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THE VIEWS OF THE ATONEMENT OF
IRENÆUS AND ANSELM

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

A.	The Problem Defined and Delimited.	v
B.	The Problem Justified.	v
C.	The Method of Procedure and Sources of Data. . .	vii

CHAPTER I

THE VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT OF IRENAEUS

32478

A.	Introduction	2
B.	The Need for Atonement	2
	1. The Power of Sin	4
	2. The Power of Death.	5
	3. The Power of the Devil.	6
	4. The Significance of Adam's Fall	7
C.	The Means of Atonement	8
	1. The "Recapitulation" of Christ.	8
	2. The Significance of the Incarnation	10
	3. The Significance of the Cross	14
D.	The Result of the Atonement.	15
	1. Man's Reconciliation	15
	2. God's Reconciliation	16
E.	Summary.	17

CHAPTER II

THE VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT OF ANSELM

May 1954

A.	Introduction	20
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B.	The Need for Atonement	21
1.	Man's Sin	22
a.	The Definition of Sin.	22
b.	The Gravity of Sin	23
c.	The Origin of Sin.	24
d.	The Effects of Sin	25
2.	Man's Dilemma	25
C.	The Means of Atonement	29
1.	The "Satisfaction" of Christ.	29
2.	The Significance of the Incarnation	30
3.	The Significance of the Cross	32
D.	The Result of the Atonement.	36
1.	The Value of Christ's Example	36
2.	The Value of Christ's Reward	36
3.	The Vindication of God's Honor.	38
E.	Summary.	38

CHAPTER III

THE COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

A.	Introduction	41
B.	The Need for Atonement	41
C.	The Means of Atonement	45
1.	The Basic Conception.	45
2.	The Significance of the Incarnation	46
3.	The Significance of the Cross	49
D.	The Result of Atonement.	50
E.	Summary.	51
F.	The Summary and Conclusion	53
1.	Summary	53
2.	Conclusion.	56
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	59

INTRODUCTION

THE VIEWS OF THE ATONEMENT OF IRENÆUS AND ANSELM

INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem Defined and Delimited

To discover the essential similarities and differences of the views of the atonement of Irenaeus and Anselm is the object of this thesis. Focusing attention upon the theories of these two men, this study will not seek to present a school or strata of thought on the atonement. Furthermore, no interest will be taken in the lives or historical background of these individuals, however helpful that might be.

B. The Problem Justified

The doctrine of the atonement is always of interest to the Christian for it deals with the crux of the Christian faith. The writers of the Gospels as well as the interpreters of the Gospel laid stress on Christ's work of atonement. Christians in all ages have found the central value of their

faith in the contemplating of the sacrifice of Christ. Theologians bear witness to the cruciality of the atonement by their many works on this doctrine. Indeed, James Denney regards the atonement as the essence of the Christian religion. He writes: "When we speak of the atonement and the modern mind we are really speaking of the modern mind and the Christian religion."¹

There are two principle reasons for selecting Irenaeus and Anselm for study. First, both of them were creative thinkers within the Christian Church who exercised an influence that far exceeded their times. Although Irenaeus has largely been ignored in the past or regarded as a mediocre thinker, interest today is being recovered in him.² In lauding Irenaeus McGiffert says: "Irenaeus. . . was one of the few really original thinkers in the history of the church."³ In closing a chapter on Irenaeus, McGiffert sums up the importance of Irenaeus, saying: "It is impossible to exaggerate the significance of Irenaeus."⁴ The name of Anselm has always been inseparably related to a theory of the atonement that bears his name. James Orr, in his book, "The Progress of Dogma", regards Anselm's thinking on the atonement as an epoch in theological thinking. He says:

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1. James Denney, Atonement and the Modern Mind, p. 2.
2. Cf. John Lawson, The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus.
3. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought, Vol. I, p. 132.
4. Ibid., p. 148.

The soteriological epoch in the history of dogma is properly reached in the end of the eleventh century with Anselm of Canterbury, the first of the great schoolmen, as we may name him.¹

Ritschl in like manner begins his history of the doctrine of atonement with Anselm. The impact Anselm made on the Christian Church is stated succinctly by James Orr:

We may affirm, therefore, that from Anselm to the Reformation is the classical period for the formation of this doctrine as it appears in our creeds, and the fundamental determinations then arrived at, subsequent thought, I believe, has failed to unsettle.²

A second reason for studying Irenaeus and Anselm is that they stand as representatives of two of the three major theories of the atonement in the Christian Church. In an historical study of the atonement Gustaf Aulen has found³ three major theories of the atonement. He has called these the "classical type", the "Latin type", and the "subjective type".⁴ Irenaeus represents the "classical type" and is probably its first exponent apart from the New Testament. Anselm represents the "Latin type" and has done the first creative thinking on this view. This study, therefore, should assist in clarifying these two major streams of thought concerning a doctrine most crucial to the Church.

C. The Method of Procedure and Sources of Data

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1. James Orr: The Progress of Dogma, p. 210.
2. Ibid., p. 210.
3. Gustaf Aulen: Christus Victor, p. 6.
4. Ibid.

The method of procedure will be to study the view of Irenaeus in chapter one, the view of Anselm in chapter two, and in chapter three a comparative study will be made to determine wherein their views differ and wherein they are similar.

The primary sources for this study will be Irenaeus' work, "Against Heresies",¹ and Anselm's work, "Cur Deus Homo".² These primary works will be supplemented with the study of various histories of Christian doctrine as well as books written on the atonement itself.

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1. Irenaeus: Against Heresies, The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I, p. 309.
2. Anselm, Cur Deus Homo, p.171.

CHAPTER I

THE VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT OF IRENAEUS

CHAPTER I

THE VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT OF IRENAEUS

A. The Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to set forth the significant aspects of Irenaeus' view of the atonement by a first-hand study of his work, "Against Heresies".

"Against Heresies" is not a book on the atonement, but rather a lengthy refutation, in five volumes, of the Gnostic heresy. Fortified with numerous Biblical quotations on every page, this writing represents an early attempt at Biblical theology. His conception of the atonement is contained in scattered reflections throughout the five volumes.

The plan of this chapter is to discuss his view under three aspects: the need for atonement, the means of atonement, the result of atonement, closing with a summary of the chapter.

B. The Need for Atonement

It is axiomatic that the solution to a problem is

determined by the nature of the problem. It is therefore true that the means of atonement is determined by the need of atonement. Hence it is reasonable and necessary to begin a study of any view of the atonement by examining the conception of its need.

Man is in need of atonement, "Against Heresies" reveals, because he is held in bondage by hostile powers from which he must be delivered. Such terms as "bonds of slavery", ¹ "fettters", ² "conquered", ³ "enemy" ⁴, and others, clearly suggest the problem calling for atonement. At the same time, terms indicative of guilt or responsibility are used, notably ⁵ "apostacy" and ⁶ "disobedience".

Who or what are man's enemies? What hostile powers have conquered him? From what or whom must Christ deliver man? Irenaeus would answer that there are three principle powers which hold man in subjection: sin, death, and the devil. He indicated this in describing the work of Christ as follows:

that sin, which was set up and spread out against man, and which rendered him subject to death, should be deprived of its power, along with death, which rules over

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1. Irenaeus, op. cit., p. 477.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 446.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 527.
6. Ibid., p. 544.

men . . . and that He should bind 'the dragon, the old serpent', and subject him to the power of man, which had been conquered, so that all his might should be trodden down.¹

1. The Power of Sin.

Irenaeus recognizes sin as both a debt and a power, and therefore he sees man's guilt and his bondage. Although he deals with the power of sin primarily, he nevertheless is aware of the debt sin incurs. He speaks of the "remitting" of sins,² the "forgiveness" of sins,³ and quotes with approval David's confession:

Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord has not imputed sin.⁴

Writing of the cross and man's guilt, he says:

that as by means of a tree we were made debtors to God, so also by means of a tree we may obtain the remission of our debt.⁵

A favorite expression concerning man's transgression is "disobedience", a term that falls on almost every page of "Against Heresies". This term, crucial in his understanding of sin and redemption, is most frequently used of Adam's transgression.⁶

In treating the fact of sin Irenaeus is chiefly interested in its power rather than its guilt. He writes

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1. Ibid., p. 457.
2. Ibid., p. 545.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 551.
6. Ibid., p. 448.

of sin in vivid terms. For example, he observes the "bondage"¹
of sin, the "chain"² of sin, and, as though sin were a monster
to be slain, "that He might kill sin".³ The phrase, "the
power of sin",⁴ is found frequently.

