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## I. THE TEACHING OF THE THEOLOGICAL CLASS-ROOM IN RELATION TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE STUDENT.

The aim of the theological student is generally a practical one ; he is in preparation for the ministry of the Gospel. With this end in view he is seeking to acquaint himself with the several parts of the theological curriculum. The promotion of his spiritual life—the increase of his faith and of the other Christian graces—is to him, therefore, of primary importance. Whether, indeed, the student has respect to his own well-being or to his qualifications for the ministry, the cultivation of the religious life should be his first concern. To know God and Jesus Christ is eternal life, and it is also the necessary condition of all effective service in the Kingdom of God.

Apart from his studies, there are various ways in which the candidate for the ministry will seek to cultivate and strengthen the life of the soul. He will do so through private prayer and reading of the Scriptures, through connection with religious societies in college or hall, through teaching in Sabbath school or elsewhere, through fellowship with some congregation.

But we are here rather to consider what help the spiritual life of the student may receive through his proper studies, and especially in the class-room. For we must not acquiesce in the notion that study is necessarily unfavorable to

#### IV. THEORIES OF THE ATONEMENT.

It is perfectly obvious that not every one who cordially accepts such a cardinal Christian truth as the Atonement, must, *ipso facto*, have a logical and consistent and clearly articulated conception of that truth. Thousands accept Jesus of Nazareth as the Divine Son of God who have never so much as heard of the theological doctrine of the Divinity of Christ; thousands regard the Bible as the very Word of God who have no sort of clearly wrought-out theory of inspiration; thousands believe in miracles who have never stopped to define miracles or the supernatural. All this goes without the saying, only it is by no means applicable to the Christian ministry. It is our privilege and high calling, as it is also our duty, to give very careful thought to these great themes. As ministers of Christ we are stewards of the mysteries of God and it is required of us that we be found faithful. We are called to teach men in holy things, to preach to them the unsearchable riches of Christ. For us, therefore, it is necessary that there should be more than a merely consenting and unthoughtful acceptance of the truth.

And this for two reasons: first, without an intelligent and mature conception of the truth, we can hardly expect to preach it to the permanent profit of the people. Indeed, I very much question, after all, whether we can distinguish sharply between the truth of the atonement and some doctrine of it. The doctrine is simply the fact—known and rationally interpreted. We accept the fact or the truth or the thing and, being intelligent persons, in accepting it, we at once understand it as meaning something and that something, whatever it is, is, in so far forth, our doctrine concerning it. By theory of the atonement, then, I mean simply a doctrine, a view, a conception of it. Certainly the preacher of the Gospel who fain would convince and persuade men to accept the truth, should aim first of all to have some rational conception of his own of what that

truth is. We shall heartily assent to the words of Professor Orr when he says: "I can not believe that any doctrine of Scripture—least of all the doctrine of the atonement, which is represented in Scripture as the Revelation of the innermost heart of God to man, the central and supreme manifestation of his love to the World—was ever meant to lie like a dead weight on our understanding, incapable of being in any degree assimilated by our thought."\*

The other reason why we should have a clear conception of this particular subject is because of its vital relation to our work in the Gospel. This truth is at the very core of our Christian faith and yet it has been the diverging point, the fork in the road, for hundreds of preachers who have gone astray. The great apostle did not regard that he declared a complete Gospel so long as he had been preaching Christ; he must preach that Christ crucified. Christianity, without the cross, was not his message. Jesus born, Jesus baptized, Jesus multiplying loaves and raising the dead, even the risen and reigning Jesus, is not the whole Gospel we are to preach. The atonement is the capstone in the citadel of Christianity and that minister who is not both spiritually enlightened and intellectually solid as to it, is neither able to give forth his message in clear and commanding tones nor is he in a position to be steadfastly confident in the midst of the distracting doubts and clamorous conceits of many-voiced modern unbelief.

