position to make reparation from our position of indebtedness. God agrees to accept as reparation a sinless human life, provided that it is lived with the intention of making reparation for the sins of others. God gives the life to us in the sense that he gives us the right to claim the benefits that flow from it, as if we had lived that life ourselves. Each of us is now faced with a choice: he can either use Christ's life for the purpose for which it was given, in which case both God and Christ are benefited, or he can fail to use it and waste Christ's sacrifice. Moreover, this form of benefit is peculiarly appropriate, since the best reparation for a gift ill-used is a gift well-used.

This account attempts to meet my objection by offering not only a sense in which God can give us the gift of Christ's life but also a sense in which we can give it back to God and thus provide genuine reparation by providing Him with a benefit which He would not otherwise receive. Swinburne has shown that, if a gift which is given for a specific good purpose is well used, then its good use bestows a benefit on the giver; similarly, failure to use it harms him by wasting his effort and sacrifice. Moreover, the analogy of the sponsored dig explains how Christ's life can be offered again and again by each repentant sinner in turn. Clearly, the same deed can be offered to many sponsors to claim a donation, but it would also be possible for a sponsor to

⁵ I have altered his example slightly in order, I hope, to make the connection with the Atonement even closer.

accept one benevolently substituted deed as standing in for the deeds of many, so that each of those who had failed to perform the sponsored deed would gain the right to claim the benefit from the sponsor in virtue of the one substituted act.

Although this account is neat and ingenious it is, I shall argue, unsatisfactory. To show this, we need to get quite clear as to who is offering what to whom. Here it is instructive to compare this account of the Atonement with the example of the sponsored dig. First, the sinner benefits, since he has been given the right, because of Christ's benevolent substitution, to claim forgiveness of his sins and to be reconciled with God. Contrast this with the case of the sponsored dig; here it is my favourite charity, rather than I, that receives the proceeds from the sponsors, though I benefit indirectly because a charity I care about is benefited. Second, as in the sponsored dig, my benefactor, who is in this case Christ, is benefited since his sacrifice was not in vain. This is not to say, of course, that if I, and indeed every other sinner, foolishly reject the offer, that his life will have been worthless. Christ achieved many good things while on earth and lived a morally perfect life. Our refusal to take advantage of his sacrifice would mean, however, that he achieved less good than he hoped to do. Indeed, on this account, such a refusal would mean that his primary mission would have been frustrated. As I have argued, the third and crucial issue is whether, in claiming the right won for him by Christ, the sinner is conferring some benefit upon God, which would not otherwise be conferred, and which can be regarded as the sinner's reparative contribution.

As I insisted in my earlier objection, we must not say that the benefit that we are offering to God is Christ's perfect life, a benefit which He would not otherwise receive. For, as I have argued, Christ's life is not ours to give or withhold as a benefit.⁶ What we can do, as we have just seen, is to make Christ's life have a good consequence which it would not otherwise have, by ensuring that his sacrifice was not in vain. And that good consequence can, as we shall shortly see, also be viewed as benefiting God. This point may be obscured if we fail to distinguish between what the sinner is offering to God as the token by which he claims his right to forgiveness and the benefit which he is offering to God as reparation. The sinner offers the whole of Christ's life, with all its good deeds, to God as the token in virtue of which he claims forgiveness, but that does not mean that God is receiving from the sinner all Christ's life as a benefit. (In the sponsored dig I offer the good deeds of the

⁶ I stress this in the context of Swinburne's theory because he does seem committed to the view I have rejected. In his book he says we can offer Christ's life to God 'as the life we ought to have led (our substitute reparation and penance)' (p. 154; see also the top of p. 155). More clearly, perhaps, in his letter to me he suggests that 'God is benefited by the living of a good human life substituted for a bad one'. These ways of putting the matter may well rest on confusing the two kinds of offering – the offering of a token to claim a right and the offering of a benefit – which I am trying to keep separate in this paragraph.

substitute to the sponsors to claim my reward. But that does not mean that the sponsors are receiving those good deeds from me as a benefit which would not otherwise accrue to them.) I cannot offer Christ's morally perfect life to God as a benefit, for he has already lived it, and nothing I do can subtract from it. (My substitute in the charity dig has already done the good deeds of digging the gardens; that is a benefit I have neither the power of withholding or bestowing.)

