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A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE
DRAMATIC THEORY OF ATONEMENT

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Theology
Asbury Theological Seminary

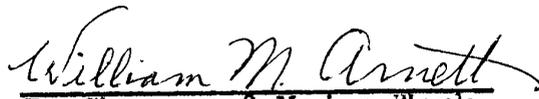
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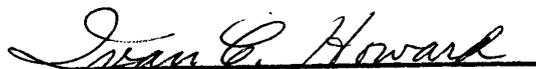
by
Raymond Eaton Noah
May 1966

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE
DRAMATIC THEORY OF ATONEMENT

A Thesis Submitted to the
Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Theology

Approved:


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Asbury Theological Seminary
May 1966

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CHAPTER I

THE PURPOSE AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

A. THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

It was the purpose of this study to make a critical examination of the Dramatic Theory of the Atonement, giving special attention to the theory as presented by Gustaf Aulen. This will include evaluation of the several aspects of the theory from various points of view.

B. THE JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

There is no attempt to justify the study on the grounds that any new or unique revelation with regard to the Atonement is to be presented. The importance of the revival of interest in this theory has been recognized by many prominent theologians. Gustaf Aulen presents an historical study of this theory in his book, Christus Victor, which has been the basis of the new interest in the Dramatic Theory. Dr. Walter M. Horton has said that the work of Aulen and his colleagues at Lund, Sweden, ". . . constitutes one of the most distinctive schools of Protestant thought in the world today."¹ Any serious study of the Atonement

¹Walter Marshall Horton, Contemporary Continental Theology (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1958), p. 155.

is always important and justified from the theological point of view. There is no other ground on which it can be justified beforehand. The study of this particular theory is of special interest at this time, but it is only when the finished product has been considered as a whole that one will be able to evaluate the importance of the study, and to determine whether or not the effort has been justified and is worthy of presentation.

CHAPTER II

THE DEFINITION OF THE DRAMATIC THEORY OF THE ATONEMENT

A. THE BASIC MEANING OF THE THEORY

The basic idea of the Dramatic Theory of the Atonement is that God has engaged the Enemy, who held man in slavery under the power of sin and death, and in triumphant victory over him has secured salvation for man. This is the essence of the meaning of salvation according to this theory. There are a number of questions to be asked with regard to the implications involved in this concept. There are various ramifications of this idea which merit investigation. In the beginning, however, it is important to have this one central thought clearly in mind. The battle has been fought, the Enemy has been defeated and so the way of Salvation is open to man. This is the starting point of the investigation of the meaning of this theory.

B. THE THEORY AS SEEN BY THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

The earliest form of this theory, as held by the Fathers of the Church, appeared to be that of a ransom paid by God to the Devil to secure the release of the souls of men. Hastings Rashdall has made an extensive study of

the teachings of the Church Fathers on the subject of the Atonement and has presented it in his book, The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology. He maintains that the Ransom Theory of Atonement as taught by Irenaeus was for a thousand years ". . . the dominant orthodox traditional theory on the subject."¹

Other modern writers, such as Gustaf Aulen,² J. S. Whale,³ Sydney Cave,⁴ Albert Knudson,⁵ Leon Morris,⁶ and Allan D. Galloway,⁷ have followed Rashdall's lead in this respect. Of the authors here mentioned, Galloway is the only one who questions the premise of Rashdall, and he does so in a criticism of Aulen's presentation of the theory rather than of Rashdall. It is Galloway's opinion that although the ransom idea was dominant during the period,

¹Hastings Rashdall, The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology (London: Macmillan and Company Ltd., 1919), p. 247.

²Gustaf Aulen, Christus Victor (London: S.P.C.K., 1950), p. 23.

³J. S. Whale, Victor and Victim (Cambridge: University Press, 1960), p. 27.

⁴Sydney Cave, The Doctrine of the Work of Christ (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1937), p. 292.

⁵Albert C. Knudson, The Doctrine of Redemption (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1933), p. 356.

⁶Leon Morris, The Cross in The New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Erdmans Publishing Co., 1965), p. 397.

⁷Allan D. Galloway, The Cosmic Christ (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1951), p. 64.

"It was basic in a number of widely different theories of the Atonement . . ." of that time. It was a chaotic period for the Church with regard to ideas on the Atonement.⁸ The other writers mentioned above appear simply to accept the conclusion of Rashdall that the Ransom Theory was dominant during the first thousand years of Church history. It is not the purpose of this study to evaluate this conclusion.

The contention is borne out by Rashdall⁹ and Aulen¹⁰ that the Ransom Theory fell into disrepute rather rapidly after the time of Anselm. It is maintained that Anselm introduced the satisfaction theory of Atonement and it became dominant in the Church through his influence and continued so up to the twentieth century, while the older, or Classic view, as Aulen chooses to call it, was neglected.¹¹ The Moral Influence Theory of Abelard was also instrumental in obscuring the older or Classic view of the Atonement.¹² Abelard's theory was a reaction to the satisfaction theory of Anselm, and the attention of the Church was drawn to these two theories. This was partly due to the bitter controversy that often raged between the two theological

⁸Ibid., pp. 64-65. ⁹Rashdall, op. cit., p. 350.

¹⁰Aulen, op. cit., p. 23. ¹¹Ibid.

¹²Rashdall, op. cit., p. 350.

camps, and thus kept these two ideas to the fore. There was also the tendency to regard the grotesque imagery and the ideas of the paying of a literal ransom to the Devil, or worse yet, to deceive him with the bait of the body of Christ, as concepts belonging to the past and unworthy of serious consideration. A third reason for neglect of the Classic view was the aversion of modern theologians to the idea of dualism (God versus Satan) which is implicit in the older Classic view of Atonement.¹³

Rashdall considered the refutation of the Ransom Theory as complete and final and pointed out the lesson to be learned from its eclipse for ". . . those who despair of traditional Christianity ever adapting itself to the intellectual requirement of a new age"14 But recent developments in theology have proved Rashdall to be wrong. The Ransom Theory has refused to die and has returned in a new form. It is true that the crude imagery of God deceiving Satan or of bargaining with him for the ransom of men has not returned. The more important elements of the Classic view have returned, however, with new forcefulness.

¹³Aulen, Christus Victor, pp. 23-26.

¹⁴Rashdall, The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology, p. 369.

Basic to this view of the Atonement is the idea that man is in reality under the power and domination of Satan because of sin, and that salvation was gained only through intense spiritual struggle and at great cost to God in his conflict with the Evil One. But the victory has been won and God, through Christ, has triumphed over the powers of sin, death and the Devil. The predominant figure responsible for the re-introduction of this theory into modern theology is Gustaf Aulen, a member of the theological faculty of the University of Lund, Sweden.

C. AULEN'S THEORY: 'OBJECTIVE' OR 'SUBJECTIVE'?

Theologians in general, since the time of Abelard have tended to think of the Atonement in terms of two main types, the 'objective' type and the 'subjective' type. All theories of the 'objective' type are based on the idea that there is something inherent in the character of God or his moral government that makes it impossible for him to forgive sin without the sacrifice of Christ in his death on the Cross. The primary purpose of Christ's death was to make it possible for God to have mercy and to pardon the sinner. Christ's death is considered to be the means of satisfying God's honor, or of appeasing his wrath, or satisfying the

demand of his holiness which can no more accept sin than light can accept darkness. Another view is that Christ's death was to pay the necessary penalty for sin and with the penalty paid, God is free to forgive the sinner. Still another view is that Christ died to uphold the integrity of God's moral government. By offering himself to die in place of the condemned criminal Christ made it possible for God to pardon the law breaker. All of these ideas are 'objective' in the sense that a sacrifice was necessary from God's point of view that he might be reconciled to the possibility of forgiving the sin of man.

The 'subjective' point of view sees no obstacle on the part of God. The obstacle is with man. The Father stands ever ready with open arms to receive the prodigal son any time that he will return in true repentance. The death of Christ is important as the sublime revelation of the love of God and the supreme example of selfless sacrifice and sinless perfection calling all men to follow him. His death could be said to be necessary in order that men might be drawn to God through his marvelous example. It was the only way that God could make man aware of the depths of his sin and degradation. It was the only way to shock him wide awake; to stir him out of his lethargy and show him what he was meant to be. God was in Christ reconciling the

world unto himself (II Cor. 5:19). It was not necessary to reconcile himself to the possibility of forgiving the world. Man must, of course, be brought to repentance before God's forgiveness can effect any change in him. The main problem is how to bring man to true repentance.

Aulen has objected to the traditional distinction between 'objective' and 'subjective' types of Atonement. He considers the distinction misleading because, as he sees it, every theory of Atonement has both 'objective' and 'subjective' elements.¹⁵ He considers the dramatic view of the Atonement as a special type, sharply distinct from both of the other types.¹⁶ It is both 'objective' and 'subjective'. He says,

It does not set forth only or chiefly a change taking place in men; it describes a complete change in the situation, a change in the relation between God and the world, and a change also in God's own attitude. The idea is, indeed, thoroughly 'objective'; and its objectivity is further emphasised by the fact that the Atonement is not regarded as affecting men primarily as individuals, but is set forth as a drama of a world's salvation.¹⁷

The above quotation was given as Aulen's defense of the idea that the 'dramatic' view of the Atonement is

¹⁵Gustaf Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 240.

¹⁶Aulen, Christus Victor, p. 21.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 22.

'objective' as well as 'subjective,' although there is a great deal that is not made clear in that statement. In the interest of clarity and by way of direct comparison with the two types of Atonement theory aforementioned it is important to point out that the 'dramatic' theory is not 'objective' in the sense that Christ's death was considered necessary in order that God could forgive sin.¹⁸ His death was necessary, however, for the defeat of Satan and to make possible the salvation of man and the world.

Aulen preferred to use the term 'Classic' rather than 'dramatic' when referring to this theory of the Atonement, although he has used both terms. He also refers to the other two types of Atonement theory as the Latin (objective) type, and the Enlightenment (subjective) type.

¹⁸Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, p. 301.

CHAPTER III

THE ATONEMENT AND THE CONCEPT OF DUALISM

A. DUALISM FROM AULEN'S POINT OF VIEW

1. The nature of the powers in conflict. Aulen makes it clear that the dualism implicit in the Classic Theory of Atonement is not, in his view, a metaphysical dualism between the Infinite and the finite, or between spirit and matter. Neither is it an absolute dualism between Good and Evil in which Evil would be treated as an eternal principle opposed to God. It is rather the dualism presented in the Scriptures which pictures God in conflict with that which resists His will in His own creation. It is portrayed as a very radical opposition but can not be considered an absolute dualism because evil does not have an eternal existence in the Scriptural view, Aulen believes.¹

Faith is faced with an inescapable decision, Aulen declares. Faith must believe either, that everything that happens is an expression of the divine will, in which case it is difficult to believe in the reality of divine love; or, faith must believe in the reality of divine love and conclude that there is much that happens which is not only

¹Aulen, Christus Victor, p. 20-21 footnote.

contrary to the divine will, but is done in radical opposition to that will.² It is the latter decision which Aulen believes to be the true point of view of the Christian faith. This means a dualism in which there are 'hostile powers' in opposition to God. The terrible fact of evil in the world and the uncompromising and continuous antagonism of God to this evil are realities that must not be minimized.³

After stating with such clarity and force the necessity to recognize the radical opposition of the 'hostile powers' it appears that Aulen immediately proceeds to minimize the strength of that opposition. Any power of opposition is completely dependent upon God for its existence. In relation to evil God is "unconditionally sovereign."⁴

Aulen freely admits the paradox of this contention. He declares that the 'hostile powers' are in radical opposition to God, are the cause of untold evil and suffering, all of which is completely contrary to the will of God. Not only is it completely contrary to God's will, but God is in bitter conflict and struggle against it and the powers

²Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, p. 197.

³Ibid., p. 202.

⁴Ibid.

responsible for it. His whole purpose is to overcome and destroy evil. At the same time, God is absolutely sovereign and the 'hostile powers' are completely dependent upon God for their existence. Such statements are indeed difficult if not impossible to reconcile.

Aulen does not try to reconcile them. He believes the tension here can not be resolved. Every attempt at a rational explanation would come out as something foreign to Christian faith. Faith recognizes the terribleness of evil and cannot accept it as being the will of God. But faith also must conceive of God as absolutely sovereign. Aulen says,

There is no answer which does not present a new question, whether the reference be to 'the freedom of the will,' to human nature, to a pre-existent fall, or to a supernatural evil power. In reality faith perceives that a rational explanation of the origin of sin cannot be given. In so far as the meaning of existence is to faith inseparably connected with the divine will, it cannot conceive of sin in any sense than something meaningless and irrational.⁵

Even if a rational explanation could be given men still would not be any nearer to a solution of the problem, Aulen declares. Faith must be content to forge the explanation of the problem of evil and concentrate on the solution.

⁵Ibid., p. 204.

Faith is interested in the methods and character of evil, because it is important to have a clear understanding of it and how it can be conquered. "It is only when conquered that evil becomes meaningful and legitimate, he writes.⁶

2. The definition of the 'hostile powers.' In spite of the emphasis which Aulen gives to the terrible reality of evil and the radical opposition of the 'hostile powers' to the will of God, he still is not clear with regard to the real nature of the 'hostile powers.' It would appear that these powers are impersonal powers. Some statements at first appear to be referring to a personal power, such as:

Faith refuses to attribute to God that which the Gospel attributes to Satan.⁷ It is perfectly evident that Jesus' struggle for the Kingdom of God is a struggle against the power of 'Satan.'⁸

Here, however, the word 'Satan' is in quotes which implies the impersonal. Again the struggle against unclean spirits is ". . . concentrated and incorporated in the figure of Satan,"⁹ which also implies the impersonal. I John 3:8 is quoted as the purpose of Christ's coming, to ". . . destroy the works of the devil."¹⁰ The powers are

⁶Ibid., p. 206.

⁷Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, p. 196.

⁸Ibid., p. 202. ⁹Ibid., p. 226. ¹⁰Ibid., p. 227.

often referred to as the powers of sin, death, and the devil. It is pointed out that faith sees these "destructive powers" from two points of view. They are on the one hand, tyrannical powers that have enslaved humanity, and it must be added, to which God is unalterably opposed. On the other hand they are expressions of the divine will and judgement.¹¹

The Law and divine Wrath are also included among the 'hostile powers.'¹² All of these powers, except sin, are partly an expression of divine will and judgement. Death is not simply physical death, but also separation from God and is God's judgement upon sin. The Law is an expression of God's will, but at the same time a destructive, condemning, power. 'Wrath' is God's immediate reaction to sin, but at the same time is a destructive power, perhaps the worst of all tyrants that must be vanquished.¹³

The devil also can be placed in relation to the divine will. From one point of view he is the incarnation of evil, hostile to God. But from another viewpoint it is God's will that men should be placed under his dominion because of sin, and the devil has thus acquired a certain legitimate domination over men.¹⁴ This gives the impression that the devil

¹¹Ibid., p. 229.

