

For the Benefit of Future Writers of Theses.

The attempt to write a thesis for the Bachelor of Divinity or any other degree is an alarming and frustrating experience. The major reason for this is the fact that the thesis is written while the process of learning is still going on at a rapid rate, and it is difficult to find any permanent ground for a thesis in the flux of changing and enlarging ideas. Between the commencement of research and the beginning of the actual writing, changes will have taken place in one's theological position which will necessitate a definite revision of what were formerly key ideas of the thesis. Between the first writing and the final revision, other changes will take place which will render the thought contained in the paper obsolete, or at least obsolescent, before it leaves the writer's hands.

This same process of learning will, or should, continue in the years following the writing of the thesis, so that the re-reading of your own thesis after the passage of a year or more will cause you to wonder if you ever could have been so naïve.

This is no isolated experience, for even the greatest of creative thinkers do not care to be remembered by their first work alone, and most of the ordinary writers of theses to whom I have spoken on this subject agree that they are rather wryly ashamed of their work in a relatively short time.

I write this, not as an excuse for this present work, but for the encouragement of those who may be tempted by similar difficulties to give up the attempt to write a thesis. My advice is that you roll up your intellectual and theological sleeves, tackle the job with honesty and perseverance, and carry it through to an end which will be more "telos" than "finis".

W. B. Sellars.

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HOLINESS AND THE ATONEMENT.

THESIS

That the concept of Atonement as throughout the work of a God whose nature is holy love is more clearly exhibited in the classic view described by Aulen in *Christus Victor* than in either the subjective or objective types of theory, and that this classic view should be further developed and formulated in a way that will remove from it any suspicion of metaphysical dualism and that will establish still more clearly the nature of God's holiness.

W.C. Sellars.
April 1952.

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CHAPTER I: Introduction.

Christians in every age have found it necessary to face the great questions which crop up in connection with the death of the Son of God on the Cross. A glance at even so recent a hymn book as The Hymnary of The United Church of Canada will suffice to indicate the stress laid on the Cross by Hymn-writers from Mediaeval times to the present; and I think we may confidently assume that the Cross was sung about also in those Christian centuries which preceded the Middle Ages.

The writers of hymns were not alone in their interest in the Cross, for the greatest theologians from Paul to the present day have expended their best efforts in seeking to find answers to the questions raised by the Cross. When all is said and done, such questions should be asked by every Christian who takes his faith seriously, and perhaps every Christian man and woman has a right to expect from his theological betters an answer phrased in terms he can understand.

But in the end, the problem of clarifying the ideas of honest Christians is not merely a problem of communication, but it is also a problem of clarifying the ideas of those who think on the next higher levels, for that we have a most confusing welter of ideas concerning the Atonement must be evident to anybody who discusses the subject with more than one Christian minister or theologian.

I am not pleading for a unanimity which will eventually become a doctrine by which to test faith and loyalty, for I believe that the ways in which we express the truths of Christianity must change with every changing age. But I do think that in our presentation of the answers at which we arrive we should attempt to make our concept of the truth as easily accessible as possible, and that, above all, we leave as little room as is humanly possible for misinterpretation.

I do not, in this paper, claim to be more lucid than any other writer who has set forth his views on the Atonement for, though I write as one to whom Christ and the Cross have laid claim, I have only recently tried to organize my thinking concerning the full significance of the Cross. But, if this paper does nothing else, it will at least serve to indicate the position at which I have presently arrived and, though it will not enlighten those whose thinking has outstripped mine, it might serve either as a sign-post or as a danger-signal to those who follow after.

As the statement of my thesis indicates, I shall lean rather heavily on Aulen's Christus Victor in my early chapters; but I shall not confine myself entirely to praise; for, though perhaps I have no cause to criticize Aulen himself, I shall make some criticism of the classic view of the Atonement which he uncovers. Also, in order that my criticism may not be entirely negative, I shall attempt to introduce some elements of the thinking of other writers on the Atonement in the hope that their strength may compensate for what I believe to be weaknesses in the classic view.

CHAPTER II. The Subjective and Objective Views of the Atonement.

In Christus Victor, Aulen studies the fortunes of the three main types of the idea of the Atonement, with the emphasis, of course, on the classic view.

The discussion in this chapter will be limited to a review of the subjective and objective views of the Atonement as he sees them, but it should be noted that Aulen claims that, in the controversy over the relative values of these two views, a third view, more germane to Christian thinking and chronologically anterior, dropped almost completely out of view. This more important "classic" view or idea (he is careful not to use the word "doctrine" or "theory" since he claims that the classic "idea" has never been shaped into a rational theory or given the status of a doctrine) he calls a "dramatic" view whose action consists in a struggle to the death between Christ and a three-in-one foe, "sin, death and the devil".

Let it be said here that Aulen claims his effort to be merely historical and not apologetic, and says that any semblance of a defence of the classic idea must be attributed to the self-validating nature of the argument. In actual fact, he does stay very close to his stated intention of giving an historic survey, but one can hardly read the book without seeing and sensing that Aulen is greatly influenced by the view of the Atonement he has helped resuscitate. A discussion of that view must wait till the next chapter. Here we want to summarize the subjective and objective views.

Aulen makes short work of the subjective view; it really gets into the book only as a sort of postscript for which he apologizes in these words.

If our sketch of the third of the three main types of Atonement-doctrine has left a less clear impression on

the reader's mind than the other two, this is not altogether due to the brevity of our description of it; there is a lack of definite outline in the type itself. This lack of definiteness is reflected in the name which it commonly bears - the 'subjective' doctrine. It would, of course, be absurd so to press this word as to imply that this teaching leaves God wholly out of account and so makes the idea of a true atonement meaningless; but it is true that in this view the emphasis is shifted from that which may be held to be done by God or by Christ to that which is done in men and by men.¹

It is not at all my intention to seek to justify the subjective view of the Atonement, and yet I wonder if Aulen is being wholly fair when he claims that in this view the emphasis is on "that which is done in men and by men".

It may indeed be true that most theologians who expressed 'subjective' views were brought to such an expression by a revolt against the earlier objective views which stated that a very legal and almost vengeful God insisted on 'satisfaction' before he would re-instate man into his favor, but it does not necessarily follow that those who claim that the death of the Cross produced a change in man were claiming that such a change was brought about by man. It is difficult to see how any Trinitarian could lose sight of the fact that "God was in Christ" or that "Christ was the Son of God", and nobody with such a view of Christ could say that the One who suffered on the Cross was merely representative man. And if the Cross is the symbol of how far God is prepared to go in the salvation of mankind we cannot say that any change wrought in man as a result of the Cross has been wrought by man.

True, for the defenders of the subjective view, the Cross is supposed to bring about a change in us - it is supposed to call forth from us a love to answer the love displayed there, but most Protestant Christians of my acquaintance who hold such a view do not regard their answering love as meritorious, but rather as the beginning of a better

1. Aulen, Christus Victor, p. 158.

ethical life. And even if, in some cases, the subjective change wrought in man is an awakening and justifying faith in such a loving God, are not things still in the correct order - first grace and then faith?

Aulen spends much more time on the 'objective' view of the Atonement which he calls the 'Latin' view in order to distinguish it from the classic view which also has some objective elements.

The Latin view is closely connected with the system of penance, and with the conceptions of 'satisfaction' and 'merit' which were given wide currency by Tertullian. Penance is a satisfaction or compensation for a sin, made, in time, to escape eternal loss or punishment. The law of a just¹ God demands a punishment 'to fit the crime', but it is possible for a man to go beyond what is demanded in the way of satisfaction by submitting to fasting, celibacy, martyrdom and so forth and thus to earn a healthy surplus of 'merit'.

Out of this idea of Tertullian's, Cyprian conceived the possibility of transferring merit from one person to another and eventually came to regard Christ's work as a satisfaction earning an overplus of merit which can be applied to man's account by a legalistic God who is more concerned with a careful balancing of justice than with anything else. This is the essence of the Latin view of the Atonement, which Aulen insists grew out of the penitential system and not out of Germanic law as some exponents claim. The two points which Aulen stresses as characterizing this Latin view are:

First, that the whole idea is essentially legalistic; and second, that, in speaking of Christ's work, the emphasis is all laid on that which is done by Christ as man in relation to God.²

In Gregory the Great, there were elements of the classic view (he saw the work of Christ in one of its aspects as a conflict

1. Using 'just' here in the forensic sense generally assumed by the exponents of the Latin theory.
2. Aulen, Christus Victor, p.98.

and victory) but he also strengthened the Latin view by his arguments that human guilt demanded a human sacrifice. But the sacrifice must be undefiled and, since there was no such thing as a sinless man (we are all born of sinful seed), the Son of God came into the world by the Virgin birth - thus partaking of our nature but not of our sin. Hence, he as sinless man could make the sacrifice on our behalf.

However, the full development of the Latin theory of the Atonement did not come about till five hundred years later when Anselm, the friend of Rome and the despair of two English kings, expounded it fully in the book which enshrines it for all time - Cur Deus Homo? He has been attacked and defended many times since the early twelfth century, but men such as Hermann and Brunner in our time have seen fit to uphold rather than decry. Hermann makes such a strong plea¹ that Aulen deals with him at some length. Briefly, Hermann sees Anselm's statement to be something after this order; In Christ, God restored the original order of creation. Christ did not, as a man, bring about a forgiveness of sin which was a bare remission of penalty; nor did Christ fulfill his function as a mere man, for to think of a man as being able to make the required satisfaction is to think too optimistically of the human race. Rather, God himself takes human form in the Incarnation and in the death on the Cross offered Himself to His own glory.