How can God be benefited by the sinner ensuring that Christ's sacrifice was not in vain? The precise nature of the answer depends on whether we take the two-person or the three-person case of assisted reparation as our model. As I, following Swinburne, have told the story it best fits the three-person case. But it can be turned into a two-person version, in which God Himself lives for us, in Christ, the life we failed to live, and promises to forgive us if we claim the right He has earned on our behalf. In the two-person version the sinner, in benefiting Christ by not wasting his sacrifice, thereby necessarily benefits God, for it is God Himself who, in Christ, made the sacrifice.

In the three-person version things are only a little more complicated. We have already seen that, where God has left the fulfilment of His purposes (at least partially) in the hands of others, then He can be harmed by having those purposes frustrated and benefited by having them fulfilled. One of God's aims is that each of us should live morally good lives and achieve as much good in the world as we can. If my claiming my right means that (part of) Christ's sacrifice was not wasted and that his life achieved more good than it would otherwise have done then my claiming my right promotes that particular purpose of God's and so benefits him. We can now see that the other benefit which flows from my claiming my right, the benefit to me of being forgiven, could be thought of as being also of benefit to God. Since another of His purposes is that humans should atone for their sins and be reconciled to Him then my acceptance promotes that purpose also; and this holds, I believe, whether we are considering the two-person or the three-person version of the story. So Swinburne has shown that the sinner's act of claiming his right does confer benefits upon God, benefits which would not otherwise have been conferred. What I shall now argue, however, is that the sinner cannot be seen, in bestowing either of these benefits, as thereby making an act of reparation to God.

The person who has been wronged has the right, as we have seen, to withhold forgiveness until (some) reparation has been made. The wrongdoer, in his turn, seeks to atone for his wrong and to attain the forgiveness of, and reconciliation with, the wronged person by offering reparation. Now there can be cases, of which the sinner's relation to God is one example, where the forgiveness of the wrongdoer would constitute a benefit not only to the wrongdoer but also to the person wronged, who wishes to forgive the

wrongdoer and to be reconciled to him. But that benefit is not one which the wrongdoer can offer in reparation. The person wronged has made forgiveness conditional on the offering of some benefit in reparation; he cannot, therefore, coherently accept as a fulfilment of that condition, a benefit which flows from his forgiving the wrongdoer, since his forgiveness of the wrongdoer is itself to be a consequence of that condition being fulfilled. The suggestion, in the case that interests us, that I should offer to God, as reparation in consequence of which He will forgive me, the benefit of His forgiving me is hopelessly circular.

If I cannot offer to God, as reparation, the benefits that flow to Him from my being forgiven, can I offer in reparation the benefits that flow to Him from Christ's sacrifice not being wasted? The same circularity afflicts this suggestion as the first. How is Christ's life made better by my claiming the right he has won for me? By my being forgiven, which fulfils his purpose in making the sacrifice in the first place. For, given that Christ made the sacrifice in order that I might be forgiven, then the benefit that accrues to him, and thus to God, is a direct and necessary consequence of my being forgiven. Since it is a benefit which is an immediate consequence of my being forgiven, it cannot, without circularity, be offered by me in reparation, as a consequence of which I will be forgiven.

So far I have been trying to show that the reparation theory of the Atonement is not coherent. But this is not the only hurdle a theory of the Atonement must surmount. To be acceptable, such a theory must have explanatory power; we must be able to see why God would have provided for our redemption in this particular way. It can only do this if it makes moral sense. I now wish to argue that, even if the kind of theory we have been examining is coherent, there are several problems with its moral structure which cast severe doubt on its moral adequacy. The disanalogies between standard cases of reparation and the very unusual case we are concerned with here evacuate the theory of its moral point. What the theory has to do is to show why God should have chosen to require reparation, as well as repentance and apology, from us when He knew we could not provide it, so that He, in Christ, would have to make the sacrifice Himself.