¹²Ibid., pp. 230-231.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

is a person, but the issue is not clear. Certainly the other powers are to be regarded as impersonal, except perhaps, God's own Wrath.

Perhaps the best expression of the nature of these powers is the following:

The solidary interrelationship of sin concretizes itself in inscrutable and obscure powers, a mysterious complex which cannot be accurately delimited and defined, and which slips away and becomes shadowy as soon as one tries to grasp and comprehend it.¹⁵

The use of the conception of the devil, Aulen believes, is not in the least a guarantee of profound insight into the nature of evil, it might even weaken one's conception of its power. It is not the demonic mythology which is important but an insight into the nature, power and extent of evil.¹⁶

It appears, however, that Aulen still leaves the true nature, power and extent of evil undefined. Its nature is impersonal, shadowy, obscure. This uncertain nature of evil might be acceptable to faith, but the relationship of these 'hostile powers' to God is not made clear. Can faith really be satisfied with a completely irrational explanation of evil?

¹⁵Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, p. 274.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 275.

B. DUALISM: FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF ITS MEANING

Any discussion of the nature of dualism must first of all consider the nature of the opposing forces and the nature of the ground of conflict. The consideration here is of the conflict between good and evil. What is the nature of the powers of good? What is the nature of the powers of evil? What is the nature of the battle ground where the two meet in conflict? Another pertinent question is, on what criteria are men to judge what is good and what is evil?

1. The power to judge between good and evil. Some would say that man is not competent to judge between the good and evil and therefore all speculation with regard to the true nature of the good or of the evil is meaningless. Man, they say, would regard as good anything which brings him pleasure and satisfies his wants. He would regard as evil anything which brings him pain and denies him what he wants. Men discovered, however, that much pleasure can be the avenue to great evil, and great pain and suffering can be the means to the highest good. But how does one know that pleasure might lead to evil, and pain to greater good? Is it not because of the end result? The yielding to

pleasure of the moment may lead to greater pain in the end, and vice versa, the denial of momentary delights often means more lasting pleasure and satisfaction later. Man judges discipline to be good, not because it is pleasant, but because it is the surest means of guaranteeing continued strength and victory over those elements that tend to the destruction and disintegration of life. Likewise the easy yielding to pleasures of the moment which characterizes the undisciplined life, is judged to be evil because it tends to weakness of will and destroys the power of resistance so that one becomes a slave to the forces that destroy life.

In the final analysis man's judgement of whether a thing is good or evil is based on its inherent or ultimate power to lead to Life or Death for man himself. There is no other basis on which ultimate good or evil can be judged, as far as man is concerned. The forces of evil are evil forces because they lead to Death for man. The forces of good are good because they lead to Life. Man can endure all sorts of suffering in a temporal sense, and endure it even with joy, if he is convinced that it will lead to eternal Life for himself, or even to a better temporal life for others. He cannot consider the suffering as good in itself, but he can rejoice in the thought that he is doing his part in the battle for Life against Death, for good against evil.

It can be argued that this is an essentially selfish kind of judgement and that man has no right to judge a thing to be inherently evil simply because it destroys him. The cosmic forces which destroy man might be of great benefit to some other beings, just as man's destruction of disease germs means a great blessing and better life for men. Be that as it may, and selfish though man's judgement might be, there is no other basis on which the judgement can be made.

God is good because he is the giver of Life. God is love because it is not his will that any should perish, but that all should have, not only temporal, but eternal Life. God is holy because he is unalterably opposed to anything that brings Death. The Wrath of God is the aggressive, unconditional, and absolute opposition to Death.

Satan is evil because he is the messenger of Death. He is unalterably opposed to Life; at least as man understands the meaning of Life. Life as man knows it is the result of the creative act of God. God creates Life. It is the purpose of Satan to destroy it. Satan cannot create, but he can destroy that which has been created.

This is dualism in its most radical form. There are other versions of this radical form of dualism and a number of versions of milder forms of dualism. The form of dualism which one advocates depends primarily on one's conception of the nature of evil. Some would disagree and claim that it

depends on one's conception of the nature of God. Certainly the view with regard to one affects the view with regard to the other.

2. The forms of dualism of special interest to the Christian faith. There is no interest here in a discussion of those forms of dualism which conceive of the forces of good and evil as impersonal and therefore unaffected by any personal or moral considerations with regard to the life of man. This is regarded as completely foreign to any Christian concept. At least the force for good must be thought of as personal if the concept is to be in any sense Christian.

How radical is the opposition of evil forces to the will of God? And how powerful is the force of opposition? These are vital questions, the answers to which will determine the concept of dualism.

Can the power of evil affect God Himself? Can God in any sense be harmed by the power of evil? From the Christian point of view the answer must be an unequivocal, No. God cannot be harmed by evil as far as he himself is concerned. Evil can work against God only through that which he has created.

What is the origin of the power of evil? There are three principle answers that can be given to this question.

(1) One answer is that evil stems from an uncreated being or principle the nature of whom or which is the antithesis of the nature of God. The two are eternally opposed to each other and in the created universe where the power of evil can actively destroy, they are in violent conflict.

(2) Another answer and the one most often given is that evil is the result of the assertion of the ego of created beings who want to take the place of God. Satan is the cosmic created being who has rebelled against his Creator. He has influenced others to do the same. As the Captain of a host of rebellious spirits he seeks to destroy the works of God, and especially to defeat God's purpose among men. This is dualism in a secondary sense.

(3) A third answer is that evil is the necessary compliment of good. The two are in eternal opposition; the one being the antithesis of the other and there can never be a synthesis of the two. But each is needed to keep life in balance. It is a kind of dualism within monism. Applied to the nature of God, this means the Love of God is the compliment of his Wrath; the Law of God the compliment of his Grace. The one is God's proper work and the other is his alien work, as Luther has expressed it, but both are the work of God. Even the devil is God's devil; the accuser used of God in testing men.

C. DUALISM AS DIVIDED MONISM

The latter concept of dualism is very close to the view expressed by Aulen. J. S. Whale, in his book, Victor and Victim, expresses a similar viewpoint, although he does not give the same stress to the radical opposition of evil to God's will. As Whale sees it the mythical figure of Satan is the accuser who opposes man on God's behalf. He is the personification of the divine attribute of justice and as such is hardly distinguishable from God.¹⁷

Satan stands for law and justice and as the zealous vindicator of God's honour he will go to any length to secure a verdict of guilty. In other words this is what God would be without love, if he were nothing more than inexorable legal justice. By insisting on the full demands of the law Satan becomes the enemy of God's redeeming grace. God's Law and God's Wrath are the agents of his purpose, yet at the same time they are the enemies of that purpose.¹⁸

As has already been stated, this is very close to Aulen's view of dualism, in which all the 'hostile powers' except sin stand in close relationship to the will of God.

¹⁷J. S. Whale, Victor and Victim, p. 33.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 34.

In the case of divine Law and Wrath the issue is perfectly clear.¹⁹ The Law (as divine justice), and Wrath (as uncompromising divine opposition to sin), are clearly a part of the divine nature and will. And just as clearly, when viewed in that light, one can see that they are obstacles to or enemies of God's redeeming Grace and Love. This the Apostle Paul sees very clearly, Aulen believes. The Law and the Wrath of God are good, even necessary; an inescapable part of the very nature of God. But these must be overcome, or in other words satisfied, if the sinner is to be saved. Somehow Grace and Love must be able to supercede the divine Law (or justice) and the divine Wrath (or Holiness) of God. How can God reconcile these two sides of his nature?

1. The heart of the objective idea of Atonement.

This is, after all, the very heart of the 'objective' idea of Atonement. Somehow God himself must be able to reconcile these two sides of his nature in order to forgive and receive the sinner, from this point of view. The Latin view regards the death of Christ, God's Son, as the means through which this reconciliation can take place within God himself. Christ died because of sin, in the place of

¹⁹Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, p. 230.

the sinner which God would have to destroy if Christ had not died. The different ideas as to how this effects the reconciliation do not need to be elaborated here. Some say that Christ suffered the full penalty of sin, others that he died a representative death. In any case his death satisfied God's Justice and Wrath, and effects the reconciliation within his own being, so that his Mercy and Love are free to act in forgiving the sinner, without regard to justice and in spite of the irreconcilable aversion to sin in his holy nature. This has been satisfied by someone else, infinitely able and worthy to do so.

2. The relation of God to the 'hostile powers.'

(a) Wrath and the Law. Aulen claims that the Classic Theory, as he sees it, is also 'objective.' Reconciliation does take place within God himself.²⁰ God's Law and God's Wrath, although directly a part of the divine will are nevertheless, enemies that must be vanquished. This is done through Christ's triumphant victory over the 'hostile powers' through his life, and death and resurrection. No rational explanation of how or why Christ's victory thus effects this reconciliation is given. It is clear enough, from this point of view, that since Christ was victorious

²⁰Aulen, Christus Victor, p. 22.

over these enemies their power has been destroyed and therefore Love and Grace have won the day. Reconciliation has been effected within God himself, but it is not clear how Christ won that victory.

One point of outstanding difference here between Aulen's view and the Latin view is with regard to divine forgiveness. In the Latin view Christ's death is necessary to make forgiveness possible. In Aulen's view divine forgiveness does not depend on Christ's sacrifice or suffering. Forgiveness is not motivated by anything outside of God himself. It springs solely from divine love.²¹

What this difference seems to imply is that in Aulen's view the side of God's nature represented by Love and Mercy is stronger than that of his Justice and Wrath and gained victory over it. Whereas in the Latin view divine Justice and Wrath or holiness are stronger than Love and Grace and will not allow forgiveness until they are satisfied. Aulen does not wish to minimize the bitterness of the struggle, however, and calls the Wrath of God the greatest of all the tyrants.

²¹Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, p. 301.

Aulen also criticizes the Latin view at this point saying that, in this view, Christ's sacrifice is regarded as, in a sense, an offering of man to God for his sin.²² This idea is open to question, although Anselm did give that impression in his book, Cur Deus Homo?.²³

(b) Death and the Devil. As has been said, it is clear enough that divine justice (Law) and holiness (Wrath) are a part of the divine nature and will and that they are, in a sense, enemies of divine Grace and Love. When it comes to Death and the Devil the issue is not so clear. Death can never be the will of God. God's will is Life, it is not his will that any should perish. Yet in relation to sin God finds himself in the dilemma of necessarily willing the death of the sinner. Death becomes an instrument of God's judgement against sin. In this sense Death is God's will. But Death is another one of the 'hostile powers' that must be vanquished. In the Classic view of Atonement Christ destroys the power of Death along with the other 'hostile powers.'

²²Aulen, Christus Victor, p. 169.

²³Anselm, Cur Deus Homo?, trans. Edward S. Prout (London: Religious Tract Society, Christian Classics Series, n.d.), pp. 164, 174, 175.

Again by way of contrast with the Latin view, it appears that the principle of Life in God is overwhelmingly stronger than the need to destroy the sinner and rises up in victory over it. In the Latin view Christ's death is suffered in the place of the sinners death thus making it unnecessary for the sinner to die. Of course, in the Classic view, Christ's death is, in a real sense, a death in the sinner's place also, because if Christ had not conquered Death, through giving his own life, the sinner would have died enslaved to the 'hostile powers.'

The Devil, in a certain sense, also stands in relationship to the divine will, in Aulen's view. He is the incarnation of all sin and evil and therefore at every point in opposition to God. But, as in the case with Death, he becomes an instrument of God in judgement upon the sinner. God wills that the sinner remain under the dominion of Satan as long as the will of the sinner is in opposition to the will of God. As Aulen puts it, the sinner is rejected and under God's condemnation as long as his rebellious will remains unconquered by divine love.²⁴ But God's conquest of man is a matter for discussion elsewhere.

²⁴Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, p. 172.

The Devil is another of the 'hostile powers,' whether a person or a personification, is not clear from what Aulen writes. Certainly he is not a person in the same sense that God is. In any case he is one of the 'hostile powers' destroyed in Christ's victory. In what sense he is destroyed or vanquished is not made clear. He is completely dependent upon God for his existence which is another indication of God's permissive will in relation to him.

In the Latin view the Devil is usually regarded as a personality in rebellion against God. In this view also, he is a created being and therefore dependent upon God for his existence. It could also be said that God permits sinners to be under his dominion and that his power is destroyed through the death and victory of Christ. The basic difference between the Classic idea and that of the Latin is that in the former the primary reason for Christ's incarnation and facing of death is to conquer the Devil and Death and all the 'hostile powers.' According to the Latin idea Christ's suffering and death are not necessary to destroy the power of the Devil. He is doomed anyway. God can destroy him when he chooses; nothing more is needed for that. The death of Christ is necessary for God's own reconciliation in order that he may be able to forgive sinners. Their rescue from the power of Satan is incidental, whereas from the Classic point of view the defeat of Satan

and the 'hostile powers' is the primary reason for the Atonement and is an indispensable part of God's own reconciliation.

The fact that the 'hostile powers' are so closely related to the divine will, in Aulen's presentation, tends to blur this distinction between the two views. In the last analysis the basic problem is one of the reconciliation between the two sides of God's own nature. In the Latin view God's Law and Wrath are satisfied by Christ's death so that he may forgive the sinner and thus save him. In Aulen's view, the 'hostile powers' are so closely related to the will of God, except sin, it is still primarily a case of one side of God's nature (for us the best side), winning out over the other side. At least this is true in so far as God's own reconciliation is concerned.

In either case, as far as God's Wrath is concerned, the battle is God's own battle within himself. As Aulen said of God, "His is the Love and His the Wrath."²⁵ Certainly it follows that His is the Law and His is the Grace. To continue the analogy, and the logic, it can also be said, with real justification, His is the Life and

²⁵Aulen, Christus Victor, p. 172.

His is the Death; and the Devil is His also. Indirectly they are, Aulen agrees.²⁶ Luther, whom Aulen follows closely, calls the Devil, God's Devil, as J. S. Whale points out.²⁷ Luther occasionally identifies the Wrath of God with Satan²⁸ and at least four passages in the New Testament imply this, according to Whale.²⁹

(c) Sin as a 'hostile power.' Only sin, among the 'hostile powers' can be said to have no relationship to the will of God.³⁰ And what is sin? According to Aulen, it is essentially a perversion of the will in so far as it is related to man.³¹ But sin is also an objective power,³² which stands in a 'solidary interrelationship' with all the 'hostile powers.' And given the proposition that the sovereignty of God is unconditional and unlimited, and that all other powers are completely dependent upon him for their existence, it is difficult to see how it is that sin is not also related to the will of God in some sense.

