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Reconciliation and Justification

By ADOLF KOEBERLE¹

1

ONLY he can understand the concept "reconciliation" who has experienced the implications of the separation between God and man and between man and God. He who ignores this *mysterium iniquitatis* and refuses to see the wide chasm between the holy God and the guilty creature cannot comprehend the glory of the concept "atonement," but on the contrary will in a rebellious spirit be offended at it.

The underlying principle of the vast number of religious or philosophical world views rules out the concept of atonement as entirely unnecessary and superfluous. The Brahmanic and Hindu mysticism is monistic and pantheistic. According to this Indian philosophy, man is not wicked, only foolish. He is too easily influenced by the impression which visible things make upon him and fails to understand their illusory character. As a result he fails to effect the mystical union of his own individuality with the all-embracing cosmic being.

One of the greatest scholars in the field of antiquity has characterized Greek piety as the feeling or awareness of the immediate presence of the deity, a presence which is evident in nature and in man and which everyone can experience at any time. The Dionysian disciple of these past mystery religions, who has recently been

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resuscitated in Nietzsche and Ludwig Klages, sees in Greek Hedonism the possibility of an "intoxicated union" with the deity.

Hegelianism at first glance seems to have recaptured at least one phase, man's vague idea of a separation between God and man, which can only be resolved in an atonement. However, the concept of atonement in Hegelian philosophy is diametrically opposed to that of the Scriptures. According to Hegel, such antithetical concepts as nature and spirit, authority and autonomy (*Freiheit*), the individual and the State, must be brought into a higher unity by a grand process of synthesis. But Hegel's pantheism completely ignores the basic problem, namely, the separation between God and man.

The poet Rainer Maria Rilke, the spiritual father of our modern mystery cultists among the intelligentsia, is obsessed by the one idea that the entire universe is translucent, and that man can see God if he yields himself to an enjoyment of the splendor and glory of all things. When Scripture announces the absolute necessity of the atonement because of man's estrangement, this "noble spirit" becomes tremendously vehement: "Who is this Christ who interferes in all things? I shall not be abased for Christ's sake, but be good for God. I do not want to be addressed *a priori* as a sinner . . . I can talk to God and require no one to help me to write a letter to Him."

Finally, let me also briefly examine the basic principles of modern psychotherapy. Sigmund Freud, the pioneer in psychoanalysis, considers every guilt consciousness as a morbid complex, from which one is able to free himself by transferring it to the physician. C. G. Jung, the psychologist, believes that the goal of man must be to become an integrated personality by resolving the tensions between the conscious and the subconscious, between extroversion and introversion. But the deepest antithesis which cuts through the middle of our very existence, our antithesis to the holy "Thou," remains completely submerged. It need therefore not surprise us that wherever this separation is denied and man's inherent at-onement with God taken for granted, the Scriptural concept of atonement remains entirely unknown. But the separation (*Entzweiung*) is a reality, and we must recognize what it really is: man's rebellion against God and God's "No" to man.

2

The separation between God and man is portrayed in Scripture as man's flight from God. Jeremiah says: "They have forsaken Me, the Fountain of Life" (Jer. 2:13) or, in the words of the parable: "Father, give me my portion of the goods . . . and shortly after the young man gathered all and went into a far country, where he wasted his substance" (Luke 15:12-13). Man does not want to remain in the fellowship of his heavenly home. He runs away from "being-in-love" and attempts to conquer life without God.

But the separation is far more than a single act of separation; the "away-from-God movement" becomes an "against-God movement." The mystery of man's rebellion is not seen in its final depth if we view it only as a *fugere a Deo*. The separation invariably becomes hostility and rebellion against God, a *hostilis impugnatio contra Deum*, as our Lutheran Confessions state. There we find a play on words which can be reproduced only in the original: Man is not only *aversus a Deo*, he is also *adversus Deum*. In his spite, resentment, anger, rebellion, man would enjoy nothing more than to begin an insurrection against God which would culminate in deicide. Of the King of Kings he says: "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14), and when the Holy One Himself comes as our Brother in the plenitude of grace, then the word is passed around: "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours" (Mark 12:7).

Only a radical illumination by the Holy Ghost will enable us to see the basic error of our way and the dreadful seriousness of our condition. Man is so totally ignorant of his condition, so pleased with himself, so self-centered, that he imagines that his flight from God and his enmity against God is actually a grand achievement. Man foolishly thinks himself free and strong in his titanic pride and conceit and hopes that in this way he can ultimately become a superman. He is quite intrigued by his own ingeniously sinful maneuvers to achieve the true meaning of life.