One further characteristic of sin mentioned is its
organic relation to death. In a selection already quoted⁵
Irenaeus writes: "that sin, which was set up and spread out
against man, and which rendered him subject to death . . ."⁶
In paraphrasing Paul he says: "For as by one man's disobedience
sin entered, and death obtained a place through sin. . ."⁷
Gustaf Aulen states:

Irenaeus is definitely opposed to a moralistic view, which
would have no other meaning for sin than as separate and
individual acts of sin . . . Sin involves death.⁸

2. The Power of Death.

Irenaeus never tires of speaking of the power of
death. He says of Christ:

For it behooved Him who was to destroy sin, and redeem
man under the power of death . . . deprive death of its
power and vivify man . . ."⁹

And again he writes of man being "abandoned to death",¹⁰ or
"subject to death".¹¹ Death, he says, must be "overcome",¹²

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1. Ibid., p. 488.
2. Ibid., p. 499.
3. Ibid., p. 448.
4. Ibid.
5. Ante., p. 2.
6. Irenaeus, op. cit., p. 457.
7. Ibid., p. 454.
8. Aulen, op. cit., pp. 23-24.
9. Irenaeus, op. cit., p. 448.
10. Ibid., p. 455.
11. Ibid., p. 493.
12. Ibid., p. 452.

or "abolished".¹ Aulen has rightly described Irenaeus' view² of death as an objective power.

3. The Power of the Devil.

Characteristic of the age in which he lived Irenaeus wrote frequently of the reality of the devil. As real to him as the power of sin and death was the influence of the devil on mankind. He speaks of the devil under many terms: "the enemy of man",³ "the adversary",⁴ "the serpent",⁵ "the strong man",⁶ "the apostate",⁷ and "satan".⁸

Those who do not believe the Gospel or obey the will of God are called "sons and angels of the devil".⁹ Although born a son of God, man through disobedience has become a son of the devil.

According to Irenaeus, Satan is the essential cause¹⁰ for apostacy. Mankind, caught off guard, has been brought under his power and cannot free itself from Satan. His evil works were prompted by his envy of God's workmanship.¹¹ A characteristic description of the devil and his works reads as follows:

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1. Ibid., p. 452.
2. Aulen, op. cit., p. 20.
3. Irenaeus, op. cit., p. 448.
4. Ibid., p. 549.
5. Ibid., p. 455.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 552.
8. Ibid., p. 550.
9. Ibid., p. 525.
10. Ibid., p. 524.
11. Ibid., p. 553.

Just as if any one, being an apostate, and seizing in a hostile manner another man's territory, should harass the inhabitants of it, in order that he might claim for himself the glory of a king among those ignorant of his apostasy and robbery; so likewise also the devil, being one among those angels who are placed over the spirit of the air, as the Apostle Paul has declared in his Epistle to the Ephesians, becoming envious of man, was rendered an apostate from the divine law: for envy is a thing foreign to God . . . he has set himself to this with greater and greater determination, in opposition to man, envying his life, and wishing to involve him in his own apostate power. 1

The devil, then, is an objective power holding mankind in bondage.

4. The Significance of Adam's Fall.

According to McGiffert Irenaeus was the first of the Church Fathers to recognize the significance of the Adamic fall. 2 Irenaeus not only observes the importance of the fall, but chooses to emphasize it on almost every page of his apologetic against the Gnostics.

The Adamic fall is significant not only for an understanding of man's need of atonement but also for an appreciation of the means of atonement through Christ. 3 Adam's transgression is important because "Adam was the true representative of the race, the universal man, whose act is the act of the race." 4 Adam's bondage, therefore, to sin, death, and the devil, plunged all mankind into a similar captivity from which the Second Adam must make His deliverance.

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1. Ibid., p. 553.
2. McGiffert, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 124.
3. Post, pp. 8ff.
4. Lawson, op. cit., p. 9.

C. The Means of Atonement

1. The "Recapitulation" of Christ.

The saving work of Christ as understood by Irenaeus may be summed up in the word, "Recapitulation". A thorough study of the meaning of the word itself has been undertaken by John Lawson.¹ Examining its Greek and Latin derivations, its use by Paul in Ephesians 1:10, and reviewing the various interpretations of Irenaeus' use of the term, Lawson concludes:

The foundation of all views would seem to be the conception of 'going over the ground again', rather than the conception of 'comprehension in unity', even though the latter springs so naturally from the derivation of the word.²

The idea of the recapitulation of Christ is used in relation to Adam's experience. For example, in connection with the Adamic fall, Irenaeus says: "That the Lord then... was making recapitulation of that disobedience which had occurred in connection with a tree."³ The essential idea conveyed by the recapitulation theory is that Jesus Christ "went over the same ground as Adam, but in the reverse direction."⁴ The analogy between Christ and Adam is carried on not only at the crucial point of the temptation and fall, but in the significant experience of Adam from birth to death. Beginning with the virgin birth, Irenaeus writes:

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1. Lawson, op. cit., pp. 140-144.
2. Ibid., p. 143.
3. Irenaeus, op. cit., p. 547.
4. Lawson, op. cit., p. 144

From this, then, i.e., the new-formed earth whilst it was still virgin, God took dust of the earth and formed the man, the beginning of mankind. So then the Lord, summing up i.e., recapitulating afresh this man, took the same dispensation of entry into flesh, being born from the Virgin by the Will and the Wisdom of God.¹

The analogy is carried on and a parallel is drawn between Eve and Mary. Eve's disobedience is contrasted with Mary's obedience. Eve's disobedience brought death; Mary's obedience, life:

And thus it was that the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the virgin Mary set free through faith.²

The recapitulation is seen also in the temptation experiences of Adam and Christ:

For as at the beginning it was by means of food that the enemy persuaded man, although not suffering hunger, to transgress God's commandments, so in the end he did not succeed in persuading Him that was an hungered to take the food that proceeded from God.³

Finally, the analogy of Christ and Adam is seen with respect to the cross:

For doing away with the effects of that disobedience of man which had taken place at the beginning by the occasion of a tree, 'He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross', rectifying that disobedience which had occurred by reason of a tree.⁴

The emphasis of the recapitulation is to be found

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1. Ibid., p. 150. Quoted from Irenaeus: The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching, chapter 32.
2. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, p. 455.
3. Ibid., p. 549.
4. Ibid., p. 544.

not only in the analogous experience but in the contrasting results. Adam's failure is contrasted with Christ's triumph. "At every point where Adam weakly yielded, slipping down to destruction, Christ heroically resisted."¹

The value of the recapitulation centers in the parallel relation to mankind sustained by Adam and Christ. Just as Adam is the "universal man, whose act is the act of the race",² so also is Christ. Christ is the "second Adam",³ the "New Man",⁴ the "Champion of humanity".⁵ Just as the losses of Adam's defeats are suffered by humanity as a whole, so the benefits of Christ's victories bless mankind. Indeed, the very reason for the recapitulation of Christ was to win back what was lost in defeat by defeating man's enemies that triumphed over him. "God recapitulated in Himself the ancient formation of man," writes Irenaeus, "that He might kill sin, deprive death of its power, and vivify man."⁶

When such a recapitulation has been completed, atonement is made.