We saw earlier that it may be right for a person who has been wronged to insist on reparation because he does not wish to trivialize the wrong; he wishes the wrongdoer to take it seriously. As we also saw, in the paradigm case of reparation this is a reasonable goal, since the wrongdoer supplies the reparation personally and at some, perhaps considerable, cost to himself. It is the extra cost to him, over and above repentance and apology, that betokens the seriousness with which he is trying to put things right and work off his guilt. But in the case where the sinner claims his right to forgiveness as a result of Christ's reparative work, what does it cost the sinner, over and above what is already involved in genuine repentance and apology? Nothing

whatever. He simply has to associate himself with a deed already done. But associating oneself with a sacrifice that has already been made, though good, is not an act that carries much moral weight, over and above what is already involved in repentance and apology. It certainly does not carry the moral weight that a sacrifice on the part of the sinner carries. But if it does not carry the moral weight that reparation in the standard case carries, then there is no reason for God to require it, especially in view of what it costs in the life of Christ, and so the theory fails to give a satisfying explanation of God's requiring it.

The proponent of the reparation theory may reply that, though giving the gift to God involves no cost to the sinner, yet it is a costly gift, and thus in giving it, the sinner shows that he takes the sin seriously. But this point does not seem to advance matters. The *giving* of a costly gift, which someone else has paid for, in itself reveals nothing about the seriousness or otherwise of the giver's attitude to his sin. Since it costs nothing to give it may be given as casually as can an empty apology, and with as little meaning.

Alternatively, the reparation theorist may suggest that associating himself with Christ's life does involve the sinner in a considerable extra cost, for it involves a commitment to live a life as like Christ's as possible, with all that that involves. It does involve such a commitment, but it is a mistake to think that this commitment is a cost over and above that already involved in repentance and apology. To think otherwise is to ignore the commitment to reform, which is built into genuine repentance.⁷ That commitment is especially far-reaching in the case of sin, where one's whole life has been misused and must be changed. So the very considerable cost of attempting complete reformation is already present in the act of repentance which, to be sincere, must involve a determination to do everything possible to live the sort of life God wishes us to live, namely the sort of life Christ lived on earth.⁸

This brings me to a second disanalogy between an ordinary attempt to atone for wrongdoing and the case of atoning for sin. In the ordinary case, where I have committed some specific wrong to another human, we may feel that reparation is required because to repent and apologize is not, after all, to do so very much. Failure to make reparation would normally be an indication of not wishing, sufficiently seriously, to atone for my wrong. If we fail to make unaided reparation to God it is not, however, because we are doing so very little, and so not taking our sins seriously enough, but because we owe Him so much, so that whatever we do we shall not escape from indebtedness. It is unclear, indeed, that the genuine penitent could take his sins more seriously than he already has in apologising and dedicating his

⁷ As Swinburne notes on pp. 82f.

⁸ I am talking only of those who have heard the Gospel, believe it, and repent. Those who repent without having heard it are, of course, in no position either to follow Christ's example or to offer Christ as reparation in addition to repentance and apology. I suggest, at the end of the paper, that full repentance may only be possible for those who accept Christ.

future life to God's service. God does not need to give us the opportunity to make reparation as well in order for us to be able to take our sin seriously.