For this reason a mirror in which he can see his perverseness must constantly be placed before man. According to Lutheran theology, this mirror service is performed in the first place by the Law. The holy will of God as revealed in the Law shows us

how far we have missed the goal of a joyous, complete fulfilling of the Law. But more, in our resistance against God's commandments our separation comes to light in its true essence, namely, as insurrection and rebellion against God. The mere preaching of the Law, however, does not remove the possibility of self-justification, as is evident in Pharisaism and in the ethical idealism of Kantian philosophy. Therefore God has given another sign, which will forever prevent man from making such a false deduction (*moralischer Kurzschluss*). This is the Cross of Christ.² The event of the Cross tells us in sharpest terms: Here you see your real selves, you are able to do nothing else but to hate the incarnate love of God, to persecute it, and to bruise it. You talk much about hunger for God and your intimate relation to God. But if the loving God confronts you "bodily" and approaches you in His fullness, then you not only completely fail to understand Him, but you cast Him out of the world as an unbearable reality. This sets forth in unmistakable terms that you have lost yourselves in your God-forsakenness and are hardened in your enmity against God. It is the great mystery of the atonement on Golgotha that here the separation is removed in such a way that at the same time the separation becomes uncovered down to its last detail. The necessity of an atonement does not become real to us until we have encountered Christ.

In our contemporary society the rupture and rebellion on the part of man manifest themselves especially in the problem of theodicy, the attempt to find the solution between the existence of evil and the sovereignty of God. A few years ago we heard the perverse, challenging, defiant challenge: "Jehovah, I defy Thee, I am the king of Babylon ('Jehovah, dir kuend' ich auf ewig Hohn! Ich bin der Koenig von Babylon')." But God has given His answer in such a dreadful manner that we have lost the senses of seeing and hearing. And now another form of rebellion has taken place. In his anger and despair man asks God: "Why do you permit us to

² In his *Quest for Holiness* Dr. Koeberle devotes the entire chapter "God's Judgment on Man's Self-Sanctification" to this point. The "preaching of the Cross" under this aspect is part of Christ's "foreign office." According to the Formula of Concord "the preaching of the suffering and death of Christ is a terrible proclamation of God's wrath" as long as "the veil of Moses hangs before men's eyes." (Art. V, 7—10; *Trigl.*, 803.)

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suffer so terribly? How can we love Thee as the only true God if Thy hand is so heavy upon us?" Not only the *hybris*, part and parcel of every tower of Babel, separates from God, but also the distrust of God will sever the bond and bring about a complete alienation between God and man. Probably no one in our day has so crystallized modern man's *Zwei-fel* and reproach of God as the poet Ernst Wiechert. In his "*Jeremiaskinder*" he broadcasts his defiance of God, yes, even charges God with infanticide.

3

Man finds it difficult to recognize and admit the fact of his separation from God and his enmity against God. It is even more difficult for him to realize that God is also against him. Scripture reminds us of God's "No" when we read: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. 10:31 (cp. Deut. 4:24; Job 37:22). God's separation from man is clearly taught in all those Scripture passages which speak of God's wrath. But against no part of Scripture has greater objection been raised than against the testimony of God's wrath, judgment, and punishment. For that reason the Gnostic Marcion wanted to reduce "the God of wrath" to a "God of second order" in order to remove from the New Testament concept of God all reference to divine justice. For similar reasons the Alexandrian theologians Clement and Origen accepted the Neoplatonic idea of a passionless God (*affektlose Ruhe in Gott*). The philosopher Feuerbach employs the Biblical doctrine of the wrath of God as the chief argument for his theory that all religions, including the Christian, are illusionary. He holds that the doctrine of God's wrath clearly demonstrates how man transfers the attributes of his own nature into the metaphysical realm and ultimately makes them the attributes of God. The Ritschlian School declares that the idea of God's wrath is questionable, since it has no religious relevance nor moral value. At best, it is a concept to express man's imaginary guilt complex, which Jesus removed by showing that God was always at-one with man. We can still hear the German Christians of Thuringia tell us that the doctrine of God's wrath is a remnant of Judaism, entirely unworthy of the New Testament Christian revelation and ready for the scrap heap.

In spite of the objections which have accumulated during the history of the Christian Church, we cannot escape the reality that both Testaments speak in unmistakable terms of the wrath of God. Moses, beholding how vain and fleeting life is, says: "We are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled" (Ps. 90:7), and David: "Thine arrows stick fast in me, and Thy hand presseth me sore" (Ps. 38:2). Because the unclean, sinful creature dare not come uncovered into the presence of the consuming fire, God ordained the Old Testament priesthood and the sacrificial culture. St. Paul testifies that the Law can only engender wrath because of man's rebellion. This is the general theme of Romans 7, and in Eph. 2:3 we read that because of our defection from God we are all "children of wrath."