2. The Significance of the Incarnation.

Any theory of the atonement that fails to grapple with the significance of the incarnation is overlooking

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1. Lawson, op. cit., p. 144.
2. Ibid., p. 9.
3. Irenaeus, op. cit., p. 544.
4. Ibid., p. 493.
5. Lawson, op. cit., p. 145.
6. Irenaeus, op. cit., p. 448.

one of the vital factors in sacred history. James Orr points this out when he says:

For, once the reality of the incarnation is acknowledged, it is impossible not to concede that there must be some stupendous exigency or occasion calling for it; and once it is allowed again, that the incarnation and the sufferings and death that followed from it are connected with the forgiveness of sins, it can scarcely be questioned that this connection has its ground in deep principles of the divine character and government; that there are reasons which make imperative this amazing interposition. This method of salvation, with its awful entail of suffering and shame on the Son of God, can be no mere preferential scheme of the divine wisdom -- one which God has chosen to adopt while others less costly and painful were open to Him.¹

It is therefore legitimate to ask what significance the incarnation has to the "recapitulation" theory of atonement.

The incarnation, it can be affirmed unequivocally, is the cornerstone of Irenaeus' view of atonement. Adolph Harnack says:

So far as we know at least, Irenaeus is the first ecclesiastical theologian after the time of the Apologists... who assigned a quite specific significance to the person of Christ and in fact regarded it as the vital factor.²

Irenaeus' assertions of the fact and value of the incarnation are numerous. In fact, an entire chapter is given to a discussion showing that Jesus Christ was not a mere man, begotten from Joseph in the ordinary course of nature, but was very God, begotten of the Father Most High, and Very Man, born of the Virgin Mary.³ In this chapter he states:

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1. Orr, op. cit., p. 221.
2. Adolph Harnack, History of Dogma, Vol. II, p. 239. Cf. Aulen, op. cit., p. 20.
3. Irenaeus, op. cit., p. 448.

For I have shown from the Scriptures, that no one of the sons of Adam is as to everything, and absolutely, called God, or named Lord. But that He is Himself in His own right, beyond all men who ever lived, God, and Lord, and King Eternal, and the Incarnate Word.¹

Concerning the manhood of Christ, he writes:

He therefore, the Son of God, our Lord, being the Word of the Father, and the Son of man, since He had a generation as to His human nature from Mary -- who was descended from mankind, and who was herself a human being -- was made the Son of man.²

There are two principle reasons why the incarnation is vital to Irenaeus' theory of the atonement. The first reason is in relation to His deity; the second, to His humanity.

First, the incarnation is essential because only deity presupposes a sufficient power to defeat man's enemies. Overcome by sin, death, and the devil, man is helpless before his captors. God alone can provide adequate power to meet these powers. This can be seen in the following statement of Irenaeus:

On this account, therefore, the Lord Himself, who is Emmanuel from the Virgin, is the sign of our salvation, since it was the Lord Himself who saved them, because they could not be saved by their own instrumentality; and, therefore, when Paul sets forth human infirmity, he says: 'For I know that there dwelleth in my flesh no good thing', showing that the 'good thing' of our salvation is not from us, but from God. And again: 'Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Then he introduced the Deliverer, saying 'The grace of Jesus Christ our Lord'. And Isaiah declares this also, when he says: 'Be ye strengthened

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1. Ibid., p. 449.

2. Ibid.

ye hands that hang down, and ye feeble-minded; be comforted, fear not; behold, our God has given judgment with retribution and shall recompense: He will come Himself and save us.' Here we see, that not by ourselves, but by the help of God, we must be saved.¹

That the saving work of Christ is accomplished by Christ as man is also an essential factor in Irenaeus' view. Christ's atonement is seen as a conflict with Satan. In this conflict Christ delivers man from Satan's power "not snatching away by stratagem the property of another, but taking possession of His own in a righteous and gracious manner."² Again, His saving work is described as "not by violent means . . . but by means of persuasion".³ This saving work of Christ is contrasted with the destructive work of Satan. Satan is said to have "tyrannized over [man] unjustly . . . by violent means."⁴ While Christ was recovering "His own", Satan took "what was not his own",⁵ for man is "the property of the omnipotent God."⁶ The significance of the contrast is to point up how God upholds His righteous character in making atonement for man. Irenaeus makes it clear that this could not have been done unless God became man and waged His battle against Satan in the arena of humanity: "For unless man had overcome the enemy of man, the enemy would not have been legitimately vanquished."⁷ The humanity of Christ, then,

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1. Ibid., p. 450.
2. Ibid., p. 528.
3. Ibid., p. 527
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 448.

is a necessary factor in His saving work because only in this way could atonement be made and the righteous character of God upheld.

3. The Significance of the Cross.

If the "recapitulation" theory of the atonement involves the whole life of Christ, including even His birth, it is reasonable to ask what place the cross has in this scheme. Does the cross have special significance? How is the experience of the cross related to the life of Christ?

It is certain that Irenaeus does not ignore the cross of Christ in "Against Heresies". He speaks repeatedly of being redeemed "by His blood".¹ In drawing a parallel between Adam and Christ, he says:

For doing away with [the effects of] that disobedience of man which had taken place at the beginning by the occasion of a tree, 'He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;' rectifying that disobedience which had occurred by reason of a tree, through that obedience which was [wrought out] upon the tree of the cross.²

Although aware of the cross Irenaeus nowhere seems to put particular emphasis on it as such. If the cross stands for anything, it stands for the climax of Christ's obedience throughout His life. This is suggested by the statement: "By His obedience unto death the Word annulled the ancient disobedience committed at the tree."³ Gustaf Aulen states

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1. Ibid., p. 528.

2. Ibid., p. 544.

3. Aulen, op. cit., p. 29, quoting Irenaeus: Epideixis, 34.

Irenaeus' position as follows:

But if the earthly life of Christ as a whole is thus regarded as a continuous process of victorious conflict, ¹ it is His death that is the final and decisive battle."

D. The Result of the Atonement

Inasmuch as the language of the atonement, for Irenaeus, is the language of conflict, it is not surprising to find that the results of the atonement may be summed up in the word "victory". The triumph of God over the powers that have held man in captivity is the meaning of the atonement. This victory involves not only man's relation to God, but God's attitude towards man. Gustaf Aulen calls this ² the "double-sidedness" of Irenaeus' view.

1. Man's Reconciliation.

For man, the atonement means the defeat of evil powers that have conquered and held him in captivity. It means, first, victory over the devil, man's arch-enemy.

Irenaeus writes:

He has therefore in His work of recapitulation, summed up all things, both waging war against our enemy, and crushing him who at the beginning led us away captives in Adam.³

The crushing of this enemy makes possible the subjugation of man's other foes. Life is regained; death is defeated:

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1. Ibid., p. 30.

2. Ibid., p. 31.

3. Irenaeus, op. cit., p. 548.

As our species went down to death through a vanquished man, so we may ascend to life again through a victorious one; and as through a man death received the palm of victory against us, so again by a man we may receive the palm against death.¹

Man's sin, the remaining foe, finds its defeat in Christ's obedience at the "tree", "rectifying that disobedience which had occurred by reason of a tree."² By destroying our adversary, God perfects man after His own image: ". . . what we had lost in Adam - namely, to be according to the image and likeness of God - that we . . . recover in Christ Jesus."³

Thus the hostile powers which have held man in bondage - the devil, death, and sin - are defeated by Christ's victorious recapitulation. This victory means that "the Lord has reconciled man to God."⁴

2. God's reconciliation.

In his "double-sided" view of Christ's atoning act, Irenaeus sees not only man's reconciliation to God, but God's reconciliation to man. Irenaeus expresses this view in the following statement:

Now this being is the Creator. . .by transgressing whose commandment we became His enemies. And therefore in the last times the Lord has restored us into friendship through His incarnation, having become 'the Mediator between God and men;' propitiating indeed for us the Father against whom we had sinned. .⁵

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1. Ibid., p. 549.
2. Ibid., p. 544.
3. Ibid., p. 446.
4. Ibid., p. 542.
5. Ibid., p. 544.