The doctrine of the atonement is so closely related to that of grace and justification and faith and the personal righteousness of the believer that it is well to remind the reader that present limitations rule them out; otherwise it might seem that I am purposely evading questions which naturally enough suggest themselves. It is not salvation, nor who are saved, nor why they are saved, nor how, which is my theme, but rather the historical fact of the atonement of Jesus as understood in the light of Holy Scripture. This

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\* The Christian View of God and the World, p. 340. First Ed.

shuts out merely philosophical notions of the atonement. For example, that brilliant native son of the golden West, in his last book, "Studies of Good and Evil,"\* finds what he calls "the immortal soul of the doctrine of the atonement" in the idea that all existing evil is necessary or God would not be God, that the existence of evil is necessary to the existence of perfection or as he says it, "The eternal world contains Gethsemane." It is a very significant that every philosopher has some philosophy of the atonement but if it ignore the Word of God, if it turn its back upon the common consensus of the people of God, we have neither time nor inclination to honor it with careful study or with very respectful thought—nor will it pay to do so.

There are two or three things presupposed in the doctrine of the atonement.

First, we must assume that God is just. The divine love is presupposed but divine justice is the norm of an atonement. To forget this is to shut the door at once against any place for an atonement. Underlying every biblical view of this subject, is the biblical teaching concerning the divine justice. I am not now trying to explain what that justice is, nor how it harmonizes with divine love, nor how it reconciles itself with divine forbearance; I am only saying that if we suffer our idea of God as just to be wholly merged and lost in our idea of God as love, then we have relinquished all title to any theory of an atonement and have no occasion whatever to consider how it is that God can "be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Secondly, we assume that man is a sinner. The law of God, which, in its last analysis, is but the expression of his justice, has been disobeyed, This is the essence of sin. There can be no idea of crookedness without some kind of a straight-edge in mind; Dr. Samuel Harris may be right in saying that it is rather a formal than a real definition, but in any case it is a true one when we say, in its widest sense, that sin is lack of conformity to a holy law; for as John

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\* By Prof. Josiah Royce, p. 14, et passim.

says, "Sin is the transgression of the law," and as Paul says, "Where no law is there is no transgression." This sin, then, is such, being itself a transgression of the law, as to lay the sinner liable to the condemnation of that law. He is both personally depraved and he is legally guilty. His depravity calls for the new birth and sanctification by the Holy Spirit, working mightily within him. His legal—or perhaps a better word—his judicial guilt calls for an atonement on the meritorious ground of which, he may be justified from that guilt, that is to say in order that his condemnation may be averted. In point of fact and of experience, these two factors in our redemption are never divorced from each other though they are entirely distinct in thought, in their nature and in Bible teaching. Justification has to do with the sinner's guilt before God's law, with his pardon, his forgiveness; sanctification has to do with his growth in grace and his development in the Christian character and life.

Thirdly, it is assumed that the crucifixion of Jesus was in some way the historical culmination of the accomplished atonement which he wrought out for men. What I mean is that the Christian idea of the atonement is not merely that of an eternal or transcendental metaphysical principle. When our Lord exclaimed "It is finished," we understand that he had completed a work, objectively in time, on the basis of which a way was opened up by which the alienation—such as it was—between God and the sinner might be overcome and a reconciliation effected by which they are to be at one; so it is that the apostle could write to the Ephesians that though they had been "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, yet now in Christ Jesus they who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ who had reconciled both Jew and Gentile unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." In classifying the leading doctrines of the atonement, and confining our view only to such as are influential at the present time, I should say that the word "*didactic*" might well designate a large

family of theories, presenting, to be sure, many minor differences. The essential idea in this group is that Jesus designed to teach men to be good, and that if we only place an interpretation broad enough upon this intention, we shall have entirely accounted for the atonement which he made. If we ask how he did this, we get a variety of answers. By a perfectly sinless life, from birth to death, from the manger to the cross, thus setting men an example which they can do no better than to follow; by his wonderful teachings, speaking as never man spake, appealing to every rational instinct and moral interest in men, thus pointing them to loftier ideals and leading them to purer lives; by his matchless display of self-denial, his most marvellous devotion to a unique mission in the spiritual amelioration of mankind, thus rousing and stimulating men to emulate his beautiful and saintly spirit; by his very death, indeed, going so far in the impressive drama of Calvary as to seal his mission with his blood and to set forth before the astonished gaze of all the nations such an overwhelming object-lesson of unselfish interest and of a love that passeth understanding as to shame the meanest of men out of their sins and to spur the most sluggish of souls to a nobler endeavor.