²⁶Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, p. 230.

²⁷Whale, Victor and Victim, p. 33.

²⁸Ibid., p. 40.

²⁹Ibid., p. 40 (I Cor. 5:5; I Pet. 5:8; I Jo. 5:19; I Tim. 3:6).

³⁰Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, p. 229.

³¹Ibid., p. 260.

³²Aulen, Christus Victor, p. 164.

In some forms of the Latin view sin is explained also as a perversion of the will; the perversion of the will of created beings. God is said not to be responsible for sin, in the sense that he created them free moral beings. God has thus limited himself because of the nature of the beings he has created. But Aulen does not find this explanation acceptable, and as has been pointed out, one cannot, according to his belief, ". . . conceive of sin in any other sense than something meaningless and irrational."³³

It is at this point that Aulen's concept of dualism becomes incomprehensible. The Christian faith he believes cannot accept a thorough-going dualism. Evil does not come from an eternal principle or supernatural being. But he conceives of evil as something more powerful, something much more radical than that which could have originated with the fall of created beings. It is, therefore, irrational and meaningless. It is nevertheless, terribly real and powerful, irreconcilable to the divine will, engaging even the absolutely sovereign God in a bitter struggle to overcome it. Except for this concept of sin, Aulen's idea is not far different from that of Whale who sees the ultimate reconciliation of all things, including

³³Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, p. 204.

even the Devil and the demoniac powers.³⁴ From either view there is only a secondary kind of dualism.

3. The idea of opposing forces in balance.

(a) The balance between love and aggression. There is another concept of dualism in which the interplay of opposing forces is necessary for Life. This idea, taken from Freud, is well expressed by Smiley Blanton in his book, Love or Perish.

Love is the immortal flow of energy that nourishes, extends and preserves. Its eternal goal is life. Side by side with it there exists the antagonistic force of aggression. This is the dark instinct that strives constantly to pull the parts asunder. It is the power that conquers and dissolves. It bores inward, seeking to separate and destroy. Aggression's goal is death. . . . Each of these forces is an indispensable source of energy, and human life would be impossible if either were to be eliminated.³⁵

The man who tries to live by love alone exposes himself to annihilation by all the hostile forces that nature itself has planted on earth. Such a person is like the all-loving, all-understanding, all-sacrificing Prince Myshkin of Dostoyevski's novel - an epileptic 'idiot' who is in the end destroyed by his own infinite goodness. It is a matter of balance between the forces of love and aggression, not their mutual exclusion. The destiny of love is to guide the forces of aggression so that life - vigorous, active, competitive life - may be preserved.³⁶

³⁴Whale, Victor and Victim, p. 41.

³⁵Smiley Blanton, Love or Perish (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1956), p. 38.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 146-147.

It must be noted, of course, that Blanton is not here thinking in terms of the nature of God nor the eternal destiny of men. He is thinking of the primitive drives of man's psychic life. He is concerned with the way life is lived out as man finds himself involved in it in the practical affairs of the everyday world. But, after all, this is the sphere in which theology must answer man's questions about life also. This force of aggression that Blanton speaks of; where does it come from? This is what many theologians have called original sin, it is an active principle in man because he is a fallen creature. The main goal of salvation is to release him from the body of this death. Or has Blanton pictured this aggressive power wrongly? Does he intend it to be confused with the destructive principle of sin?

For men generally the need for aggressive action is everywhere recognized but it is not usually thought of as a destructive principle. It is recognized, however, that the spirit of competition must be curbed by the principles of fair play, justice and love for the good of mankind. It is also true that one who will not aggressively compete for fear of hurting someone else will not accomplish much. To go too far either way means weakness, the two must be kept in balance for Life to be at its best.

(b) The stern side of love. Some have thought of this aggressive spirit as simply the stern side of love. Love, they say, is not all sentimentality. There are times when love is demanding and stern, when it must be harsh for the good of all concerned. Anger, sometimes even hatred, against evil can be an expression of love. And this idea is carried over into the concept of the Love of God. His justice and Wrath are but the stern side of his Love and are necessary expressions of his opposition to sin. As Aulen said, "When wrath is, as it were, merged with love, every possibility to enfeeble its meaning is removed; love remains strong and firm, and retains its purity under all circumstances."³⁷

This is certainly understandable, but the idea of balance is still there. God's Justice and Wrath will certainly destroy the sinner if it is not balanced by Mercy and Love. So that even in God there is, from this point of view, the necessity of not allowing the one side to over balance the other.

The application of the principle set forth by Blanton to the nature of God makes a very interesting comparison to what has been discussed with regard to the views of Aulen

³⁷Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, p. 139.

and Whale on the Atonement. The theological implication of what Blanton says makes the principles of Love and Aggression eternal in the nature of God, and the two must be kept in balance. This can be seen, of course, only in relation to that which he has created. When that which he has created becomes corrupt and rebellious it is natural from the side of God's Justice and Holiness that this corruption should be destroyed, it can not be tolerated. On the other hand it is natural from the standpoint of Love and Mercy to seek to preserve the sinner. Blanton says, "The destiny of love is to guide the forces of aggression so that life - vigorous, active, competitive life - may be preserved."³⁸

(c) The Law and Wrath - destroyed? placated? or controlled and guided? This brings us to a new thought with regard to God's relationship to the sinner. From the point of view of Aulen and also the Latin view, it is agreed that God's Wrath and Law will destroy the sinner if there is no intervention of Love and Grace. In the first instance Wrath and Law are enemies to be vanquished so that Death may be averted. In the second, God's Wrath and the Law are placated or satisfied so that the sinner will not need

³⁸Blanton, Love or Perish, p. 147.

to die. In a third sense one could say with Blanton, that, it is the destiny of God's Love to guide the force of His Wrath so that Life may be preserved for the sinner. It is the destiny of His Grace to modify the force of His Law so that Life may be preserved. It is the destiny of His Mercy to season His Justice so that the Life of the sinner may be preserved.

The question before us then is this: Do the forces of Life (Love, Mercy, and Grace) completely vanquish the forces of Death (Wrath, Justice, and the Law) so that the sinner may have Life? Or do the forces of Life modify; keep in check; maintain a balance; guide; the forces of Death so that the Life of the sinner may be preserved?

In the Latin view the Wrath and Justice of God are modified, satisfied by the sacrifice of Christ so that the sinner may be forgiven and have Life. They are not destroyed as enemies of God. They are not enemies of God, although, they may in a sense, be regarded as enemies of God's purpose of redemption for sinners.

In Aulen's view the impression is given that these forces are destroyed along with the other 'hostile powers.' Perhaps he does not intend to leave that impression, but the issue is very much confused by lumping together, Wrath and the Law, with sin, Death and the Devil, as a block of

'hostile powers' that are destroyed through Christ's victory over them. At any rate their power is destroyed.

It would be better to keep Wrath and the Law in a category completely separate from sin, Death, and the Devil. True, they are all enemies of God's purpose to redeem the sinner, but should not be placed in the same category as powers of evil. Aulen does indicate that they are in a different relationship to the will of God,³⁹ but still they are very much related to the other 'hostile powers' as he sees it.

God's Wrath and Law will bring Death to the sinner, so that in this sense they are related to Death. Actually, however, Wrath, the Law, and Death are all expressions of God's opposition to sin, from this point of view.

Sin and the Devil are also related to Death in that Death is the result of sin and the fulfillment of the Devil's purpose for God's creatures.

It would seem, however, that Wrath and the Law of God should be regarded as being on opposite sides of the 'river of Death' from sin and the Devil; although both sides are determined to push the sinner into it. Only the Love and Grace of God are determined to rescue the sinner from

³⁹Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, pp. 230-231.

the 'river of Death.' The difference is that sin and the Devil should be destroyed as the cause of Death; whereas Wrath and the Law are merely to be restrained from killing the sinner in their zeal to overcome sin.

However, the logic of Blanton's idea leads us to the conclusion that the force of Aggression and the force of Love must be kept continually in balance. Both are necessary to Life and Life is at its best when they are kept in balance. If either becomes dominant to the exclusion of the other, Death sets in.

In so far as the forces that would destroy the sinner and the forces that would preserve him are regarded as opposite sides of the nature of God there is no true dualism. The battle is all God's battle within himself in the final analysis.

B. DUALISM OF THE LATIN THEORY

In the Latin Theory there is a secondary kind of dualism also. It is a real dualism for man because Satan is pictured as real and powerful as far as his dominion over sinful man is concerned. And Satan takes advantage of the natural weaknesses of man, and thus greatly enlarges the barriers between the sinner and God. Satan, nevertheless, is regarded as a creature of God dependent upon God for his

existence. The Atonement of Christ is not primarily to defeat him, as has already been pointed out. The Atonement is primarily for God's own reconciliation within himself. The problem of Satan is a relatively minor problem.

In the Classic Theory, as presented by Aulen, very much the same is true. The matter of God's own reconciliation is interpreted in a different way but it is still the same basic problem, at this point. The position of the Devil is not clear, but he presents no greater problem at least than the other 'hostile powers.' Except for the problem of sin there is no radical dualism in Aulen's theory either. The other 'hostile powers' are all more or less, considered as within the divine will as God's judgement against sin. But Aulen insists that the terrible reality of sin must be recognized as a power in complete and absolute opposition to the divine will. There is thus pictured here a radical dualism which is inescapable to the eye of faith but makes no sense to reason, because there is no explanation of where it comes from, and faith cannot recognize the existence of any power which is not utterly dependent upon God for its existence. But there it is! Sin exists as a terrible reality. God is not responsible for it, he has nothing to do with it except to struggle against it until it is overcome. Yet nothing can exist outside the will of God. Its existence is

meaningless, irrational, incomprehensible. This, Aulen believes, is what Christian faith must accept. The tension cannot be resolved.

It would seem more acceptable to faith to believe in a rational dualism rather than an irrational one. Evil as Aulen pictures it seems to come out of nowhere and will later disappear into nowhere. It exists but has no right to exist because God could not have created it, and nothing can exist without him.

From the standpoint of logic it must be admitted that if a thing exists and God does not want it to exist, and He did not create it, and it did not originate with the free will of some creature He has created, then it must have an independent existence. Reason and logic must be respected enough to allow that conclusion. The paradox which Aulen postulates at this point appears to be an absolute contradiction.

E. DUALISM AS CONCEIVED BY EDWIN LEWIS

At least one modern author accepts the conclusion that evil existed before Creation. Edwin Lewis in his book, The Creator and the Adversary, vividly portrays the grim reality and the terrible power of God's Adversary.

Lewis has come to the conclusion that evil cannot be explained in terms of human freedom. It also has a cosmic reference.⁴⁰ Its origin is to be found in a Demonic power which is much more powerful even than the traditional Satan who is pictured as a fallen angel. This Demonic power is termed the Adversary of God. He, or it, is eternal, having existed from the beginning. God's nature is creative. The nature of the Adversary is discreative, and he could not work until God had created something to destroy. Creation is, in one sense, God's challenge to the Adversary.⁴¹ According to Lewis, not only was the Adversary existent in the beginning with the Creator, but there was also another eternal existent which he called 'the residual constant.' This 'residual constant' is an uncreated neutral substance, which is indispensable to creative activity. In other words creativity is what God does to the 'residual constant.' He said that, "No created being, no created kind, can be accounted for wholly by the divine, or wholly by the demonic, or wholly by the residual constant, but only by all three."⁴²

⁴⁰Edwin Lewis, The Creator and the Adversary (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), p. 24.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 140.

⁴²Ibid., p. 142.

This confused picture of Creation tends to weaken the force of Lewis' graphic portrayal of the conflict between the Creator and the Adversary, as well as making it unbiblical in character. He presents a great truth, however, in his concept of the very real and terrible power of evil which bids fair to destroy all that God has created. This Adversary is not one of secondary importance like the Satan of the traditional Latin view.

The dualism of Lewis is a true dualism, but the force of it is destroyed for the Christian faith by the confused picture of the creative process and the unbiblical character of the supposed ground of conflict. The dualism of Aulen is weakened almost to the point of denying itself by the picture of evil as an irrational, meaningless force that could not exist unless God had created it, which, nevertheless, exists though God did not create it and seeks only to destroy it. What both Lewis and Aulen have done, however, is to recognize the existence of an evil power that cannot be accounted for simply through the rebellious will of created beings. Both also refuse to attribute this evil to God himself.

CHAPTER IV

THE ATONEMENT FROM THREE BASIC POINTS OF VIEW

Before continuing with further discussion of the meaning of the Dramatic Theory of Atonement it is important to present in more detail the three basic concepts of Atonement theory. There are two fundamental questions to be answered. (1) What is the chief obstacle to be overcome in securing salvation for man? (2) Why was the suffering and death of Christ necessary? These two questions are so closely related that the answer to one will be the answer to the other. These questions have already been partially answered in the discussion of the 'objective' and 'subjective' ideas with regard to the Atonement. It is important, however, to deal with this more fully before coming to the discussion of various other aspects of the Atonement.

The three basic answers to the above questions are the following: (1) The chief obstacle to be overcome in assuring man's salvation is in the nature of God himself. And Christ's suffering and death were necessary to reconcile God himself to the possibility of forgiving the repentant sinner. (2) The chief obstacle to be overcome in securing salvation for man is in the nature of man himself. And Christ's suffering and death were necessary to influence man

to turn to God in true repentance. (3) The chief obstacle to be overcome in securing salvation for man is Satan, the enemy of both God and man. And Christ's suffering and death were necessary because it was the only way in which God could fully confront and defeat his Enemy.

Each of these answers are to be elaborated in turn. First by presenting in very brief outline the implications of each answer with regard to the full sweep of the plan of salvation from creation to the completion of the redemptive process. This will be followed by the consideration of various aspects of the Atonement as related to each of the three answers.

A. THE FIRST ANSWER: THE CHIEF OBSTACLE TO MAN'S SALVATION BEING IN THE NATURE OF GOD HIMSELF¹

(1) In the beginning there was only God. It was God's nature and wish to create.

(2) God knew, however, that as soon as he created a creature with even a limited power of choice he could expect that creature to express his ego by wanting to rule his own life without interference from another. He would not want God to rule over him.

(3) God knew that when the creature with power of choice rejected the rule of God for his own way, the creature

¹Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Co., 1872), II, pp. 482-494.

would have to be severely punished and ultimately destroyed, or relegated to eternal punishment, unless God could somehow reconcile himself to forgive the creature in spite of his sin.