The renewing of friendship between God and man through Christ is observed in this way:

. . .it was incumbent upon the Mediator between God and man, by His relationship to both, to bring both to friendship and concord. .¹

The double-sided view is seen in interesting juxtaposition in this statement of "Against Heresies":

Wherefore he who had led man captive, was justly captured in his turn by God; but man, who had been led captive, was loosed from the bonds of condemnation.²

Man, delivered from the evil powers that have held him captive, is at the same time freed from the guilt of his sin and brought to friendship with God. God's "enmity is taken away in the very act in which He reconciles the world to Himself."³

In the atonement, then, "God is at once the Reconciler and the Reconciled", according to Irenaeus' view.⁴

E. Summary

Man stands in need of atonement because he is held in captivity by sin, death, and the devil. This captivity of mankind, Irenaeus holds, was achieved in Adam's fall, for Adam is man's representative. Atonement was accomplished

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1. Ibid., p. 448.
2. Ibid., p. 456.
3. Aulen, op. cit., p. 35.
4. Ibid., p. 35.

through Christ, the Second Adam, who recapitulated in His incarnation all of Adam's experiences of defeat triumphantly. Such a victory was made possible only because Christ was God. On the other hand, the victory was achieved justly only because Christ was man. In Christ's experience of recapitulation the cross stands as the climax to a life of perfect obedience. This atonement made possible man's deliverance from the hostile powers that subjected him, reconciling him to God. Furthermore, it created a situation whereby God could be at friendship with man, thus reconciling God to man. In this atonement, then, God is at once the Reconciler and the Reconciled.

CHAPTER II

THE VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT OF ANSELM

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THE VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT OF ANSELM

A. The Introduction

The object of this chapter is to set forth the important aspects of Anselm's view of the atonement. This will be done by a study of his notable work on the atonement, "Cur Deus Homo?"¹

"Cur Deus Homo?" is the most famous of Anselm's writings. It opened a new chapter in the development of the doctrine of the atonement in the thinking of the Christian Church. ". . . it has seldom been given to any writer to work such a change in the history of thought as that wrought by Anselm's short treatise, Cur Deus Homo?"² Directed toward those outside the Church, it undertakes to show, by the use of reason alone,³ why the incarnation was necessary. The treatise is cast in the form of a dialogue between

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1. St. Anselm: Proslogium; Monologium; An Appendix in Behalf of the Fool By Gaunilon; and Cur Deus Homo.
2. L. W. Grensted, A Short History of the Doctrine of the Atonement, p. 120.
3. Anselm, op. cit., p. 177.

Anselm and his interrogator, Boso, so that the thought might be "thus made more plain to many, and especially to less quick minds."¹

Following the plan of chapter one, this chapter will deal with Anselm's concept of the need for atonement, the means of atonement, concluding with remarks on the result of atonement.

A. The Need for Atonement

Living in an age when the great Christological debates had ceased and the true incarnation of the Son of God was established for the Church, it remained for men like Anselm to discover the far reaching implications of the doctrine of the person of Christ. In "Cur Deus Homo?" Anselm seeks to see the implications of the incarnation for the atonement. Granting that Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh, the question logically arises as to why it was necessary for Him to stoop to such shame and humiliation in His sufferings and death for man's salvation. James Orr, commenting on "Cur Deus Homo?" says:

Anselm's significance results from the fact that he was the first who, with a complete view of the problem, raised this question in its whole compass, and sought to give a reasoned answer.²

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1. Ibid., p. 179.

2. Orr, op. cit., p. 221.

1. Man's Sin.

It is clear that the answer as to why God became man is centered in the nature of sin and the means of its remission.¹ All men, Anselm holds, are kept from their destined happiness by being in bondage to sin.² What is sin?

a. The Definition of Sin.

Sin is conceived of in terms of man's failure to pay his debt to God. "To sin," Anselm writes, "is nothing else than not to render to God his due."³ And again: "If man or angel always rendered to God his due, he would never sin."⁴ What debt does man owe God?

The debt is described first as a debt of absolute obedience to the will of God. "Every wish of a rational creature should be subject to the will of God."⁵ Defining this more carefully, he says:

This is justice, or uprightness of will, which makes a being just or upright in heart, that is, in will . . . it is such a will only, when exercised, that does works pleasing to God.⁶

The paying of this debt of obedience is to live life acceptable to God; everyone who fails to pay the debt sins.

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1. Cf Orr, op. cit., pp. 220-221.
2. Anselm, op. cit., p. 201.
3. Ibid., p. 202.
4. Ibid., p. 201.
5. Ibid., p. 202.
6. Ibid.

This debt is further described in terms of honoring God. ". . . this is the sole and complete debt of honor which we owe to God, and which God requires of us."¹ To pay the debt is to honor God; he who fails to pay the debt not only withholds from God His due honor, but also does Him dishonor: "He who does not render this honor which is due to God, robs God of his own and dishonors him; and this is sin."²

Sin, therefore, is the failure to render God absolute obedience, which is His rightful due, and thus robbing God of honor due Him as well as dishonoring Him.

b. The Gravity of Sin.

The enormity of the evil of sin is suggested in a dialogue on sin between Anselm and Boso. In discussing a sin so insignificant as to be but "one look contrary to the will of God" Anselm raises the question:

What if it were necessary either that the whole universe, except God himself, should perish and fall back into nothing, or else that you should do so small a thing against the will of God?³

Boso replies:

When I consider the action itself, it appears very slight; but when I view it as contrary to the will of God, I know of nothing so grievous, and of no loss that will compare with it . . . I must confess that I ought not to oppose

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1. Ibid., p. 202.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 229.

the will of God even to preserve the whole creation.¹
To accentuate the gravity of sin, Anselm probes even further,
asking: "What if there were more worlds as full of beings
as this?"² Boso responds: "Were they increased to an infinite
extent, and held before me in like manner, my reply would
be the same."³ To this answer Anselm affirms: "You cannot
answer more correctly . . . So heinous is our sin whenever we
knowingly oppose the will of God even in the slightest thing."⁴

c. The Origin of Sin.

The genesis of sin is related by Anselm in the
following description of paradise and the first man:

Man being made holy was placed in paradise, as it were in
the place of God, between God and the devil, to conquer
the devil by not yielding to his temptation, and so to
vindicate the honor of God and put the devil to shame,
because that man, though weaker and dwelling upon earth,
should not sin though tempted by the devil, while the
devil, though stronger and in heaven, sinned without
any to tempt him. And when man could have easily effected
this, he, without compulsion and of his own accord, allow-
ed himself to be brought over to the will of the devil,
contrary to the will and honor of God.⁵

Man, acting as God's earthly representative, could have easily
defeated the adversary by resisting his seductions, thus
upholding the dignity of God. Failing to do so, he was
brought under the devil's power.

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1. Ibid., p. 229.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., pp. 229-230.
5. Ibid., pp. 230-231.

d. The Effects of Sin.

In freely submitting to the temptations of the devil and failing to yield to the will of God man "justly incurred the penalty of death."¹ Anselm argues this at greater length, saying:

It is easily proved that man was so made as not to be necessarily subject to death; for, as we have already said, it is inconsistent with God's wisdom and justice to compel man to suffer death without fault, when he made him holy to enjoy eternal blessedness. It therefore follows that had man never sinned he never would have died.²

Not only death but "the taint of sin"³ follows the first transgression. Now "man is conceived and born in sin"; "human nature [has been] corrupted".⁴ Man has been left "disabled" so far as his ability to discharge his debt to God.⁵

Sin, then, has weakened man and introduced death to the human experience.

2. Man's Dilemma.

How man, being a sinner, can save himself is the problem sin poses for him. The character of God, justice, and wisdom, demand that man either make satisfaction for his sin or be punished.

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1. Ibid., p. 231.
2. Ibid., p. 241.
3. Ibid., p. 232.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 234.

