

The Atonement in Anselm and Luther, Second Thoughts About Gustaf Aulén's *Christus Victor*

BY TED PETERS

IN HIS book, *Christus Victor*, Gustaf Aulén asserts that there is an essential and irreconcilable theological difference between Anselm and Luther to be found in their doctrines of the Atonement. Luther is said to be an adherent of the classical view of the early Church Fathers, named the "Christus Victor" theory. This theory portrays Christ as God's valiant warrior who vanquishes the enemies, i.e., sin, death and the Devil, and, thereby, reconciles man to God. Anselm is described as holding an essentially alien view, the "Satisfaction" theory, wherein man through Christ makes satisfaction for his sin to God and, thereby, gains his own salvation. However, upon closer examination of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*, Aulén's evaluation seems unfair, for God is no less responsible for the atonement in this view than he is in the Classic theory. Furthermore, Aulén is forced to deny the functional presence of *satisfactio* in Luther's theology in order to attain a clear distinction between Luther and Anselm.

I will limit myself to the framework supplied by Aulén's argument, and attempt to show that Anselm, like Luther, saw the atonement as God's work on behalf of mankind. With this continuity established, I intend to make it clear that the structure of Anselm's satisfaction theory was not in itself anything repugnant to Luther and that Luther himself saw fit to use it.

I

It is Anselm's aim in *Cur Deus Homo* to prove the necessity of the incarnation by the use of reasoning alone, and apart from any prior knowledge of Christ (*remoto Christo*). His reasoning, however, presupposes certain notions familiar to Christian doctrine, e.g., the omnipotence and perfect goodness of God, and the historical fact of man's sin.

Let us briefly review the essential stages of Anselm's argument. God's

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purpose in creating man was that man was to enjoy perfect blessedness, or happiness. This blessedness requires the total and voluntary submission of man's will to God's will, for it is upon God's will that the beauty and rational harmony of the universe rest. But, of course, the whole human race is guilty of disobedience. Any deviation of man's will must be balanced by either deprivation of blessedness, i.e., punishment, or satisfaction rendered by an offering greater than the act of disobedience. Unconditional forgiveness is not an alternative for it would introduce irregularity into God's universe. But no member of the human race can offer any satisfaction to God because the human is already under the obligation of total obedience. There is no human capital available with which man can redeem himself from his past sins, let alone provide redemption for his disobedience in the future. Therefore, the whole human race must forfeit the blessedness for which it was created.

Anselm moves from here to the second phase of the argument. He concludes that God's purpose in creation has been frustrated. But this is impossible. God is omnipotent. Therefore, a means of redemption must exist. The offering for redemption ought to be made by man, but since man has nothing to offer, it cannot be made by him. But God is able to make this offering. And since only God is able to make an offering which man ought to make, it must be made by a God-man. Therefore, the incarnation is necessary.

Anselm proceeds beyond this conclusion to explain that the incarnate Son of God freely offers up his sinless life to death in honor of God. But, of course, death is to be incurred only as a result of a man's sin. Therefore, since this is an unwarranted deed which the Father cannot allow to go unrewarded, and since the Son needs nothing for himself, the reward accrues to the advantage of those for whom the Son dies.

Aulén centers his criticism on Anselm's doctrine of *satisfactio* because it depends upon a legalistic structuring of the relationship between God and man and because it is man and not God who accomplishes the atonement. He prefaces his critique by asserting that the root source for the Anselmian doctrine is the Latin practice of penance.

The Latin idea of penance provides the sufficient explanation of the Latin doctrine of the Atonement. . . . Two points immediately emerge: first, that the whole idea is essentially legalistic, and second, that, in speaking of Christ's work, the emphasis is all laid on that which is done by Christ *as man* in relation to God. It is a wholly different outlook from that of the classic idea which we have hitherto been studying.¹

We should investigate Anselm's notion of satisfaction to determine to what extent Aulén's contentions are correct.

1 *Christus Victor* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 82-83.

It was Tertullian who introduced the ideas of satisfaction and merit into theological thought. God was depicted as the great law-giver. God was said to regard as meritorious those actions which his will does not make obligatory. The issues here were heightened when Tertullian considered sins which were committed following the reception of forgiveness in Baptism. Such sins were to be met by a repentant heart, by confession, and by penitent deeds, e.g., fastings, mournings, almsgiving, etc., in order to re-purchase forgiveness. "Thus," in Aulén's words, "Penance is satisfaction, the acceptance of a temporal penalty to escape eternal loss."² For Tertullian, then, satisfaction is both meritorious and penal in character.