God knew also that when this creature turned against him he would have put a curse upon all the rest of creation. A part of the creature's punishment would be to live in this cursed environment. God also knew that this would mean the ultimate destruction of all of creation unless he could find a legitimate way to justify forgiveness of the creature.

(4) God knew that the only way he could forgive the creature and allow him to live would be for someone to suffer the punishment for sin and die in the creature's place. Only thus could God's own holy aversion against the sinfulness of this creature, and his own absolute sense of justice be satisfied so that he could be reconciled to the possibility of forgiving him.

(5) So from the beginning, before creating anything, God conceived the plan of sending his own Son to suffer and die in the sinful creature's place, so that he might find it possible to forgive and restore the sinful creature and the rest of the creation which he would have to curse because of the creature's rebellion.

(6) God planned, however, that as soon as his Son had suffered and died in the sinful creature's place and his

own holy Wrath against sin had been satisfied, he would raise his Son from the dead and restore him to his former glory with himself. His Son would then be a constant reminder that the price of Salvation had been paid and that the sins of the creature could be forgiven.

(7) God could then forgive the creature's sin - provided - that the creature recognized his own sinfulness in wanting to go his own way; repented of his sin; yielded his will to the will of God; and trusted only in the death of God's Son for his salvation. If he refused to do this it would still be necessary for God to destroy him, or punish him forever, after his time of opportunity to choose had passed.

(8) If the creature repented of his sin, and trusted in the way of Salvation provided through God's Son, he would be transformed in spirit so that by constant dependence upon God's help and Grace he could live a life at least partially pleasing to God. His constant failure to live completely in the will of God would be forgiven because of the death of God's Son.

(9) Those among the creature's who remained true to their trust in the Son of God until the day of their death would undergo a more radical transformation in the

resurrection, after the pattern of the resurrection of the Son of God. This transformation would be more than simply a restoration to the original sinless state. In the new state of things there would be no possibility of sin.

Not only would the faithful creatures be transformed into a new life in the presence of God, but the curse would be lifted from all of nature and there would be a New Heaven and a New Earth in which there would be no sin, no Death, nor pain, nor sorrow.

B. THE SECOND ANSWER: THE CHIEF OBSTACLE TO MAN'S SALVATION BEING IN THE NATURE OF MAN, GOD'S CREATION²

(1) In the beginning there was only God. It was God's nature and wish to create.

(2) God knew, however, that as soon as he created a creature with the power of free choice he could expect that creature to express his ego by wanting to rule his own life without interference from another. He would not want God to rule over him.

(3) God knew that when the creature with power of free choice rejected the rule of God for his own way, the creature's sin would set in motion a whole series of destructive tendencies. God knew that the effect of these

²Knudson, The Doctrine of Redemption, pp. 369-371.

destructive tendencies would be cumulative. They would be multiplied, compounded and intertwined, each rebellious act breeding new ones and strengthening others until the creature and all his environment would be hopelessly enmeshed in evil. God knew that this meant that the creature would destroy himself and all the rest of creation with him, unless God could find a way to save him from himself.

(4) God knew that the only way the creature could be saved would be for some powerful and restraining influence to enter the world, which would make him aware of the error of his ways, and win him back to God. It would have to be an influence that could make the creature understand that the pain, sorrow and death he saw all about him was the result of sin, chief of which was his own rebellion against God. He would need to recognize that he was utterly helpless to right things himself and that only by returning to God's way could the evil be overcome.

(5) So from the beginning, before creating anything, God conceived the plan of sending his own Son to live among the sinful creatures as one of them; to suffer with them all the effects of their sin even to the point of death. By his sinless life and perfect example he would reveal to them the exceeding sinfulness of their own ways. Through

his sympathetic understanding of their suffering and weakness, and through his willingness, as the Son of God, to identify himself with them even to death, he would reveal also the great love of God. He would thus reveal to them that God wished to restore them to new life and was waiting only for them to turn to him for forgiveness and restoration. In this way constructive powers and influences would be set in motion that would counteract and eventually overcome the destructive tendencies of sin.

(6) God planned, however, that as soon as his Son had lived out his life on earth and had suffered and died as a man, he would be raised from the dead and restored to his former glory with himself. The resurrection of the Son of God would be the final drama to show the creatures what they could become through turning to God, and would give them a glorious hope which would hold them steady in their struggle to work with God in setting right the world which had become so deformed through the sin of the race.

(7) God could do nothing to help the creature, however, until the creature recognized his own sinfulness in wanting to go his own way, repented of his sins; yielded his will to the will of God, and trusted in his love and mercy which had been revealed through the life and death of his Son.

If he refused to do this there was nothing more God could do for him, the creature would die in his sin with no hope of eternal life.

(8) If the creature repented of his sin and trusted in the Love and Mercy of God as revealed in his Son, he would be transformed in spirit so that by constant dependence upon God's help and Grace he could live a life at least partially pleasing to God, in spite of the moral drag of his sinful society. His constant failure to live completely in the will of God would be overlooked and forgiven because of his true repentance in spirit, his desire to fulfill all the will of God, and willingness to deny himself in order to follow the way of the Son of God.

(9) Those among the creatures who remained true to their commitment to the Son of God and their trust in his Mercy and Love until death would undergo a more radical transformation in the resurrection, after the pattern of the resurrection of the Son of God. This transformation would be more than simply a restoration to the original sinless state. In the new state of beings there would be no possibility of sin.

Not only would the faithful creatures be transformed into a new life in the presence of God, but all of nature

would be freed from the effects of sin and there would be a New Heaven and a New Earth in which there would be no sin, no Death, nor pain, nor sorrow.

C. THE THIRD ANSWER: THE CHIEF OBSTACLE TO MAN'S SALVATION BEING IN THE NATURE OF SATAN, GOD'S ENEMY³

(1) In the beginning there was God; and there was the Enemy of God. It was God's nature and wish to create. It was the nature of the Enemy to destroy.

(2) God knew that as soon as he created anything the Enemy would try to destroy it. He knew that the higher the form of creation, the greater would be the Enemy's opportunity to destroy and thus the greater the risk of its corruption and destruction. With the creation of creatures with the power of free choice the Enemy would have his greatest opportunity and God's creation would be most vulnerable.

(3) God knew that the power of the Enemy would be sufficient to corrupt and ultimately destroy all that he would create unless he found a way to defeat him and thus save his creation.

(4) God knew that the only way to defeat his Enemy and save his creation was to confront him in the very arena of the Enemy's greatest power and advantage. This would

³Lewis, The Creator and the Adversary, pp. 128-139.

come at the point of the creation of free moral creatures and it was in this context that the greatest battle must be fought and the decisive victory won.

(5) So from the beginning, before creating anything, God conceived the plan of sending his own Son to live in a body of flesh and to be united with a creature exactly like the free moral beings he would create. His Son would be subject to the same limitations of the creatures among whom he would be sent; the same limitations of body and mind, and affected by the same emotions. His Son would thus be subject to all the temptations to sin which confronted the creatures among whom he came to live. This would give the Enemy the opportunity of employing to the fullest advantage all his powers of corruption and destruction against the Son of God himself, even to the point of death. God had every confidence that he could win this battle and in this way defeat the Enemy on his own ground, and thus save that which he had created.

(6) It was God's plan that as soon as the Enemy had done the worst that he could do in bringing Death upon his Son, he would raise his Son from the dead and thus gain complete victory and power over the greatest weapon of the Enemy. The Son of God would then be restored to his former glory.

This great victory through the life, death and resurrection of God's Son would not mean the immediate cessation of the Enemy's activity and power among earthly creatures. But the resurrection of the Son of God would be evidence to all free moral creatures that God's power was infinitely greater than the power of the Evil One, that life in God would be victorious over Death and all the effects of sin. It would also serve as a prelude to the final and complete victory over the power of the Enemy for all who would trust in God, and as the earnest of a glorious hope to hold them steady in their struggle to work with God against the power of the Evil One on the earth.

(7) It would be necessary, however, for each of the free moral creatures to choose between the way of God and the way of the Enemy. The creature would have to recognize his own responsibility and his own sin in having listened to the suggestions of the Evil One and in having yielded to them. He would need to recognize the fact that his own corrupted will and selfish desires were working in harmony with the destructive power of the Enemy. He would need to be aware of the fact that he had allowed himself to become a slave to the Enemy and that he was powerless to change or save himself. He could be freed from the power of the

Enemy only through genuine repentance for his own sin, yielding his will completely to the will of God, and trusting in his Love, Mercy, and Power which had been revealed through the life, death and resurrection of his Son. If he refused to do this God would not be able to save him. He would remain a slave of the Evil One and suffer all the consequences of the way of corruption and Death which he had chosen. This would mean final banishment with the Evil One to outer darkness.

(8) If the creature repented of his sin and trusted in the Love and Mercy of God for forgiveness, and trusted in the Salvation made possible through the victory of God's Son, he would be transformed in spirit so that by constant dependence upon God's help and Grace he could live a life at least partially pleasing to God in spite of the power of the Evil One and the influence of his fellow creatures who were still following the way of the Enemy. His constant failure to live completely in the will of God would be overlooked and forgiven as long as he was truly repentant; was sincerely desirous of doing God's will; and continued to trust in the Son of God as his Saviour.

(9) Those among the creatures who remained true to their commitment to God, to their trust in his Mercy and

Love, and his Power to save, would undergo a more radical transformation in the resurrection, after the pattern of the resurrection of the Son of God. Thus would the faithful creatures be, not restored, but re-created into the kind of being which was the original purpose and goal of the Creator.

Not only would the faithful creatures be transformed into a new life in the presence of God, but all of nature would be freed from the corrupting power of the Evil One and made new. There would be a New Heaven and a New Earth in which there would be no sin, no Death, nor pain, nor sorrow, because the Evil One would have been defeated and God's creation would be beyond the reach of his power to corrupt and destroy.

These three answers are given without elaboration and without consideration of the many variations and combinations of the three that have at times been expounded. The idea here is to compare them in as brief a space as possible.

It is obvious that these three concepts correspond to the three types of Atonement theory that were mentioned earlier. The 'First Answer' corresponding to the Latin, or Satisfaction Theory; the 'Second Answer' to the Enlightenment or Moral Influence Theory; and the 'Third Answer' to

the Classic or Dramatic Theory. The three answers do not correspond exactly at all points with the theories mentioned and as has been said there are various combinations. The thought is to contrast sharply the central idea in each of the three without particular reference to the names that have been attached to them.

It should be noted that Aulen's view of the Atonement does not fit exactly any of the three answers given. In one sense it corresponds to the 'First Answer' in that Christ's victory destroyed or overcame these elements of God's nature that were opposed to redemption of the sinner. Aulen insists, however, that God's forgiveness is not motivated by anything other than his spontaneous Love. But the implication remains that the sinner could not be spared if God's Wrath and Law had not been vanquished through Christ's victory over them.

Aulen's view corresponds to the 'Third Answer' in that the suffering and death of Christ are regarded as necessary primarily to defeat the enemies of God's purpose of redemption. The concept as to the true nature of the Enemy or enemies is different, however. And because of the concept of the nature of God's enemies and the 'objective' emphasis on the nature of the Atonement, Aulen's view is,

after all, not so sharply distinct from the Latin view as he would lead us to believe.

Aulen's view is, therefore, not a truly 'Dramatic' view of the Atonement, in the sense that the opposing forces are sharply distinct from each other. Aulen does claim that sin is absolutely separate and distinct from God and he treats it as an objective power, but the concept is so vague that it dulls and confuses the attempt to dramatize the encounter of opposing forces, and he further maintains that there is no power which is not utterly dependent upon God for its existence.

At any rate, for the sake of clarity in comparing and contrasting the three points of view the 'Dramatic' view has been presented here as the 'Third Answer' which pictures Satan, and therefore evil as existing entirely separate from God. The 'Dramatic' idea can be presented only in a limited sense and confused manner if this is not done.

In each of the nine steps presented in the three answers there are a number of variations that could be pointed out. Some of the major ones will be considered in the following chapters along with the discussion of various important aspects of the Atonement as seen from the three points of view.

CHAPTER V

THE ATONEMENT AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

A. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY ACCORDING TO THE 'FIRST ANSWER'

The question of the sovereignty of God was vital in influencing the formation of each of the three concepts. In fact, the primary reason that men have given the 'First Answer' has been to assert the absolute sovereignty of God.

1. God's relationship to man. As it was presented in Chapter IV man's limited power of choice was assumed in the 'First Answer.' But in its most radical form which is seen in Calvinism, and also in Luther's theology, the idea of choice would have been rejected from the start because this would have meant the possibility of something happening outside the will of God. This rejection eliminates all possibility of sin having its origin apart from the will of God and leads to the idea of absolute predestination. There is much scriptural support for the idea of absolute predestination of all things, and there is also much scriptural support for the belief that man has the power to choose for himself.

In the famous debate between Luther and Erasmus, Erasmus quoted at length passages confirming the idea of

freedom of the will and ended by declaring that such passages were so numerous that looking for them in the Bible was ". . . like looking for water in the ocean."¹ Luther, however, was impervious to this argument in spite of his own great emphasis upon and respect for the Scriptures. As Luther saw it man could have the apparent freedom of choice and turn to God or reject him exactly as Scripture appears to make him responsible for doing. But this does not mean that the man is actually free to choose, because he can have the spirit of obedience only if God gives it to him and he can have faith only if God chooses to give him faith. Luther declared,

No one can give faith to himself, nor free himself from unbelief.² . . . our original proposition still stands and remains unshaken: all things take place of necessity.³

From this point of view then, one could not even logically consider the power of free choice as in any sense the origin of evil. Nor could one logically consider any evil in the world as originating outside the will of God. Logic, however, had no place in Luther's theology, he still

¹Ernst F. Winter, Erasmus - Luther Discourse on Free Will (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1961), p. 36.

²John Dillenberger (ed.), Martin Luther - Selections from his Writings (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1961), p. 25.

³Ibid., p. 183.

insisted that man is responsible for his sin and God can do no evil. He wrote:

By the light of grace, it is inexplicable how God can damn him who by his own strength can do nothing but sin and become guilty. Both the light of nature and the light of grace here insist that the fault lies not in the wretchedness of man, but in the injustice of God; nor can they judge otherwise of a God who crowns the ungodly freely, without merit, and does not crown but damns another, who is perhaps less, and certainly not more, ungodly. But the light of glory insists otherwise, and will one day reveal God, to whom alone belongs a judgement whose justice is incomprehensible, as a God whose justice is most righteous and evident - provided only that in the meanwhile we believe it . . .⁴

In the light of what Luther wrote the question is, how can anyone believe it? He cannot, of course, unless God gives him that faith, and if God gives him that faith he cannot believe otherwise.