The character of God demands punishment or payment
for sin.¹ To cancel sin without compensation or punishment
is to let it be "passed by undischarged."² But "it is not
fitting for God to pass over anything in his kingdom undis-
charged."³ Furthermore, to let sin go unpaid would be
tantamount to saying there is no difference between the
guilty and the innocent. "This is unbecoming to God."⁴

Justice demands satisfaction for sin. Justice is
achieved by law, so that punishment or reward, according to
the dictates of the law, are given by God. But if sin is
neither punished or compensated for, as under the rule of
law, it stands apart from the sphere of the law, and "in-
justice . . . is more free than justice which is very
inconsistent."⁵ This would make injustice stand on a par
with God, for "God is subject to no law."⁶

Sin without adequate compensation either in terms
of satisfaction or punishment is incongruous with highest
wisdom. To raise a man to the same happiness after he sinned
as the bliss he had before sinning is unwise. Anselm, using
an allegory, points this up:

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1. Ibid., p. 203ff.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 204.
6. Ibid.

Suppose a rich man possessed a choice pearl which had never been defiled, and which could not be taken from his hands without his permission; and that he determined to commit it to the treasury of his dearest and most valuable possessions . . . What if he should allow it to be struck from his hand and cast in the mire, though he might have prevented it; and afterwards taking it all soiled by the mire and unwashed, should commit it again to his beautiful and loved casket; will you consider him a wise man? . . . Would not God be acting like this, who held man in paradise as it were in his own hand, without sin, and destined to the society of angels, and allowed the devil, inflamed with envy, to cast him into the mire of sin, though truly with man's consent . . . Now I say, would not God be acting like this, should he restore man, stained with the defilement of sin, unwashed, that is, without any satisfaction, and always to remain so; should he restore him at once to paradise, from which he had been thrust out?¹

Hence the character of God, justice, and wisdom, demand sufficient payment for sin. "Either satisfaction or punishment would vindicate God's outraged dignity, and God cannot suffer His personal honor to be violated without vindication."²

What satisfaction must man make for his sins? First, the payment given must not be something man already owes God. He must pay out of a treasury that does not already belong rightfully to his Creator. Anselm remarks:

Therefore you make no satisfaction unless you restore something greater than the amount of that obligation, which should restrain you from committing the sin.³

Bozo, Anselm's mythical interrogator, suggests repentance, a broken and contrite heart, self-denial, various bodily sufferings, pity in giving and forgiving, or obedience as

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1. Ibid., p. 223.

2. Grensted, op. cit., 132.

3. Irenaeus, op. cit., p. 230.

satisfaction for sin. Anselm replies: "But you owe God every one of these things which you have mentioned."¹

Realizing man's predicament, Boso responds: "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."²

Secondly, satisfaction rendered for sin must be proportionate to the guilt. The difficulty of making such payment is seen when one regards the enormity of the evil of sin. Even "one look contrary to the will of God" is a matter of infinite magnitude, greater than the preservation of an infinite number of worlds, with all the life therein.³ To conceive, for example, of repentance - allowing for the sake of argument that man does not already owe that to God - compensating for the guilt of sin is simply to show that one "has not yet estimated the great burden of sin."⁴

Thirdly, satisfaction must be made not only for the honor withheld from God, but for the dishonor brought about by disobedience:

it will not suffice merely to restore what has been taken away, but, considering the contempt offered, he ought to restore more than he took away. For as one who imperils another's safety does not enough by merely restoring his safety, without making some compensation for the anguish incurred; so he who violates another's

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1. Ibid., p. 226.
2. Ibid., p. 227.
3. Ante, p. 23.
4. Ibid., p. 228.

honor does not enough by merely rendering honor again, but must, according to the extent of the injury done, make restoration in some way satisfactory to the person whom he has dishonored.¹

Man has done God a special dishonor by allowing the devil to defeat him, not only by failing to "vindicate the honor of God" but by heaping a "calumnious reproach" upon God.² Satisfaction for this can be accomplished by man only if, in his now weakened position due to sin, he conquers the adversary who defeated him in the days of strength. This, obviously,³ is impossible.

Hence man's dilemma due to sin is acute. The character of God, justice, and wisdom, all demand satisfaction or punishment for sin. Satisfaction, under the terms reason demands, is beyond the ability of man to pay. Apart from divine assistance, man has no hope but to suffer the eternal punishment for his sin.

C. The Means of Atonement

1. The Satisfaction of Christ.

Man's dilemma is in some sense God's dilemma as well. Man, not being able to render satisfaction for his sin, must suffer punishment. But to punish man everlastingly would only serve to thwart God's purposes for him. Such an

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1. Ibid., p. 202.
2. Ibid., pp. 230-231.
3. Ibid., p. 231.

impasse is inconsistent with the divine character. Anselm remarks:

we can easily see that God will either complete what he has begun with regard to human nature, or else he has made to no end so lofty a nature, capable of so great good . . . it is altogether foreign from his character to suppose that he will suffer that rational existence utterly perish.¹

To solve this predicament God Himself, through Jesus Christ, makes satisfaction for the sins of mankind. While the dilemma of man seems to compel God to act on behalf of his salvation, Anselm asserts that this is not so.² The satisfaction God provides is entirely a work of grace. It is "necessary" only in the sense that it truly expresses the divine character's demands.³ Hence, while "man ought, but cannot. . . God need not, but does . . ." provide satisfaction for man's sin.⁴

2. The Significance of the Incarnation.

To make satisfaction for the sin of man it is required that the price paid "be greater than all the universe besides God."⁵ Its value, that is, must exceed all that is not God. Only such a compensation could outweigh

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1. Ibid., p. 242.

2. Ibid., p. 244.

3. Ibid.

4. Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. V, p. 605.

5. Anselm, op. cit., p. 244.

the guilt of mankind.

It follows, therefore, that he who makes satisfaction "must be greater than all else but God himself."¹ That is to say, the possessor must be greater than his possessions. But who is sufficient for this? Anselm concludes: "Therefore none but God can make this satisfaction."²

On the other hand, since man is the transgressor it is he who must make satisfaction. Anselm writes:

. . . as it is right for man to make atonement for the sin of man, it is also necessary that he who makes the atonement should be the very being who has sinned, or else one of the same race.³

It is necessary, therefore, that he who makes satisfaction for man's evil must be both God and man. Only the incarnate Christ meets such conditions and hence qualifies in this respect to pay for the sins of the world. "The deity of Christ," write James Orr, "gives infinite value to all He does; His humanity is the medium in which the satisfaction is [legitimately] rendered."⁴

One other argument is put forward in favor of the incarnation which appears earlier in the treatise than the above discussion.⁵ Boso, the interrogator, suggests that

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1. Ibid., p. 245.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 247.

4. Orr, op. cit., p. 225.

5. Anselm, op. cit., Book I, Chapter V.

redemption of mankind might have been effected by someone other than God. Perhaps, he suggests, God could have created some man without sin, like Adam before his fall, who could make satisfaction for sin. This would relieve pagan mankind of the difficulty of accepting the doctrine of the incarnation.¹ Anselm replies that such a deliverance would not solve man's basic problem of allegiance to God. It would, in fact, divert man's allegiance from God, for "man would rightly be adjudged as the servant of that being."²

3. The Significance of the Cross.

The death of Christ is crucial to Anselm's view of the atonement. His death alone is conceived of as the means of satisfaction for sin.

Neither a life of obedience nor the gift of Himself is sufficient for satisfaction for sin. These gifts could not atone for sin because satisfaction cannot be made with something already belonging to God or owed to Him. The payment must be something "greater than anything in the possession of God."³ A life of perfect obedience could not pay for sin "for every reasonable being owes his obedience to God."⁴

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1. Ibid., p. 184.
2. Ibid., pp. 184-185.
3. Ibid., p. 257.
4. Ibid.

It is not possible for Christ to present Himself as a gift of satisfaction "for every creature belongs to God."¹

Death remains as the only alternative for atone-
ment. There are two reasons why death is sufficient for satisfaction.

