

God, he says, being omnipotent, might have chosen some other way. But when the reason has seen a thing to be necessary, it is absurd to place above this necessity the abstract notion of an Omnipotence which may make it unnecessary. For, in this case, the notion really uppermost is that of the entire incomprehensibility of God, which, of course every theory founded on a supposed knowledge of his attributes.

The theory of St. Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor (born 1224), is chiefly distinguished by its doctrine of "satisfactio superabundans." Christ has restored to God more than was taken from him by human sin. This surplus became afterward a stock of merit belonging to the church, and was the ground on which it based the right of selling indulgences. In the main Aquinas agrees with Anselm, nevertheless he also gives up the absolute necessity of satisfaction.

Opposed to St. Thomas stands Dons Scotus (flourished 1300), the Subtle Doctor, whose view directly contradicts that of Anselm. He denies the infinite guilt of sin and the infinite merit of Christ, declaring that guilt and merit take their character from their subject not their object. He declares that the belief of the infinite character of sin, involves Manicheism. Sin, however, though not *intensively* infinite (in itself) is *extensively* so (in its results.) By thus denying the infinite nature of sin, Anselm's theory is cut up by the roots. He denies the necessity of the death of Christ, and even asserts that it is possible that a mere man might have atoned for us. Anything which God chose to accept as an atonement would be so. In other words, God's will is not conditioned by any necessity, but is absolutely supreme. And here is the radical difference between the Scotists and the Thomists, the one attributing to God an unconditioned will, the other a will conditioned by the laws of nature. From this point the scholastics divided into these two parties, though the majority were Scotists. The church, however, decided for the doctrine of Thomas, as seeming most to favor church authority. It was adopted by the Bull *Unigenitus*. The idea of *acceptatio* is found, however, in a great variety of systems, from the time of Scotus down.

And now we come to the third great epoch in the history of our doctrine, which commences with the Reformation.

The peculiarity of the Protestant Reformation, as of all true reformations, consists in its being a falling back upon personal experience. Wearied with the forms of Scholasticism, men were impelled to reject every thing which was not based in a moral need, or an immediate and practical religious interest. The reformation, therefore, was the great turning point, where the mind passed from the Outward to the Inward, from Objectivity to Subjectivity, and became conscious of its own freedom. Nothing which could not be legitimated by an inward experience was henceforth to be regarded as true. Hence the importance of Faith, or the deepest personal element in man.

The principal difference between the Lutheran theology and that of Anselm was significant of this change. Anselm's doctrine was based in the necessity of the Divine nature. Anselm asked, How shall God be satisfied? Luther, How shall man be justified?

In answering this question, the Lutheran theologians maintained the doctrine of an infinite evil in sin, but changed the *satisfaction* of Anselm into an *equivalent*. They also made the distinction between the active and passive obedience of Christ, which was not known to the theory of Anselm. Their view was, that man, by disobeying the law of God, was justly exposed to punishment, but Christ is punished in his place, and he thus becomes free. Yet he is still bound to obey God and lead a life of perfect goodness, in order to be saved. Christ fulfils this obligation for him by his holy life. The suffering he ought to bear, Christ bears; the duty he ought to perform, Christ performs. The satisfaction, therefore, before confined to the death of Christ, is now extended to his life; and now first is Christ considered as being punished in the place of the sinner. God also is now regarded as a sovereign, bound to uphold his laws, instead of a creditor, claiming his due. We see in this the beginning of the change from the legal to the governmental view.

We now come to Faustus Socinus and the Socinians, whose doctrine may be regarded as the great revolt from the doctrinal authority of the church, as that of Luther was a revolt from its ecclesiastical authority. Socinianism is the extreme of subjectivity. In this system the subject (man) becomes self-dependent, and his relation to the object (God) becomes an outward one. The attacks by Socinus upon the church doctrines were very acute, and have never been sufficiently met or answered.

The argument of Socinus against the church theory of satisfaction, begins by de-

nying its foundation, the idea of Divine justice. If God cannot forgive sin without a satisfaction, he becomes subject to finite limitations. Mercy is as much an attribute with God as justice, but if we consider it as absolute, then God cannot punish sin at all. Therefore justice and mercy must both be regarded as finite conditions, not absolute qualities in God. Both are effects of his will, which is his absolute essence. Man therefore is reconciled to God, God is not reconciled to man.

With still greater emphasis does the Socinian logic attack the doctrine of satisfaction itself. Satisfaction and forgiveness mutually exclude each other. Satisfaction pays the debt; how then can it be forgiven? If forgiven, why need it be paid? If it be said, that the person who owes the debt is forgiven, because it is not demanded of him but another; Socinus then asks, how can a debt be asked except of the one who owes it, or the one who assumes it? If paid by either, how can it be forgiven? Moreover, punishment is strictly a personal thing. The idea of punishment involves that of guilt. If transferred to the innocent, it ceases to be punishment. Punishment, therefore, cannot be assumed like a debt. Again, satisfaction supposes both the justice and mercy of God in exercise. But the exercise of mercy would be a free pardon, that of justice determined punishment.

