CHRISTUS VICTOR REVISITED. A STUDY IN METAPHOR AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF MEANING[1]

I

IT is now just over fifty years since Gustav Aulén propounded his thesis that what he called the classic theory of the atonement had been obscured, if not obliterated, by generations of Latin legalism. The notion of satisfaction, introduced into Western theology by Tertullian and Cyprian (Aulén, 81 f.) not only seriously misconstrued one of Christianity's central doctrines, but laid open the way for the critique of Christianity by the representatives of the Enlightenment and their successors. What Aulén calls the Latin doctrine is legalistic, rationalistic, and blind to the teachings of the Fathers, which it rejects for inadequate reasons. While his study is chiefly historical rather than systematic, there is no doubt that Aulén wished to commend as well as to describe the classic theory. In a metaphor used by the proponents of authentic early music, he wished to clean the generations' encrustations of dirt off the picture and leave the original with its bright colours revealed.

There are, in *Christus Victor*, two summary statements of the 'classic' theory:

> This type of view may be described provisionally as the 'dramatic'. Its central theme is the idea of the Atonement as a Divine conflict and victory; Christ—Christus Victor—fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the 'tyrants' under which mankind is in bondage and suffering, and in Him God reconciles the world to himself (p. 4).

The provisional description is confirmed and expanded in similar terms later in the book:

> God in Christ overcomes the hostile powers which hold man in bondage. At the same time these hostile powers are also the executants of God's will. The patristic theology is dualistic, but it is not an absolute Dualism. The deliverance of man from the power of death and the devil is at the same time his deliverance from God's judgment. God is reconciled by His own act in reconciling the world to himself (p. 59).

The pattern is quite clear. On the cross of Christ a divine victory takes place, a victory over powers described in terms we should probably call mythological—more of that later—but which are

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never outside the divine ordering. It is God who dispatches the four horses of Rev. vi to do their destructive work, and yet they are powers which the Lamb with the marks of slaughter upon him has conquered. Clearly, Aulén has captured some aspects of the biblical understanding of the cross; otherwise it seems unlikely that so apparently improbable a thesis would have caught the theological imagination in the way that it did and still does. But it is with the inadequacy of the book that I wish to begin, with a view to developing some of the positive possibilities inherent in its central claim. By inadequacy, I do not mean Aulén's widely criticized oversimplification of the Western tradition in general and Anselm in particular, but the problems inherent in one of the reasons he gives for comparing his theory favourably with its main rivals. Both the Latin doctrine and the liberal reaction to it are, he holds, rational: the former in explaining how the divine love and the divine justice can be reconciled, the latter in smoothing away oppositions (p. 156). But: 'When theology sets itself to seek for fully rational explanations of all things, it is only too evident that it must set aside the classic idea, with all its contradictions, as a crude and primitive stage in the attempt to express truth . . .' (p. 157). I would agree that rationalism is an inadequate orientation towards the mysteries of our universe, particularly those concerned with the living of life under God. But does it follow, as Aulén seems to suppose, that the classic theory is to be preferred simply, largely, or even partly, because it contains contradictions? The main task Aulén bequeaths the theologian is, therefore, an engagement with the question of rationality. Is it possible to give some rational account of the way things are without either succumbing to rationalism and so *explaining away* pervasive features of human life or in a positivist manner simply throwing paradox in the face of the reader? If theology is concerned with truth, it cannot evade the question of rationality; but how may it do so without rationalizing away recalcitrant features of the human condition like those noticed by Aulén? The answer has something to do with the nature of metaphor and the way in which it conveys truth.

The rest of the paper will, therefore, take the following form. First, there will be a dogmatic, though fairly well supported, account of the nature of metaphor and how by its means we express truth. Then there will be an examination of the two families of metaphor with which we are here concerned, namely the use of the word *victory* in connection with Jesus and the use of the conceptuality of the demonic in order to express the nature of that which he is said to have conquered. Finally will come an

attempt to bring together aspects of the theology of atonement and of the philosophy of language with which we have been concerned.