Since this double-sided aspect - God as at once the Reconciler and the Reconciled - is one of the strong points of the classic view (see next chapter), Aulen thinks that a confirmation of Hermann's claims for Anselm will remove the necessity for his sharp distinction between Anselm's theory and the classic view. Hence he asks this searching question, "Does Anselm treat the atoning work of Christ as the work of God from start to finish?"² He concedes Hermann's point

1. Hermann, Zeitschrift fur systematische Theologie, 1923, pp. 376-396, as quoted in Aulen, Christus Victor, page 100.
2. Aulen, Christus Victor, p.102.

that Anselm regards the Atonement as a re-establishment of the order of creation, but thinks that he misinterprets Anselm's assertion that men are unable to offer the satisfaction which God requires and too readily assumes Anselm to mean that thus God of necessity does all.

Hermann goes astray from Anselm's thinking because he fails to see that Anselm thinks only in terms of the penitential system and so does not give up his basic assumption that man must make the satisfaction. So says Aulen. Hence Anselm's whole argument is pointed to show how the Man appears who is able to give the satisfaction which God demands, the Man being Christ - or God made flesh. Only in this respect is there a connection between the Incarnation and the Atonement in Anselm.

Anselm's difficulty came about because he saw himself faced with two alternatives; either God forgives sins outright, which means that God does not treat sin seriously; or satisfaction. Only the satisfaction provided by Christ's death can prevent God's forgiveness of sin from becoming a laxity.

Anselm is forced to make his choice between these two alternatives because by his time the classic view of the Atonement which Aulen claims to have been present in the early fathers, had completely dropped out of sight. But the Latin doctrine is faulty in that, though it is morally earnest while still providing for the remission of the punishment due to sins, it does not provide for the doing away of the sin itself.

Aulen thinks that the Classic idea fulfills this requirement and gives the best all-round explanation of the Atonement. In the next chapter, then, we will investigate this classic idea.

CHAPTER III. The Classic Idea.

The classic ^{view} as Aulen sees it, is a dramatic view of the Atonement having as its central theme the idea of the Atonement as a Divine conflict and victory. Mankind is in bondage under 'tyrants' against whom Christ fights and over whom he triumphs. This is both a work of salvation and a work of Atonement, for besides saving us from the tyrants it is also God's means of reconciling the world to himself. The tyrants referred to are hostile powers - powers of evil - in a measure opposed to God, but also in the service of God as executants of His judgment. Against them, in a drama of cosmic significance, Christ wages a victorious conflict which brings about a new relation between God and the estranged world.

Such an idea, he says, is the idea of the Atonement to be found in Paul and in the New Testament in general; it is strongly present in Irenaeus and in most of the Church fathers in both East and West, save those who made it their business to develop the Latin view for penitential purposes. Then, in Luther, the classic idea comes out again, not as a new thing nor as an innovation of Protestantism, but as a return to the true Church teaching from which the Roman Catholic church had wandered away.

Looking briefly at the case Aulen makes for Irenaeus, we find him accusing most theologians of interpreting Irenaeus' salvation as being 'naturalistic' or 'physical', that is, the bestowal of 'divinity' or immortality. But when Aulen puts to Irenaeus the question, "For what purpose did Christ come down from heaven?", he gets two answers which he considers much more significant; "That he might destroy sin, overcome death, and give life to man." 1. And, more fully:

Man had been created by God that he might have life. If now, having lost life, and having been harmed by the serpent, he were not to return to life, but were to be wholly abandoned to death, then God would have been

1. Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III, 18, 7 as quoted in Christus Victor, p.35.

defeated, and the malice of the serpent would have overcome God's will. But since God is both invincible and magnanimous, he showed his magnanimity in correcting man, and in proving all men, as we have said; but through the Second man he bound the strong one, and spoiled his goods and annihilated death. For Adam had become the devil's possession, and the devil held him under his power, by having wrongfully practised deceit upon him, and by the offer of immortality made him subject to death. For by promising that they should be as gods, which did not lie in his power, he worked death in them. Wherefore he who had taken man captive was himself taken captive by God, and man who had been taken captive was set free from the bondage of condemnation. 1.

Along with this he quotes other passages from Irenaeus to show that he thought of Christ as the Word, and of the Word as God himself. He also proves that in Irenaeus there is a very close connection between the Incarnation and the Atonement:

The Word of God was made flesh in order that He might destroy death and bring man to life; for we were tied and bound in sin, we were born in sin and live under the dominion of death. 2.

From all of this, Aulen draws the following conclusion, which is quoted verbatim:

In the first of these passages³, Irenaeus speaks of sin and death as the enemies of mankind; in the second there emerges by the side of or behind death the figure of the devil. The main idea is clear. The work of Christ is first and foremost a victory over the powers which hold mankind in bondage; sin, death, and the devil. These may be said to be in a measure personified, but in any case they are objective powers; and the victory of Christ creates a new situation, bringing their rule to an end, and setting man free from their dominion. 4.

Aulen says that Irenaeus' idea is quite different from the Latin theory in that the latter thinks of the Atonement as an offering made to God by Christ from man's side, whereas Irenaeus thinks of God as being throughout "the effective agent in the work of redemption". 5.

1. Irenaeus, op.cit., III, 23, 1 as quoted in Christus Victor, p.36
2. Irenaeus, Epideixis 37, as quoted in Christus Victor, p.36.
3. Identified by footnote on page 10 of this paper.
4. Aulen, G., Christus Victor, p.36.
5. Ibid., p.47.

God is both the Reconciler and the Reconciled. This is brought out in his summary of the classic idea found in Irenaeus, which he considers to be a typical example of the idea:

First, then, it must be emphasized that the work of atonement is regarded as carried through by God Himself; and this, not merely in the sense that God authorizes, sanctions and initiates the plan of salvation, but that He Himself is the effective agent in the redemptive work, from beginning to end. It is the Word of God incarnate who overcomes the tyrants which hold man in bondage; God himself enters into the world of sin and death, that He may reconcile the world to Himself. Therefore, Incarnation and Atonement stand in no sort of antithesis; rather, they belong inseparably together. It is God's love, the Divine agape, that removes the sentence that rested upon mankind, and creates a new relation between the human race and Himself, a relation which is altogether different from any sort of justification by legal righteousness. The whole dispensation is the work of grace

Second, it is to be emphasized that this view of the Atonement has regularly a dualistic background - namely, the reality of forces of evil, which are hostile to the Divine will. Consequently, so far as the sphere of these forces extends, there is enmity between God and the world. The work of Atonement is therefore depicted in dramatic terms, as a conflict with the powers of evil and a triumph over them. This involves a necessary double-sidedness, in that God is at once the Reconciler and the Reconciled. His enmity is taken away in the very act in which He reconciles the world unto Himself. 1.

In some versions of this dualistic scheme of things, the devil claims power over man by right, for man came rightfully under his dominion as a result of the Fall. Yet another version considers the devil as having usurped a hold over man. Naturally, the picture we draw of the manner in which Christ released us from the devil's clutches will be colored according to which of the above viewpoints we accept.

If the devil has rights over us, then Christ's dealing with death and the devil must have been in the nature of a ransom, and this is the assertion of Gregory of Nyssa and of Origen. Gregory of Nazianus, on the other hand, denies that the devil had any rights over man, and so it was fitting that he should be overcome by force and made to surrender his prisoners. Yet a third way of dealing with

1. Aulen, Christus Victor, p. 50f.

the situation is suggested by those who claim that the devil was foiled by deception, seeking to claim Christ as a mere man and finding out that He was the Son of God and more than a match for his adversary.

When Aulen comes to deal with Paul, he has no trouble finding many passages in which "principalities and powers", "the last enemy, death", and a generally imposing array of hostile forces which rule in "this present evil age" are mentioned, and over all of them Christ has prevailed. He also points to the idea of 'ransom' found in the synoptics (for example, the mention of it in Mark 10:45, "the Son of Man is come . . . to give His life a ransom for many") and hints that such passages mean that men are presently held in bondage by some evil force. Then, going on to the life of Jesus as we know it from the Gospels, he points out the references to demons found there and says that Jesus considered the growing hostility to his teachings to be the work of Satan the Adversary, and indicates that Christ saw the necessity of submitting to the power of evil and death in order that he might conquer the hostile forces once and for all. All of this, of course, is in accordance with Aulen's dramatic view of the Atonement.

The same dramatic ideas are to be found in Luther, who is never lacking for a powerful and colorful expression of his ideas, and Aulen finds Luther leaning heavily on the concept of the deception of the devil and returning constantly to the theme of Christ's victory over the tyrants - especially the powerful three, sin, death, and the devil.

All in all, Aulen is to be commended for the manner in which he has demonstrated that the classic idea, as he terms it, has had a very close connection with the thinking concerning the Atonement from the very beginning of the Church's history. He has, without a doubt, shown that many of the greatest Christian thinkers from the

time of the Apostles, through the Fathers, and on down to Luther himself, have expressed their convictions concerning the Atonement in these dramatic terms.

CHAPTER IV. The Advantages and the Dangers of the Classic View.

One big advantage of the classic view in our time lies in the fact that it speaks a language with which we are familiar, for certainly we of the twentieth century are familiar with warfare on a grand scale and with all the terminology that war brings into prominence. All in all, it is not surprising to find more of this sort of language coming out of Europe and Anders Nygren has recently written an article seeking to justify the use of such concepts for the simple reason that they are so real to us. Using the analogy of an occupied country, he proceeds to explain the work of Christ in very much the same way as Aulen did before him:

During the last world war, one country after another was occupied. Inasmuch as this fate also struck our nearest neighbouring countries, we have a fairly clear idea of what life is like in a country occupied by an enemy. Many of the citizens had to go underground because of fear of those in power; or else they would languish in prisons and concentration camps. And even those who did not directly and personally meet with the interference of the occupying authorities, experienced in many ways the fact that they did not live in a free country. The feeling of having lost one's legal rights and of living under compulsion weighs heavily upon the country.