As a matter of fact, satisfaction is impossible, and could never have been made. Every sinner deserves eternal death. The substitute then should endure eternal death for every individual sinner, which is impossible. But in fact Christ did not endure it at all, for he rose from the dead in three days, and has ascended into heaven. Paul says, that "if Christ be not risen, we are yet in our sins." But if his death freed us from sin, his resurrection is unnecessary. Nor was the death of Christ a punishment, since it was the means of his exaltation and glory. If it be said, that Christ made an infinite satisfaction through the dignity of his person, Socinus replies, that with God "there is no respect of persons." Christ could not suffer as God, and if he could have done so, this Divine suffering would have been no proper satisfaction for human sin. Nor, lastly, could God make satisfaction to himself.

Nor did it escape the acuteness of Faustus Socinus, that active and passive obedience are contradictory to each other. The one either excludes the other, or makes it unnecessary. Christ could not make satisfaction by his active obedience, for he was bound to obey God on his own account. His obedience was rewarded by his own elevation to glory, it could not therefore have been rewarded by the salvation of others. Nor could the obedience of one have made satisfaction for that due by all. However exalted his person, he could only do, what each owes, i. e., obey God perfectly.

In addition to these arguments, Socinus adduced others founded on the nature of man, which we cannot stop to insert here. This bold and profound attack was met by a sufficiently tame reply from the Protestant theologians. They merely repeated again their previous formulas, and relied mainly on the Scripture argument. But here again they were met by their skilful opponents by a mode of interpretation, which was original with Socinus, and which has never been sufficiently carried out since his time. Socinus collected all the texts referring to the death of Christ, or to the forgiveness of sin, and arranged them in four classes. Placing in the first class the texts which speak of Christ's death as a ransom or redemption, he easily shows that these were to be taken figuratively. In the second class were those that spoke of Christ as dying for our sins, which he explained as meaning that he died on account of our sins, in order that we might be freed from them. The third class of texts included those in which it is said that Christ took our sins on himself, or took them away. These either mean that he has taken them away by making us good, or borne them, as one may bear the consequences of another's sin. The fourth class includes the texts relating to Jewish types and sacrifices. Here Socinus clearly shows that the sacrifices of the Old Testament were not substitutions, either really or symbolically, but only certain conditions with which God had connected the forgiveness of sin.

Having thus demolished the Church doctrine of atonement, what did Socinus put in its place? The positive side of his system is far from being satisfactory as the negative. The sum of it is briefly this.

Man is reconciled to God when he repents. God is always placable, man alone needs to be changed. He reconciles himself by repenting. Repentance, in the system of Socinus, takes the place which faith occupies in the Protestant system. Still, subjective as this system appears, it has also an objectivity of its own. If faith has its object out of itself in the Divine love, repentance has its object out of itself in the Divine law. Soci-

nus also teaches that it is faith in God's forgiveness which leads to repentance. Faith is necessary also, therefore, in his system. The question between Socinus and Luther is only this, Do we repent in order to be forgiven, or are we forgiven in order that we may repent?

But how is Christ a Redeemer according to Socinus? Through Christ, man has God's promise to trust and God's law to obey. He is reconciled to God when he has a practical living confidence that his sins are forgiven. Christ gives him this confidence by announcing forgiveness on the condition of repentance. Christ's office, therefore, as a Mediator, is prophetic rather than priestly. The death of Christ has value as an example of self sacrifice, and as a solemn confirmation and seal of the promises of God. The death and resurrection of Christ are necessary to man's salvation, but not because of any effect they exercise upon God, but because of their moral influence upon man.

The attack by Socinus made it necessary for the system of church orthodoxy to shift its ground, that which it had occupied having become no longer tenable. Hence the famous theory of Hugo Grotius, which has been essentially that of modern orthodoxy ever since his time. He founds the necessity of Christ's death not on the justice of God as a creditor, but as a ruler ("justitia Dei rectoria.") For the legal view of the atonement, he substitutes a Governmental view.

The fundamental error of Socinus, says Grotius, is to consider God in the work of redemption only in the light of a creditor, who may forgive the debt if he will; or in that of an absolute monarch, who can at any time remit punishment. God is to be regarded as a Governor, and the right of forgiveness is conditioned by the good of the whole community. The object of punishment is not to satisfy the honor of the monarch only, but only to preserve the order and protect the peace of society. Atonement is an act of Jurisdiction, according to which one is punished that another may be excused; or of Dispensation, remitting the operation of the law with respect to certain persons or matters. Now, can the law of punishment be relaxed? All positive laws, says Grotius, may be relaxed. The law (Genesis ii. 17) which announces death for disobedience, may be remitted, since it is an expression, not of the Divine nature of the Divine will. But in order that it might safely be remitted in the case of human beings, it was necessary that some example should be made to show the evil of sin. Christ, therefore, "died for our sins," to be an example of God's displeasure against sin. This displeasure the Scripture calls "wrath of God." In the death of Christ, therefore, God's hatred of sin, his care for his law, and his goodness to men, are all manifested.