This is well called the Moral-Influence Theory of the Atonement. It has never had a more attractive or more effective setting forth than by Dr. Horace Bushnell, of New England, whose name is commonly associated with it, though it is very interesting to note that before Dr. Bushnell's death he wrote words which certainly read like a substantial retraction of the whole theory. This view of the atonement is one which, for obvious reasons, is bound to prevail most largely among those who entertain low views of Christ, and who, in a general way, are disposed to discount the supernatural elements in Christianity. A man can hold this theory and regard Jesus as man only; he was doubtless a very good man, a very bold man, but after all he may be classed, perhaps, *primus inter pares*, along with Seneca with his precepts, Socrates with his hemlock and

Prince Siddartha under his Bo tree. It takes no account of the sinner's guilt; it forgets that there are past transgressions to be forgiven; at the very best, it is only an incentive to a self-wrought reformation on the part of the sinner; it works its results only by ordinary means and according to natural laws; in effect, it makes Christianity a vast scheme of pedagogics, it makes Palestine the greatest of school-rooms, it makes Gethsemane and Golgotha the instruments by which the great teacher addresses his truths to the wondering eye; it makes the whole world—Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian, bond and free—the school to be taught.

This general view of the atonement assumed a distinct form in the hands of the great jurist of Holland, Dr. Hugo Grotius. If we are to understand this view, we must remember that Grotius was a student of law and jurisprudence and that he had the idea of the nature of law and justice which many lawyers entertain. It has already been noted in this paper that justice is the only secure foundation stone for any conception of the atonement, yet a man may profess to hold to the idea of justice, but, while he retains the word, he may let its essential meaning slip away. Many people have such a conception of justice as really negatives or neutralizes what is its characteristic, its constitutive quality. We are properly told that justice is violated by wrong doing and that it is vindicated by the punishment of the wrong-doer. This is sound and if we would stick to that position we should be all right. But we are further told that the object of the punishment—instead of being the vindication of justice which is strictly the correct conception—is one or the other of two things, or both. If a man steals a horse he is sent to the penitentiary, one says so that he cannot steal any more horses; another says so that he may be taught better than to steal horses; a third says for both these reasons. This is all doubtless true, only it misses the essence of justice. Let it be observed that the criminal codes and human government generally have other objects in mind than simply the execution of justice.

Civil institutions are often and properly, protective, utilitarian, paternal, and I suppose that this extra-judicial function of civil government accounts for the fact that so many lawyers and law-makers and statesmen have no higher abstract notion of justice than Bentham's idea "of the greatest good for the greatest number." If it be said that God's government no more than man's is administered on the basis of impartial justice we reply, that while this very truth of the atonement is luminous with the benevolence, the love of God, still if God be not just we are in a moral pandemonium with no righteous rule on earth or in heaven and the Judge of all the earth may or may not do right. We must insist upon the first postulate which we laid down, that God is just and build our doctrine afterward; for "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

But now again, as to our horse-thief; in a purely judicial court, he is sent to the penitentiary because he stole the horse—and when that is said it is all said. In such a court, the penitentiary is primarily neither for the protection of society nor for the reformation of the horse-thief. These are both very good and desirable ends and I believe that it is well for our courts to have them in mind, only they are not justice. A quarantine is a good thing but it is not an institution of justice; a reform school is another good thing, but it is not distinctly a thing of justice. The punishment of the horse-thief is not accomplished either by keeping him from stealing more horses or by teaching him something better until he will not want to steal horses. Justice would send him to the penitentiary if there were not another horse or horse-owner in all the world.