II

The trouble with metaphor is not its existence—for scarcely a paragraph can be written in any form of literature without its employment (Goodman, p. 80)—but the view of it held by the man in the anorak—he who, according to recent correspondence in *The Times*, shares the outlook of Mr. Cupitt. This is that metaphor belongs in the realm to which it was consigned for many centuries, of rhetoric. Metaphor, it is widely believed, performs the function of ornament, enhancing poetry and obscuring the true views of politicians by a cover of imagery and exaggeration. Therefore, when one uses metaphor he or she is not telling the plain truth, for that, it is widely believed, consists in literal statement only. Do we not often hear the expression 'the literal truth'? The route then lies open to an equation of metaphor with myth, so that when Christ is supposed to have overcome the principalities and powers he cannot be supposed to have *really* done anything, except perhaps some kind of personal or individual overcoming of temptation, fear, and the rest. (Later I shall hope to open a breach between metaphor and myth.)

But if there is a consensus among philosophers who have treated the subject recently—and there very nearly is—it is that the view of metaphor as mere ornament is disastrously wrong.

1. Even in the case of poetry, which is of all language the most easily, if wrongly, conceived to be mere effusions of the mythologizing imagination, it is far from the case that metaphor simply functions as ornament. It was the view of Samuel Taylor Coleridge that poetry is 'a reproportioning of the human mind to correspond with the Truth. But this is only true of some poetry, great poetry; it proportions the mind's activity, so that it accords with reality itself' (Hardy, p. 18). What is true of great poetry is also true of metaphor within poetry according to Paul Ricoeur, quoting Goodman to the effect that 'in aesthetic experience the emotions function cognitively' (p. 231). Poetic metaphor is a means of expressing truth aesthetically and emotionally.

2. The other side of the case is provided by the fact that metaphor is now understood to operate centrally in disciplines which we are accustomed to understand as models of cognitive respectability. Speaking of their use in science, Mary Hesse writes: 'Acceptance of the view that metaphors are meant to be intelligible implies rejection of all views that make metaphor a wholly non-cognitive, subjective, emotive or stylistic use of language' (p. 164).

The fact is that we cannot discover anything new without new forms of conception, and they can only be developed by changing the uses of words, which will usually, if not universally, require metaphor.

What, then, is a metaphor? Only the most general definition is possible, for a number of reasons. The first is that metaphor is such a pervasive feature of language that a tight definition would exclude so many respectable instances that it would be self-defeating. The second is that this paper is designed to show how a particular family of metaphors can be construed as opening windows upon reality. The justification of the language will consist in its successful usage, not in making it fit into an a priori theoretical scheme. We require here simply a general definition as a procedural or heuristic device, and therefore begin with Aristotle's still much-quoted definition.

Metaphor is the application of an alien name by transference

μεταφορὰ δέ ἐστιν ὀνόματος ἀλλοτρίου ἐπιφορὰ . . .

(*Poet.* 1457 b 7–8)

Nelson Goodman has described metaphor in a number of vividly metaphorical terms which expand the basic point: it is 'teaching an old word new tricks' (p. 69) or 'a calculated category mistake' (p. 73) or 'an affair between a predicate with a past and an object that yields while protesting' (p. 69). The point is clear enough, at least as making plausible the working hypothesis of this paper. Only one qualification requires to be made here, and it is one which makes the matter more complex. Metaphor is not merely a matter of changing the meaning of a word. A metaphor operates as part of a sentence, and it functions within that sentence as part of a dynamic process of interaction between speech and reality. It is a word used in a new or unusual way in human *discourse* (see Ricoeur, p. 291).

Once again, it is the cognitive function of metaphor that is here being stressed, and that leads into another important point. If we are only able to express the truth about our world in language that is borrowed and altered, there can be no simple conception of the fit between words and the world, as is supposed, for example, in empiricist verification theory. This means that we cannot neatly divide descriptive words into two, those that express their meaning literally and the rest, the former mirroring or picturing the world directly, the latter failing to come into any contact at all. Such a division implies a static view of language, and is quite unable to deal with the bewildering rapidity with which words which begin as metaphors become literal and, indeed, vice versa. There are, of course, literal and metaphorical uses of words, but which is which can only be decided by context and usage (Ricoeur, pp. 291 f.).