First, death is not something Christ would owe God. Anselm says: ". . . God will not demand this of him as a debt."² Death is not demanded of Christ, first, because of Christ's sinless nature. Death, according to Anselm, is not natural to the nature of man but due to sin. Of this Anselm writes: "I do not think mortality inheres in the essential nature of man, but only as corrupted."³ If Christ is without sin it follows that he should not die. Concerning this Anselm says:

if Adam would not have died had he not committed sin, much less should this man [Christ] suffer death, in whom there can be no sin, for he is God.⁴

But since philosophy will not accept this explanation of the genesis of death, and since his approach to the atonement is rationalistic,⁵ Anselm offers a second argument for death being voluntary for Christ. All will admit, he says, that God is omnipotent. If Christ was God incarnate, then He too

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1. Ibid., p. 257.
2. Ibid., p. 258.
3. Ibid., p. 255.
4. Ibid., p. 252.
5. Ante, p. 20.

was all powerful. It follows, therefore, that it is within His providence to lay down His life or take it up. Thus death is not obligatory but voluntary, not a debt but a gift.¹

A second reason why death is sufficient for satisfaction is found in the very nature of death itself. The severity of voluntary death is set in contrast with the ease with which man surrendered himself to the temptation of the devil. It is admitted, Anselm argues, that since man was defeated by the devil with ease he should make satisfaction for his sin with great difficulty. Again, all will agree that nothing could be more severe than to submit to death voluntarily. It logically follows that "man cannot give himself to God in any way more truly than by surrendering himself to death for God's honor."² Hence, if a man wishes to make atonement for sin he should be one who is in a position to die without obligation. This Christ was able to do.³ Anselm summarizes his arguments for Christ's death as satisfaction in the following statement:

I think it is plain that the man whom we seek for should not only be one who is not necessarily subject to death on account of his omnipotence, and one who does not deserve death on account of his sin, but also one who can die of his own free will, for this will be necessary.⁴

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1. Anselm, op. cit., pp. 256-258.
2. Ibid., p. 258.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., pp. 258-259.

The real satisfaction of Christ, then, lay primarily in the fact that of His own free will, under no compulsion, He laid down His life.

It is clear that Christ's death can atone for sin. But the question arises as to how the death of one person can atone for the sins of all mankind. The pertinence of the question is seen when one considers again the enormity of the guilt of sin, even of a sin so insignificant as to be but "one look contrary to the will of God".¹ Through a series of questions Anselm brings his interrogator, Boso, to conclude that personal injury to Christ exceeds beyond comparison such sins or injuries that do not immediately affect His person. All sins, in the last analysis, are against God, but

no enormity or multitude of sins, apart from the Divine person, can for a moment be compared with a bodily injury inflicted upon that man [Christ]²

It follows, therefore, if personal harm is of such terrible consequence, then Christ's voluntary submission to personal injury is of greatest good. It is, indeed, more than sufficient to outweigh the evil of universal sin. "It has even infinite value," Boso exclaims.³

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1. Ante, p. 23f.

2. Anselm, op. cit., p. 263.

3. Ibid.

D. The Result of the Atonement

1. The Value of Christ's Example.

The voluntary death of Christ has left for mankind the supreme example of devotion to the will of God.¹ The value of His exemplary life is two-fold: First, His obedience to God remained sure not only in the ordinary pursuits of life but even to the point of death, and that death was the ignominious death of crucifixion between two thieves.² Such an example shows men "that they should never turn aside from holiness due to God on account of personal sacrifice."³ Secondly, while other noble men, such as John the Baptist, have died for the sake of truth, Christ "freely offered to the Father what there was no need of his ever losing, and paid for sinners what he owed not for himself."⁴ Christ's example is, therefore, "a much nobler example".⁵

2. The Value of Christ's Reward.

The death of Christ has released "reward" or merit⁶ to mankind more than sufficient to pay the debt due to sin. This reward enables man to enjoy the "inheritance" of Christ and the "superfluity of his possessions."⁷

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1. Ibid., p. 280.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 284ff.
7. Ibid., pp. 284-285.

Christ's voluntary death calls for a reward from God. Not to reward Christ for His death would be unthinkable. A reward, by definition, is a gift of something which the one being rewarded does not possess or the remittance of some legitimate claim upon him.¹ To reward Christ, therefore, is impossible. Since Christ is God all things belonging to the Father belong to Him. Nothing could be given Him. Again, no claims upon Christ need remittance. For example, Christ has no need of remittance of sin.² While it is impossible to give Christ His deserved reward, not to give a reward would suggest that His great work was accomplished in vain. This could not be true.³ The solution, therefore, is to to confer the reward upon some one else. It would be logical for the reward to be given by the Father to whomsoever Christ desired. But to whom would Christ give His reward? Anselm answers:

Upon whom would he more properly bestow the reward accruing from his death, than upon those for whose salvation, as right reason teaches, he became man; and for whose sake, as we have already said, he left an example of suffering death to preserve holiness? . . . What more proper than that, when he beholds so many of them weighed down by so heavy a debt, and wasting through poverty, in the depth of their miseries, he should remit the debt incurred by their sins, and give them what their transgressions had forfeited?⁴

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1. Ibid., p. 283.
2. Ibid., p. 284.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

Thus all mankind has available the required satisfaction for the debt due to sin through the voluntary death of Jesus Christ.

3. The Vindication of God's Honor.

Finally, the death of Christ as satisfaction restores to God the honor withheld from Him and atones for the dishonor done Him. No satisfaction, Anselm has insisted, would be sufficient unless this were done.¹ The "infinite value"² of the death of Christ more than compensates for the outraged dignity of God. Christ's death was "a deed done in human nature by One who did not owe it which brings infinite glory to God . . . He rendered God a glory which can only be measured by the magnitude of the sacrifice it entailed."³

Thus the death of Christ makes adequate satisfaction for man's sin by paying his debt and restoring God's honor, making it possible for God to justly carry out His plans for the human race.

E. The Summary.

Since all men have failed to render God the honor that belongs to Him by living in absolute obedience to His will, the character of God, justice, and wisdom, demand that either adequate satisfaction be made or punishment be exacted.

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1. Ante, p. 28f.
2. Ante, p. 35.
3. Orr, op. cit., p. 226.

Such a payment for sin must be paid from that which is not already owed God; it must be proportionate to the weight of guilt; and it must atone for the dishonor rendered God. This payment is beyond the ability of man, weakened by sin, to pay. But God, seeing that His purposes for mankind would be thwarted by eternally punishing all mankind for sin, provides satisfaction through Jesus Christ, the God-man. Christ can make satisfaction for sin because His deity enables Him to pay an adequate price, while His humanity qualifies Him to act on behalf of man. He makes satisfaction for sin by freely laying down His life at the cross, an act to which He was not obligated and which is consistent with the demands of reason for a difficult atoning act. This one death is sufficient for all mankind because of the personal injury sustained by God in Christ. In making atonement for man Christ has left a supreme example of obedience to the will of God; rendered man a reward more than sufficient to pay for the debt of his sin; and vindicated the honor of God.

CHAPTER III
THE COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

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THE COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

A. The Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the principle similarities and differences between the views of the atonement of Irenaeus and Anselm which were set forth in the first and second chapters of this thesis.

This study will enable one to penetrate more profoundly into their thinking on the atonement because it will serve to highlight, by comparison and contrast, the salient features of their respective theories.

Following the general plan of the preceding chapters, the comparisons and contrasts will be drawn under the following main divisions: the need for atonement, the means of atonement, and the result of the atonement.

B. The Need for Atonement

Both Irenaeus and Anselm recognize the tremendous need that called forth the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Neither minimizes the necessity of man's deliverance from

sin and its accompaniments. Irenaeus writes in the most vivid terms of the strength of sin in the life of man. His vocabulary itself describing sin's power is highly suggestive of the seriousness with which he views the predicament of man.¹ Anselm, no less than Irenaeus, sees the awfulness of human evil. He points up the dreadfulness of man's transgressions to his interrogator, Boso, when he measures sin with the price of satisfaction necessary to outweigh its evil effects.²

While neither diminishes the necessity for atonement, there is considerable contrast between the precise view of man's need of deliverance. Irenaeus ranges with the power of sin over life, the power of death and the devil. These three stand almost independently as enemies of man and the fulfillment of his life.³ Anselm, on the other hand, is chiefly concerned with the problem of sin alone. While he seems to be aware of the reality of death and the devil, these are not significant in his thinking concerning the need for atonement. Satisfaction must be made for sin. Death is regarded as punishment arbitrarily imposed by God on man for sin; the devil diverted man's allegiance from God to himself in paradise.⁴

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1. Ante, pp. 3f.
2. Ante, pp. 23f.
3. Ante, pp. 3-7.
4. Ante, pp. 22-25.