But can we maintain these statements concerning God's wrath in the light of Christ's revelation of God, which, after all, is the only standard of our knowledge of God? The answer is a decisive "Yes," for Christ bears unmistakably the marks of the "holy wrath." Behold His zeal for the glory of God in the cleansing of the Temple! In His battle against deceitfulness and hypocrisy He will give absolutely no quarter. This uncompromising zeal in His warfare against the sin of man is a picture and an expression of the consuming majesty which is God Himself. If we were to remove from this picture all emotions, we would reduce God to a philosophical, abstract concept of quiescent, pure being. But God is life, and therefore cannot do otherwise than to burn, to be zealous. Only an imbecile remains unaffected when his "thou" is questioned, or his own individuality is ignored. The lover cannot remain indifferent when the object of his love is withdrawn from him. True love is always total love. Because God's love is infinite and all-inclusive, He must condemn our lack of confidence in Him and oppose our flight from Him and our rebellion against Him with a holy "No." However, we must be careful in speaking of the wrath of God lest we add to the picture of God the unholy concepts of our own sinful passions. Indeed, human wrath is always a dubious thing, for it is constantly distorted by our selfish interests and hurt pride. God's wrath, on the other hand, is pure flame and has absolutely nothing in common with cruelty or lack of self-control. This takes care of the charge of Feuerbach that we

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apply our concept of wrath to God so that all theology is in the final analysis only anthropology or psychology. Nevertheless, it remains true that because man is created in the image of God, his emotions are reflections of the divine essence. However, through the Fall these have been completely distorted and corrupted.

4

When we have comprehended the dark mystery of the separation as man's defiant "No" against God as well as God's holy "No" against man, then we are ready to hear the Word of Reconciliation or Atonement. The history of religion is replete with the awareness of the necessity of a reconciliation between God and man and between man and God. True, there are instances where men believed themselves to be at-one with God. But there are, on the other hand, pathetic examples of man's attempt to establish a reconciliation with God. Man not only realizes that there is a law of guilt and expiation, but also attempts to restore the broken relation by such propitiations as pilgrimages, ablutions, giving of alms, fasting, asceticism. Man has an uncanny feeling that his rebellion against God is a *crimen lèse-majesté* and really deserves capital punishment. Therefore he offers the blood, i. e., the life, of a sacrificial animal. The sacrifice of an animal, yes, even of a sinful human life, can, of course, never effect a reconciliation. But these sacrifices show in a terrifying manner how keenly man is conscious of the dire results of his separation from God. In the light of man's experience the naive divine-immanence theory of modern religious mysticism is idle prattle. It is the glory of the Old Testament that the necessity of reconciliation, sacrifice, and expiation is presented from the viewpoint of an awakened conscience. Nevertheless, even the most sincere in the covenant congregation realized that the sacrifices in the Temple were insufficient, as is evident in the searching questions of Micah 6:6 or Ps. 49:8. In this inexplicable dilemma of our separation from God and our inability to bridge the chasm, there are only two possibilities: Either our condition is hopeless, and we remain under the "No" of God, under His wrath and judgment, under the closed heaven, under the separation from God and our enmity against God; or God Himself must intervene and rescue us from our hopeless condition.

The New Testament brings us the joyous message: God has intervened! (2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 1:22; Rom. 5:11; 1 John 2:1; 4:10.)

The Lutheran Confessions have not only accepted the joyous message of the reconciliation, but have made this Word of Reconciliation the key for understanding the entire Scriptures and made it the central doctrine of the Church's proclamation. Melancthon writes in the Apology: "The wrath of God cannot be appeased if we set against it our own works, because Christ has been set forth as a Propitiator, so that, for His sake, the Father may become reconciled to us" (Art. IV, 81, cp. also Art. XXVII, 17; and XXIV, 45).

5

The New Testament presents the atonement between God and man as having been effected solely by the *death* of Christ (Rom. 5:10). Likewise our Confessions confirm the intimate relation between the Atonement and Good Friday: "We teach that the sacrifice of Christ's dying on the cross has been sufficient for the sins of the whole world, and that there is no need, besides, of other sacrifices, as though this were not sufficient for our sins" (Apology, XIII, 9). No other sacrifice is necessary. Modern Protestantism, oriented in Schleiermacher's theology, found it strange and almost impossible that our reconciliation is indissolubly associated with the death of Christ. The question is often asked: Has the reconciliation between God and man not been effected and completed in the *incarnation*? Is it not sufficient that God condescended to come to our plane and to unite Himself with us who had been His enemies? John 3:16 has often been interpreted in this light. Also the Oriental Church sees the miracle of reconciliation as completed in the mystery of the Incarnation, for by uniting Himself with our poor flesh and blood in a most intimate union, God, who is holy Love, has really forgiven us and has received us, who had been separated from Him, into His fellowship.³ There is, of course, some truth in this view. Also in Lutheran pulpits the message of Christmas is a proclamation of the forgiveness of sins as it is beautifully summarized in the

³ More recently some English theologians lean toward this so-called "incarnation theology"; see J. M. Baillie, *God Was in Christ*. The Barthian view also comes into this category.