In the subsequent centuries of development, the notion of the transference of merit from one person to another, later introduced by Cyprian, became widely accepted. The fastings and mournings of Tertullian's Confession became severely materialized and depersonalized by the early Middle Ages. The sinner could either make payments himself or hire others to fast or sing psalms in his stead. Thus, the compensating penalty became transferable.³

There is one notable respect in which Anselm clearly dissociates satisfaction and penalty. He accepts the notion that God expects moral obedience to him as a debt due Him by his creatures. When a sinner fails to obey, God may choose one of two alternatives: He may punish the sinner, or He may receive from him some satisfaction which atones for the dishonour done to Him. His alternatives are either punishment or satisfaction, *aut poena aut satisfactio*. The link between satisfaction and penance, so close both in Tertullian and in the penitential system, is absent here. In the *Cur Deus Homo* Anselm explicitly contends that penitence is not satisfaction.

Anselm: Tell me, then, what payment you make God for your sin?

Boso: Repentance, a broken and contrite heart, self-denial, various bodily sufferings, pity in giving and forgiving, and obedience.

Anselm: . . . But you owe God every one of those things which you have mentioned. . . . How then do you pay God for your transgression?

Boso: If in justice I owe God myself and all my powers, even when I do not sin, I have nothing left to render to him for my sin.⁴

² *Ibid.*, p. 81.

³ John McIntyre, in agreement with Aulén, holds that one cannot discern any significant secular influences on Anselm's doctrine, as has often been proposed, e.g., Germanic law, Irish system of commutations, etc. *St. Anselm and His Critics* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1954), p. 86. R. W. Southern sees a strong influence on the part of the monastic and feudalistic milieu. *St. Anselm and His Biographer* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 102-114.

⁴ *Cur Deus Homo*, I, 20, translated by S. N. Deane, *Saint Anselm: Basic Writings* (LaSalle: Open Court, 1966), pp. 226-227.

Thus there is no meritorious penalty which a man can accept which will make satisfaction for his sin. And when Anselm treats the Death of Christ (e.g. at *C.D.H.* II, 11), though he emphasizes the difficult and painful character of that death, he does not regard it as penal substitution. The purpose of such reasoning is to achieve the exclusive association of the notion of satisfaction with the Death of Christ. Man as man is unable to make the satisfaction which only the God-man can make. It is McIntyre's contention that this is an original departure in the usage of the term.⁵ Anselm is certainly not a mere product of the Latin penitential milieu.

Anselm's contention that when faced with man's disobedience God must either exact punishment or receive satisfaction is objectionable to Aulén, because it subjects God to a legalistic and rationalistic structure. Aulén wishes to emphasize God's freedom and mercy which "transcends the order of justice."⁶ This problem, if it is a problem, would seem to make its clearest appearance at the point where God is prohibited from freely forgiving man's sins on the ground that it would interfere with His governance of the moral order.

Perhaps a brief discussion on the *rights of the Devil* will help depict the nature of Anselm's shift from the earlier notion of dualism into a single reality with a rational-moral structure, a move to which Aulén objects. Anselm makes a break from all previous accounts of the atonement when he denies to the Devil any right over the destiny of mankind.⁷ The older views presupposed a dualistic conflict between God and the Devil in which man played a subordinate role. By removing the Devil from the picture, Anselm transformed this dualism into a simple relationship between man and God, thus making man's role more significant. With the rights of the Devil out of the picture, it would seem that there is nothing to prevent God from freely forgiving man's sin as an alternative to punishment. However, the historic drama of Christ's sufferings stand in Anselm's past. And it should be noted that one of the audiences to whom the *Cur Deus Homo* was written was Judaism. The Jewish critics of Christianity vociferously pointed out that the doctrine of the incarnation irrationally and unnecessarily exposed God to the indignities of human life. It is to this criticism that Anselm directed his argument.⁸

Anselm supplies two answers why God ought not freely to forgive man's sin. First, such forgiveness would unjustly place the disobedient will on the same plain as the obedient one. The disobedient will would then be-

5 John McIntyre, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88.

6 *Christus Victor*, p. 91.

7 *Cur Deus Homo*, I, 7.