It is of the eternal essence of right that it is what ought to be. If it is violated, there is a call for vindication. That call demands that the violator must suffer for his violation, must atone for his wrong-doing. The guilty thief often brings his conscience-money back years after it has been taken; this is the tribute from what is good in the man, paid to the principle of justice. It is restitution, but no one

knows so well as he that it is not everything that he owes. Judas Iscariot's conscience was not clear when he threw down his thirty pieces of silver. Punishment correlates strictly with justice and is therefore evil inflicted in vindication of justice. If the regulative principle of the divine government were aught else, then the foundations of the righteous are but shifting sands. If you make the justice of God only for the protection of society, then you must consign the destiny of the wicked to an eternal quarantine of isolation; or if, on the other hand, you regard the justice of God as only for the reformation of the sinner, then you can find no landing place this side of making the Inferno of Dante, the purgatory of the Roman Catholic faith.

There is no further space to support this fundamentally important truth; I have referred to it at all only to show how so great a mind as that of Grotius built a fallacious doctrine of the atonement by overlooking the essential nature of justice.

Instead of assuming God to be a just judge, he regarded him as a sovereign ruler, an almighty governor of the world. Sin came into the world and his law was broken. But God is holy, his rule is righteous, his kingship must be uncompromised with evil. The Ruler must see to it that his sceptre is not smirched, his dignity must not be impaired. Just here arises the emergency which the Son of Man came to meet. He volunteers to show how horrible an intruder sin is. If his sufferings were great, their greatness is the measure of God's abhorrence of sin. If the world can not understand the enormity of sin by seeing sin itself, it shall understand it by seeing what awful consequences it brings in its train; and nothing less than Calvary with its cross will avail to impress the fearful lesson upon mankind. Jesus Christ came not to bear men's guilt; he came to endure the chastisement of their sins but only in such a sense and in such a way as to show them how deep and high their sins were. The cross was the emphatic utterance of the World-Ruler's displeasure at sin; he intended thus to publish that displeasure to all his intel-

ligent subjects and so, if possible, to dissuade them from indulging in sin. It was for the sake of its moral, its didactic effect upon mankind that Christ died on the cross. When stripped of its incidentals, the Grotian doctrine, therefore, is substantially that of Dr. Bushnell.

This may seem far away and yet it is very near. There are pulpits all about us that echo to this theory. Principal Fairbairn tells us that it is one of the marks of the "modern evangelical theology."\* There are learned and popular professors of theology whose lectures and books do not disguise the old Dutchman's ideas. And yet it must face the same unanswered objections as the Bushnellian. If the one makes the cross a mere object-lesson, the other makes it a spectacular display. A human Saviour could have made such an atonement still. It ignores Bible teachings, or what is worse, it tortures and eviscerates them. It is built upon a merely empirical or utilitarian conception of justice, human and divine, which is not justice at all but mere expediency; it wholly forgets the intuitive and universal moral instinct of the right and the just which, as a mark of our higher nature, differences us from lower orders and constitutes us in the image of God.

This will suffice to show what is meant by the didactic idea of the atonement. It has taken almost countless forms and prevails very widely indeed. Just now, in certain quarters, it is undergoing some significant transformations but the same generic principle runs through them all.

There is another group of theories that stand at the opposite extreme of thought. According to the didactic idea, the historic Jesus suffered and died and the natural influence of his sufferings and death affects the lives of men for good. It is an influence working upon men from without. This second group I may call "mystical" seeing that it contemplates the atonement as a certain mystical or mysterious or supernatural process in the heart of the believer. It makes little of Calvary and much of the inner life. The

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\* The Place of Christ in Modern Theology, p. 175.

Son of God did not become a man but Man, not a *vir* but *Homo*, and his people are ingrafted into or upon him by virtue of the fact that he became the new head of the human race. He is literally the Second Adam. Some say the whole race enters into this vital union with him, others say only his people, only the kingdom of God. This view, in a word, dissolves the fact of the atonement into a force and makes Christianity a life only. This may seem scholastic and yet it is very fascinating and very misleading. Some of us recall the preaching of a popular evangelist in this city a few years ago who has since turned his back upon the evangelical faith. He was very impressive but it may be remembered that his appeals were almost entirely to the crucifixion that must take place in the heart of the sinner while there was a very noticeable absence of reference to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on the cross at Jerusalem eighteen centuries and a half ago. If it be true that many who hold the moral-influence theory, regard Jesus as only human, it is on the other hand true that no one can hold this doctrine consistently with regarding Christ as divine. However, there is too often a pantheistic whang about this style of preaching which is easily mistaken for deep and fervent evangelicalism. But it is charged with a virus that if unchecked will in time prove fatal.