But then one day there comes the message (the emphasis on "message" is Nygren's, for he is pointing out the Gospel as a message): "Your country is free. The occupying power is beaten and must abandon the field." What is now the significance of this message? First and foremost it signifies that an objective change has occurred. There is something which has happened and which the message reports; a power has come which is stronger than the occupying power, and deprived it of its dominion. But that which had occurred also has the most far-reaching consequences for every individual in the country. The whole life takes a new form. The period of the violation of justice and of arbitrariness has passed away. The law, which was unable to function, again returns to power. The change, which has come over the country as a whole, also effects the individual citizen. He can say: "The freedom of my country also signifies that I have personally received back my freedom."

. . . there is no better illustration for making clear the import of the Gospel as a joyful message. . . .

Now the message of the New Testament has the same significance - only with an infinitely wider outreach and

an infinitely deeper effect upon our human life. Our human life is by nature a life lived under foreign powers, under the forces of destruction. . . . And the forms of destruction - these are the powers which the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans designates under the four words: God's wrath, sin, the law and death.

. . . .

Mankind has . . . been placed by God's wrath under the dominion of sin. When sin is mentioned, we generally think about certain moral mistakes or about a reprobate character, which expresses itself in these wicked deeds. The Scriptures speak about sin in an altogether different manner: sin certainly is man's own action and his own perverted mind, but it is at the same time a power which keeps him imprisoned and leads him to destruction. Sin is a destructive power, which exercises its tyranny not only over the individual person, but over the whole human race. . . . We live in an occupied country, and even if we imagine that we are free, we are still under an alien power.

. . . .

To us, who live in this country occupied by sin, the curse, the law and death, there now comes through the Gospel this message from God: The new aeon has broken through, your hour of release has struck. God through Christ has deprived the forces of destruction of their dominion and given our human family a new start. . . . He came as the stronger one who overcame sin and death and released their slaves. . . . ¹

This is language that all of us can understand without the least effort. For, though our country was not occupied, our rapid means of communication kept us in almost instantaneous touch with the state of affairs in the occupied countries and with the fortunes of the armies which were battling their way toward those countries to bring the occupation to an end. For more than five years we watched such events on a world-wide scale, and we still keep a watchful eye on similar events taking place even now in Korea.

Moreover, the language of the classic view - similar to that above - shows us the nature and strength of the hold sin exercises over man. Also, it tends to demonstrate the magnitude of the work of Christ.

1. Nygren, Anders, "Christ and the Forces of Destruction", in Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 4, No. 4, December 1951.

Again, though the classic view makes little mention of the holiness of God, the manner in which this view expounds the work of God presupposes the holiness of God as the background of the whole of the action.

The subjective view is weak in this regard, for God there becomes very like the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son, content to make his love known to those who have left home and then to wait, patiently, till love constrains them to return. There is no evidence of a decisive defeat of sin itself nor, for that matter, is there very much to show that God's nature and sin are incompatible.

The Latin view likewise does not sufficiently emphasize the fact that the work of Atonement is wholly the work of a holy God. Righteousness and justice in the forensic sense seem to replace holiness in this theory; God becomes an almost vengeful being who extracts the last iota of punishment for man's misdemeanors. "Satisfaction" is the object, and this satisfaction must be made by man, for it is man who has sinned.

The death of Christ then becomes a lump sum payment for all the sins of man and, in that act which is truly sacrifice since it mollifies an angry God, Christ is acting in his capacity as man; he pays for sin and leaves a balance on the credit side of the ledger, a portion of which can be applied to the deficient account of those who seek it via the only true channel of grace - the Roman Catholic church.

Aulen takes time to explain that this system can be manipulated in such a way as to make it appear God's work.¹ This is done by considering that the idea of sending Christ to bear the burden originated with God himself, and Aulen thinks that Anselm attempts thus to give God the credit while still insisting that the required

1. See pages 8 and 9 of this paper.

satisfaction must be provided by man himself.

But the classic view restores the necessary emphasis on Atonement as being from first to last the work of God

and this, not merely in the sense that God authorizes, sanctions, and initiates the plan of salvation, but that He himself is the effective agent in the redemptive work, from beginning to end . . . ¹.

And the God who does this demonstrates his holiness in that the action he takes against sin is such as to defeat it and destroy it, not merely to forgive and restore those who have yielded to sin.

When first I read Christus Victor, I thought that this classic view which was now brought to light and presented as the original understanding of Atonement left nothing to be desired. For all of the above reasons - the dramatic and easily understood language, the way it demonstrated the power of sin and the magnitude of the work of Christ, the manner in which it showed the work as being throughout that of a holy God - I thought that here was the supreme conception of the Atonement. But now for several reasons I am not so sure. I seem to sense some dangers in trying to revive the classic view in its present form (at least, with its present language). I believe that Aulen himself realized the danger, for on the very last page of Christus Victor he writes this paragraph:

Let it be added, in conclusion, that if the classic idea of the Atonement ever again resumes a leading place in Christian theology, it is not likely that it will revert to precisely the same forms of expression that it has used in the past; its revival will not consist in a putting back of the clock. It is the idea itself that will be essentially the same; the fundamental idea that the Atonement is, above all, a movement of God to man, not in the first place a movement of man to God. We shall hear again its tremendous paradoxes; that God, the all-ruler, the Infinite; yet accepts the lowliness of the Incarnation; we shall hear again the old realistic message of the conflict of God with the dark, hostile forces of evil, and His victory over them by the Divine self-sacrifice; above all, we shall hear again the note of triumph. ².

1. Aulen, Christus Victor, p. 50.
2. Ibid., p. 176.

With Aulen, I think that the idea of the classic view will wield much influence in future theology, but I also agree with Aulen in the belief that the form of expression in the future must be different from what it has been in the past.

I said that I thought there were dangers involved in trying to revive the classic view in its former language, and the two most obvious dangers are (1) that the dualistic language used may be misleading, and (2) that the holiness of God, if merely taken for granted as the ground of Atonement, may drop out of sight. I would like to deal more specifically with these two points.

With respect to the first. When first reading about the classic view I was struck by the fact that the dramatic language and concepts were such as would befit epic poetry. The first poet that came to my mind was John Milton. and the specific poems, of course, were Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. The devil in Paradise Lost is a magnificent figure:

He scarce had ceas'd when the superiour Fiend
Was moving toward the shore; his ponderous shield
Ethereal temper, massy, large and round,
Behind him cast; the broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the Moon, whose Orb
Through Optic Glass the Tuscan Artist views
At Ev'ning from the top of Fesole,
Or in Valdarno, to descry new Lands,
Rivers or Mountains in her spotty Globe.
His Spear, to equal which the tallest Pine
Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the Mast
Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand,
He walkt with to support uneasie steps
Over the burning Marle, not like those steps
On Heavens Azure, and the torrid Clime
Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with Fire;
Nathless he so endur'd, till on the Beach
Of that inflamed Sea, he stood and call'd
His Legions, Angel Forms, who lay intrans't
Thick as Autumnal Leaves 1.

In speech, too, and in most of his actions the stature of the devil is so presented that Milton is hard put to make God compare. (Of course,

1. Milton, J., Paradise Lost, Book I, l.283f.

the devil is also given some very humiliating forms, such as those he assumes while tempting Eve.) Milton's purpose in giving the devil such stature was, of course, to give his poem the epic proportions he wanted it to assume and, in general, the epic qualities of Paradise Lost are maintained throughout.

But Paradise Regained is a sad anti-climax! And what makes it such is the fact that the book is brought to a close before the action really begins. Milton goes far enough to show Christ facing Satan in the wilderness temptations (with the stature of Satan carefully kept in check so that he may not steal the spotlight from Christ) and then ends abruptly by having heavenly choirs sing the praise of Christ and by having them announce ^{that} Christ will carry his initial triumph through to a complete victory.

And I've often wondered why Milton did not go and make his epic include the death on the Cross and the Resurrection. Surely there is plenty of epic material in the Passion story!

I believe that the reason for Milton's sudden stop is due to the fact that the gospels themselves have little mention of the devil as a person after the temptation narratives. While he was dealing with the story of the Fall as Genesis records it, and while he was dealing with the personal appearances of the devil in the Gospel story, he felt sure of his ground. He even takes the story, in a sentence, up to the account of Legion and the herd of swine; but the final drama on Calvary is thus tamely referred to:

. . . . Hereafter learn with awe
To dread the Son of God; he all unarm'd
Shall chase thee with the terror of his voice
From thy Demoniac holds, possession foul,
Thee and thy Legions 1.

and even that reference is not unambiguous, for it may just as easily refer to the casting out of the devils which possessed the man who inhabited the tombs in the country of the Gadarenés. 2.

1. Milton, Paradise Regained, Book IV, l. 625f.
2. Mark 5:1-14.

Did Milton know about the classic view of the Atonement? Most likely he did - if it was current in his time - for though he was not a theologian he was obviously no theological dunce. But, though he laid the foundations perfectly for a final epic struggle between Christ and the devil, when he had brought the story up to the final scene he left it there, perhaps preferring not to describe the final events of the earthly life of Christ in the language of a dualism.