8 Southern, *St. Anselm and His Biographer*, p. 97.

come God-like, for only God's will is subject to the law or judgment of no one.⁹ Second, such forgiveness would do nothing to correct the disturbance of the order and beauty of the universe caused by sin. The slightest uncorrected disorder argues a deficiency either in God's justice or in His power, which is impossible if one affirms that God is deficient in neither.^{10, 11} What Aulén has missed here, but what should be obvious, is the platonic structure behind Anselm's argument. There is one final reality for Anselm, God. God is subject to no heteronomous system of laws. Rather, the whole universe is an expression of God's intrinsic character and will. The rational and moral structure of existence issues from the nature of God Himself. Justice is not reduced to the simple notion of rendering to each man his due, but implies doing that which befits the supreme goodness of God.¹² With this background, mercy cannot finally be seen to work against justice. In the *Proslogium*, Anselm demonstrates how, behind the apparent contradictoriness of the notions of mercy and justice, there lies a single unitary law.¹³ Mercy and justice are as one insofar as they are expressions of God. Mercy requires that man shall be everlastingly blessed, and justice requires that sin be met on its own terms. The atonement becomes the point at which justice is satisfied and mercy achieves its end.

Thus, God for Anselm is no less merciful, no less gracious, than is God for Luther or for Aulén. God created man out of love, and it was God's purpose that men find fulfillment in eternal blessedness. And in the final analysis, God's purpose is accomplished. His grace is victorious. But *en route* Anselm wants us to take seriously the gravity of man's sin and the ultimate dimensions of God's historical activity. The legalistic structure of the relationship between God and men is not the last thing to be said about God. It is the means whereby God's mercy is shown to triumph.

It is not simply the legal scheme of the Latin view of the atonement to which Aulén rejects. There is something deeper (of which legalism appears as a symptom) which disturbs him. This something he describes as a cleavage between the incarnation and the atonement.¹⁴ While God became

9 *Cur Deus Homo*, I, 12.

10 *Ibid.*, I, 15.

11 It should be noted here that from the beginning this has not been a contention between forgiveness or no forgiveness. Rather, there are two forms of forgiveness. First, there is the forgiveness requiring no punishment or recompense for sins. This Anselm rejects. The second type of forgiveness results in the non-punishment of sins when the debt incurred by sinning is satisfied. This notion of forgiveness upholds God's honor and preserves the moral order of the universe.

12 *Proslogium*, p. 10.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

14 *Christus Victor*, pp. 87-88.

man for Anselm, Aulén contends that this truth is not organically connected with the doctrine of the atonement because satisfaction is simply the act of man towards God.

... the contrast between Anselm and the Fathers is as plain as daylight. They show how God became incarnate that he might redeem; he teaches a human work of satisfaction, accomplished by Christ.¹⁵

It is becoming clear that the criterion by which Aulén assesses the various theories of the atonement is dependent upon his own particular understanding of the incarnation and its purpose. For Aulén the redemptive purpose was achieved only because the acts of the incarnate one were really acts of God, in a sense which absolutely excludes the thought of any atoning work from man's side. In his own words: "... the crucial question is really this: Does Anselm treat the atoning work of Christ as the work of God Himself from start to finish?"¹⁶

Aulén identifies his view of the atonement with the "classic" doctrine of the early church fathers. On the basis of the "work of God alone" thrust of his presuppositions (mentioned above), Eugene R. Fairweather, in an article in the *Canadian Journal of Theology*, makes a case for placing Aulén's view of atonement in continuity with Docetism and Monotheletism, while he posits that Anselm's doctrine stands in a better relationship to the Patristics than does Aulén's. Fairweather challenges Aulén to make a full commentary on Romans 5:17-19.

If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.¹⁷

Aulén does, as a matter of fact, direct a comment to this issue when remarking about Irenaeus:

The redemptive work is accomplished by the Logos through the Manhood as His instrument; for it could be accomplished by no power but that of God Himself. When Irenaeus speaks in this connection of the "obedience" of Christ, he has no thought of a human offering made to God from man's side, but rather that the Divine will wholly dominated the human life of the Word of God, and found perfect expression in His work.¹⁸

15 *Ibid.*, p. 88.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 86.

17 "Incarnation and Atonement: An Anselmian Response to Aulén's *Christus Victor*," *Canadian Journal of Theology*, vol. 7, 1961, pp. 167-175.

18 *Christus Victor*, pp. 33-34. (The italic's are Aulén's.)