There is, furthermore, a difference of conception concerning the evil these impose on man. Irenaeus thinks of sin, death, and the devil, as evil powers holding man in bondage. These are enemies of man, and the language of conflict is used to describe their undoing.¹ Anselm, in contrast, is accustomed to speaking of sin in terms of debt. Sin is a debt or the failure to pay a debt of obedience. This is the language of the court room.² Irenaeus' conception is more psychological in its expression, while Anselm's idea is more legalistic. Irenaeus thinks in terms of the power of sin, while Anselm is preoccupied with the guilt of sin.

This leads to another distinction in their approach to the problem of sin. Emphasizing man's captivity to evil powers, Irenaeus is concerned primarily, though not exclusively, with man's predicament. Man is in trouble and he needs to be rescued.³ Anselm, viewing sin as a debt to God and an effrontery to His character, is occupied in his thinking with the injury wrought against God.⁴ With Irenaeus it is man's personality that is endangered; with Anselm the personality of God.⁵ Man is held captive, says Irenaeus; God's honor has been robbed, asserts Anselm. While the emphasis of these

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1. Ante, pp. 2-6.
2. Ante, pp. 22-23.
3. Ante, pp. 2-6.
4. Ante, pp. 22-29.
5. Cf. Orr, op. cit., p. 222.

thinkers is clear, it by no means follows that their thinking is confined to the emphasis suggested.

The significance of the Adamic fall in their respective theories contributes another contrast in their theorizing of the atonement. In Irenaeus' view the fall occupies a large and important part in determining the means of atonement; in Anselm's view Adam's transgression plays a less determinative role. The Adamic fall is significant for Irenaeus because he regards Adam as the universal man, the representative man, while Anselm views him merely as the first man. In Irenaeus' thinking the act of Adam is the act of the race; hence the transgression of Adam is the transgression of the race. His sinful act can only be undone by a Second Representative Man.¹ Since Adam is only the first of many men, according to Anselm, he was only the original channel for sin to enter the human family and, therefore, no more significant than any man so far as atonement is concerned. Adam's failure has left mankind weakened through the introduction of sin, but he did not act representatively for man.² The different concepts held concerning Adam's significance largely influence the structure of their respective views of the means of atonement.

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1. Ante, p. 7.
2. Ante, p. 24.

C. The Means of Atonement

Both Irenaeus and Anselm agree that atonement was made through Jesus Christ. Yet there is a real divergence of opinion as to the precise way in which Christ secured man's redemption.

1. The Basic Conception.

The basic conception of atonement as understood by these representative thinkers may be suggested by the key word used by them to describe their respective view of Christ's saving work.

To Irenaeus atonement is Christ's "recapitulation". This means that Christ, the Representative Man, relived the experiences of Adam, successfully coping with every temptation that seduced Adam to failure. To recapitulate the Adamic experience, then, meant conflict with life's evil powers. Atonement was made when victory was achieved.¹ To Anselm atonement is Christ's "satisfaction". Christ, the God-man, pays the price of man's sin to God by laying down His life on man's behalf. To make satisfaction Christ must compensate for man's transgressions by the presentation to God of that which He normally does not demand of man. Atonement was made when Christ voluntarily laid down His life.²

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1. Ante, pp. 8-10.
2. Ante, pp. 25-35.

From this basic conception it is clear that the life of Christ is dominant in the thinking of Irenaeus. On the contrary, Anselm conceives of Christ's redemptive act¹ as accomplished solely through His death.

It may be noted that for Irenaeus atonement is achieved through conflict and struggle. For Anselm atonement is secured by the paying of a price which involves surrender² and submission.

Again, one observes that Irenaeus conceives of Christ's work in terms of representation. Anselm views the act of Christ as an individual act on behalf of the human³ race.

2. The Significance of the Incarnation.

The incarnation is the cornerstone of Irenaeus' theology of the atonement. Anselm likewise lays claim to the incarnation as a vital factor in his scheme of Christ's⁴ saving work.

It can be seen that both men regard the deity of Christ as an essential fact for atonement, albeit for different reasons. Both views require the humanity of Christ⁵ as necessary to fulfill certain presuppositions of justice.

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1. Ante, pp. 6-14, 32-35.
2. Ante, pp. 8-9, 29-30.
3. Ante, pp. 10, 35.
4. Ante, pp. 10-14, 30-32.
5. Ante, pp. 13-14, 31.

But these similarities are only superficial. Some basic distinctions arise when closer examination is made of their specific reasons for regarding the incarnation important.

To Irenaeus the incarnate life of Christ lived in obedience to the will of God is an essential part of atonement. This is due to the fact that He is regarded as the Second Adam, the Representative Man. His atonement by recapitulation of the life and temptations of Adam, winning victories where Adam surrendered in defeat, involves the entire life of Christ.¹ To Anselm the life of Christ is not in any sense atonement, but merely the prelude to atonement. By living a sinless life Christ was only paying a debt of obedience to God owed by every human being. Being able to pay that debt perfectly freed Christ to offer to God a special gift of His death for satisfaction.² For Irenaeus, then, the life of Christ made atonement; for Anselm, the life of Christ qualified Him to make atonement.

The deity of Christ is the essential factor of Irenaeus' theory of atonement. If atonement is secured through conflict and triumph over evil powers that have held man in bondage, power to gain the victory is the single most important factor. For Irenaeus, only deity possesses sufficient strength to meet man's foes and defeat them. The very power

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1. Ante, pp. 10-14.

2. Ante, pp. 30-32.

of God is prerequisite to making atonement, in the mind of Irenaeus.¹ Anselm regards the deity of Christ from a different point of view. Atonement consists in the voluntary death of Christ. It can be offered as atonement because of its voluntary character, but it is only sufficient for all mankind because it was deity suffering personal injury, and hence of infinite worth.² So then, for Irenaeus, the power of deity is the supreme thing; for Anselm, it is the value of deity.

The humanity of Christ in His conflict with man's foes is essential because in no other way could God defeat the evil powers holding mankind in bondage justly, according to Irenaeus. The just methods of God are set in contrast with the deceptive, unjust ways of the adversary. Although this appears to be secondary to Irenaeus' scheme of atonement, it is regarded by him as necessary.³ For Anselm the humanity of Christ is the most significant aspect of the incarnation. Christ could not make satisfaction for the sins of man apart from being man Himself. God's character, justice, and wisdom, demand that he who sins must make satisfaction. Hence sinful man, or a member of the human race, must make the payment. Christ, then, makes satisfaction for mankind as man and not

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1. Ante, pp. 10-14.
2. Ante, p. 35.
3. Ante, pp. 13-14.

as God.¹ From this comparison it can be observed that both men require the humanity of Christ as an essential factor in Christ's saving work. On the other hand, a contrast is apparent when one views the reasons why they regard the humanity necessary. In both views there is something of a paradox evident. Irenaeus sees the necessity for the power of deity to work out atonement, yet seems to insist on the limitation of the operation of that power in life. Anselm asserts that only God can make atonement, but he requires the satisfaction to be made by man.

3. The Significance of the Cross.

Irenaeus sees the cross as the climactic point of conflict between Christ and man's enemies. Christ's life, a continuous conflict with evil, triumphs even at the cross. The cross is the decisive battle, the final victory.² The cross brings the work of atonement to completion.