Such contradictory concepts in Luther's theology are, of course, the basis for Aulen's statement that ". . . . theology lives and has its being in these combinations of seemingly incompatible opposites."⁵

2. God's relationship to evil. The basis of the 'First Answer' is the concept of the absolute, unconditional

⁴Ibid., p. 202.

⁵Aulen, Christus Victor, p. 173.

sovereignty of God. From this concept one can not even picture Satan as having any real freedom of choice. He could be only what God wills him to be, or at the very most what God permits him to be, which makes very little difference. It is no wonder that he is not considered an important problem to God in working out the plan of man's salvation.

From this point of view it is easy enough to see why more recent versions of this theology have led to universalism. If God is absolutely sovereign then there can be no possibility of anything happening against his will nor defeating his purpose. If he is love and his purpose is to redeem all men nothing can keep him from accomplishing that purpose to its fullest extent. That is, unless one can believe that it is not his purpose for all men to be redeemed.

B. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY ACCORDING TO THE 'SECOND ANSWER'

1. God's relationship to man. From the point of view of the 'Second Answer' the sovereignty of God can still be stressed in the sense that there exists no other power of consequence. The difference being that God temporarily relinquishes part of his sovereignty; temporarily limits himself in order to give the creatures he has created actual, and not merely apparent, freedom of choice. This thought

would appear to absolve God of all responsibility for evil. The responsibility for evil falls upon the disobedient creatures whose acts of evil God cannot immediately check without violating the real freedom which he has given them. Thus the consequences of the evil action must be allowed to work themselves out in the society of men. The work of Christ was to set in motion other forces that would counteract the evil forces set in motion by free moral beings.

From this point of view one could logically believe in an ultimate over-all victory for God, and still accept the fact that some beings will be lost, without placing the blame on God. If every free being is given full opportunity to choose in the light of full understanding of the consequences of his choice, God cannot be blamed for his wrong choice. One would have to admit, however, that every soul lost would be a defeat for God. This would be true from any point of view, of course, except perhaps the first one in which one might conclude that it is God's purpose for some to be lost.

It should be noted that the more common view of God's relationship to man is a combination of the 'First' and 'Second' Answers, but there is no need to present all intermediary positions here.

2. God's relationship to evil. The existence of Satan is often denied by proponents of the 'Second Answer,' but the idea of Satan can fit in very well with this position. The influence of rebellious heavenly beings in conjunction with the free spirits of man would add greatly to the complexity of the force of evil that must be overcome in the redemption of man and creation. If the power of the evil forces of the Heavenly rebellion is conceived to be great enough, this force could also be responsible for the evils of nature.

The natural evil under consideration here is not so much the harm that comes to man through floods and drought, heat and cold, and storms of violence and such natural disasters. The problem which is much more acute is the evil of the so called "law of the jungle;" the survival of the fittest, the necessity to kill or be killed, the pall of violence and disease and Death which hangs like a cloud of doom over all of creation. It is difficult to imagine that the sin of man is responsible for all this evil. It is possible to conceive of this as the deliberate corruption of creation by supernatural forces, but this means further infringement upon the sovereignty of God. According to the 'First Answer' this evil is simply the curse which God himself has put upon nature because of man's disobedience.

The first appearance of Satan in the Scriptures is, of course, the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Edwin Lewis says, "It does not matter how the Serpent is interpreted, it stands for evil, which means that evil was in existence before Adam disobeyed."⁶

A careful look at the early chapters of Genesis confirms this fact at several points.

3. Biblical evidence of evil before creation of man.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, followed by the creation of plant life, fish, birds, animals and finally man. This is the story in the first chapter of Genesis.

But the problem of evil immediately arose and the second and third chapters of Genesis are for the purpose of explaining the origin of that evil. God prepared a special garden in Eden for the man. Apparently this garden was not like the rest of the earth. It was a place especially prepared for the man. The implication is that this garden was much better than the rest of the earth. Just what was the relation of the garden to the rest of the earth is not clear. But it was a special place, and when man sinned he

⁶Lewis, The Creator and the Adversary, p. 130.

was driven out of it into the world. In any case it would imply that only the garden of Eden was a special paradise, and there lurked in the background, even here, the shadow of evil. Also man was placed in the garden to till it and keep it, which is a clear indication that it would not have remained a paradise without some effort on man's part to take care of it. In other words the seeds of decay and disorder were already there even in the garden of Eden and had to be guarded against, even though man himself was perfectly innocent of any evil.

The pre-existence of evil is even more clearly seen, however, when the fact is noted that God had placed in the midst of the garden the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as well as the tree of Life. The man was forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil on pain of death. So the man was made aware of the fact that there was such a thing as evil and such a thing as Death. He was forbidden to eat of the tree that would bring Death. He was free to eat of the tree of Life, but apparently did not do so.

Adam and Eve did not themselves question the command of God not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Apparently they would have been content to till the

garden and live in obedience to God's command had not the serpent suggested otherwise. Here is further evidence of an already existing evil power. Scripture does not say that the serpent represented an evil power, it merely states that " . . . the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature" (Gen. 3:1).⁷ But certainly the whole story implies that this was more than just a wild creature. The implication is that an evil power was working through him. What or who was this evil power represented by the serpent?

If Satan is conceived of as a fallen heavenly being it is difficult to understand how this could have happened. He must have been created a perfect moral creature and have lived in an atmosphere where everything was absolutely perfect and favorable for continuing in this moral perfection. What could have tempted him to sin in such an atmosphere? The final restoration surely could not be more perfect. And if not, how could it be declared that no sin can enter there, if it was able to enter into the original perfect state? J. S. Whale made an interesting observation in this connection:

. . . to the question 'When did the devil rebel?' medieval scholasticism answered 'statim post creationem'

⁷The Revised Standard Version of the Bible is used in all quotations from the Scriptures.

(immediately after the creation). It was a hair-splitting attempt to safeguard the sole causality of God and the perfection of his creation while admitting the reality of evil which that creation makes logically inconceivable.⁸

We may add that as the Christian doctrine of creation means the world is from God and perfect, it cannot logically contain a rebellious devil; the perfection which he mars would already be incomplete through his very existence. Further, its perfection would already be incomplete through its potential corruptibility.⁹

Whale's belief was that "Biblical theology boldly declares a demonic anti-divine principle which participates nevertheless in the power of the divine."¹⁰ This concept has already been discussed at length in connection with Aulen's view regarding God's relationship to Wrath, Law, Death and the Devil. It hardly seems a better concept, nor less fraught with illogical contradictions.

If the problem is discussed in the earthly realm rather than the heavenly it will hardly be different, if the Tempter is not taken into account. Again as Whale said,

The temptability of Adam is logically incompatible with that original perfection which Christian theology postulates in him Given the Christian doctrine of creation in its Classic form, not only sin but temptability itself remains a mystery¹¹

⁸Whale, Victor and Victim, p. 39.

⁹Ibid., p. 39 footnote.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 38.

¹¹Ibid., p. 39 footnote.

Edwin Lewis also said, "A perfect man would be untemptable" ¹² One could agree with Whale and Lewis in this only on condition that there was no Tempter. In the case of Adam and Eve there certainly was a Tempter, also there was a Tempter who was a very real problem of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ was perfect and he was tempted, but only because there was already existing the conditions of sin and a powerful evil Tempter who sought to bring pressure to bear upon him. The temptation of Adam is understandable because there was a Tempter, but the fall of a heavenly being to become that Tempter is not understandable.

C. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY ACCORDING TO THE 'THIRD ANSWER'

1. God's relationship to evil. According to the 'Third Answer' which has been considered in Chapter IV, this evil power is the Enemy of God who existed in the beginning with God. (This, of course, is in basic disagreement with Aulen's view of dualism.) The objection made in this respect is that this concept of the origin of evil is not acceptable to Christian faith because it is not compatible with the concept of the absolute sovereignty of God. It

¹²Lewis, The Creator and the Adversary, p. 130.

could be argued, however, that the existence of evil in any form is incompatible with the concept of the absolute sovereignty of God. The existence of powerful evil forces in direct and irreconcilable opposition to the will of God cannot be denied. (Aulen strongly affirms this point, but nevertheless, insists on God's unconditional sovereignty). As long as evil continues one cannot think of God as being absolutely sovereign unless he believes this evil is also within the will of God, all of it. In this the ultra-Calvinist is at least logical. As long as one believes that the evil existing in God's creation is contrary to his will; that it is something which he did not create and does not want, one must believe that there is limitation, in some sense, to the sovereignty of God. That is, unless one can do as Aulen does and believe in two contrary concepts at the same time.

In no case was the sovereignty of God challenged until the creation. From any point of view, however, the problem of evil is as old as creation itself. Something went wrong with creation. Something which was not a part of God's creation entered into it, something which was completely contrary to his will, something which he proposes to condemn and fight until it is completely eradicated, and his creation

can become what he originally intended it to be. One must believe this unless one accepts the belief that all of it is the will of God and that he did create it, in which case one cannot believe in him as a God of Love. Aulen also declares that the Christian faith is faced with an inescapable decision:

Either God discloses himself in Christ and in that spiritual life which he dominates, in which event he is divine love and his will is not reflected in every occurrence; or everything that happens is actually an expression of the divine will, in which event the characteristic features of love in the Christian idea of God are enveloped in obscurity, and nothing remains except mysterious and impenetrable Fate.¹³

This did not keep him from saying, however, that,

Faith's view of the sovereignty of divine love implies that everything is unconditionally dependent upon the will and love of God. Nothing is outside the sphere of God's power; no situation can arise in which his power would not be able to assert itself.¹⁴

This last statement of Aulen's, "Nothing is outside the sphere of God's power, no situation can arise in which his power would not be able to assert itself," can be accepted from any of the three points of view under discussion. That is to say, there cannot arise any situation in which God would not be able to assert his power and change that

¹³Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, p. 197.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 148.

situation in some way if he chooses. The absolute sovereignty of God can be understood and accepted in this sense. But there is a sense in which sovereignty is limited by the creation of free moral beings, or even by the very nature of love itself. Quoting again from Aulen, "Love cannot be induced by force. The hearts of men can be won only by the power of love."¹⁵ God's purpose is that all men should have hearts filled with love. He is limited, however, in his power to do this. Love cannot be induced by force, and to the extent it is not accepted God's sovereignty in this realm is limited and his purpose defeated.

There is a similar analogy with regard to God's relationship to evil. There was only one way that God could have avoided confrontation with evil. He could have decided not to create anything. At that point he was absolutely sovereign in every sense of the word. He could have created or not have created just as he chose. But from any point of view it was apparent that as soon as he created free moral beings he would be confronted with evil. At least it is believed that he knew this and that he prepared from the beginning a plan to overcome it. It was also clear from the beginning that he could not overcome that evil by the

¹⁵Ibid., p. 146.

sheer power of his sovereign might. It had to be done indirectly, at least in part, through the winning of those free moral creatures who would be affected by it. Just as love could not be forced upon them so evil could not be forced out of them and in this sense his sovereignty was limited. This is understandable from all three views of the origin of the power of evil, except with the extreme form of the 'First Answer' which does not recognize the freedom of the will.

Looking at the problem of evil from the standpoint of natural evil it appears that God was faced with the problem of evil even before the creation of free moral beings. The implication of the 'Third Answer' under discussion is that God knew that as soon as he created anything he would be faced with the discreative activity of the Evil One. (Again this is not Aulen's view). If God had not created, the Evil One would not have acted. He could not have acted because he could do nothing creative. The recognition of the existence of such an evil power does not deny the sovereignty of God any more than does the recognition of the actual existence of evil. As has already been pointed out, evil is something for which God is not responsible. He did not create it, he is unalterably opposed to it, he

is engaged in a bitter struggle to overcome it and to eradicate it from his creation. It is apparent that if God had not been willing to pay the incalculable cost to redeem his creation and transform it beyond the reach of sin and Death, all of it would be destroyed. What more could be said of the power of evil, even assuming the pre-existence of the Evil One.

It may be argued that the idea of an uncreated evil power is not Biblical. The Bible does not say the Evil One was in the beginning with God. The Bible says the Lord is One and there is no other beside him. On the other hand there is nothing in the Bible which says that the Evil One did not exist and he is certainly assumed to be active throughout the Bible. The conflict between light and darkness is ever present. God bringing order to chaos and light to darkness in Gen. 1:2 might be interpreted in this way also.

The following Scripture passages lend strong support to the idea of Satan as the source of evil and death, and as never having existed in any other context:

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44,45).

He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil (I John 3:8).

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage (Heb. 2:14,15).

The 'Dramatic' view certainly would not contend that there were two Creators as pictured by some forms of dualism. There is only one Creator who is responsible for all of creation. But there is also the Destroyer. Where there is love it is his purpose to bring hate. Where there is light he brings darkness. Where there is order he brings chaos. Wherever there is Life it is his purpose to bring Death. Wherever there is creation it is his purpose to destroy.

The Biblical picture of the final triumph of God over Satan is also interesting in this connection. Satan is bound and imprisoned, or cast into the bottomless pit, or into the outer darkness where he will be forever and ever. And between him and God there is a great gulf fixed, nothing can cross over from one side to the other. God's creation has been redeemed and perfected, and placed forever beyond the reach of the Evil One, the victory is complete and final. Death and Darkness and Destruction cannot enter

where God reigns supreme. Life and Light and Love will reign with him forever.

2. God's relationship to man. The concept of God's sovereign relationship to man according to the 'Third Answer' is as follows: God created man with real power of choice. God thus limited himself insofar as the direct control over man's activity is concerned. The real fact of man's free choice not only limits God's direct control over him, but gives the Enemy his greatest opportunity to destroy through corrupting the highest beings of God's creation on earth and enlisting their support in his purpose of destruction and Death. And although it is true that the creation of man has given the Evil One his greatest opportunity to corrupt, and destroy God's creation; it is also true that through man God purposed to confront his Enemy in the decisive battle that would break his power and assure his ultimate and complete defeat. This could be done only through exposing himself to sin and Death in the form of one of his creatures (as is implied in Heb. 2:14). Thus God entered into the arena of the activity of the Enemy and destroyed his power. It was only in this way that God could take the blows of the Enemy unto himself and emerge victorious in spite of the worst the Enemy could do.

God has been working out his plan and purpose through men during all the course of human history and continues to spare no effort to win all men unto himself.

CHAPTER VI

THE ATONEMENT AND THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN

The relationship of God's forgiveness of sin to the idea of Atonement is of vital importance. It is the major point of controversy between the concept of the 'First Answer' and the point of view of the 'Second' and 'Third' Answers. This has already been pointed out in the discussion of the 'objective' and 'subjective' ideas of Atonement.