Concerning this group of theories, I wish to make two remarks. First, they mistake the incarnation for the atonement. The first centuries of the church were occupied with formulating doctrines of the incarnation and the great truth of the atonement was left for the post-medieval era of the reformation. When St. Anselm wrote *Cur Deus Homo* in the 11th century he made the beginning of the turn from the standpoint of old Athanasius, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" to that of Martin Luther "The just shall live by faith."

Now the modern evangelical faith does not hesitate to say that, great as is the truth of the incarnation, yet the incarnation was in order to and for the sake of the atonement. It is not only what Christ was but what he did also

that atones for sin ; it is not only what he is but also what he does that saves the sinner. When he exclaimed, "It is finished," he had "finished the work which his Father had given him to do."

I am convinced that there is a whole nest of errors in this plausible view. It hides the cross of Calvary in the mists of cloud-land. It exalts the ethical Christ, it honors the incarnate Christ, it urges the indwelling Christ, but it minimizes the historical work of the Christ of Galilee and it does not too plainly point men to the Son of Man who was lifted up even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.

The other thought is this, namely: what is true in this teaching is made false by being put in the wrong place. When asked for a theory of the atonement, it gives in reply a doctrine of sanctification. We believe in the divine life within. We believe in the vital, intimate, mystical union of Christ and the believer. We believe in the Christ-life in the soul and that as are the branches to the vine, so are his people to their Lord. This is all very important and very true, but it is not a doctrine of the atonement. It is the work of the Gracious Spirit building up the saints of God into a new and purer life in Christ Jesus. It is very closely related to the atoning work of our blessed Lord, but it is not that work. Justification is not santification. We are saved on the ground of his righteousness accepted by our faith, but we no sooner accept that righteousness than the Holy Spirit, in the new birth, plants the new life within us and that new life is henceforth absolutely dependent upon and inseparately connected with the divine presence and power within; but we must not lose sight of the Christ crucified, in our ecstatic contemplation of the Christ enshrined. If there is a cross-bearing for us now, we must not forget the cross which was borne along the *Via Dolorosa* to the crest of Calvary. Rather shall we say that as we emphasize the Christ crucified, do we know and honor the Christ within us. We rejoice in the blessed experiences of redemption, but we must not therefore tear out and burn to ashes

the last few chapters of each of the four gospels. The present personal experience of God's people must be anchored to the sublime, supreme facts of Christ's passion and his death, or it is like a frail and floating craft, driven by fitful winds, enveloped in gloomy mists, without compass or rudder for the guidance of its course.

The one other class of theories to which I would like to refer may be generally designated as "sacrificial" I have already made way with so much time that I cannot hope to do more than simply to name it; but I am sure that I am addressing a company who are so well acquainted with it, that anything beyond the naked mention of it would be a work of supererogation. It may properly enough be called the orthodox doctrine, not because it is our own doctrine, but because it is the only one that has ever been formally promulgated by any of the great ecclesiastical councils or in any of the evangelical confessions of Christian history.

To be sure, there is a certain degree of latitude within the range of this evangelical view. But on the essentials of it there is agreement among all the Protestant churches. It regards the crucifixion of Jesus as the offering of a sacrifice to satisfy the violated justice, the broken law of God. It is sacrificial in the sense in which the typical offerings of the Old Testament, pointing forward to him, were sacrificial. When they are called vicarious, we understand of his sufferings, that he bore what but for him we should have borne. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." He was made sin for us who knew no sin. When it is said that his sufferings were penal, it is not meant that the sinless Jesus became sinful for our sake and then suffered the penalty of his own sins; when it is said that he bore our sins we understand that he assumed the guilt-element of our sins, that which made us liable to the condemnation of the law; that penalty was ours and he bore that for us so that we are delivered from that penalty only on the condition of appropriating his righteousness to our need by our own act of faith.