An equal and opposite view of language is also excluded by the fact of the successful use of metaphor in describing the world, and that is 'hard' or extreme relativism. Such a view holds that we cannot establish the cognitive propriety of any descriptive terms, except by reference to the conventions or stipulations of our immediate cultural environment. In that case, the distinction between literal and metaphorical speech will be simply a matter of arbitrary convention. I believe this view to be untenable in view of such phenomena as the successful practice of translation and the employment of metaphor to express the truth of the way things are, for example, in the once metaphorical use of the word *field* in modern physics.

Nevertheless, it does seem to be true that the distinction between the literal and metaphorical use of terms is bound up with usage and convention. In the first place, if we are to avoid a view that attributes privileged access to the world to some words and not to others, we must agree with Ricoeur that the distinction between literal and metaphorical is a matter of usage. Language is a dynamic phenomenon, and a usage which was once metaphorical becomes by virtue of its very success the primary, and therefore literal, meaning of the word (consider the history of the word *muscle*). But this does not mean that suddenly a word takes on cognitive or truth-expressing functions which it once lacked. Rather such functions are formalized: it becomes clearer how and in what sense a word is used to convey a truth claim. In the second place, to concentrate on usage makes it possible to show words in a wide spectrum of movement to and from literal status. Metaphors may be live—an interesting metaphor in itself—and illuminating (or obscuring), false, true or half-true, dead, boring and banal, or almost any combination of these and other epithets. Not only may a metaphor die, but it may also, once dead, be recalled to life, as in the metaphors with which this paper is concerned. The important point for our purpose is that the truth of a claim about the world does not depend upon whether it is expressed in literal or metaphorical terms, but upon whether language of whatever kind expresses the human commerce with reality successfully (truthfully) or not.

Here a comment of George Steiner's is worth mentioning. 'Historical relativism infers that there are no beginnings, that each human act has precedent. This could be spurious hindsight. The quality of genius in the Greek and Hebraic statement of human possibility, the fact that no subsequent articulation of felt life in the Western tradition has been either as complete or formally inventive, are undeniable' (Steiner, pp. 21 f.). In our context that may be to say that the metaphor of victory may be so central to our understanding

of the human condition that we cannot do without it. But somebody had first to discover the metaphor. 'We have histories of massacre and deception, but none of metaphor. We cannot accurately conceive what it must have been like to be the first to compare the colour of the sea with the dark of wine or to see autumn in a man's face. Such figures are new mappings of the world, they reorganise our habitation in reality' (p. 23). That, of course, is another aspect of the Coleridgean 'reproportioning of the human mind to correspond with the Truth'—if it is indeed the truth with which we are here concerned. How, then, may it be conceived that the two families of metaphorical discourse with which we are concerned enable us to find our way about our world?

III

To use metaphor successfully requires not only genius, as Aristotle pointed out, but also an awareness of the nature of the language one is using. This is particularly true in theology. Now it is almost certainly true that some theological terms, though beginning life as metaphors, eventually come to be used literally. An example might be the use after Nicaea of the word *homoousios* to describe the Son's relationship to the Father. The theology of the atonement has never, however, been formalized in the way that christology was, either because it was never the same focus for debate or (as I believe the more likely) because of the realities with which it purports to deal. To overlook the metaphorical nature of the language of soteriology is to miss its point. Part of our difficulty with the patristic formulations of the atonement as victory is that they do sometimes appear to misconstrue the nature of their language through such an overlooking. Only the literal-minded[2] would ask the question to whom was the ransom paid when Christ died on the cross, suggesting that it is usually not the Bible but its interpreters with whom we have to take issue. Similarly, it could be argued that all the patristic and medieval argument about whether the devil had rights over man as the result of the Fall derives from a similar literalism.