Aulen is not unaware of the fact that the line between a limited dualism and an absolute dualism is hard to draw. His footnote on page 20 of Christus Victor makes that quite clear:

It will be well to explain at this point, once and for all, the sense in which the word Dualism is used in this book. It is not used in the sense of a metaphysical dualism between the Infinite and the finite, or between spirit and matter; nor, again, in the sense of the absolute Dualism between Good and Evil typical of the Zoroastrian and Manichaean teaching, in which Evil is treated as an eternal principle opposed to Good. It is used in the sense in which the idea constantly occurs in Scripture, of the opposition between God and that which in His own created world resists His will; between the Divine Love and the rebellion of created wills against Him. This Dualism is an altogether radical opposition, but it is not an absolute Dualism; for in the scriptural view evil has not an eternal existence. We shall see later that in the dominant theology of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there has been a tendency to confuse this scriptural idea of Dualism with the other two forms, and therefore an effort to escape from it and minimize its importance.

Perhaps the dualism in the classic view remains within these bounds, but I do think that there is often room for misunderstanding, especially in those places where sin becomes person^{ified}~~ized~~ in the devil.

Now I am aware of the difficulty of trying to put into words the tension created in the Godhead by the radical opposition between his nature and sin - between His will and that which in his own created world resists his will. But we should make our language

as unambiguous as possible. I would not presume to say that I have the answer to the language difficulty, but I shall at least make a suggestion in the following chapters.

Coming now to the second danger which I thought I detected in a resuscitation of the classic view with all its original language, namely, that the idea of the holiness of God may be lost if we merely assume that it is there as the ground of Atonement, I would like to point out that Aulen himself has taken steps to prevent this happening. Be it understood that I do not intend to deal with The Faith of the Christian Church in any detail, but it won't take long to point out that when Aulen incorporated the classic view into his systematic theology he was careful to see that holy love - or "divine love" as the translation phrases it - was specifically mentioned. To quote from just two paragraphs in section 26, "Christus Crucifixus - Christus Victor":

Christian faith perceives the work of Christ finished on the cross as an act of reconciliation, as a deed accomplished by divine love through which God effects reconciliation between himself and the world. 1.

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. . . But Christian faith cannot speak about Christ as Mediator in any other sense than as the means through which divine love realizes its purpose. This is the decisive viewpoint in the New Testament. As far as faith is concerned it is imperative that this work be understood as an act of which the divine and loving will itself is the subject. Reconciliation between the two hostile parties is based on the activity of one party, the God of Love. 2.

This emphasis is at least a step in the right direction, and Aulen injects a little of it at intervals in order to keep his views of Atonement in line with his conception of God, which is based on holiness. 3. This helps to overcome the second danger, but

1. Aulen, G., The Faith of the Christian Church, (tr. by Wahlstrom and Arden), Philadelphia, Muhlenberg Press, 1948, p.223f.
2. Ibid., p.225.
3. See Ibid., p.120ff.

it doesn't eliminate the danger posed by the fact that the language of the classic view can too easily be understood as referring to a dualism between the forces of good and the forces of evil, that is, as an absolute dualism such as the old philosophers revelled in.

My suggestion is that we try to retain all of the advantages of the classic view by insisting on an explanation of the Atonement which keeps the act of God to the fore, and which sufficiently emphasizes the gravity of sin, the magnitude of Christ's work, and the defeat of sin, but that we seek if possible to refrain from language which tends to objectify evil to the point that it becomes ^{ified} ~~personalized~~ in a Being who has set himself up in opposition to God. The following chapters do not claim to present a finished explanation of this sort; they merely investigate the possibilities and point to other efforts which have been made along similar lines. whs

CHAPTER V. The Holy.

Since, as I have earlier acknowledged^{1.}, it is very difficult to explain the tension in the Godhead caused by human sin without using the language of at least a limited dualism, would it not be possible to keep the dualism within bounds by using "holiness" and "sin" as ^{the} opposing elements? There is an opposition of long standing here and, in order to demonstrate this fact, I want to review the history of "holiness".

Rudolf Otto's treatment of the subject^{2.} may not be the most thorough one available, but in both range and detail it best suits my present purpose, though I may find cause to supplement it at some points.

A reference to a concordance will show immediately how often 'holy' and 'God' were mentioned on the one breath by the writers of the Old Testament. Everything intimately connected with the worship of Yahweh must be kept holy, "for I the Lord am holy"^{3.}; and the Psalms and Isaiah constantly refer to God as "the Holy One of Israel". No doubt the content of the word increased as time went on (this will be shown), but the fact remains that the concept of holiness is inseparable from the idea of God in our Scriptures.

Otto naturally seeks, early in his book, to give a working definition of the word 'holiness' or 'the Holy':

. . . we have come to use the words 'holy', 'sacred' (heilig) in an entirely derivative sense, quite different from that which they originally bore. We generally take 'holy' as meaning 'completely good'; it is the absolute moral attribute, denoting the consummation of moral goodness. In this sense Kant calls the will which remains unwaveringly obedient to the moral law from the motive of duty a 'holy' will; here clearly we have simply the perfectly moral will. In the same way we speak of the holiness or sanctity of duty or law, meaning merely that they are imperative upon conduct and universally obligatory.

But this common usage of the term is inaccurate. It is true that all this moral significance is contained in the

1. Page 21 of this paper.
2. Otto, R., The Idea of the Holy, (tr. Harvey), Oxford U. Press, 1950.
3. Leviticus 20:26.

word 'holy', but it includes in addition - as even we cannot but feel - a clear overplus of meaning, and this it is now our task to isolate. Nor is this a later or acquired meaning; rather, 'holy', or at least the equivalent words in Latin and Greek, in Semitic and other ancient languages, denoted first and foremost only this overplus; if the ethical element was present at all, at any rate it was not original and never constituted the whole meaning of the word . . . 1.

Norman H. Snaithe does not entirely agree with Otto. Snaithe has made a word study of qodesh (in which, incidentally, he adopts the view that it refers to 'separation'; here he agrees with Baudissin "Der begriff der Heiligkeit in Alten Testament", Studien zur semitischen Religionsgeschichte, 1878, ii, 20), and he has this to say about the moral or ethical content in the earliest meaning of the word:

There is a . . . qualification which we would make in connection with Baudissin's monograph. This concerns his emphatic claim that the word had originally no moral content whatever. Noldeke (Lift. Centralblatt, No. 12, cols. 361f) in his review of the monograph, noted this statement particularly and with strong approval, as being the most important conclusion which Baudissin reached. The same statement has been made with the starkest emphasis by Otto in more recent times. But the terms of the statement need careful definition. All three writers, Baudissin, Noldeke, and Otto, are thinking of morality and ethics in the developed modern sense of the words. In the way in which they used the words, the statement is, of course, undoubtedly correct, but they have forgotten that there has been a long history in the development of ethics also. It is true that in primitive religion "the idea of sin, in any proper sense of the word, did not exist at all". But it is also true that there was no proper sense of Deity either. Further, as soon as there was any idea of an Other, however well or ill conceived, there was also a recognition of the danger and 'wrongness' (in a broad, almost pre-ethical sort of sense) of breaking a taboo, or infringing some tribal sanction. It may be said that this is a non-ethical wrongness. We would say pre-ethical, for everything is embryo here. We are dealing with embryo notions of qodesh, and equally with embryo notions of ethics. We maintain that the embryo qodesh (holiness) involves an embryo ethical content and embryo ideas of sin. If sin did not exist in the proper sense of the word, then neither did qodesh, and we have as little right, or as much right, to talk about the one as about the other. We therefore deny Baudissin's actual statement, though we fully accept the implications he meant to convey. The word qodesh originally had no moral content in our developed sense of the word 'moral' but it did involve pre-ethical restrictions, as undeveloped in content as itself. 2.

1. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, p.5.
2. Snaithe, N.H., The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament, Philadelphia, Westminster, 1946, p.37f.

I am glad to note Snaith's correction of Otto's assumption, because I am very much interested in the developing ethical content of 'holy' and am glad to find some support for the view that this aspect of the meaning was present from the beginning. Nevertheless, I would like to make a closer examination of that overplus of meaning which Otto claimed to be original.

In order to isolate this overplus from the present meaning of 'holy' Otto conscripts a Latin word numen and creates from it the corresponding numinous. Then the various elements that go into the compound and complex numinous are analyzed out and examined individually.

The first of these elements is 'creature-feeling' which is a religious self-consciousness of one's own insignificance and dependence in the presence of an absolute power of some kind. This feeling occurs only in the presence of something objective, that is, something outside oneself, and is well illustrated in the feeling which caused Abraham, in his pleading for Sodom, to say "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." 1.

Two elements are combined in the next phrase which Otto uses, the 'mysterium tremendum'. The 'mysterium' is of the nature of a 'wholly other', something which remains forever and completely beyond our intellectual grasp. This is an essential to a god who would retain his godhead, for, as Otto indicates in a quote from Tersteegen, "a God comprehended is no God". 1.

But the adjective 'tremendum' seems to have a greater content than the 'mysterium', and there are several meanings contained in it. We may quickly dispose of 'overpoweringness' or 'majesty' which is that in the Godhead producing 'creature-feeling' in us. But the ideas of 'awefulness' and 'energy' which are inter-related, are worth a little further investigation.

1. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, p.25.

'Awefulness' was probably the very root of religion for primeval man who felt within him a daemonic dread he could not even begin to understand or explain, and which was vastly different from even the most intense natural fear. A man might be terrified of some natural threat without feeling the least impulse to shudder, but this 'awe' or religious dread inspired by the sense of *tremendum* is such that it can make the strongest quail before it in hair-raising terror; and yet, in some of its manifestations it may be but a gentle agitation, fleeting like a shadow across the mood of a moment. The fear of Yahweh comes within this category of 'fear' which is more than fear proper.