A. FORGIVENESS AND SALVATION

Although there are only two major points of view with respect to forgiveness, (i.e. Christ's death either was or was not necessary for God's forgiveness), there are in another sense three points of view which can be stated as follows:

(1) Forgiveness and Salvation are inseparable terms in the sense that Christ's death was necessary in order that God might be able to forgive. And, although Salvation has a wider connotation, the fact of God's forgiveness is the essence and primary concern of Salvation in its narrower sense.

(2) Forgiveness and Salvation are inseparable terms in the sense that man finds Salvation when he turns to God

in true repentance. Salvation, in its narrower sense, is the Forgiveness of God, the reconciliation between God and man. Christ's death was not necessary to make this forgiveness possible, however.

(3) Forgiveness and Salvation are again inseparably linked together, yet each has a very distinct and separate meaning from the other. Forgiveness in the heart of God was always there for the genuinely repentant sinner, as is true with the 'Second Answer.' The essence of Salvation, however, is that the Enemy who held the sinner in bondage has been defeated and the sinner can find Salvation because of Christ's death for him. The two terms are inseparable in the sense that, although forgiveness was always in the heart of God for the truly repentant, it could not be effective until the Enemy was defeated. Forgiveness would be of no value to the sinner if he were not freed from the power of Death. Likewise the defeat of the Enemy is of no value to the sinner who does not turn to God in repentance and receive forgiveness. It is true from all three points of view, of course, that the available forgiveness of God is of no effect or value to the unrepentant sinner. (This idea is in harmony with Aulen's view on God's forgiveness, although the enemy to be overcome in making it effective is different).

B. FORGIVENESS AND THE DEATH OF CHRIST

Leon Morris has said, "If God simply forgives, then nothing more is needed. The Cross is not needed. The Cross is no more than a piece of useless embroidery. The Cross is emptied of its meaning.¹ Again he asks, "If His death did nothing to bring about our forgiveness, then exactly why did Christ die?"²

If these statements of Morris are considered only in the light of the 'Second Answer,' or Moral Influence Theory, his objection is clear and understandable. It seems clear that this is the only alternative he has in mind. It is apparent from the above statements that Morris cannot conceive of the death of Christ as being in any sense necessary apart from making forgiveness possible. His concept of the Atonement is thoroughly 'objective.' As he sees it, if there is no need to satisfy the Holiness, Wrath or sense of Justice in God so that he can forgive sinners, then Christ's death is meaningless.

It appears that Morris, either completely misses the point of the 'Dramatic' view of Atonement, or he is so convinced of the 'objective' necessity of the Atonement that

¹Morris, The Cross in The New Testament, p. 369.

²Ibid., p. 371.

he does not regard the other point of view as worthy of consideration. According to the 'Third Answer,' or the 'Dramatic' view, of the Atonement the death of Christ, and therefore his Cross, was necessary to save the world from God's Enemy who would otherwise destroy it. Through the Cross of Christ men are saved from eternal Death and given hope of eternal Life. How can anyone say that this makes the Cross of Christ unnecessary or meaningless? According to the 'Third Answer' one can believe that it was necessary for God to send his Son to save the world and still not believe that it was necessary in order that He might be able to forgive.

Morris declares, "The plain truth is that if forgiveness can come about independently of Jesus Christ, then neither His person or His work, neither His life nor His death nor anything else about Him can be necessary to forgiveness."³ Here again it is evident that Morris is thinking of forgiveness and Salvation as almost identical terms. The 'Dramatic' view would agree, however, that forgiveness cannot come about independently of Jesus Christ, but not for the same reason. For Morris it means that God could not

³Ibid., p. 378 footnote.

bring himself to forgive without Christ's death. For the 'Dramatic' view it means that God could not make his forgiveness effective without Christ's death.

Thus there appears another manner in which the three types of Atonement theory can be distinguished. The 'First Answer' regards the death of Christ necessary for God to be ready to forgive, but not necessary for the defeat of Satan. The 'Third Answer' regards the death of Christ as necessary in the defeat of Satan, but not necessary to God's readiness to forgive the repentant sinner. The 'Second Answer' does not regard the death of Christ as necessary for God's readiness to forgive the repentant sinner, nor for the defeat of His Enemy. Any necessity for Christ's death lies in another realm.

The objection is voiced by Guillebaud against the Moral Influence Theory that if Christ did not die for the forgiveness of sins it is as though he died for someone who was in no real danger.⁴ Morris, also thinking in much the same way says, that Matthew and Mark set their 'good news' against a sombre background, "Jesus does not save men from some imaginary danger, but from very real peril."⁵ The

⁴H. E. Guillebaud, Why the Cross? (London: Inter-
Varsity Fellowship, 1954), p. 167.

⁵Morris, The Cross in the New Testament, p. 20.

'Dramatic' view would also agree that Jesus died to save men from a very real peril, but that peril was Death which could be avoided only through the defeat of the Enemy that brings Death. (Again it should be pointed out that the concept of 'Enemy' here does not correspond with Aulen's view). It was not the peril that God would be unwilling to forgive the repentant sinner without the death of Christ.

C. FORGIVENESS AND THE CONCEPT OF SIN

Proponents of the 'First Answer' argue that if men believe that God is ready to forgive sin without great sacrifice, sin ceases to be regarded as a serious matter. According to this point of view it is felt that men will be convinced of the terribleness of sin only when they are convinced that God cannot forgive sin without great cost to himself. To say that God can or will forgive sin on the sole conditions of genuine repentance and faith in God's Love is to make sin a light matter and to picture God as a sentimental parent ready to spoil his children in order to gain their affection. It is argued that man will sense the horrible reality of sin only when he is convinced that God must punish all sin and must will the death of the sinner. Only when man sees that Christ must suffer punishment and Death in his place so that God can lift the sentence

of condemnation and Death will he be aware of God's implacable hatred of sin and the awful doom which would have been his without the sacrifice of Christ.

Proponents of the 'Dramatic' view would argue, however, that the exceeding sinfulness of sin is portrayed with even greater vividness and telling effect from this standpoint than from that of the 'First Answer.' From this point of view God's Enemy is pictured as the father of Death and corruption and sin. Without the saving power of God and his victory over sin through Christ no one could have escaped Death, nor the corrupting power of sin. It is not necessary to question God's willingness to forgive in order to understand the awful ravages of sin and what it has cost God to overcome it and secure Salvation for men. Man can only gaze with awe and wonder at the fact that God loved men enough to make the sacrifice of his Son for their Salvation from the power of the Evil One. God's hatred of sin is plain for all to see in his war against the forces of evil. And by implication the just fate of the sinner who refuses repentance and the way of Salvation to follow the Evil One, is easily understood. Genuine repentance and faith in the Salvation provided through Christ are the only conditions for receiving the forgiveness of God, as far as man is concerned.

From the point of view of the 'Second Answer' the concept of the awful power of sin appears to be weakened because man is not pictured as being saved from either the terrible Wrath of God nor the malignant power of the Evil One. Man has to be saved only from himself and his own sin through recognizing his need and turning to God in repentance. The sinless life of Christ and the revelation of the Love of God are sufficient to make man aware of his own failure and inadequacy and the need of moral transformation through Christ.

D. FORGIVENESS, FAITH, AND REPENTANCE

1. The conditions necessary to forgiveness according to Scripture. Hastings Rashdall has said that when Christ came preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom there was no evidence at all that he brought any new way of procuring forgiveness of sins other than the way of repentance. Rashdall believed Jesus taught that when and in so far as a man's will was rightly directed and when he condemned and abhorred the evil of his past, ". . . God would not reckon against him, or punish, the sins of the past."⁶ This wiping out of one's sinful past was purely on the basis of true repentance.

⁶Rashdall, The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology, p. 24.

a) Passages which indicate repentance only as necessary to forgiveness. Much of the Scriptural evidence tends to support Rashdall's statements. When Jesus began his ministry his preaching was in the same vein as that of John the Baptist before him. John preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 3:2). And people from all the region about Jordan were baptized by him confessing their sins (Mt. 3:5,6; Mk. 1:5). Mark and Luke stated it a bit differently saying, that John came ". . . preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3). But the meaning was the same, John was preaching the need for repentance in order that sins might be forgiven. People came confessing their sins and were baptized as a sign or seal of their repentance and forgiveness. Those baptized were admonished to bear fruit that would show the reality of their repentance (Mt. 3:8; Lk. 3:8).

Jesus began his preaching in the same manner, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 4:17). "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mk. 1:15).

There are a number of other passages that indicate no condition for forgiveness other than repentance. Jesus

told of the two sons, one who promised to do as his father asked but did not do it. The other said he would not but afterward repented and did it. Jesus comparing the chief priests and elders to the first son said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; and even when you saw it, you did not afterward repent and believe him" (Mt. 21:31,32). In Luke Chapter 15 where the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son are given there is no indication of anything but repentance needed. The plea of the rich man to Abraham was only that one from the dead might go to his brothers so that they would repent (Lk. 16:30). Again when referring to the tragedy of the eighteen upon whom the tower at Siloam fell, the warning of Jesus was only " . . . unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:5). There are a number of such passages in Acts,

Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out. . . (3:19). Repent . . . and pray . . . that if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you (8:22). Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life (11:18). The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent . . . (17:30). . . . that they should repent and turn to God and perform deeds worthy of their repentance (26:20).

When Jesus upbraided the cities in which many mighty works were done it was because they had not repented (Mt. 11:20; Lk. 10:13; 11:32). In Revelation the reason that various churches and people were condemned was because they refused to repent (Rev. 2:5,16,21,22; 3:19; 9:20,21; 16:9-11).

b) Passages which indicate repentance and faith in Jesus as necessary to forgiveness. There are a number of passages which add to repentance the condition of faith in Jesus. While speaking to his disciples after his resurrection Jesus told them that it was written ". . . that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations . . ." (Lk. 24:47).

Other typical passages follow:

And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'My son, your sins are forgiven' (Mk. 2:5). Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much . . . (Lk.7:47). Your faith has saved you; go in peace (Lk. 7:50). Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31). To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name (Acts 10:43). Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone that believes is freed from everything which you could not be freed by the law of Moses (Acts 13:38). John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is Jesus (Acts 19:4).

c) Passages which indicate something more than repentance and faith in Jesus as necessary to forgiveness.

. . . his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:14). And you . . . God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands . . . nailing it to the Cross (Col. 2:13,14). . . . if any one sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the expiation⁷ for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world (I Jo. 2:1,2). . . . your sins are forgiven for his sake (I Jo. 2:12). . . . this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Mt. 26:28).

d) Passages which indicate the necessity of the spirit of forgiveness in the sinner as a condition of God's forgiveness.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors . . . (Mt. 6:12). So also my heavenly Father will do to everyone of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart (Mt. 18:35).

2. The necessity and meaning of true repentance. The fact that true repentance is necessary for the sinner to receive God's forgiveness is clear from all points of view. The fact that this repentance includes absolute sincerity and a willingness to forgive others is equally acceptable to all points of view. Again it is clear to all that God cannot forgive any sinner who will not repent no matter what provision may have been made for his Salvation.

⁷The word 'expiation' is translated 'propitiation' in the King James Version.

Thus from the point of view of the 'First Answer,' even though Christ's death perfectly satisfied every demand of God's Law, Holiness and Wrath, it was all in vain if the sinner does not repent of his sin and meet the conditions of sincerity, faith in Christ and the willingness to forgive others.

As has already been pointed out, the more extreme view of the 'First Answer' regards man as incapable of responding freely and that repentance and faith are given to those who are predestined to be saved and is withheld from those who are to be lost. For Luther it was not only a question of believing that Christ's death had satisfied every demand of God's Holiness and Justice, but one must also trust in God to give repentance and faith. As he saw it no man could ever be sure that he was truly repentant and absolutely sincere. Therefore man's subjective feelings about this could not be trusted. He was sure that man would fail in carrying out even the smallest requirement that would be considered necessary for him to do for his Salvation.⁸ One must admit, of course, that if Salvation depended on a flawless and perfect sincerity of attitude and motive, and

⁸Dillenberger, Martin Luther - Selections from his Writings, p. 199.

complete repentance for every sin, no man could manage to do it. Every man would fail just as Luther himself did. Most would agree, however, that this is not what is meant by repentance. Involved in the idea of repentance is the recognition of one's moral imperfection, uncleanness, absolute helplessness, and utter failure to accomplish anything worthy of the Mercy and Grace of God in his forgiveness. No man can be sure of his motives, except to be sure that they are not absolutely pure. He can be sure of only one thing, his complete helplessness and therefore the necessity to depend utterly upon the Mercy of God. This is the meaning of true repentance.

3. The availability of God's Mercy. The question most important to consider, however, is with regard to the availability of the Mercy of God, and the interpretation of those passages of Scripture which seem to imply that something more than repentance and faith is necessary for forgiveness. What is the meaning of such statements as the following?

. . . his beloved Son in whom we have redemption,
 the forgiveness of sins . . . if anyone sins we have
 an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,
 and he is the expiation for our sins . . . your sins
 are forgiven for his sake . . . this is my blood . . .
 poured out . . . for the forgiveness of sins.

It would appear that the meaning here clearly indicates that the death of Christ was the important factor in making forgiveness possible. Can these passages in any sense, be compatible with the 'Third Answer?'

To say that Christ died in the place of sinful man; that he died to redeem him; that he poured out his blood to save him; even to say that his death was a ransom, or an expiation, or propitiation of God's Wrath; or that man is justified through his death; all this can be clearly seen from the point of view of the 'Third Answer.' To say, however, that this was done for forgiveness of sins, as these passages indicate, does not seem to agree with this position. There is only one sense in which this concept could be said to apply with respect to these passages. It could be said that Christ's death was necessary, not to make God willing to forgive, but to make God's forgiveness effective. All men would have been lost in spite of His willingness to forgive the repentant, if Christ had not died to rescue them from the Enemy.

This interpretation is certainly debatable. It is hardly more debatable, however, than the other interpretation which would say that all men would have been lost in spite of God's infinite Love, if Christ had not died to save the repentant sinner from His own Wrath.

The difference between the two views in this respect is further discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VII

THE ATONEMENT AND WRATH, THE LAW, AND JUDGEMENT

A. THE WRATH OF GOD

A great deal has already been said regarding the Wrath of God in the discussion of Aulen's views on this subject. It was noted that Aulen considers the Wrath of God as one of the 'hostile powers.' And although Wrath is directly related to the will of God in judgement upon sin, it is, nevertheless, the worst of the tyrants to be vanquished.