This is certainly Aulén speaking here, and not Irenaeus or St. Paul. The New Testament presents us again and again with the human obedience and self-oblation of Christ as the divinely ordained means of man's reconciliation with God.¹⁹ But Aulén seems to pass these over and to open himself up to the charge of monotheletism if not monophysitism. Thus, Fairweather proceeds further to appeal to that age when classical soteriology presumably stood pretty well unchallenged, but his appeal is to Chalcedon, Leo the Great, Sophronius and Martin, The Lateran Council, and Constantinople III. These sources emphasize that it is the divine Word who acts, but the Word has truly become flesh, and he acts *divine et humane*—in a divine and in a human manner.²⁰ And is this not precisely what Anselm proposes?

Anselm: Therefore none but God can make this satisfaction.

Boso: So it appears.

Anselm: But none but man ought to do this, otherwise man does not make this satisfaction . . . (therefore) it is necessary for the God-man to make it.

. . . Now we must inquire how God can become man. The Divine and human natures cannot alternate, so that the Divine should become human or the human Divine; nor can they be so comingled as that a third should be produced from the two which is neither wholly Divine nor wholly human. . . . Since, then, it is necessary that the God-man preserve the completeness of each nature, it is no less necessary that these two natures be united in one person . . . for otherwise it is impossible that the same being should be very god and very man.²¹

When Anselm so consistently and searchingly expounds the essence of man's redemption as a divine-human work, it is the patristic and conciliar vision of the divine humility in the incarnation that dominates his thinking.²² Aulén is rendering a distortion of Anselm's view when he separates the incarnation from the atonement by asserting that satisfaction is simply man's task. As I tried to show earlier, Anselm's break from the penal substitution notion in the Latin practice of penance shifts the ultimate responsibility for satisfaction away from ordinary man and identifies it solely with Christ's death. Furthermore, even Aulén recognizes that "it is, indeed, true that Anselm and his successors treat the Atonement as in a sense God's work; God is the author of the plan, and He has sent His Son and ordered it so that the required satisfaction shall be made."²³ But the detour between God's plan and its execution via the route of an ordinary man's action upon which Aulén's argument rests is misleading. His

19 For example: I Tim. 2:5 f.; Hebr. 2:17; 5-1.

20 Fairweather, p. 173.

21 *Cur Deus Homo*, II, 6-7.

22 Fairweather, p. 173.

23 *Christus Victor*, p. 88.

own Christology so stresses the divine person of the Incarnate Word as to make it impossible for him to take seriously the suggestion that Christ's human acts can have any kind of meaning. Anselm, on the other hand, carefully coordinates the human need with the divine motivation, that results in victory for the purposes of God's love and mercy.

II

The whole mood with which Luther approaches his Christology is considerably different from that of Anselm. In the 11th century Anselm had confidence in his ability to demonstrate, by appeal to reason alone, the universal truths of the Church's belief, including those of the Incarnation and Atonement.²⁴ But the intervening years witnessed a growing distinction between what could be known by reason without faith and what could be known only by faith. The separation between faith and reason widened in Thomas Aquinas and William of Occam until the truths of philosophy and the truths of theology could be set over against each other.²⁵ Even if he had a mind so to do, Luther could not have drawn upon a metaphysical-rational substructure, like that underlying Anselm's thought, to establish a foundation and coherency for his doctrines without grave qualifications.

Luther's christological doctrine has a different starting point, namely, his own experience of what it means to be saved. In his *Table Talk* he relates:

I, out of my own experience, am able to witness, that Jesus Christ is true God; I know full well and have found what the name of Jesus has done for me.²⁶

The historical effects of the salvation wrought by Jesus Christ upon the Church and the individual Christian in the present stimulate reflection, and this reflection issues in theological propositions about Christ's nature. It is the soteriological concerns which precipitate Christological conception. Luther provides a most succinct example in his *Larger Catechism* where Jesus receives the title *Lord* simply because he is my *Redeemer*.

It probably goes without saying that Aulén is correct in attributing an essential role to the Christus Victor theory of the atonement in Luther's thought. Luther's writings are filled with dramatic descriptions of Christ's conflict with the tyrants holding man captive: sin, death, and the Devil, along with the Law and the Wrath of God.

24 *Cur Deus Homo*, Preface.

25 See B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Reason* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 49 f.

26 *Table Talk*, No. CLXXXII, translated by William Hazlitt, revised edition (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publishing House).