The reparation theorist might concede this point, but still maintain that the demand for reparation makes moral sense because we are thereby enabled, through Christ's sacrifice, to confer a considerable benefit on God that we could not otherwise have conferred. So we are enabled to do a service not otherwise in our power. This defence also fails. For there can be cases where someone enables us to confer a benefit we would not otherwise have been able to confer and yet his action is, overall, morally pointless. One such case is intentional unnecessary sacrifice. If someone seeks to achieve an end by making a considerable sacrifice, when that end could have been achieved just as well without that sacrifice, then that sacrifice was unnecessary, even if it was not in vain because it did achieve the good end. Swinburne holds that God did not have to demand reparation, and so did not have to make it the case that someone would have to make a sacrifice if sinners were to be forgiven. It is true that, once He had imposed that requirement, a benefit would flow from sinners responding to the sacrifice. But it would have been pointless to impose that requirement just so that there could be the benefit that flows from a used sacrifice, if He could have achieved just the same end without it. Once it has been accepted that we have shown all the moral seriousness about atoning that we can in sincerely repenting, apologising and trying to reform, then the sacrifice is pointless.

So far my argument has been entirely negative. I want to end by briefly suggesting that the exemplary theory of the Atonement, which Swinburne regards as inadequate, can incorporate the central features which he thinks desirable in any account of the Atonement, features which he tried to capture, unsuccessfully, in the reparation theory.

The reparation theory of the Atonement is one of a number of accounts which are sometimes called 'objective transaction' theories, in which Christ's life and death make an 'objective contribution to removing our guilt which we ourselves were in no position to make' (p. 162). Other theories of this kind include the penal substitution, ransom, and victory over evil theories. They stand in contrast to the exemplary theory of the atonement in which 'Christ's life and death work to remove our sins by inspiring us to penitence and good acts' (p. 162). Swinburne rightly rejects other objective transaction accounts on the grounds that each relies on an inadequate moral outlook, which undermines their explanatory power. I have been arguing, in the second part of this paper, that the reparation theory labours under similar difficulties. We are left, therefore, with the exemplary theory.

I take it that, for Swinburne, any satisfactory account of the Atonement should have at least these two features. Firstly, it should show how Christ's life and death make an objective contribution to removing our guilt and, secondly, how that contribution enables us to take our sins seriously in a way

which helps us to atone. Taking our sins seriously involves at least two elements. The first is realizing the full depth and consequences of our sin and the second is doing whatever we can to remove those consequences. The reparation theory concentrates on the second of these; the exemplary theory can stress the first, as a means to the second. The exemplary theory can not only stress the inspirational power of Christ's life but also show that it brings home to us the seriousness of our sin. Consider again the example of the parent who gives the child the cheque to pay the glazier to mend the window. I have argued that we misconstrue the moral point if we attempt to see this as the parent helping the child to make financial reparation. But the act can have a moral point nonetheless. The parent is bringing home to the child the serious consequences of his wrongdoing. In making the child his agent by giving him the cheque the parent is demonstrating to the child, in a vivid and memorable way, that windows are valuable and that there is a cost to be borne in repairing them. Similarly, Christ's death can be seen as showing the believer, in the most vivid way imaginable, the costs of human sin. I have suggested that we can see God as suffering as a result of human sin. I further suggest that, in the incarnation, this fact is made luminously clear. In meditating on Christ's passion, as part of his act of repentance, the Christian is forcefully reminded that his sin hurts not only humans but also God.

It may seem more difficult, however, for the exemplary theory to allow that Christ's life and death make an objective contribution to the removal of our guilt, one which we are in no position to make. Surely the essence of an exemplary theory is that Christ only provides the example; we have to do all the atoning. But this is to ignore the fact that the life and death of Christ can make an objective contribution to removing our guilt by giving us a capacity for repentance and reformation which we could not acquire unaided. We can only fully repent of our sins, and thus be fully forgiven and reconciled to God, if we are truly aware of just what sins we have committed. Part of our difficulty in seeking forgiveness may be that we do not properly realise the moral nature of many of our acts. It is arguable that we can never, by natural reason, become fully aware of what a human life of perfect love would be like, and thus of just what kind of life God requires us to lead. We need the revelation of God in Christ in order to realise the complete nature of the life to which we are called. If that realization is necessary for full repentance and reconciliation, then we could not be fully forgiven were it not for Christ's redemptive life.⁹

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