The idea that the Wrath of God must be removed in order for God to forgive sin is also expressed by Guillebaud in the following question.

We have seen that God is not only Love but also Light, and, as such, must and does will the destruction of evil. In order that God may be just and yet forgive sin, His holy wrath against sin must be removed by a 'propitiation for sin.'¹

This expression of Guillebaud with regard to the Wrath of God is in keeping with the 'First Answer' given in Chapter IV. According to this point of view something must be done about the Wrath of God. It may be placated

¹Guillebaud, Why the Cross?, p. 69.

by a sacrifice, or removed, or vanquished, or in some way modified. There is not complete agreement about which expression is best, but all are meant to convey the concept that something must be done about the Wrath of God or there is no hope for even the repentant sinner.

According to the view point of the 'Third Answer' the idea that something must be done to modify or remove the Wrath of God is false. (It is well to note here that Aulen's view at this point does not correspond with what is called the 'Third Answer,' which is a less complicated view of the 'Dramatic' idea of Atonement).

The 'Third Answer' would agree with the first part of Guillebaud's statement. God is Love, but He is also Light and He must and does will the destruction of evil. It does not follow that Wrath (in this case equivalent to Light) must be removed or propitiated, in order to forgive and save the repentant sinner.

According to this view nothing about God changes. His Love remains the same. His Wrath remains the same. Wrath is not removed or modified, or placated. His Wrath remains as always uncompromising against evil, and He is determined to overcome evil and eradicate it whatever it may cost. This Wrath, or Holiness, which stands in eternal

and radical opposition to darkness, sin and Death is not changed and does not need to be changed for the repentant sinner to be forgiven. In fact, the sinner who does not repent will not be forgiven. From any point of view absolutely nothing is changed for the unrepentant sinner. The other two points of view also hold that the unrepentant sinner will not be forgiven.

The difference, of course, with the 'First Answer' is that God could not be reconciled to forgive the truly repentant sinner unless something is done to appease, remove or modify the Wrath by an equivalent punishment, or an act which makes clear God's uncompromising opposition to sin.

According to the 'Third Answer' this uncompromising opposition to sin is clearly seen in His relentless purpose to defeat His Enemy and destroy his power. It is also clearly seen by the very fact that those who choose the way of the Evil One must necessarily be banished into outer darkness with him. There is no compromise, the unrepentant sinner will not be forgiven. God can forgive the repentant sinner without compromising his integrity because he knows the heart of the sinner. He knows whether or not the sinner is genuine in his repentance. To say that the sinner can never be absolutely sure that his own repentance is genuine

and complete is beside the point. The fact remains, unaltered from any point of view, that without genuine repentance there is no forgiveness of sin. Against the sinner who refuses to repent His Wrath remains unabated, unchanged, uncompromising. It cannot be removed. The death of Christ does not change that nor cover up sin.

Neither does the death of Christ make God's Love and Mercy different. The truly repentant sinner can be forgiven without asking a payment for his sins. The death of Christ has saved him from the power of the Enemy whose dominion and way of sin would otherwise lead to certain destruction. The provision has been made, but the sinner who rejects it and refuses to repent of sin will remain under the Enemy's dominion and will share his final exile. God can receive only the truly repentant who has rejected completely the way of the Enemy.

John Miley in his exposition of the Governmental Theory, came to a similar conclusion with regard to the Wrath of God.

. . . the divine wrath . . . asserts no dominance in the mind of God, and is in fullest harmony with his love. It has no necessity for penal satisfaction either in personal contentment or judicial rectitude. As personal, it neither requires nor admits a substitute in penalty as the ground of its surrender.²

²John Miley, Systematic Theology (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1894), II, p. 185.

Miley, of course, maintained the necessity of Christ's death to uphold the integrity of God's Moral Government and thus make it possible for God to forgive the offender.

The idea of removing or satisfying God's Wrath appears necessary only to those who think of God's own holy Wrath as being the primary enemy of the sinner's Salvation, (Aulen's view on the Wrath of God is close to this), and who regard Satan as a secondary, or even less important, obstacle to be overcome.

From the point of view of the 'Third Answer,' however, the satisfaction of God's aggressive Wrath, as well as the upholding of his honor and integrity, and the uncompromising position of his Holiness are all clearly seen in his relentless battle against evil and his triumphant victory over the Enemy who is the author of sin and Death.

B. THE LAW OF GOD

John Miley in writing of the necessity to uphold the Moral Law says,

That sin brings misery is in the order of the divine constitution of things.³ But punishment, strictly, is a divine infliction of penalty upon sin in the order of

³Ibid., p. 93.

a judicial administration. The necessity for penalty, therefore, is not from necessary causation, but from sufficient moral grounds.⁴

Guillebaud writing in a similar vein says,

The punishment of sin is inherent in the nature of God and in the nature of the universe created by Him. In that sense it may be called the out-working of a natural law. But, since God is not a mere abstraction but a Personal Being, He is directly and personally concerned in the upholding of this law that sin brings death, and, as our Lord teaches, He does directly, and judicially enforce it.⁵

These two questions represent the position of the proponents of the 'First Answer' with regard to the Law. Although Miley disagreed with respect to the understanding of the Wrath of God, he agreed with regard to the Law. The first agreement here is that punishment for sin is inherent in the divine constitution of things, or the nature of the universe created by God. In this sense it is the out-working of natural law according to the way God created. With all this Aulen would also agree.

The idea regarding the Law which fits the 'Third Answer' given in Chapter IV would also agree that the punishment for sin is built into the nature of things. It would not mean, however, that God arbitrarily built into the

⁴Ibid., p. 94.

⁵Guillebaud, Why the Cross?, p. 37.

nature of things the sort of law that he chose. It would mean that God created as he did because he was creating Life. The law of Life is God's Law. All that he has made was made to live by that Law. This is true not because he chose one system of law among several possible systems and resolved to punish those who did not like his chosen system. His Law is as it is because it is the Law of Life. The law of Life and righteousness is God's Law. The law of sin and Death is not his Law in one sense. The law of Death is the negation of the law of Life. There are only two ways to go. One way leads to Life the other way leads to Death. God could not reverse the order and make Death bring Life, nor change the pattern so that principles other than Life or Death would be in operation. It is indeed inherent in the nature of things that there is a way of Life and a way of Death. In one sense these are the opposite sides of the same Law, And it is more than just something built into the nature of things. It is the way things ARE, it is THE LAW, even God cannot change it. (This is not necessarily Aulen's view on the subject).

But in another sense the law of sin and Death is not God's Law. It is the negation of the law of Life. The negation of his Law is not his will, sin is not his will.

And the consequences of the negation of his Law are not his will. Death is not his will. It is not his will that any of his creatures should perish, no matter how sinful they may have been.

In the quotation given from Guillebaud, he said, ". . . He (God) is directly and personally concerned in the upholding of this law that sin brings death" The point of view of the 'Third Answer' could not agree with this. God has no personal interest in upholding the Law that sin brings Death and making sure that the law is enforced. In the first place he does not need to do so, sin will bring Death, he does not need to encourage it, or give it a boost to see that its work is accomplished. In the second place it is not true, because God's personal and primary interest is in counteracting sin and Death and overcoming them. He sent his Son to destroy the power of the Enemy who is the author and source of sin and Death. The unrepentant sinner who chooses to remain under the power of the Enemy will be lost in spite of all that God has done for him, not because God is interested in seeing that the law of Death is enforced.

The way Guillebaud has stated the matter is unfortunate because it would give the idea to the sinner that he could

revel in his sin and suffer no ill effects had not the great Dictator of the universe decided that certain actions should be called sin and punished. Therefore he must grudgingly obey the laws of the Dictator or suffer the consequences. It is much more effective for the sinner to recognize that it is a question of Life and Death and that God's whole effort is to persuade him to the way of Life, rather than being interested in making sure that Death is visited upon him as punishment for his sin.

The contention of Miley, and those of the Latin view of Atonement with regard to the Law is that Christ's death suffered the penalty of the Law in the place of the sinner so that God can forgive sin. As Miley sees it the punishment is on the order of judicial administration and in the interest of Moral Government. The punishment is not necessary for God to be ready personally to forgive the repentant. The Latin view generally holds that the punishment is necessary to satisfy the very nature of God, and the question of God's Law is automatically satisfied by the same Atonement.

From the point of view of the 'Third Answer' Christ's death does indeed satisfy God with regard to the law of Death. This is true because it is through His death that the law of Death is completely conquered and overcome so that

it no longer holds for those who are in Christ Jesus. The death of Christ was not to suffer the penalty for disobedience to Moral Government so that God can forgive the lawbreaker, but to completely nullify the power of the law of Death for those who trust in him.

This can also be stated in terms of government, Let us suppose that in a certain kingdom there has been a rebellion against the rightful Government of the kingdom. The Ruler of the kingdom has succeeded in breaking the power of the rebel armies. The Ruler sends out an order of Amnesty for all those who will turn against the rebel leader and come over to the side of the Government forces. The Ruler finds no difficulty in justifying the forgiveness of those who accept the offer of Amnesty. Those who refuse the offer, however, and choose to remain with the rebel leader in defiance of the Ruler of the kingdom can expect no mercy. The power of the enemy must be completely destroyed. This illustration is not completely adequate but serves to present the general idea.

Proponents of the 'First Answer' seem to fear that if God does not personally see to it, the law of sin and Death will not be enforced and proper punishment meted out. This is so because they see everything that happens as being directly related to God's will.

There is also the fact that we do not see the wicked properly punished in this life and feel that there must be some assurance that they will meet their proper punishment in the next. It is true that in this life the righteous often suffer more than the wicked and the innocent more than the guilty. And often the wicked do sin with impunity because they do not see punishment being meted out according to man's sin in this world. It is true that in this world God sends the rain upon the just and the unjust and allows the tares to grow with the wheat until the final judgement.

C. THE JUDGEMENT OF GOD

The portrayal of the last judgement in the Scriptures is very vivid and terrible in its finality. The following quotations from Jesus' teaching bear this out:

And then will I declare to them, I never knew you; depart from me you evildoers (Mt. 7:23). Truly, I say to you it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgement for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town (Mt. 10:15). But whosoever denies me before men, I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven (Mt. 10:33). So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth (Mt. 13:49, 50).

While the five foolish virgins were gone to buy oil for their lamps the bridegroom came and the door was shut.

When they came knocking at the door the reply was, "Truly, I say to you, I do not know you" (Mt. 25:12). A man at the wedding feast was found without a wedding garment and the king ordered that he be cast into outer darkness (Mt. 22:11-13).

The comparison of the points of view of the 'First' and 'Third Answers' with regard to the judgement is the primary interest here. Both would accept without question the Scriptural portrayal of the sovereignty and finality of the Judgement. The interpretation of the relationship of the Atonement to Judgement is different from the two points of view, however.

It is the position of the 'First Answer' that God could not have been free or ready to forgive anyone without the sacrifice of his Son. This means, as was pointed out in Chapter IV, that the chief impediment to man's Salvation was the Wrath or Holiness of God himself. This is, no doubt, the reason that Aulen called the Wrath of God the worst of all the tyrants to be vanquished, because he agreed with this position at this point. Now since the chief impediment to man's Salvation is taken to be within the nature of God himself the matter of Judgement takes on a very personal character. This was noted in the discussion of the Law of

God when Guillebaud declares that God is personally interested in seeing that the law of Death is applied to sinners. This same way of thinking naturally carries over into the conception of God's attitude in Judgement. From this point of view God is not only interested in seeing that all unrepentant sinners are properly punished, there is the added factor that he would not even have been ready to forgive the repentant sinner if Christ had not died in his place. (At this point Aulen's view differs).

From the standpoint of the 'Third Answer' the end result for the unrepentant sinner is not any different. It is the understanding of God's attitude in the Judgement that is different. From this position the primary impediment to man's Salvation is Satan himself and all that God does in the Judgement is seen in that light. In other words, every action of God in Salvation and Judgement is seen to be primarily for the purpose of defeating his Enemy, and eradicating sin from his creation rather than to satisfy his own sense of justice or necessity to punish all sin. His interest is not to punish sin but to get rid of it; and to destroy the power of the author of sin. (This does not mean that the unrepentant sinner can escape the consequences of his sin). Thus his forgiveness of the truly

repentant sinner does not depend upon the sacrifice of his Son. Although, as has been pointed out, God's readiness to forgive the repentant sinner would have had no practical value until the Enemy had been defeated and man rescued from his power.

This means, of course, that if Christ had not died to provide the way of Salvation all would have been lost to the Enemy. This is the same practical result as the other point of view, but the reason for men being lost is much different. However, the power of the Enemy has been broken through God's Son and the way of Salvation opened to the sinner, God's Love and readiness to forgive cannot be effective even then, of course, until the sinner is genuinely repentant of his sin.

The question of Judgement then is on the basis of the sinner's repentance and acceptance of the way of Salvation provided through Christ's victory over the Enemy. Any sinner who refuses to repent and accept the only way open to Salvation is still in the camp of the Enemy and must suffer the fate of the Enemy. Therefore at the final Judgement anyone who is still aligned with the Enemy must be destroyed with him; cast with him into outer darkness; into the hell prepared for the Devil and his angels.

There is another way to point up the differences between the two positions. From the viewpoint of the 'First Answer' one thinks of Judgement upon sin as being purely God's Judgement and personal need to punish sin. Death for the sinner is his will and he personally sees to it that the sinner does not escape it. (Aulen is in partial agreement here in that God's Wrath wills Death and must be conquered by His Love through Christ).

From the viewpoint of the 'Third Answer' one thinks of Death as coming from the Enemy. God's Judgement is simply the rejection of anything that has the taint of Death upon it. It is a question of Life and Death. In the final Judgement there must be a great gulf fixed forever between the two, so that Death cannot cross over ever again to destroy Life. The Judgement is final, the door is shut. Those who have not the wedding garment of the bridegroom of Life must be cast into outer darkness.

God's Judgement is personal in the sense that he must see to it that anything or anyone with the taint of Death is excluded. But one cannot conceive of God as judging fractions of differences between persons so that one may barely be worthy to squeeze in and another barely fail to make it, with only a fraction of moral difference

between the two. It is not that kind of a Judgement. On that day the issue will be perfectly clear and for God the Judgement will be as simple as dividing sheep from goats, tares from wheat, light from darkness, Life from Death.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

In this study the concept of Salvation as God's rescue of man from the forces of corruption and Death has been presented as the true definition of the Dramatic Theory of Atonement. The reader will have noted that there are some points of difference between what has been here presented as a truly 'Dramatic Theory,' (outlined as the 'Third Answer' in Chapter IV) and the theory as presented by Gustaf Aulen.