He (Paul) refers to the resurrection of Christ, who rose again for our justification (Rom. 4:25). His victory is a victory over the Law, sin, our flesh, the world, the devil, death, hell, and all evils; and this victory of His He has given to us.²⁷

The battle imagery does maintain the dualistic framework familiar to the patristic writings. The Devil had received authority from God, as an extension of His will, to be the executioner of sinful men. According to the patristics, the Devil was deceived by Christ's ordinary manhood, for he failed to recognize his hidden divinity. Thus by condemning Christ, who was innocent of any sin the Devil overextended himself in direct contravention to the authority given him. Luther presents it after the analogy of a fish who is fooled into snatching the tantalizing worm only to end up caught on the cold iron hook.

Even so has our Lord God dealt with the devil; God has cast into the world his only Son, as the angle, and upon the hook has put Christ's humanity, as the worm; then comes the devil and snaps at the (man) Christ, and devours him, and therewith he bites the iron hook, that is, the godhead of Christ, which chokes him, and all his power thereby is thrown to the ground.²⁸

This Christological motif, as Aulén faithfully reports, necessarily requires an emphasis upon the divine power required to defeat man's enemies. Sinful man is helpless in the face of his peril. "Therefore," Luther argues, "it was necessary that He who was to conquer these in Himself should be true God by nature."²⁹

Aulén is also correct in his contention that this "Christus Victor" interpretation of the Atonement is originally related to the heart of Luther's theology, namely, his doctrine of justification by faith.³⁰ It is Christ's redemptive work received in faith through which a man is saved.

Therefore we are justified by faith alone, because faith alone grasps this victory of Christ.³¹

Aulén has supplied us with an accurate presentation of the Christus Victor motif in Luther's christology. But he goes astray when he attempts to make a case for holding that this theory is the only one Luther propounded. Luther also holds a satisfaction perspective with regard to the

27 *Commentary on Galatians of 1531 in Luther's Works*, the American Edition (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963), vol. 26, pp. 21-22. (Hereinafter: AE.)

28 *Table Talk*, No. CXCVII.

29 *Commentary on Galatians of 1531*, AE, v. 26, 282.

30 *Christus Victor*, p. 107.

31 *Commentary on Galatians of 1531*, AE, v. 26, p. 284.

work of Christ, and it has certain vital elements in common with Anselm. Aulén has been insensitive to the breadth and complex texture of Luther's many-sided theology. The *Christus Victor* notion is certainly present in Luther's thought, it may even be the predominant view. However, it does not preclude the presence of other approaches. It is to one of these other approaches that we now turn.

One of the decisive proofs set forth by Aulén to show the real character of Luther's teaching on the atonement is that, in those places where it is necessary for Luther to be most clear, he appeals to the *Christus Victor* theme. These places of greatest possible clarity are listed by Aulén: the longer *Commentary on Galatians*, the *Catechisms* and Luther's hymnody.³² But there are multiple instances of the satisfaction construction found in this *Commentary on Galatians*,³³ and a near organic relationship between the notions of Christ's victory and satisfaction rendered to God is found in the *Larger Catechism*:

He has snatched us, poor lost creatures, from the jaws of hell, won us, made us free, and restored us to the Father's favor and grace . . . clarify and express how and by what means this redemption was accomplished—that is, how much it cost Christ . . . he suffered, died, and was buried that he might make *satisfaction* for me and pay what I owed, not with silver and gold, but with his own precious blood.³⁴

Luther faced the same problem Anselm confronted, i.e., what is the relationship between divine forgiveness and the sufferings of the incarnate Christ? The forgiveness of sins does not consist in a simple non-imputing of sin, as though the sufferings of Christ for sinners had been an unnecessary labor. God would then have carried on a sham battle. But God would not perform the act of non-imputation unless payment of satisfaction were made in a twofold manner, namely, by His fulfilling of the Law in our behalf and by His innocent suffering of all our punishment.

Here is a point at which Luther differs from Anselm with regard to satisfaction. For Anselm, satisfaction is not punishment for sin, rather it is a substitute for punishment—*aut poena aut satisfactio*. For Luther satisfaction includes the notion of penal substitution.³⁵ Christ suffers our punishment.

32 *Christus Victor*, pp. 104-105.

33 AE, v. 26, pp. 33, 132, 151, 177, 281, 325.

34 In the *Book of Concord*, edited by Theodore C. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 414. The underlining is mine.