In this respect, something that Aulén has noticed about the contrast between Paul and the Fathers is instructive: 'he makes considerably less mention of the devil than most of the Fathers; instead, in some important passages he speaks of a great complex of demonic forces . . . which Christ has overcome in the great conflict' (p. 67). Now, in order to make the next point it is not necessary to

[2] Interestingly, this is one of the few common linguistic usages to connote the inferiority of the literal to the metaphorical.

deny that Paul's characterization of the forces defeated by Christ employs the language of mythology. The important question is how he used it, for it is important to be aware of the distinction made in recent discussion between metaphor and myth. One way of construing a myth, according to Turbayne (p. 60), is as a metaphor that has come to be taken literally. This does not happen only in religion: Berggren defines a scientific myth as what develops when an imaginative construct becomes identified with the theory itself (p. 458). Indeed, the thrust of Turbayne's book is to demythologize the notion which has taken hold of the popular mind since Descartes and Newton that the world *is* a machine. Descartes himself was, according to Turbayne, half aware of the metaphorical nature of his language: 'I have described the Earth and the whole visible universe *as if it were* a machine . . .' (Turbayne, p. 39). But unimaginative successors of Newton have treated in a literalist manner such words as *machine*, *force*, *attraction*. May it not also be that the same has happened to Pauline language of principalities and powers?

> They stand, as their names imply, for the political, social, economic and religious structures of power . . . of the old world order which Paul believed to be obsolescent. When therefore he claims that on the cross Christ has disarmed the powers and triumphed over them, he is talking about earthly realities, about the impact of the crucifixion on the corporate life of men and nations. He is using mythical language of great antiquity . . . to interpret the historic event of the cross (Caird, p. 242).

Caird's claim presupposes in Paul an awareness of the metaphorical nature of his language. That this is indeed the case is supported by the fact that Aulén has observed, that 'among the powers which hold man in bondage he ranges the Law; and this is the most striking point of contrast between his view and that of the Fathers' (Aulén, p. 67). That Paul is aware of the metaphorical nature of such hypostatization of law as he indulges in is evident; may it not also be true that in speaking of principalities and powers he does not envisage superhuman hypostases trotting about the world, but uses the language to express metaphorically moral realities that otherwise would defy expression?

This general claim is supported by another. When Paul speaks of the cross as a victory, he manifestly does not believe that it was fought like literal victories with swords and spears. The victory is a metaphorical one, but conceived to be real. The opponents are conceived metaphorically, even mythologically, but are meant to be understood *realistically*. What, conceivably, could these opponents be, and how, conceivably, could they have suffered defeat?

IV

Unless we are fundamentalists, we do not often speak of the devil; but *the demonic* is an expression to be found on many fashionable lips, those of psychiatrists and philosophers, novelists and theologians. The more general, less anthropomorphic, expression avoids the uncomfortable suggestions of mythology in synoptic accounts of devils being thrown out of bodies like squatters from derelict council property.[3] It is also more clearly conceptual and, of course, it has the immense advantage of ambiguity. When we speak of the demonic we could refer either to psychological or other forces within the individual or society or to something more dualistically conceived, alien realities which enslave the person or society so afflicted. In terms of our discussion of metaphor, we should ask whether biblical and other talk of the demonic is simply a metaphorical way of speaking of intra-personal realities—in which translation means demythologization into entirely other terms—or whether it is irreducibly metaphorical simply because it wishes to hold in tension the personal and the extra-personal, in some way ascribing the possession of the person or society so afflicted to forces which are not simply psychological but that and more.

The point can be illustrated by a recent paper by Stewart Sutherland in which he discusses different interpretations of the characters of Raskolnikov and others in *Crime and Punishment*. According to one interpreter, an adherent of the theories of psycho-analysis, Dostoyevsky's characters can be explained in terms of a particular theory of human nature (Sutherland, p. 224). Unfortunately, argues Sutherland, such a hermeneutic fails to do justice to the complexity and opaqueness of the characters. Another interpreter, however, uses different language altogether, speaking of one who 'betrays himself to the powers of dark necessity' (ibid.). While not wishing himself to espouse or justify this 'resort . . . to the language of myth' (p. 235), Sutherland clearly finds it more satisfactory than the language of motive as an interpretation of Dostoyevsky's demonic characters. The interpreter who speaks of 'Svidrigailov's having fallen "under the power of impersonal cosmic forces"' is at least nearer to expressing the 'absolute rather than relative disruption' which Dostoyevsky portrays (p. 233). For Sutherland, then, language of 'cosmic forces', 'the demonic', etc., while not

[3] Of course, the biblical writers may well have been aware of the metaphorical nature of their concrete modes of speech. 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven' (Luke x. 18) sounds like a classic piece of parabolic imagery, while Paul's 'the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet' (Rom. xvi. 20) is verbally more expressive and economical than any periphrasis would have been.

reducible to subjective terms can be construed adequately in the language of objective good and evil.