(1) The 'Third Answer' holds that a real metaphysical dualism, which conceives of the source and the origin of evil as completely outside of God and his creation, is necessary to give meaning to a truly 'dramatic' idea of Atonement. This is not in agreement with Aulen's view. Reasons for this position will be summarized further on.

(2) The 'Third Answer' holds that there are no basic changes which take place in the character or attitude of God as a result of the Atonement. Here again there is a difference between this view and that of Aulen. Discussion relating to this point is to be found in Chapter III where Aulen's view of God's relation to the 'hostile powers' is considered, (pages 24-32) and also in Chapter VII regarding Wrath, Law and Judgement.

(3) The 'Third Answer' pictures the conflict as clearly a struggle between the forces of Life and the forces of Death. There is no confusion between the two and no possibility that they can be mixed together, nor co-operate in any manner. God is the source of Life and Satan is the source of Death. There is no sense in which the Devil can become God's advocate. Death and the Devil are not in any sense within the will of God as Aulen contends.

As was stated at the end of Chapter IV the 'Dramatic' idea of the Atonement has been presented as a primary dualism because it is only in this way that the concept can be clearly and forcefully stated. Any other concept of the power of evil tends to confuse the issues or completely obscure them as far as the 'Dramatic' idea of Atonement is concerned. It is well to consider briefly the three possible theistic concepts of the origin of evil. (Atheistic and materialistic concepts are not considered here). If the origin of evil is not to be completely meaningless and mysterious, it must come from one of three sources. (1) It must come from the will of God, or (2) It must come from the will of beings which God has created, or (3) It must come from the will of a being whom God did not create, and who has an independent existence.

Only the latter concept is truly consistent with the 'Dramatic' idea of Atonement. This conclusion is held for the following reasons: (a) If evil comes from the will of God, then temptations to sin, and the suffering and death in the world can be nothing more than God's method of testing the obedience of men. In such a concept the idea of Atonement is meaningless. It is meaningless because nothing in creation is more than a puppet.

(b) The idea that evil comes from the will of created beings also is not consistent with the 'Dramatic' view of Atonement. The thought of God himself being engaged in a bitter cosmic struggle with an enemy who is merely one of His creatures, in order to destroy that enemy's power appears ridiculous.

Of course, the idea that free moral beings are the source of evil through rebellion against God, does present a problem to God as far as their redemption is concerned, but the problem is of a different kind. It would seem that God must allow the results of a wrong choice to work themselves out as well as those of the right choice, unless he can find a way to counteract those results without violating the freedom of choice he has given to his creatures. This is in reference, however, to sinful creatures that

God loves and wishes to save and to win back to himself. The Evil One represented in the 'Dramatic' idea is not a power that God wishes to redeem or to reconcile to himself, there is no possibility of reconciliation, the Evil One must be destroyed.

Now if this Evil one is merely a created being which has corrupted himself beyond the possibility of redemption, the problem of destroying him is of a different order. Evil in this context, therefore, although not issuing from the will of God, is permitted by him to exist. It will exist only until such time as he sees fit to bring it to an end. It is merely a 'question of when' God will bring evil to an end, not a 'problem of how' he will overcome or destroy the source of it. The Atonement, therefore, has no primary relationship to the problem of conquering an Evil power. The problem of conquering evil is a secondary issue in Atonement. The primary objective of Atonement then, is reconciliation. From one point of view it is primarily the reconciliation of God himself in order that he might find it possible to forgive sin, and secondarily the reconciliation of man to God. From the other point of view the primary problem is the reconciliation of man to God.

In the 'Dramatic' view, of course, the conquering of evil and destroying the source of it is the principal

problem and the primary objective of the Atonement. The reconciliation of God to man and of man to God is of great importance, and Atonement is necessary to this reconciliation, but in a secondary sense. Thus the 'Dramatic' idea of Atonement loses its force when considered in connection with the concept of created beings as the origin of evil.

This concept also implies, of course, that Satan, created as a perfect moral being in a perfect moral environment where there was no hint of evil to tempt him, and with no weaknesses of problems of insecurity, or need of any kind, nevertheless, chose to set himself up in opposition to God as ruler of creation. In making this decision he immediately acquired a nature completely opposite to that with which he was created. It would seem to imply also that free moral beings even though in a perfect moral environment are created with the will-to-power which must be resisted in order to fulfill the purpose for which they were created. If this is what is meant by the term 'a perfect moral creature' then it is possible to conceive of created beings as the original source of evil. But for the same reasons given above the 'Dramatic' idea of Atonement still would not apply.

Aulen's 'Dramatic' view considers the Atonement necessary to overcome three categories of evil forces which

are termed the 'hostile powers.' One category of forces (Wrath and Law) is directly and fully within the nature and will of God. Another category (Death and the Devil) is in partial relation to the will of God, and the third category (Sin) is completely outside the will of God.

As has already been pointed out in Chapter III (pp. 24-26) God's Wrath and the Law are pictured by Aulen as enemies of God's redemptive purpose through his Love and Grace, although they are as much a part of God's nature and will as Love and Grace. Wrath and the Law are enemies or tyrants that must be vanquished through Christ's victory in the Atonement. This does not present a picture of 'dramatic' encounter of opposing forces. It is rather a picture of one side of God's nature struggling to save the sinner which the other side of his nature finds necessary to destroy.

An interesting comment in this connection is that of George O. Evenson in an article written for the Concordia Theological Monthly.

Luther does speak of God's Law and God's wrath, together with sin, death and the devil, as enemies from which Christ delivers mankind. Obviously they belong in the category of enemies, not because of inherent similarities - how blasphemous such a charge would be - but because of an external factor. This factor is man's sinfulness. Hence Christ triumphs over these enemies by what He does with Man's sin.¹

¹George O. Evenson, "A Critique of Aulen's Christus Victor," Concordia Theological Monthly, October, 1957, p. 747.

The 'Third Answer' would hold that the idea of God's Wrath and the Law as enemies of God's purpose in any sense is blasphemous. Evenson is here thinking of them as enemies in the sense that God must provide satisfaction for them before sin can be forgiven, even for those who repent. This does not seem to make them enemies in the same sense as Aulen pictures it, nor is there the idea that the Law and Wrath are vanquished or conquered as Aulen's view portrays. As Evenson sees it the Atonement is simply the satisfaction of the demand of the Law and propitiation of God's Wrath. Ambivalence in God's nature in any sense would be rejected from the point of view of the 'Third Answer.'

Aulen's view with regard to Death and the Devil further complicates the concept of evil. These are pictured as tools which God uses in working out his purpose. They are within His will but only because of the necessity of punishing sin with Death, and of using the Devil as a taskmaster to dominate the sinner as long as he is in rebellion against God. (How an impersonal Devil can be used in this fashion is not explained). Death and the Devil also are vanquished through the Atonement of Christ. Again this is not a picture of a 'dramatic' encounter of opposing forces.

Sin is the only one among the 'hostile powers' that is not at least partly within God's will. Here we find the true 'dramatic' encounter of God against an absolutely irreconcilable 'hostile power.' Sin, however, has no definite origin, as Aulen sees it. It does not originate with created beings and there is no personal supernatural evil power. In fact, no power exists which is not utterly dependent upon God for its existence. This awful power of sin, therefore, has a vague, mysterious; and as Aulen sees it, 'meaningless and irrational' existence.² Sin is also vanquished by the Atonement of Christ, but this also is not a picture of a 'dramatic' encounter of sharply defined opposing forces.

All this presents a very complex picture of the power of evil and of its relationship to God. And as has been pointed out this concept confuses the meaning of the 'Dramatic' idea of Atonement and weakens its force. For the above reasons it is argued that Aulen's view is not a truly 'Dramatic' idea of Atonement.

For the 'Dramatic' idea of Atonement to be really meaningful there must be the concept of opposing forces which are absolutely irreconcilable to each other. Two

²Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, p. 204.

forces as incompatible as Light and Darkness; as uncompromising with each other as Life is with Death. On the one hand, is God the source of Light, and Law, and Love, and Life. On the other hand, is Satan the source of Darkness, and Disorder, and Hate, and Death. In the human drama Satan may appear as an angel of Light and God may make use of the forces of Darkness, but they are unalterably opposed to each other and can never co-exist in peace.

The Light or Holiness of God is not in any sense at cross purposes with his Love. Both are forces of Life and thus implacable enemies of the forces of Death. Love does not need to overcome Light, or remove it, or make some concession to it in order that Love may operate freely in mercy and forgiveness. God's Love and Light and Law all work together in perfect harmony to create and sustain Life, and to completely eradicate and dispell Disorder, Darkness and Death.

Love and Aggression are not forces in balance, as Blanton would say. It is rather that the force of Aggression can be guided by either Love or Hate. Aggression is an amoral force that can be used to further the cause of Light or of Darkness; to support Life or cause Death. It is a tool that can be used by either side.

The 'Dramatic' idea of the Life or Death encounter between God and his Enemy lends a force and meaning to certain events in the Life of Jesus that they otherwise do not have. The Incarnation is filled with dramatic meaning that is not there from the other points of view. The little babe born of the virgin in Bethlehem is the first step in God's preparation for the battle of the ages. He is entering the arena where he intends to expose himself openly to all the might of the Enemy; and where he intends to inflict the decisive blow that will mean the ultimate and complete destruction of the Enemy's power. The Enemy is aware of this and seeks to destroy the child before he can come of age.

The next dramatic encounter is the temptation in the wilderness, where the Enemy attempts to defeat God's purpose in the beginning of Jesus' inauguration as the Messiah. Satan takes full advantage of Jesus' human limitations and physical desires. If he could cause Jesus to slip even a little here at the beginning it would mean ultimate victory in this battle. Jesus' defeat of the Enemy in this encounter is reflected in the abject surrender of the unclean spirits. The demons recognized his victory as complete and his authority as absolute. ". . . he cast out the spirits with a word . . ." (Mt. 8:16). "And demons also came out

of many, crying, 'You are the Son of God.' But he rebuked them, and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ" (Lk. 4:41). The temptation in the wilderness had been the subtle questioning jibe, "If you are the Son of God, use your power to the best advantage. Think what you could do with it!" And almost immediately after his return from the wilderness the demons were reminding him of the same thing. "Ah! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. But Jesus rebuked him saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him'" (Lk. 4:34).

Thus all through his ministry on earth Jesus was aware that he himself was the center of the conflict of the ages, the outcome of which would mean Life or Death for man and all that God had created. And the knowledge of the fact that he must finally enter alone into the citadel of Death, the last stronghold of the Enemy, was with him like a shadow through all those days. This was not just a matter of facing physical pain and death, but facing the full power of the forces of Darkness and Destruction; of entering into spiritual Death, the complete separation from God. He must expose himself to that which was absolutely unacceptable in the presence of God; to that which was utterly abhorrent

and revolting to his nature. He who was the Lord of Light and hope must allow himself to be taken into the abyss of Darkness and despair. He who had known only the warmth of Life and Love in the presence of the Father must surrender himself to the malignant power of Hate and submit to the icy grip of Death. This was not an unconscious oblivion, but the conscious Death of being alone and lost and separated from God in the outer Darkness permeated by the atmosphere of evil. It is no wonder that he was in an agony of spirit and sweat, as it were, great drops of blood as he contemplated the meaning of this in the Garden of Gethsemane. It is no wonder that he cried, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me" (Mt. 26:39).

This gives vivid meaning to the cry on the Cross, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46). All this was necessary to meet the Enemy on his own ground and deliver the final blow which would destroy his power and gain the victory over Death, as Heb. 2:14 implies.

Leon Morris has said, "The Atonement is too big and too complex for our theories. We need not one, but all of them, and even then we have not plumbed the subject to its depths."³ No theory of Atonement put forth so far has been

³Morris, The Cross in The New Testament, p. 401.

able to win universal assent, Morris declares, and it is not likely that one ever will. It cannot all be comprehended in one theory. Any neat theory always excludes a good deal of the evidence.⁴ This is certainly true, and to emphasize too strongly one theory of Atonement may blind one to the truth that is in the others.

Morris does insist, however, that the idea of substitution is at the heart of the Atonement. This idea, Morris believes, gives flexibility to the different ways of stating our need,

Was there a price to be paid? He paid it. Was there a victory to be won? He won it. Was there a penalty to be borne? He bore it. Was there a judgement to be faced? He faced it. View man's plight how you will, the witness of the New Testament is that Christ has come where man ought to be and has met in full all the demands that might be made on man.⁵

The 'Dramatic' view of the Atonement does not answer all the questions about the meaning of Christ's life and death, nor does it adequately explain the meaning of all passages of Scripture. It does, however, give meaning to Christ's life and death, and to many parts of the Scriptures that has been overlooked from other points of view. In conclusion it will be interesting to point out, to what

⁴Ibid., p. 400.

⁵Ibid., pp. 405,406.

extent and in what sense the 'Dramatic' view includes the various ideas generally associated with the concept of Atonement.

The idea of substitution certainly has a prominent place in this view. Christ is our penal substitute in the sense that his death was the means of saving man from Death which is the penalty of sin. If he had not died for us we would have died. It was not, however, to satisfy God's necessity to punish sin. He paid the price of our Salvation from the power of the Evil One, but it was not a price which God himself required to cancel our debt to him. Thus he paid the price to ransom us from the power of evil and Death. He is our Redeemer and our Saviour, not to save us from the Wrath of God but from the Enemy. We are in a sense saved from the Wrath of God in that we are set free from the power of sin and need no longer be identified with the Enemy who must be destroyed by the Wrath of God. Those who remain identified with the Enemy in unrepentance will not escape his Wrath. He took upon himself the curse of sin and the Law and Judgement in that he suffered Death which is the final Judgement against sin. His death saved us from its power so that we might escape Death in the final Judgement, through repentance and trust in him. The victory

over the Evil One which is the result of his death has made possible the reconciliation between God and man that would have been impossible with man remaining enslaved to the Enemy. He is the propitiation for sin in that God's Holiness or Wrath is infinitely satisfied through his complete victory over it through his death.

Finally, the 'Dramatic' view of Atonement pictures the death and resurrection of Christ as the triumphant victory over the Enemy which assures the final and complete eradication of Sin and Death. Nothing could be more satisfying to God's honor, or do more to uphold the integrity of his Moral Government. Nothing could better express his terrible and uncompromising Wrath against Death and Sin and Satan, and all who would cast their lot with him. There is no further need for justification of his right to forgive those who in true repentance and faith in his Son have turned their backs to the Enemy and their faces towards God. Nothing could bring greater satisfaction to God's Wrath, or his Holiness, or his Justice, or his Love than his triumphant victory over the Evil One, and over the power of Sin and Darkness and Death.

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