The Hebrew *hiddish* (hallow) is an example. To 'keep a thing holy in the heart' means to mark it off by a feeling of peculiar dread, not to be mistaken for any ordinary dread, that is, to appraise it by the category of the numinous. But the Old Testament throughout is rich in parallel expressions for this feeling. Specially noticeable is the *emah* of Yahweh ('fear of God'), which Yahweh can pour forth, dispatching almost like a demon, and which seizes upon a man with paralyzing effect. It is closely related to the *θεῖμα τῶν ἁγίων* of the Greeks. Compare Exodus 23:27; 'I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come . . .'; also Job 9:34; 13:21 ('let not his fear terrify me'; 'let not thy dread make me afraid'). Here we have a terror fraught with an inward shuddering such as not even the most menacing and overpowering created thing can instil. It has something spectral in it.¹

In the attribute of *tremendum* which he calls 'awefulness' Otto also includes the 'wrath of God', and he sees some analogy between the wrath and another attribute which he calls 'energy'. These two, I believe, are even more closely linked than he indicates. It seems almost as if the wrath (still, in this stage, a pre-Christian idea of 'wrath') triggers off a disastrous manifestation of the energy. W.C. Graham¹ has pointed out on numerous occasions that 'the Holy' as it was originally conceived by the Old Testament writers was almost an impersonal force - "as energy is conceived by present day physicists". Many of the rituals against which Amos protested so bitterly were, according to Dr. Graham, designed to get this amoral superforce to

1. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, p.13f.
2. Rev. W.C. Graham, M.A., S.T.M., Ph.D., D.D., F.R.C.S., Principal of United College, Winnipeg.

keep the seasons cycling properly and to provide an abundance of the material things craved by man. Certainly there was nothing particularly moral about 'the holy' at that time; rather it was a force which man could not hope to understand, a force in whose presence he felt afraid and insignificant, a force which he could only hope to placate and perhaps to control for his own material ends. They earnestly sought to avoid stirring up the wrath of this superforce, for his energy and power would then be manifested by a refusal to cause a return of the seasons.

But possibly the passage that best reveals the amoral quality of both the great potential energy and the wrath is found in the story in I Chronicles 13 concerning the moving of the ark of the Lord from Kirjath-Jearim to the house of Obed-Edom.

And when they came unto the threshing-floor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled.

And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark; and there he died before God. ¹.

Poor Uzza was trying to prevent the ark from suffering the indignity of being toppled over by the clumsy oxen, and with no thought of curiosity or sacrilege he put out his hand to steady it. But he made the mistake of touching something holy, and for no other reason than this the wrath of God released the bolt that killed him.

It would be exceeding the bounds of reasonable speculation, perhaps, to attribute the misfortune to young Eutychus in Acts 20:9 to the working of such wrath, but I am not so sure that what happened to Ananias and his wife (Acts 5:1-10) was not of the same order as what happened to Uzza. Peter scolded Ananias for lying to the Holy Ghost, and the poor fellow fell down dead. Three hours later Sapphira his wife suffered the same fate. The difference between this story and

1. I Chronicles 13:9.

the story of Uzza is immediately apparent, for Uzza had not offended in a moral or ethical way, but Ananias and Sapphira had. Obviously, by this time, 'the holy' had taken on a developed ethical quality as well as the 'energy' and 'wrath' and other attributed previously referred to.

Since the moral and ethical content will interest us from now on, we might profitably investigate the point at which this quality came to the surface in the idea of the holy. Otto will not be quite so helpful in this quest, since he is more concerned with the numinous, the other-than-ethical elements.

A reading of Isaiah 6 concerning Isaiah's vision in the temple shows that all of the elements described by Otto are present in Isaiah's idea of the holy. For purposes of examination I will quote the first eight verses as they are translated by Alex R. Gordon in the American Translation.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and uplifted, with the skirts of his robe filling the temple. Over him stood seraphim, each having six wings, with two of which he covered his face, with two he covered his loins, and with two he hovered in flight. And they kept calling to one another, and saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the sound of those who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

Then said I,
"Woe to me! for I am lost;
For I am a man of unclean lips,
And I dwell among a people of unclean lips;
For mine eyes have seen the king,
The Lord of hosts."

Then flew one of the seraphim to me, with a red-hot stone in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar; and he touched my mouth with it, and said,

"See! this has touched your lips;
So your guilt is removed, and your sin forgiven."

Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying,

"Whom shall I send,
And who will go for us?"

Whereupon I said,
"Here am I! Send me."

All the numinous elements are here and pervade the whole passage to such an extent that it would be very difficult to isolate them. Yet it is worth while trying to point out the portions which best illustrate them individually.

The element of 'fascination' (the one element isolated by Otto which I did not specifically mention in my earlier summary) is evident in the remarkably clear picture which Isaiah has retained of the throne, the train and the seraphim. So vivid was his vision that even his description of it takes on life and reality and becomes, in its turn, fascinating for us who read.

The 'mysterium tremendum' element is nowhere better shown than in the shaking of the foundations and the filling of the temple with smoke, in the midst of which God remained - revealed and yet unrevealed. The 'majesty' of God and the feeling of creaturehood that came to Isaiah as he found himself in such a presence are evident in his sense of dismay at having been a witness to such things. But something else is also evident in his spoken thoughts, namely, the fact that all is lost for him because he is in the presence of one who has the power to annihilate him, and that even this mere contact of his with anything so holy is enough to kindle the wrath and release destruction upon him.

But there is another point worth noting. What is the chief reason for his dismay? Nothing less than the fact that he is of unclean lips, sinful; and he is one of a whole nation of sinful people: The ethical element has arrived! This God who is majestic, mysterious, creative of tremulous terror, full of destructive energy and wrath - this being who was hymned by the seraphim as "Holy, holy, holy" - is One such that a man of sin dare not be found in his presence. And

before God could have any communication with Isaiah his sin had to be purged by contact with the red-hot coal from off the altar. Only after this cleansing could Isaiah stand to be spoken to! Had God spoken earlier his very voice would have destroyed the sinner to whom he spoke.

It seems as though holiness and sin could not co-exist. That fact explains the discomfiture and dismay of Isaiah and his certainty of doom when he found the Holy One of Israel in the temple, and Isaiah's reaction serves as a reasonably reliable indication of the extent to which the ethical element in 'the holy' had emerged by that time.

ADDITIONAL NOTE "A".WRATH OF GOD.

The "wrath of God" has also undergone a development in the course of the centuries. In the Old Testament especially the wrath is often given an anthropomorphic twist, and it becomes the anger of a displeased holy God which results in some action not conducive to what man considers his own well-being.

In Christian thought, the wrath of God is briefly defined as

. . . the qualitative intensity of the reaction of God in the fundamental character of His Being as Eternal and Sovereign Holy Love against all that is not in harmony with His will. ¹.

The wrath is sometimes seen as giving over to self-destruction whatever resists it (Romans 1:18ff.) but the relationship between 'love' and 'wrath' is retained in Christian thinking by the affirmation that the wrath is in the service of God to warn or chasten those who are falling away; hence it may even be the means of ultimate redemption or sanctification.

But if God is to be true to His holy self he cannot abrogate his wrath against sin; he can only act to overcome and destroy it. From this arises the difficulty of expressing the holiness and the love of God in a manner which brings out the immanent tension between them without resulting in an outright dualism. The tension of course is due to the fact that we conceive of God's love as seeking to restore the broken fellowship between man and God, while his holiness demands that wrath take effect against man's sin to destroy it.

Christian faith could not endure any doctrinal formulation in which the Unity of the Being of God would be defeated by the alleged antinomy of two eternal 'sovereignties within God, i.e., Sovereign Love and 'sovereign' wrath. For while the character of Holiness is eternal in the eternally Sovereign Love, the wrath of that Holy Love must pass away from God's relationship to the penitent man who is reconciled to God through Christ. ².

1. Ferm, V., Encyclopedia of Religion, New York, The Philosophical Library, 1945, p. 831.
2. Ibid., p.832.

Theologians will never cease trying to make more clear and meaningful the manner in which this wrath does take effect, so that sin is adequately dealt with and so that men may be reconciled to a God of Holy Love. Aulen has shown us one way in which Christians have explained this Atonement, and I have suggested that perhaps the core of that classic view is acceptable but that it might be possible, by the use of different terms, to overcome what could be interpreted as an absolute dualism and to make more obvious the emphasis on holiness.

I think, perhaps, that I am now in a position to enlarge on this suggestion.

CHAPTER VI. Holiness, Sin and Atonement.

Christian thought deals in paradoxes and tensions, and especially is this so when discussing God's reaction to sin. Even the layman asks why there should be sin in a world created by a completely good, omnipotent God, and philosophers or religion have spilled much ink in trying to prove that God can be either completely good or omnipotent, but not both.

Perhaps it is a desire to avoid that kind of an argument which leads me to reject the classic tendency to objectify sin to the point of referring to it as a person - the devil. Whether we like it or not, the tension will have to be discussed (if it is to be discussed at all) in terms which will include separate nomenclature for the two opposite poles. But I am hopeful that a sufficient explanation of the Atonement can be made by using the words 'holiness' and 'sin' to designate these poles.

Of course, this is no new suggestion, for these words have often been thus used. But I was much attracted to the manner in which they were employed by P.T. Forsyth in the early part of this century, and the conservative strain to which I have fallen heir leads me to investigate his ideas of the Atonement and to compare and contrast with the more recent expressions. In short, I am never willing to adopt an idea or a book on first reading (especially a new, untried idea or book), and I interpret this to mean that I tend to be a critic rather than a creative thinker. But when I note the rapidity with which new ideas - in theology as in other fields - come to the fore, blaze for a time, and then fizzle out, I feel that the critic has a place in the scheme of things - his task being to damp the ardor and jar the memories of those who are too easily carried away on the crest of the latest idea.