There are, however, modern writers who wish to take the metaphor of the demonic more realistically—more literally I was tempted, inconsistently, to say. One of them is Dorothy Emmet in whose recent book there is some detailed consideration of the nature of what she calls 'the daemonic person'. Herself alluding to Dostoyevsky, she speaks of 'not just a moral badness, but a corruption of the springs of action in a person's mind' (Emmet, p. 151).[4] 'Those, both Greek and German, who have written about the daemonic have been drawn to talk about it not just in psychological or sociological terms, but in mythological and metaphysical ones, where a drive coming from the deep self acquires cosmic overtones' (p. 78).

Professor Emmet does not elaborate these 'cosmic overtones', but they seem to be essential to any satisfactory understanding of the world of metaphor with which we are concerned. If we are neither to psychologize—and ultimately to deny the objective reality of evil—nor to mythologize—and turn the demonic into the world of spirits and demons of Bultmann's tendentious account of the biblical cosmology—we need to see that we are here dealing with an attempt to express the objectivity and irrationality of evil in the only way in which it can adequately be expressed, as a reality generating its own momentum and sweeping up human beings into its power. Human life is lived in interrelationship with other human beings and with the world, leaving aside for a moment the so-called 'vertical' relationship with God. We are what we are partly by virtue of that network of relationships. When it goes badly awry, the individual or society is rightly described as enslaved, another familiar metaphor in this connection.

The point here is that extreme cases of moral enslavement, alienation, or depravity are not adequately characterized in subjective or psychological or moral language alone. The daemonic person is so bound up with the universe in which he lives that his slavery is metaphysical as well as moral. That is why the great exponents of Christian atonement theology have seen fall and salvation in language embracing both the moral and the cosmic spheres. The fathers spoke of *φθορά* not simply because they were Greeks obsessed with change and decay but because they saw person and physical environment bound up together for both good and ill. Similarly, Anselm is not concerned simply to lay on with

[4] It is significant here that Rollo May attributes the failure of Western liberals to see the daemonic reality in Hitler to a failure to accept just this kind of analysis (May, pp. 130 f.).

a trowel *quanti ponderis sit peccatum* but to show that everything is thrown out of joint by the breach of the relationship between God and his human creation (e.g. *Cur Deus Homo*, i. xv).

The language of possession by demonic forces is used, then, to express the helplessness of those so affected in face of psychological, social, and cosmic forces in various combinations.[5] A theological account of the phenomenon would, I think, identify it as the outcome of an idolatrous worship of the created order. When we attribute to any part of the created world the value of God, we thus far come into its power which, because it is not divine, operates demonically. 'The demonic', writes Tillich, 'is the elevation of something conditional to unconditional significance' (Tillich, i, p. 155); it is 'the claim of something finite to infinity or to divine greatness' (iii, p. 109). We might instance here Kierkegaard's account of the demonic in *Either/Or*: 'Don Juan . . . is the expression for the daemonic determined as the sensuous; Faust its expression determined as the intellectual or spiritual . . .' (Kierkegaard, i, p. 89). It might therefore be claimed that any element of our relationships with our fellow human beings and the world can *become* demonized. The psychiatrist Rollo May defines the daimonic as 'any natural function which has the power to take over the whole person', giving as examples 'Sex and eros, anger and rage, and the craving for power' (p. 123). For those who find this too narrowly psychological, there is the saying of Aristotle which so fascinated E. R. Dodds and Freud before him: 'for Nature is daemonic' (Dodds, p. 120).