35 Lennart Pinomaa notes this distinction between Luther and Anselm. However, he too misinterprets Anselm's notion of satisfaction as being merely man's work. *Faith Victorious* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), pp. 48-49.

(Christ) . . . who offered himself in place of our sinful nature, who took upon himself all the wrath of God merited by ourselves with our works. . . .³⁶

Otherwise the dynamics of the doctrine are quite similar. Much like Anselm, the demand for fulfillment and satisfaction of the Law does not suffocate God's gracious love under a system of divine justice. The work of Christ does not create but presupposes a gracious God. The very wrath that is pacified in Christ's act of satisfaction is, for Luther, the "strange work" (*opus alienum*) of God whose "proper work" (*opus proprium*) is forgiveness and grace. The punitive wrath of the Father is in the service of His love.

There was no remedy except for God's only Son to step into our distress and himself become man, to take upon himself the load of awful and eternal wrath and make his own body and blood a sacrifice for sin. And so he did, out of the immeasurably great mercy and love towards us, giving himself up and bearing the sentence of unending wrath and death.³⁷

For Aulén to criticize Anselm for his legalism and then to contrast him with Luther, by implying that Luther did away with the legal order, is a serious mistake. The divine Law and Wrath are not the foreign invaders of a dualistic framework. Rather, they are expressions of the will of God. The legal order is abolished for those who believe in Christ, but that is founded upon satisfaction rendered by Christ in fulfilling the creaturely obligations to God's will in our stead. Our relationship to God through faith in Christ transcends the legal order, but this does not eliminate the role which God's Law and Wrath play in the structure of the Atonement. If Aulén's own Christology presupposes a cleavage between God's justice and his love, or at least a subordination of justice to love, as was apparent in his critique of Anselm, then the logical implications of this position would lead him to a position like that of Albrecht Ritschl. For Ritschl, there is an unresolvable conflict between love and justice, so that God can be defined only as a loving Father and not as a Judge. Ritschl opposes Anselm's notion of satisfaction with a vehemence akin to Aulén's, and maintains that God is pure grace and does not need to be converted from wrathfulness to sweetness. And if one is already grounded in this eternal love for him by God, then the forensic non-imputation of sin in Luther's doctrine of Justification is superfluous. What is required for reconciliation is that man's faltering trust in God expressed in con-

36 "Epistle Sermon, New Year's Day," in the *J. N. Lenker Edition of Luther's Works* (Minneapolis: The Luther Press, 1903-1910), vol. VII, No. 50.

37 "Epistle Sermon, Twenty-fourth Sunday After Trinity," *Lenker Edition*, vol. IX, Nos. 43-45.

sciousness of guilt be overcome by the news that he is firmly secured in God's love. If God has done it all, by simply being "love," then the whole categories of Atonement and Justification are inappropriate; they are replaced by an understanding of reconciliation in which a man plugs himself into the eternal love. Christ becomes strictly a revealer and founder of God's Kingdom on Earth; his sufferings and death so stressed by Luther have no salvific efficacy in themselves.

Another point at which Anselm and Luther find agreement is in rejecting the possibility that man can make satisfaction on his own. In the *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm says, "But a sinful man can by no means do this, for a sinner cannot justify a sinner."³⁸ And, in an Epiphany sermon of 1522, Luther says,

Therefore there is no penance, no satisfaction for sin, no acquiring of grace, no salvation, except by believing in Christ, that he alone has rendered satisfaction for sin, has gained grace, and saved us. . . .³⁹

Aulén contends that Luther reinterprets the notions of sacrifice, merit, and satisfaction so that they apply to Christ's work and not to that of an ordinary man.⁴⁰ This is supposed to set Luther apart from Anselm and the Latin view. But Aulén's point was based on the supposition that Anselm was a mere product of the Latin penitential system in which men purchased forgiveness by supererogatory works. But, as I argued earlier, this is where Anselm sets himself apart from that penitential practice by attaching the ability to make satisfaction only to the God-man. To make his argument cogent, then, Aulén tried to force Anselm into an unacceptable mold. When Anselm said that no one but a man "ought" to make the satisfaction,⁴¹ Aulén concluded he meant a man "could" make the satisfaction and that that was what Christ did, *qua homo*.⁴² This strange principle of interpretation we might label the "Hermeneutic of the Kantian Ethic," i.e., "I ought, therefore, I am able." However, it is my opinion that on this point Luther and Anselm stand together; no man (*qua homo*) is capable of achieving his own salvation and it is this fact which turns his vision toward the Incarnate Son of God who accomplishes the atoning work in man's behalf. Christ, in the tradition of the fathers and the councils, is both God and man.

