

work of Christ, in its relation to the forgiveness of sin ; and second, the importance assigned to this doctrine by the Christian Church and by Christian experience in all ages. These two facts must be adequately accounted for by any theory of the Atonement which is expected to maintain its place as a permanent solution of this question. That Unitarian theology has not yet done justice to this doctrine is not brought as a reproach against it. It has had its own work to do, and this has hitherto been one rather of destruction than of construction. But now, this work is well nigh done, and everywhere men are beginning to build. We may now hope to have a more positive system of theology, and with the rest, more justice will be done to the positive side of the doctrine of Atonement. Meantime, we may help to prepare for this, by taking a brief survey of the past history of the doctrine. Our survey must be very cursory, for our limits compel us, however reluctantly, to abstain from touching any but the most prominent points.

In surveying the course of this doctrine we are struck by three periods distinctly marked, which present themselves immediately to our observation. The first, which may be called the Mythic period, extends from an early point of Christian antiquity to the eleventh century, during a period of nearly a thousand years. During the whole of this time, the prevailing idea was of a *controversy* between Christ and the devil for the souls of men, and the work of Christ was mainly to redeem men from the power of the devil, by paying the ransom due to him on account of their sins. The second is the Scholastic period, extending from the eleventh century to the Reformation, and during this period the leading notion was *legal*, and