Here, however, we must pause to make an important distinction. The claim that nature is daemonic suggests that in some way or other nature is in itself the vehicle of divine powers. Nature is charged with divinity, a rather different thing from its being charged with the grandeur of God. In such a conception, it is difficult to distinguish between the divine and the demonic, as Dodds's study shows. The drive of biblical thought is rather to distinguish between God and everything else, whether natural or demonic. In fact, we might say that nothing is demonic in itself, not even Satan (Job i). Hence it can be argued that the language of principalities and powers is metaphorical discourse expressing either certain positively valued political realities or the same realities distorted into the demonic. A biblical writer is therefore unlikely to say that nature is demonic, but he might concede that it *becomes* demonic in certain relationships to the human creation.

[5] In the widest usage of the term it can be applied to some manifestations of physical sickness as well—'a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years' (Luke xiii. 16).

Hence the passage cited from Aulén notes that the powers 'are also the executants of God's will'. Even when human fallenness throws the universe out of joint it remains the vehicle of the divine will.

Thus any part of the created order can become the vehicle of demonic disorientation. But the feature of modern life we find it easiest to understand as demonized is power, a word which embraces features of psychological, social, political, and cosmic dimensions of our existence. I think that part of the appeal of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* derives from the fact that the ring of power is thrown away because to possess it is to be possessed by it. Preoccupation with the demonization of power is not, of course, the prerogative of the modern, though Dostoyevsky's revolutionary Stavrogin and our characteristic fear of nuclear annihilation or technocratic impersonality make it quite reasonable to hold that the modern West is (either literally or metaphorically!) possessed by power. There is, however, a much earlier, classic formulation of the question: 'All these I will give you if you will fall down and worship me' (Matt. iv. 9). The temptation narratives are in large part concerned with the temptation to power: or rather, as Jesus is represented as realizing, with the temptation to serve power and so to be possessed by it. His replies to the devil in two of the three cases are couched in terms of a refusal to countenance idolatry: to worship the creature rather than the creator (cf. Rom. i. 25). To worship the creature is to be possessed by it.

The example of power illustrates the general phenomenon of the demonic. The language with which we are concerned, and that includes the anthropomorphic and realistic New Testament characterization, is language which seeks to bring to expression the fact of the subjection of human moral agents to forces which they are unable to control. To be understood, the matter must not be construed simply in terms of the individual. The afflicted may be a person or a society, as is often asserted to have been the case with German society in the 1930s. Likewise, the responsibility may be that of the person become demonic, or it may be that of other persons or indeed of us all. The point is that it happens: human beings do fall into the control of alien forces, which leave them not only incapable of acting morally but also of distinguishing between good and evil. It is, according to Dorothy Emmet, a characteristic of the demonic person that he or she claims to be beyond good and evil, superior to the moral distinctions that trouble ordinary people (Emmet, chap. 7).

But it would be a mistake to draw too firm a distinction between the notoriously demonic and the rest of us. That is to say, it is possible that while Legion, Stavrogin and Mozart's Don Giovanni

are archetypal demonic persons, they are not necessarily different in principle from the rest of us, but only in degree. They represent us all, that is to say, apart from grace, wishing to be like God. In other words, the group of metaphors with which we are concerned becomes one of the means by which we come to understand the nature of the human condition, that sombre backcloth against which the doctrine of the atonement has always been expressed and understood. Subjection to the demonic is one feature of that which an earlier theology described in terms of original sin and the fall. And that is precisely what, according to Aulén, was met and defeated on the cross.

V

What, then, of the equally metaphorical victory? We return first to Aulén, one of whose objections to Western theory is that it concentrates on the cross at the expense of the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection as a whole. He writes:

> Irenaeus is altogether free from the tendency, which has shown itself at times in later theology, to emphasise the death of Christ in such a way as to leave almost out of sight the rest of his earthly life. It is remarkable what great weight he attaches to the obedience of Christ throughout his life on earth (Aulén, p. 29).