The essence of the theory of Grotius lies in the proposition, "God could not forgive sin without an act of exemplary punishment." The necessity of Christ's death, therefore, according to this theory, is very different from its necessity in the theory of Anselm. It has reference not to the past but to the future. The guilt of past sin is abolished by an immediate act of Divine love. The example of punishment is only necessary to prevent future sin. Therefore with Grotius, as with Socinus, the principal effect of the death of Christ is its *moral influence* on man. With Grotius this is negative, with Socinus positive. According to Grotius, Christ's death was necessary before man could be forgiven, but this is also the case in the theory of Socinus. In some respects Grotius is the least consequent of the two. Anselm's theory is based upon the notion of Divine justice, that of Socinus on the notion of Divine goodness. Grotius, in his theory, neutralizes both. The whole of this theory has the character of a juridical proceeding, and its error consists in applying to the Divine law and government necessities which belong merely to human governments and to human laws.

The essential difference between the theory of Grotius, and the church doctrine of satisfaction is very apparent. The main point of the church theory is this, that before man can be forgiven, Divine justice demands that the *full debt* be paid. Satisfaction is paying to God the very debt which man owes, and what Christ has done is identical with what man ought to do. Socinus objected to this, that it made forgiveness impossible, and that therefore satisfaction and forgiveness are contradictory. Grotius replies, that Christ's death is not "satisfactio," but "solutio;" that is to say, the debt is not paid, but something is accepted in the place of it, and this act of accepting Christ's death constitutes forgiveness. He admits that if the full and very debt was paid by the death of Christ, "remissio," or freedom from guilt, would follow at once, without any forgiveness on the part of God. The death of Christ would then be in itself "solutio," or payment, and call not for an act of "remissio," or pardon

on the part of God, but of "liberatio," or acquittal. He thus virtually surrenders to Socinus the theory he had undertaken to defend against him.

Crollius, the Socinian, replied to Grotius, (*Præfates Poloni*, vol. 5.) and easily showed the injustice he had done to Socinus, and the defects of his theory. These defects were also observed by his own friends, the Arminians. Nevertheless the theory of Grotius has, on the whole, continued to be the most favorite form of modern orthodoxy down to the present time.

We must stop our historical survey at this point, and content ourselves with a few closing remarks suggested by this cursory view of the subject.

(TO BE CONCLUDED IN OUR NEXT.)

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THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT.

The proper meaning of the word atonement is reconciliation, as its etymology testifies. It occurs only once in the translation of the New Testament, that is in Rom. v. 11. But the Greek word so rendered in this place, occurs elsewhere in the same epistle, and in other writings of the Apostle Paul, (Rom. xi. 15, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19,) and is translated "reconciliation." Now this doctrine of atonement, or reconciliation, is unquestionably the great point of the Gospel. To make an atonement, that is, to effect a reconciliation, was the great aim of the mission of Christ. The parties at variance were man and his Maker. They had to be reconciled, and Christ undertook the work.

But in whom was the necessary change to be wrought? Obviously in man, not in the unchangeable God. The Deity from his nature must hate the sin, but it does not follow, therefore, that he must hate the sinner. The sinner is his child—his rebellious child to be sure, but still his child—and the benevolent Father could not hate his child. He has no pleasure in his death, wicked though he be, but would rather all would turn from their wickedness and live. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" is still the appeal which he makes to them. If they come back to him as penitent prodigals "confessing their sins, he is faithful and just to forgive them their sins." Our Saviour, in his affecting parable of the Prodigal Son, exhibits a striking illustration of the doctrine of reconciliation. The earthly father in the parable is but the type of the heavenly Father as he deals with his intelligent offspring.

To effect such a change in the sinner as would induce him to return with penitence to God, was the sublime and beneficent aim of Jesus Christ. To accomplish this end, he lived, taught, and died. By the disclosures which he made of the Divine mercy, by the winning example of holiness and obedience which he set before the eyes of humanity, and by the profoundly interesting spectacle of his death upon the cross, he sought to turn the heart of man from evil, and bring the world back to God. To whatever extent the heart of the sinner is moved to penitence by these combined influences, to the same extent is he reconciled, and when he is wholly moved to a thorough repentance,—a repentance which issues in a new life of sincere obedience,—then he is reconciled to God. Then Christ has made atonement for him,—that is, he has effected the reconciliation.

This seems plain enough to us, yet we are aware that it would be very unsatisfactory to a large class of minds. Many even in our own denomination would probably feel dissatisfied with it. The Scriptures, it is thought, in some places lay a peculiar stress on the death of Christ as the procuring cause of man's salvation. The Apostle Paul, we know, makes a free use of the sacrificial language of the Jews in which he had been educated, but when used in reference to the death of Christ it seems clear to us that it is employed in a figurative sense. We do not mean, however, to deny the effective agency of the