38 *Cur Deus Homo*, I, 23.

39 *Sämtliche Schriften* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1882), ed. by J. G. Walch, v, II, p. 394; my own translation.

40 *Christus Victor*, pp. 116-119.

41 *Cur Deus Homo*, II, 6.

42 *Christus Victor*, p. 87.

For sin is so grievous that no creature can quench it, the wrath so great that no man can appease and conciliate it. Therefore another man, God and man, and through his suffering and death make satisfaction for our sins and pay for them.⁴³

In Luther's discussions of the work of Christ, the chief emphasis from time to time is laid upon his active ministry, upon his sufferings, upon the death, or upon his triumph in the resurrection. Nowhere has Luther, in a uniform statement, combined, expanded, or harmonized all these various elements. One could speculate about the possible relationship between the satisfaction and victorious champion motifs in Luther's thought. It might be posited that the work of our salvation is already completed by the satisfaction, which would be associated with fulfilling the Law, suffering and going to the cross. The victorious resurrection then would be God's declaration or confirmation of the divine Sonship and innocence of the Savior. Or further, in conjunction with Luther's interpretation of the ascension, the victory would be a means for rushing the Savior into the sphere of spiritual activity whereby he ties each person to salvation. On the other hand, the satisfaction may not be sufficiently potent in itself to achieve full salvation, and the resurrection implies God's acceptance and active redemptive response to the satisfaction offered. But it is already too much to associate satisfaction strictly with Jesus' ministry and the cross, and, in greater measure, Christ is sometimes seen as victorious in death as well as in the resurrection. We would destroy the peculiar character of Luther's view if we were to demand such discrimination of the combined elements.⁴⁴

Furthermore, it is not objectionable for one to present a variety of imagery portraying the meaning of a single truth. There is no intrinsic reason why either the Christus Victor motif or the satisfaction motif should exclude the other if they are both directed toward the same basic conveyance, namely, that a gracious God has reconciled sinful men unto himself through Jesus the Christ. Aulén wants to show that the only way Luther can say what he really wants to say is through the imagery of the victorious champion. But, if it were true that Luther could see the true meaning of the Atonement only through the Christus Victor motif, then why did Aulén refrain from demoting Luther's implementation of sacrifice imagery on the same grounds?⁴⁵ Luther speaks of the sacrifice of Christ as the one true sacrifice, as opposed to the sacrifice of the Mass, and he uses this imagery because it expresses just how much the atoning

43 Martin Luther, "Sermon on October 3, 1529," *Lenker Edition*, vol. XIV, p. 221.

44 Julius Köstlin, *The Theology of Luther* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1897), vol. II, p. 412.

45 *Christus Victor*, pp. 116-117.

work cost God. Aulén is inconsistent. If Sacrifice and Christus Victor can stand side by side without essential opposition, then why must it be concluded that Luther's theological method (or non-method) is of such a nature that a broader variety of imagery could not be employed to express a single theological truth? Why should the Classical Theory exclude the Latin Theory?

There is a difference between the essential structure of a theological position and the motif or motifs it may employ. A Lundensian theologian such as Aulén ought to be clear on this point. The motif provides a mode of expression for the basic structure, but it certainly cannot be identified with the structure itself. But Aulén has taken one motif in Luther's theology and has attempted to superimpose it upon all the rest of that body of thought. I have attempted to point out one other motif active in expressing what Luther wants to say. If one should desire to get at the basic unifying structure in Luther's theology, he may do so by penetrating either one or both of these two motifs. It is the cursory and superficial character of Aulén's approach toward Luther's profound and nuanced world of faith and reflection which I find objectionable.

I am not maintaining here that Luther is in the final analysis Anselmian. But I do believe that Aulén is wrong for locating the point of departure in the motifs given to expressing their doctrines of the Atonement. As we have seen, when properly understood, the form of imagery plays a more or less superficial role once a basic continuity between the two men has been established, i.e., that God is seen by both to be the agent and the object of the atoning work. This is further buttressed by the fact that Luther himself sees fit to employ the satisfaction constructs to express the meaning of the atonement.