If there is a victory, it is not to be understood simply as the miraculous transformation of human possibilities affected by the death on the cross. It is a function of Jesus' life as a whole. In the symbolism of Rev. xii it is the birth of the child which precipitates war in heaven and the defeat of the accuser. But the talk of war in heaven is not meant to remove the locus of the struggle from earth. Quite the reverse, as the synoptic portrayals of the ministry make quite clear. Now if we are to give these portrayals due weight we must avoid the temptation to see them as a series of isolated exorcisms of beings now known or supposed not to exist. The significance of the victory is to be seen most clearly if we isolate the primary field on which it is fought: and that is the entry of Jesus upon one course of action rather than another. We return to the subject of power and the significance of the temptation narratives as depictions of the choice of one form of the exercise of power rather than another. The primary reference for the metaphor of victory is the refusal of Jesus to exercise power demonically. That is the first connotation of victory: victory as moral victory and, so long as the word is used carefully, victory belonging to the 'inner' rather than to the outer life of Jesus. 'Inner' refers here not to the subjective consciousness, about which we are not informed, but to the con-

quest of the demonic by a decision for obedience. The pattern of the ministry follows from this decision, as significantly set out in Luke iv: the departure of temptation being followed by the beginning of the Galilean ministry, the exercise of free and fearless authority in Nazareth and the exorcisms and healings. I am not here relying on a naïve faith in the historicity of those narratives, but on the theological interpretation of the life of Jesus underlying them. For Luke certainly the authenticity and authority of Jesus' ministry is a result of the choice of a certain pattern of life rather than the suggested alternative.

In the Synoptic Gospels the victory is seen as God's activity in overcoming the alienation of mankind from both moral and cosmic aspects of its situation. The healings and exorcisms are part of a process in which human life is seen *and made* whole: 'release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind' belong together. Just as bondage to the demonic is both moral and physical, so is release, with the result that the cross falls into place as the completion of a process begun already in different aspects of the ministry. That the evangelists conceive the death in different ways is not necessarily a problem here. All see it as the appropriate fulfilment of the manner of Jesus' life. There is a human moral victory which is construed in different ways as the freeing of human life from its bondage precisely because it is also the victory of God over disorderly moral, political, and cosmic forces.

It must be noted, however, that the Synoptic Gospels do not themselves portray the ministry and death in the language of victory.[6] The propriety of the language of victory would seem to derive from the fact that some kind of (metaphorical but real) victory is there being portrayed. More interesting is the fact that the Fourth Gospel uses the language of victory but not explicitly that of the demonic: 'be of good cheer, I have overcome the world' says the Jesus of this Gospel (John xvi. 33, compare 1 John v. 4). It is surely not without significance that John uses the expression *the world* in an ambiguous way which parallels exactly that of the Pauline principalities and powers. It is used at once of the world as the object of God's creating and redeeming love and of that world as it attempts to reject the love of God made real in Jesus—the creation as good and as *become* demonic, we might say. And for John the whole incarnate life, from becoming flesh to ascension, is the locus of the victory, which then continues into the life of the church.

What, then, is the nature of the encounter between Jesus and the demonic? It is an encounter between the power of God undemonically exercised by a man and moral, social, and political

[6] I owe this point to a remark of Professor Kenneth Grayston.

forces demonically exercised by other men. Only in a very restricted sense is it right to understand the cross as submission—as a man's free submission to the dark powers that would destroy him. The submission is depicted, for example in the Fourth Gospel, as an active exercise of authority: it is a submission that consists in a refusal to submit. It may be that Luke is right in describing the early sermons of Christian preachers as proclamations of the resurrection as a victory over the defeat of the cross. But later reflection seems to have moved to a view that sees the cross as the centre of the victory, with the ministry as its opening campaign and the resurrection its seal of authenticity. Certainly Paul follows the Fourth Gospel in seeing the death as an exercise of divine power (in 1 Cor. i. for example), while the author of the Epistle to the Colossians, if indeed it be another, sees the cross as an act of active disarmament of enemies (Col. ii. 15). Similarly the author of Revelation interprets the conquest by the Lion of the tribe of Judah through the imagery of a slaughtered lamb (Rev. v. 5, 9).

Overall, then, we discover an extreme case of metaphorical transference of the kind that Ricoeur describes as the 'category mistake that clears the way to a new vision' (Ricoeur, p. 230). The significance of the reversal of categories which is here achieved can be indicated in the four following ways.