Anselm regards the cross as the sum total of the atonement. No atonement is made until Christ lays down His life at the cross. All that precedes is preparatory. The cross was an act of Christ not owed to God. It stands, in a certain sense, in utter contrast with His life. The life of obedience He owed to God; the submission to the cross was

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1. Ante, p. 31.

2. Ante, pp. 14-15.

freely offered.¹

To summarize this contrast, to Irenaeus the cross was the logical end of a life of conflict with man's enemies; to Anselm the cross was not a part of Christ's normal relationship to God but a special act of devotion. For Irenaeus the cross was organically related to the life of Christ; for Anselm the cross represented an unusual move, an unexpected turn, to the sinless life of Christ. It is clear, then, that the cross is the climax of atonement, for Irenaeus; it is the whole atonement, for Anselm.

D. The Result of Atonement

As understood by Irenaeus, victory is the keynote of the atonement making possible reconciliation. This victory has both subjective and objective results. The triumphant conflict of Christ over man's evil foes delivers man from his bondage to sin, death, and the devil, reconciling him to God. Objectively, this deliverance makes possible God's reconciliation to man by removing those things which prevented fellowship between them.²

To Anselm, the atonement finds its keynote in satisfaction made. This satisfaction has two objective results. First, God's honor has been vindicated. Secondly,

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1. Ante, pp. 32-35.
2. Ante, pp. 15-17.

man's guilt or debt due to sin can be remitted. If any subject value accrues from the atonement, it is merely the example of Christ is the completeness of His dedication.¹

It can be noted, therefore, that while Irenaeus is concerned with both the subjective and objective values of the atonement, Anselm is interested chiefly in its objective results. Again, while Irenaeus is thinking of a double-sided reconciliation, Anselm writes only of God's reconciliation to man. In Anselm's view there is no provision for the power of sin in the life of man, while Irenaeus finds this to be one of the great concerns of the atonement of Christ. Irenaeus' view, then, is more comprehensive than the theory of Anselm.

E. The Summary

Both Irenaeus and Anselm recognize the need for atonement in the strongest terms. Irenaeus conceives of man's need in terms of three objective powers, namely, sin, death, and the devil. Anselm sees man's need of atonement because of the debt sin incurred. Irenaeus is primarily interested in man's predicament; Anselm faces the problem of atonement from the God-ward side. The Adamic fall is fundamental to Irenaeus' view; it is less essential, and all but unrecognized by Anselm. Both theories assert the primacy of Christ in making atonement. Irenaeus sees Christ's saving work as a recapitulation of the Adamic

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1. Ante, pp. 36-38.

experiences, succeeding at every point where Adam failed. Anselm conceives of the atonement as satisfaction paid for man's sin. It is a payment, while the former view is a victory. Both views stress the importance of the incarnation. Christ's life of obedience to the will of God is atonement, according to Irenaeus; to Anselm it merely qualified Christ to make atonement. The deity of Christ is essential to Irenaeus' theory because only deity presupposes sufficient power to meet man's foes. The deity of Christ is essential to Anselm because of its value in reference to personal suffering. The humanity of Christ is requisite to Irenaeus' view because only as Christ is man can he defeat the evil powers justly. Anselm sees the value of the humanity of Christ in that sinful man must make satisfaction for his own sin; hence Christ acts as man in behalf of man. The cross of Christ is the climax to Christ's atoning life, according to Anselm; the cross is the decisive battle with man's enemies. To Anselm the cross is the point of atonement; the life of Christ was only preliminary to His making atonement by freely offering His life on the cross. Irenaeus observes both objective and subjective results to the atonement. Objectively God is reconciled to man; subjectively, man, delivered from his bondage to sin, death, and the devil, is reconciled to God. Anselm emphasizes the objective fruits of Christ's saving act. God is reconciled to man, and His honor, robbed by man's sin, is vindicated. If there

is subjective value to the atonement, it is to be found in Christ's example of complete dedication even in the face of the cross.

F. The Summary and Conclusion

1. Summary.

The purpose of this thesis was to make a comparative study of the views of the atonement of Irenaeus and Anselm. These two theologians of the Christian Church were selected because their thinking represents two of the three major theories of the atonement in Christian theology. No effort was made to study a particular theory of the atonement as such but to represent the thinking of these individual men. In particular, "Against Heresies" was the source for the view of Irenaeus, "Cur Deus Homo?", the source of Anselm's thought.

Chapter one was devoted to a study of the view of Irenaeus. Chapter two traced the theory of Anselm. Chapter three brought their ideas together in a comparative study which served to highlight the significance features of each view.

In the first chapter Irenaeus' conception of the need for atonement, the means of atonement, and the result of atonement, was related. It was observed that sin, death, and the devil, hold man in bondage. Victory over these foes of man, and the consequent deliverance, is atonement.

This victory was achieved through Christ's recapitulation of Adam's experiences, successfully meeting every temptation that defeated Adam. Christ, the Second Adam, the Representative Man, triumphed on behalf of man. The significance of the incarnation and cross was explored. It was discovered that the incarnation was essential to the atonement for the deity of Christ alone presupposed sufficient power to defeat man's enemies and the humanity of Christ made it possible to win the battle justly. The cross, it was observed, was the climax of the recapitulation experience. The atonement resulted in man's reconciliation to God and God's reconciliation to man.

In the second chapter Anselm's conception of the need for atonement, the means of atonement, and the result of atonement, was presented. It was discovered that Anselm regarded man's debt to God incurred by sin demanded either punishment ~~or~~ satisfaction. The satisfaction for sin must be proportionate to the guilt, a gift of something not already belonging to God, and must vindicate the outraged dignity of God's honor. Since this was beyond the ability of man, God through Christ provided satisfaction. Christ, the God-man, qualified to make atonement by virtue of His deity, which made possible a sinless life, and His humanity, which permitted Him to act on behalf of man. As satisfaction Christ laid down His life at the cross, a deed not required

by obedience and sufficiently difficult to satisfy reason's demand for an arduous atonement. This satisfaction served to vindicate God's honor, make possible the remittance of man's sin, and provide an example for devotion.

In the third chapter the views of Irenaeus and Anselm were compared and contrasted in their conception of the need for atonement, the means of atonement, and the result of atonement. Both views, it was learned, take man's need of atonement seriously. Irenaeus sees man's need in terms of three objective powers, namely, sin, death, and the devil. Anselm sees man's need in terms of a debt due to sin. Irenaeus, it was discovered, is chiefly interested in man's predicament. Anselm faces the human problem from the Godward side. Anselm's view of the Adamic fall is not as fundamental to his theory as Irenaeus' view of the fall. For Irenaeus, atonement is recapitulation of the Adamic experience; for Anselm, the giving of a payment for sin. The incarnation is viewed from the aspect of power, according to Irenaeus; Anselm sees it in terms of value. The whole life of Christ is atonement in Irenaeus' theory; the death of Christ alone is atonement, for Anselm. Irenaeus sees the result of atonement in both its subjective and objective aspects, namely, reconciliation of man to God and God to man. Anselm finds the effect of atonement in, primarily, the objective realm, namely, God's reconciliation to man and the vindication of His honor.

2. Conclusion.

This comparative study has shown that while there are superficial similarities in the respective views presented, fundamental differences are apparent at every point. There is little possibility in reconciling these views.

One significant reason why the views are poles apart can be suggested. Irenaeus approaches his work purportedly from the Bible while Anselm endeavours to find the meaning of atonement by the use of reason alone.

Even so, the difficulty of interpreting the central fact of the Christian religion cannot be minimized. If this thesis teaches anything, it should teach the exercise of caution and understanding, as well as genuine appreciation, toward those who seek to fathom the depths of the mystery of the saving work of Christ however divergent their theories may be.

It is significant, however, that whatever the view may be concerning Christ's atonement, the Christian theologian is convinced that it is sufficiently successful in answering man's deepest problem of evil. And that is enough.

If it is in the will of God that man shall not know precisely how atonement is achieved by Christ, the Christian nevertheless rejoices in the fact that atonement has been made and exclaims with the Apostle Paul:

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?¹

1. Romans 11:33-34.

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