The classic idea is not new, of course, but the expression of it in our time is relatively new for us. Hence I reacted to it as I would to something brand new, and I sought for a few more ideas on the Atonement to rub together with it. Forsyth provided some of these ideas.

Many theologians think of Atonement as including Reconciliation. I would like to make the distinction that Forsyth makes. I do not mean that I accept his views or definitions in their entirety and without question, but I think we can profitably draw a distinction between reconciliation as the end, and atonement as the means to that end. Reconciliation means the restoration of the original fellowship existing between man and God which was destroyed by man's sin, and the Atonement refers to the work of Christ by which sin was fully accounted for and the reconciliation achieved.

We earlier noted Anselm's dilemma; he thought he had to choose between a lax love on the part of God, forgiving sins without reckoning with them at all; or the offering of a suitable sacrifice which would yield God the satisfaction he must demand if He is to deal with sin as he should. The righteousness of God, according to this penitential view, demands vengeance. Such a view gives us the impression that God is rather childish in his determination not to let a personal wrong go unpunished, though the jarring lines of the picture are softened somewhat by the insistence that the love of God is simultaneously pressing for a restoration of the broken fellowship. At

But suppose, as was brought out in the closing paragraphs of the last chapter, the nature of God is such that he cannot have fellowship with anything sinful. ¹ Suppose, instead of talking about righteousness

1. This, of course, is not the only way of looking at it. There are those who seek to build an explanation of the atonement around the idea that the holiness of God is the only thing that can come into the presence of sin without being contaminated by it.

demanding 'satisfaction', we talk about 'holiness' and its complete alienation from sin. Suppose, instead of talking about 'righteousness' and 'love' as pulling God in opposite directions, we talk about the 'holy love' of God which does everything that is necessary to bring about the restoration of fellowship.

At this point we come face to face with the supreme paradox of Christianity - and Christianity is full of paradoxes which we can never resolve, but which must remain as our best means of explaining what is almost beyond our comprehension and certainly beyond our powers of explication. This paradox is that of a 'holy' God sanctifying the unholy, forgiving the unforgiveable, restoring to fellowship that which has irretrievably separated itself from God.

For man had sinned, and that not in the sense of giving in to any objective of demonic power outside himself. For if man merely yielded to an irresistible external pressure, the responsibility for sin would be removed from the shoulders of man and laid at the door of the devil. No, mankind sinned in that of his own choice he opposed the free will which God had given him to the sovereign will of God. ¹. With this sin the holy love of God had to deal ere the restoration of fallen mankind was accomplished. Against this sin the wrath of God must take effect; for God is no fond parent with the type of love, more tender than wise, that simply refrains from judging a wayward child but rather forgives without weighing the sin, and thus contributes to the child's moral degradation. God's holy love is vastly different. Sin must be judged! God's holiness demands that! And only God can judge.

1. This, of course, is not the only Biblical explanation of Sin; nor does it seek to take full account of social and other pressures which are brought to bear on the individual. But what this concept does bring out is the fact of the individual's responsibility; and, though social pressures are sometimes very powerful, they can never rightly be termed irresistible and the yielding to them amounts to opposing man's will to God's.

P.T. Forsyth puts the matter this way:

When (God's) holiness is wounded or defied, could God be content to take us back with a mere censure or other penance and the declaration that He was holy? We could not respect a God like that. Servants despise indulgent masters. Sinners would despise a God who would take us back when we wept, and speak thus: "Let us say no more about it. You did very wrong, and you have suffered for it, and I; but let us forget it now you have come back." We should not respect that. We should go on, as servants do in the case I have named, to take more liberties still. He would be a God who only talked His holiness and did not put it into force. Now if our repentance were our atonement, and the Cross were simply an object-lesson to us of God's patient and tender mercy to penitence, He would be talking, I said, and not acting. He would mention the gravity of our sin very impressively, but that would not be establishing goodness actually in the history and experience of man. The sinner's reconciliation to a God of holy love could not take place if guilt were not destroyed, if judgment did not take place on due scale, if the wrath of God did not somehow take real effect. ¹.

And this wrath of God is not merely petty passion, or outraged jealousy and pride, but it is the normal reaction of a holy God against sin, and sooner or later it must release against this sin, to destroy it, all the destructive energy of the same God Isaiah saw in the temple. And that, I think, is the story of the Cross; there the wrath of God, who had truly judged sin, released against Him who was made sin on our behalf the destruction which sin merited and holiness demanded.

The death of Christ was thus something more than a mere sacrifice offered by man to propitiate an irate deity. The idea that man can work his own salvation had an innings in our generation and the one previous, but is now fairly well discredited. Only God can save man from the effects of sin.

The sinner's reconcilment with a holy God could only be effected by God. And I press the effectuation of it. The Cross did not mean news that God was willing to receive us on terms which another than God should meet; nor that God sat at home, like the prodigal father, waiting to be gracious when we came. But with God to will is to do; and the God who willed man's salvation must himself effect it.

1. Forsyth, P.T., The Work of Christ, London, Independent Press, Ltd., p. 131f. (First published, 1910.)

Only he who had lost us could find us, only he who was wronged could forgive, only the Holy One could satisfy his own holiness. To forgive he must redeem. Fully to forgive the guilt he must redeem from the curse. And only the creator knew the creature so as to redeem. And to know mankind he must live in mankind. To offer for man he must be man. Only God Himself with us, and no creature of His, could meet the soul's last need, and restore a creation undone. ¹.

In other words, God, and not man, was the Reconciler.

This, of course, is wholly in line with Paul's claim that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself". ². But in what sense was God the Reconciled? Both Forsyth and Denney claim that the atonement made by Christ produced a change in the attitude of God toward sinful man, though they are very careful in their choice of language. Denney says as follows:

It is true that in the New Testament God is never spoken of as the object of reconciliation. Man is reconciled to God, but we never read that God is reconciled to man. God is always the subject of the verb 'to reconcile'. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself through Christ." "God was, in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." This is the uniform style of speech, if we can speak of uniformity when we have only one or two instances to argue from. What underlies it, of course, is the sense that God takes the initiative in the work of reconciliation, that Christ is the gift of God, and the gift of His love. It is on this free gift that everything in Christianity depends But the inference drawn from this, that it is wrong to speak of God in the passive as reconciled, surely overlooks the fact that it is possible at the same time to love and to be justly estranged; yes, and at the same time also to work for the winning again of the offender against love. When we say that because God is love, immutably and eternally love, therefore He does not need to be and cannot be reconciled, we are imputing immutability to God in a sense which practically denies that He is a living God. If sin makes a difference to God - and that it does is the solemn fact which makes reconciliation of interest to us - then God is not immutable, and His love is not immutable, in the sense assumed. He has experiences in His love. To have His love wounded by sin is one, and to forgive sin is another. If to be forgiven is a real experience, so is to forgive; it makes a difference to God as well as to us. ³.

1. Forsyth, P.T., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, London, The Pilgrim Press, 1909, p. 85.
2. II Corinthians 5:19.
3. Denney, J., The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1917, p.236f.

I think I should go on immediately to quote Forsyth, and then comment on both of them at once. Forsyth writes:

I said that the work of Christ meant not only an action on man, it meant an action on God. Yet I pointed out that it was more false than true to say that Christ and His death reconciled God to man. I said that we must in some way construe the matter as God reconciling Himself. It was out of the question to think of any reconciliation effected upon God by a third party standing between God and man. God could not be reconciled by man nor by one neither God nor man. The only alternative, therefore, is that God should reconcile himself. But is there not something in that which seems a little forced and unnatural? Did God have to compel Himself to change His feeling about us? Did He force himself to be gracious? There is something wrong here surely, something that needs adjustment, explanation, restatement in some way.

Are we obliged to suppose that if God did reconcile Himself it was in the sense of changing His own heart and affection towards us? I have pointed out that the hearts of God towards us, His gracious disposition towards us, was from His own holy eternity; that grace is of the unchangeable. God in that respect had not to be changed. Was He changed at all then? If His heart was not changed, what was changed in connection with the work of Christ?

There was a change. And I am going to ask you to recognize here another of those valuable distinctions of which the man without the evangelical experience and its theological discipline is so impatient

The distinction I ask you to observe is between a change of feeling and a change of treatment, between affection and discipline, between friendly feeling and friendly relations. God's feeling toward us never needed to be changed. But God's treatment of us, God's practical relation to us - that had to change. I have pointed out that the relation between God and man in reconciliation is a personal one, and that, where you have real personal relation and personal communion, if there is change on one side there must be change on the other. The question is as to the nature of the change. We have barred out the possibility of its being a change of affection, of hatred into grace. God never ceased to love us even when He was most angry and severe with us.

. . . God needed no placation, but He could not exercise His kindness to the prodigal world, He certainly could not restore communion with its individuals, without doing some act which permanently altered the relation. ¹.

Obviously, what both these men are trying to avoid is a bifurcation of the Godhead, a difficulty that always arises if we talk about 'attributes' of God, such as 'holiness' and 'love' or even when we just talk about him as 'Reconciler' and 'Reconciled'. The fact

1. Forsyth, P.T., The Work of Christ, pp.103-105, 109.

that both Denney and Forsyth take such pains to deal at length with this subject of God as passive in the reconciliation (i.e., God the Reconciled as contrasted with the Reconciler) indicates that they sense the danger of confusion and misconception at this point, and shows, furthermore, that we are very near the limit of our powers of comprehension and expression. Such is always our experience when dealing with the Godhead. But the point they try to make is valid. It is not a case of God being reconciled in the sense of turning from anger to love, but both the anger and the love are simultaneously operative and, I shall attempt to point out, simultaneously fulfilled (is this a better word than 'satisfied'?) in the Cross.