1. Of primary importance is the shift of reference, in which the term *victory* denotes a different kind of event from the normal or literal meaning. It no longer refers to soldiers removing the limbs of other soldiers, or carrying slaves in triumph through Rome, but to a man refusing to exercise power demonically and so dying on a cross. By extension it comes to refer to the winning of similar victories by others (compare the use of the expression *moral* victory).

2. But this does not mean that we have a completely equivocal use of language, for, as has been observed, metaphor achieves meaning only by retaining a tension between the new and old uses (Berggren, p. 243). With the transfer of reference there remains a measure of continuity of sense. Some of the connotations of the old usage continue to cling to the word, for otherwise the old meaning would not continue to illuminate the newly discovered reality. Here are the moments of truth to be found in the view that metaphor operates by appeal to likeness. Just as a military victory deprives the opposing armies of power, so the victory of the cross deprives of power those forces which deprive human beings of their freedom to be themselves.

3. But if the meaning is so altered, how do we come to understand and accept the change? The chief way is by showing the

metaphor's capacity to promote understanding or discovery. That is why Aulén is wrong in rejoicing in the irrational or paradoxical nature of the classical theory. If it enables us to discover something of the meaning of the incarnation and cross, and of how life is to be lived in their light, then it is rational. A proper understanding of metaphor is therefore as the means by which we avoid the pitfalls of either rationalism in all its forms or an irrational positivism and glorying in paradox. The language of victory enables us to understand how God in Jesus transforms the possibilities for human existence by actively refusing to submit to the forces which bind fallen human lives in slavery. Here we return again to a point made by Aulén: 'The deliverance of man from the power of death and the devil is at the same time his deliverance from God's judgement.' The demonized creation operates as the vehicle of judgement by alienation and enslavement. By undergoing those forces himself, God restores human life to himself and so to freedom. The metaphor of victory is one of the ways by which we are able to understand the reality of salvation as liberation from an idolatrous slavery to created realities, or, more positively, as freedom to use the created order responsibly as the gift of God.

4. The matter of the transformation of meaning by metaphor is further illustrated in a recent paper by Roger White which anticipates many of the points made in this paper. White is concerned there with the related topic of analogical predication, and with how words predicable of God are predicated of him in their primary meaning and only secondarily of other entities. There are, he argues, certain words in common usage whose real and primary meaning is only revealed when we understand their theological application:

> For it is the whole of our Lord's ministry, and especially the Passion, that causes us to question where really is power and where really is impotence: is the apparently indisputable power of Pilate perhaps impotence, and the apparently indisputable acceptance of impotence by Jesus the only real power that can challenge the absoluteness of the constraints and conditions of this world which we treat as absolute and which hold us in their bondage? (White, p. 217).

And

> It is in this strange overcoming of death, darkness, things which are not—by not evading them, but undergoing them in their full depths, that He establishes His Kingdom (p. 220).

It is one of the features of the successful use of metaphor that it not only illumines that of which it speaks (the ministry and death

of Jesus) but by a kind of reverse movement also that area from which its meaning used to be drawn. We may think that the word *victory* applies literally and primarily to a process of military action, but the transformation of meaning involved in what we are examining shows that we are wrong. A real victory is the kind of thing that happens when Jesus goes to the cross. When, therefore, Constantine saw the vision of a cross and heard the words 'in this sign conquer' he took it to be a justification of carrying a cross on to the field of battle. He at once mistook the metaphor and initiated an era of Christian militarism from which we are only now beginning to extricate ourselves. This seems to be evidence enough that we are not concerned with metaphor as ornament but with metaphor as opening our eyes to dimensions of moral and cosmological reality. For much of its history the church has failed to allow its mind to be reproportioned to correspond to the truth of the kind of victory of which the New Testament speaks. It will not escape the demonism of power in which it has culpably shared unless it associates itself with the manner of the conquest of evil by Jesus on the cross. Whether that should turn us into pacifists I do not yet know, but it certainly puts us nearer to the bishop of Salisbury than to most other participants in the debate on the Church and the Bomb.

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