It regards that his active righteousness in his life as well

as his passive righteousness in his sufferings and death, is involved in the atonement which he has made; only, inasmuch as his whole work reached its acute and climacteric point in his death by crucifixion, that cross becomes pre-eminently the symbol of his completed atoning work.

This atonement is not susceptible of commercial or mechanical measurements. We can not say that if we could estimate the aggregate of the penalties of all who are saved through Christ, that that is the measure of his atoning merit. The *quid pro quo* notion is abhorrent here. For Mr. Gladstone to have undergone the inconvenience and indignity of having been thrust into prison for a single night would have been a greater punishment than for a Jack the Ripper to have been jailed for twenty years. The value of Christ's atonement follows from the dignity of his person and hence it appears how, just as the Bushnellian theory is logically and as a matter of fact entirely consistent with Unitarian and low humanitarian views of Christ, this evangelical doctrine calls for an atoning Saviour, such as the Scriptures present, whose person is divine and whose dignity is therefore infinite. This doctrine of the atonement prevails among those who regard Jesus Christ as divine as well as human. The redeemer of the world must not be a sinful man for such could not atone for his own sins; he could not be a sinless man even for such could not atone for the sins of less fortunate beings who were still of the same kind as himself; he could not be an angel or an archangel for any rational and intelligent creature-being must conform to the same holy law that is binding upon us rational and intelligent men; he could only be a divine person whose voluntary condescension is itself of measureless magnitude and whose becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" forms the basis of a plea which far surpasses the need of man to exhaust or the mind of man to measure.

One thought in closing. The truth in this great doctrine is doubtless larger than any human conception of it. The cross was lifted up so that it has been seen at many angles, from many viewpoints and in many reflecting and refracting

lights. It penetrates the highest philosophy that is true; it hallows the noblest thought of the soul; it fathoms the deepest recesses of our being.

I am willing to believe that there is more truth in this subject than we have yet compassed or comprehended; I am ready to grant that in our nearest and clearest approaches to it there may be much of error and misapprehension; but I can not believe that, in the larger visions of the truth which God may vouchsafe to us, either in spiritual illuminations or by intellectual research, we shall ever find that the bottom elements of the evangelical doctrine, given to us in the Word of God, answering, as face to face in a mirror, to the inmost and universal needs of the human race, and confirmed in personal experience to those who by faith accept the atonement that has been made, will ever turn out to be anything else or anything less than the everlasting truth of the ever living God.

Here, as so often elsewhere, evangelical truth is more generous and comprehensive than any form of error. Does Dr. Bushnell argue that the sufferings of Jesus furnish an unparalleled object-lesson of self-sacrificing love? We answer, "Yes, certainly, and far more." Does Grotius argue that those sufferings are the expression of a righteous ruler's abhorrence of sin in his world? We answer, "Yes, certainly, and far more." Are we told that Christ lived as a man to impart a new and divine life to the individual and to the race? We answer, "Yes, certainly, and far more."

These theories have some truth in their affirmations, their error is in their negations. They mistake the moonlight for the undimmed glory of the sun. The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. It was not meant to be a mere dress-parade of self-sacrifice and nothing more. That crown of thorns was not worn, that cross was not set up, he did not give up the ghost at the last, simply to awe and impress an onlooking world; and indeed, if that had been all, it had ended in failure for unto the Jews he is a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness. There are here mysteries too high and deep for us; we can not fully

scale their heights nor fully sound their depths ; but we do know that "he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed." We know, too, that when the Lamb of God was offered to take away the sin of the world, when the earth trembled and shook, when the sun hid his face in the sky for very shame and sorrow, and when the veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom, there was then accomplished a work for sinful men which lifted the load of guilt from their believing souls and opened up the way, by the riches of his grace, to the highest fulfillment of man's hopes and the utmost realization of God's promise.

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