We have so far in this chapter sought to establish the fact that man has sinned to the extent that he is incapable of putting himself right with God, and the further fact that God himself, in the person of Christ, has stepped in to be both Reconciler and Reconciled in restoring the broken fellowship. Now we must honestly face the question as to how the death of Christ brought about that reconciliation.

The question concerning the death is larger than merely asking why the Atonement could not be accomplished in some other way than the way of the Cross. We can safely say that the Cross was the supreme proof that the wages of sin is death, and not merely physical death, but that more terrible death which is separation from God. This is the death which Christ suffered; there is little doubt that such a death was assumed by Mark when he recorded that cry from the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"¹

But the larger question concerns the manner in which the death of One could bring about the reconciliation of God with all. For certainly there is no hint in the New Testament that Christ died to save just a few individuals. "God sent not his son into the world

1. Mark 15:34 and Matthew 27:46.

to condemn the world," says John, "but that the world through him might be saved." 1. Paul also indicates the 'for-allness' of Christ's work when he writes "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 2.

It would seem, then, that the whole world was under condemnation; we are all tainted with sin. The very fact that we are of the same race as Adam means that his sin is also our sin, and that not because God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, but because the human nature that made Adam to sin is likewise our nature. The same perverse will (and the same seeking to be God) that drove him from the garden also drives us out of fellowship with God. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God". 3.

If sin is thus on a corporate scale, Atonement must be on the same basis. The one making atonement must represent the whole human race, and anybody who applies the term 'Messiah', 'the Anointed One' or 'Christ' to Jesus should understand that in so doing he is referring to him in just such a sense.

This is not the place to attempt a full exposition of the term 'Messiah', but it should surely be pointed out that from the very earliest of recorded history the idea of one person being 'the focus of the corporate personality' has played a large part in the thinking of civilized peoples. Ignoring, for obvious reasons of time and space, the earlier manifestations of this idea in the ancient world, we cannot fail to see its bearings on the Hebrew kingship in the time of David and on all Hebrew hopes since that time. And nowhere is the 'one for all' idea better expressed, in the context of the present thesis, than in the 'suffering servant' passage of Isaiah found in the fifty-third chapter:

1. John 3:17
2. I Corinthians 15:22
3. Romans 3:23.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.¹

Anybody who uses the name 'Christ' in relation to Jesus is ascribing to him by connotation just such a meaning as the old Hebrews found in their Messiah - one who was divinely appointed and anointed; one who should represent them all; one who, among other things, would be for their corporate healing. Our Christ is more than that - but he is that!

Christ, then, represented the whole human race, but not in the sense that the human race had chosen him to represent them. If such had been the case, his death would have no value for us. It gets its value only from the fact that he became Head of the race by voluntary self-identification and took upon himself the curse and the judgment. He became sin on our behalf and in one great act which was a supreme confession of the holiness of God he paid the penalty of sin.

The use of the word 'penalty' requires some explanation. Because I feel that I can put the case no better, I will here quote Forsyth on this subject:

The sacrifice of Christ was a penal sacrifice. In what sense is that so? We can begin by clearing the ground, by asking, In what sense is it not true that the sacrifice of Christ was penal? Well, it cannot be true in the sense that God punished Christ. That is an absolutely unthinkable thing. How could God punish Him in whom He was always well pleased? The two things are a contradiction in terms. And it cannot be true in the sense that Christ was in our stead in such a way as to exclude and exempt us. The sacrifice of Christ, then, was penal not in the sense of God so punishing Christ that there is left us only religious enjoyment, but in this sense. There is a penalty and a curse for sin; and

1. Isaiah 53:4-6.

Christ consented to enter that region. Christ entered voluntarily into the pain and horror which is sin's penalty from God. Christ, by the deep intimacy of His sympathy with men, entered deeply into the blight and judgment which must be entailed by man's sin if God is a holy and therefore a judging God. It is impossible for us to say that God was angry with Christ; but still Christ entered the wrath of God . . . and from it He confessed in free action, He praised and justified by act, before the world, and on the scale of all the world, the holiness of God. You can therefore say that although Christ was not punished by God, He bore God's penalty upon sin. 1.

With an understanding, then, of Christ's relationship to us as our Messiah, and with the above understanding of the manner in which he bore the penalty of our sin, we can surely see that God, in Christ, was working for our salvation while we were yet sinners. His holy love acted thus in order to judge sin, punish it, destroy it, and restore the broken fellowship between God and man.

So then, we have Christ as representative of the whole human race, suffering the penalty of sin, which is death and separation from God, not because God demands such in the way of retribution, but as a confession of the holy love of God which must deal with sin even while it seeks a reconciliation. Says Forsyth:

Get rid of the idea that judgment is chiefly retribution and directly infliction. Realize that it is, positively, the establishing and the securing of eternal righteousness and holiness. 2.

1. P.T. Forsyth, The Work of Christ, p. 146f.
2. Ibid., p. 135.

CHAPTER VII. Holiness and Righteousness.

It is interesting to notice that, in the quote with which I finished the last chapter, righteousness and holiness are used in one sentence in a manner which indicates that they have much in common. In the course of this chapter I hope to be able to make this relationship more clear.

As we dealt with the contrast between holiness and sin, it must have been apparent that some of the numinous elements of the holy were a little overshadowed by a coming to the fore of the ethical elements. It seems as if the ethical elements which came into the word, or came to the fore in the word, about the time of Israel's critical prophets continued to grow and develop until they took over a large portion of the meaning of the word 'holy'. This trait is especially noticeable in the New Testament.

That is not to say that there is nothing of the numinous in the New Testament. The story of the Transfiguration, the terror of the disciples when they saw Jesus walking toward them on the sea, the reports of the terrifying natural happenings at the time of the Crucifixion, the outburst of the centurion "Truly this man was the Son of God" ¹, the numerous references to the Holy Ghost and the Holy Spirit, and the special manifestation of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; all these have about them the quality of the numinous.

But the other element, which I have called the 'ethical' element, is thoroughly mixed with it. Otto puts the case thus:

"I am a man of unclean lips and dwell among a people of unclean lips." "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." So say respectively Isaiah and Peter, when the numinous reality encounters them as a present fact of consciousness. In both cases this self-depreciating feeling-response is marked by an immediate, almost instinctive, spontaneity. It is not based on deliberation, nor does it follow any rule, but breaks, as it were, palpitant from the soul -- like a direct reflex movement at the stimulation of the numinous. It does not spring from the consciousness of

1. Mark 15:39.

some committed transgression, but rather is an immediate datum given with the feeling of the numen; it proceeds to 'disvalue' together with the self the tribe to which the person belongs, and indeed, together with that, all existence in general. Now it is to-day generally agreed that, all this being the case, these outbursts of feeling are not simply, and probably at first not at all, moral depreciations, but belong to a quite special category of valuation and appraisal. The feeling is beyond question not that of the transgression of the moral law, however evident it may be that such a transgression, where it has occurred, will involve it as a consequence; it is the feeling of absolute 'profaneness'. 1.

In another place in the same chapter, Otto has one more paragraph which is worth the quoting:

... The God of the New Testament is not less holy than the God of the Old Testament, but more holy. The interval between the creature and Him is not diminished but made absolute; the unworthiness of the profane in contrast to Him is not extenuated but enhanced. That God none the less admits access to Himself and intimacy with Himself is not a mere matter of course; it is a grace beyond our power to apprehend, a prodigious paradox. To take this paradox out of Christianity is to make it shallow and superficial beyond recognition. But if this is so, the intuitions concerning, and the need felt for, 'covering' and 'atonement' result immediately. And the divinely appointed means of God's self-revelation, where experienced and appraised as such - 'the Word', 'the Spirit', 'the Person of Christ', - become that to which man 'flees', in which he finds refuge, and in which he 'hides' himself, in order that, consecrated and cleansed of his 'profaneness' thereby, he may come into the presence of Holiness itself. 2.

Possibly the first thing we notice about this 'profaneness' as Otto describes it is that it is common to the whole human race, and seems to be of a piece with human nature. Tillich explains that originally the word 'profane' meant 'in front of the doors' (of the holy) 3. or, we might say, 'outside the holy' and this meaning may be placed opposite to the meaning of 'separate' often given the word 'holy'. But Tillich goes on to explain that the word 'profane' has been given connotations of 'unclean' and for this reason he sees fit to recommend the use of the word 'secular' to indicate the former meaning of 'profane'

1. Otto, R., The Idea of the Holy, p.50f.
2. Ibid., p.56f.
3. Tillich, P., Systematic Theology, (Vol. 1), Chicago U. Press, 1951. p. 217f.

since 'secular' has not as yet been invaded by connotations of 'unclean'.

But whether we consider 'profane' in its original meaning as 'other than holy', or whether we take full cognizance of the more recent connotation, one of the elements that constitutes the feeling of profaneness which causes us to 'disvalue' ourselves is undoubtedly the perverseness of our free will, leading us to oppose our wills to God and to commit numerous sins. Now I do not say that this element was immediately present to Peter when he broke out with the expression that Otto quotes, but if Peter ever stopped afterwards to analyze the reasons for his outburst he would undoubtedly find that a sense of his own perverseness was a partial cause. And it may well be, with us as with Isaiah and Peter, that what we confess is not so much our separate individual sins as "our sinful nature, prone to evil and slothful in good" ¹. which leads us into sins. It is with such as that the holy love of God must deal, despite what Otto calls 'the increased interval' between God and the creature found in the New Testament.

Why is the interval increased? Is it not because of the increasing emphasis laid on the ethical aspects of 'the holy'? And is not the God of the New Testament more holy than the God of the Old Testament not merely because of his reaction to sin as demonstrated in the death of Christ but also because of the love which motivates Him?

And yet, despite this claim that the New Testament God is more holy, we find much less frequent reference to 'holiness'. Is it possible that some other word is doing service in its stead? Is it possible that some word which better describes the ethical side of God's holiness is put to work? I think so; and I think that word is 'righteousness'.

But we must not consider this 'righteousness' as being a mere standard which has been set up by God and to achieve which men must vainly strive, and against which man will be summarily judged.

1. From "A Confession of Sin", #771, The Hymnary, Toronto, United Church Publishing House, 1950.

God's righteousness is something much more dynamic than that. For me it has a content very close to 'holy love'. As a matter of fact, I think that if we distill out from 'holy' those ethical elements which were brought to light by the prophets - the elements which are most concerned with the sin of man as distinct from his mere creaturehood - and allow the word 'holy' to stand for just those ethical elements for the sake of our present discussion, then the word 'righteousness' (i.e. 'righteousness of God') can almost be substituted for 'holy love', especially in Paul - most especially in Romans.

Now it has been said that if we could understand exactly what Paul meant by 'righteousness' we would have a key to the whole understanding of Paul. Many verbal battles have been waged concerning the exact meaning of the word both in Paul and elsewhere; some are content to see it as an act by which God 'imputes' a righteousness to unrighteous man, a means by which man is either made righteous or declared righteous. Others see it as an act in which God establishes a righteousness in which man by faith participates. Finer and finer distinctions are made all the time, and every new interpretation seems capable of some measure of 'proof'.

But there's no doubt about the dynamic nature of 'righteousness', at least in the thinking of Paul. In writing on this subject, Elias Andrews deals first with the righteousness of the law, and then says:

There is, however, another form of righteousness, which has done "what the law . . . could not do" . . . and this righteousness has been revealed in Christ, even the righteousness of God. It is not earned, it has no reciprocal basis, it is not something one can establish for himself in any way whatsoever. God reveals it and wills to fulfill it through his redemptive purpose, which is to bring man into right relationship with himself. This has been accomplished in Christ, and now, through being justified, that is, being declared righteous, by faith, men share in this righteousness which is not their own, but "that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God." (Phil 3:9)

This 'righteousness from God', which now becomes 'the righteousness of man', indicates that man is in right relationship to God; and God has bestowed upon him his righteousness in the very act of redeeming him. There is no cleavage, therefore, between God's righteousness and redemptive love.

. . . . This means that 'the righteousness of God in Paul' must be regarded as the equivalent of divine grace. 1.

Andrews then goes on to say that this is also the persuasion of Sabatier, and quotes him at some length. But from that quote I will take but a sentence or two:

. . . . No contradiction . . . must be asserted between the righteousness of God, in the Apostle's sense of this word, and the grace of God. While the word $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$ indicates the act of love by which God saves man, the phrase $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\sigma\upsilon\nu\eta \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ simply defines the nature and moral quality of this Divine Act. 2.

This brings us back to a point which I tried to make earlier, that the 'holy love' of God - considering 'holy' here with most of the numinous elements omitted - is almost synonymous with the 'righteousness of God'. Andrews has seen this, too, and the fact that he tends to equate the 'righteousness of God' with 'divine grace' in one place and with 'redemptive love' in another serves to point the theologian's difficulty in isolating these overlapping terms. But there is no doubt at all that God's righteousness is much larger and richer than the Latin view of the Atonement indicates.

At this point I want to criticize Aulen for a sin of omission. Sins of omission can often be as misleading as sins of commission, and I do think that, in his anxiety to show evidences of the classic view in the thinking of Paul, Aulen has diligently searched out all references to 'principalities', 'powers', 'thrones', 'dominions'³ but has neglected to investigate the relationship between Paul's concept of righteousness and his thought concerning the Atonement. This, to my way of thinking, is not quite honest historically, as it distorts our understanding of Paul. If Aulen had dealt even briefly with Paul's 'righteousness', it

1. Andrews, E., The Meaning of Christ for Paul, N.Y., Abingdon, 1949, p.65.
2. Sabatier, The Apostle Paul, pp.298-299, as quoted in *Ibid.*, p.65.
3. Aulen, Christus Victor, pp.77-89.

might have shown the possibility of explaining the Atonement in terms other than those used by exponents of the classic view, and it would have given us a different picture of 'righteousness' than that with which Aulen leaves us after his treatment of the Latin theory.

As he does with Paul, so he does with Luther. Again Aulen's fault is one of omission, but it leads to what I consider is a misrepresentation of Luther. Surely he could have some place for a mention of Luther's views of 'righteousness', especially since these views have considerable bearing on Luther's total picture of the Atonement.

Everybody who has even a nodding acquaintance with Luther knows the significance of Romans 1:17 for his life and thinking. This verse, which is translated in the Authorized Version of The Bible as (in part) "the just shall live by faith" and by Moffatt as "by faith shall the righteous live", is given a great deal of the credit for Luther's final break with Roman Catholicism. No doubt Luther was immediately aware of the contrast between the 'faith' he found commended there and the 'works' by which he had previously tried to achieve his own salvation. But here is what Luther himself has to say with reference to justification:

I greatly longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, 'the justice of God', because I took it to mean that justice whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him. Therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant.

Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that "the just shall live by faith." Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the 'justice of God' had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven . . . 1.

1. See Bainton, R., Here I Stand, New York, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1950, p.65.

This side of Luther's thinking certainly should not be overlooked when we try to get to the bottom of his concept of the Atonement. And those who are deceived into thinking that Luther thought wholly in terms of 'death', 'devils' and 'fish-hooks' should take a look at some of the findings of a scholar such as Bainton, who investigates Luther's biography and personal writings and gives us this as expressive of Luther's thought in the period when he was studying the Psalms, especially the twenty-second Psalm, with its opening line "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" which he immediately related to Christ's cry on the Cross:

Why should Christ have known such desperations? Luther knew perfectly well why he himself had had them; he was weak in the presence of the Mighty; he was impure in the presence of the Holy; he had blasphemed the Divine Majesty. But Christ was not weak; Christ was not impure; Christ was not impious. Why then should he have been so overwhelmed with desolation? The only answer must be that Christ took to himself the iniquity of us all. He who was without sin for our sakes became sin and so identified himself with us as to participate in our alienation. He who was truly man so sensed his solidarity with humanity as to feel himself with mankind estranged from the All Holy. What a new picture this is of Christ! Where, then, is the judge, sitting upon the rainbow to condemn sinners? He is still the judge. He must judge as truth judges error and light darkness; but in judging he suffers with those whom he must condemn and feels himself with them subject to condemnation. The judge upon the rainbow has become the derelict upon the cross.

A new view of God is here. The all Terrible is the All Merciful too. Wrath and love fuse upon the cross. The hideousness of sin cannot be denied or forgotten; but God, who desires not that a sinner should die but that he should turn and live, has found the reconciliation in the pangs of bitter death. It is not that the Son by his sacrifice has placated the irate Father; it is not primarily that the Master by his self-abandoning goodness has made up for our deficiency. It is that in some inexplicable way, in the utter desolation of the forsaken Christ, God was able to reconcile the world to himself. This does not mean that all the mystery is clear. God is still shrouded at times in thick darkness. There are almost two Gods, the inscrutable God whose ways are past finding out and the God made known to us in Christ. He is still a consuming fire, but he burns that he may purge and chasten and heal. He is not a God of idle whim, because the cross is not the last word. He who

gave up his Son unto death also raised him up and will raise us with him, if with him we die to sin that we may rise to newness of life.¹

This seems to me to be of a piece with what I have been trying to say about the Atonement; the whole idea of the holiness of God being unable to co-exist with sin and yet acting out of love in such a manner as to do for sinful man what he is completely unable to do for himself is obviously one of the foremost points of Luther's Reformation thinking.

Now there's no doubt that Luther made frequent use of other terms, too, in order to stress the importance and the greatness of Christ's work, and Aulen can with justice find some warrant for saying that Luther was familiar with and made use of the classic view. But it is just one more way of expressing the Atonement, and Bainton says that the mention of demons in Luther is but imagery. One sentence of Bainton's, which is typical of the context from which it is taken, should explain this. "All those", he says, "who have known the torments of mental disorder well understand the imagery of satanic hands clutching to pull them to their doom".² And I, too, think we can explain such expressions of Luther's in the same way as we explain his throwing the ink-pot at the devil.

To put the case briefly, I think we have just as much historical warrant for explaining the Atonement in terms of a tension between God's holiness and sin and the resolving of that tension in the death on the Cross, as we have for conceiving it in terms of a struggle to the death between Christ and the devil. And since it is desirable to avoid any semblance of an absolute dualism and desirable, also, to keep God's holiness plainly in view, I cannot help but feel that our present attempts to give a systematic view of the Atonement should use a terminology which gives a large place to 'holiness', 'righteousness' and 'sin' and make only the minimum use of 'demons'

1. Bainton, R., Here I Stand, p.62f.

2. Ibid., p.66.

and 'the devil'.

I do not claim to have given here a perfectly satisfactory view of the Atonement, for I did not set out with that intention or expectation, but I have attempted to show that it is possible to maintain the emphasis on Atonement as primarily a work of God, to stress the gravity of sin and the magnificence and importance of the work of Christ (all of which are major emphases of the classic view) without the use of dangerously dualistic language. Also, in my references to Paul and Luther, I have attempted to show that they did not cleave exclusively to the type of explanation found in the classic view, but that both of them made considerable use of the concept of the 'righteousness of God' in their thought and exposition. Thus I conclude that it should be possible to give a systematic presentation of the Atonement which will show 'holiness' and 'righteousness' not only as the ground of the Atonement but also as being effective in the work of Atonement.

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