Benedictus of Zacharias (Luke 1:78). Nevertheless a doctrine of the reconciliation which is restricted to the two-nature doctrine of Chalcedon is insufficient. We therefore owe this debt of gratitude to the Christology of the Occident, and of the Reformers in particular, that it directed the theological view beyond that held in the Oriental Church and has led to a deeper and more meaningful significance of the Cross of Christ. In discussing the relation of the Eastern and Western Churches, Werner Elert in his *Der Christliche Glaube*, par. 60,⁴ points out: To overcome the separation between God and man more is necessary than an incarnation. Not only the miraculous union between God and man was necessary, but especially a hot and bitter conflict between the two estranged partners, between God and man, was necessary, a conflict which Jesus carried out through the sacrifice of His body, blood, and life. The mystery of Christ's presence, though it is unfathomable, does not fully exhaust the meaning of His incarnation. It is only in the mystery of His death that we understand what we possess in Christ.

6

Throughout its history the Christian Church has endeavored to present adequately and fully the reconciliatory act of God as it was accomplished in Christ's Cross and death. Stimulated by the wealth of New Testament statements, men have employed analogies from the social and even the judicial life of the people to present the work of Christ in a comprehensible manner. There is a tremendous array of attempts at interpretation, beginning with the so-called "ransom theory" of the ancient Church, the "satisfaction" theory of Anselm in his *Cur Deus homo*, down to Luther, and continued in the nineteenth century by the Erlangen theologian von Hofmann and in the twentieth century by Martin Kaehler and Herman Bezzel.⁵ However, we must keep in mind that no analogy which has been employed to expound this *theologia crucis* is able to exhaust the richness of the blessings which the death of Christ

⁴ The reference should undoubtedly be to par. 59, especially p. 412.

⁵ The American Lutheran theologian misses a reference to the Lundensian School, which has made much of the so-called classical theory of the Atonement, especially Aulén in his *Christus Victor*. The April issue of *Interpretation* devotes considerable space to some of the current views on the Atonement. Cp. Theological Observer in this issue (p. 705).

has brought upon mankind. Above all things we must guard against any attempt to explain the "illogical miracle" (paradox) of the forgiveness of God in a theologico-rationalistic manner in order to make, as it were, the books balance. In his *Die christliche Wahrheit*, 1948 (Vol. II, p. 25), Paul Althaus calls attention to the inadequacy and fallacy of all such attempts. The best that we can say to the glory of Christ the Crucified can only be expressed in a hymn of praise and in grateful acceptance of Christ's work. This may be done when we sing with the Church during Lent:

Lord Jesus, we give thanks to Thee
That Thou hast died to set us free;
Made righteous through Thy precious blood,
We now are reconciled to God,

or when we confess in our simple faith: Under the Cross of Christ my wounded conscience has found rest and infinite comfort. In spite of the limitations which hamper all theological interpretation, we are nevertheless confronted by the task to see clearly why only the death of Christ can heal the great separation between God and man. However, in endeavoring to understand the message of the reconciliation, we dare never forget that a mere spectator attitude is entirely inadequate. Only a heart which has experienced the terrors of conscience will approach the Cross in true faith and accept the reconciliation as a gracious gift.

A separation between two persons requires the intervention of a mediator. To bridge the chasm between the two, such a mediator must be in a position to represent and also to understand both parties. Anselm of Canterbury therefore concluded correctly that if man is to be helped in his dire necessity, God must become man. Since our extreme need requires a reconciliation between God and man, therefore the mediator must be able to represent both parties at the same time. He must be true God, and he must be true man, if a breach of such infinite dimensions is to be healed. When we study the picture of Jesus as presented in the Gospels, we gain the firm conviction that Jesus Christ in a unique and singular manner meets both qualifications of the Mediator who is to reconcile heaven and earth. In Jesus the eternal God appears among men. Christ could say of Himself, "He that sees Me sees the Father." Because He is the "express image" of God (Heb.

1:3), Jesus has plenipotentiary power to represent God's cause by divine authority. At the same time this Jesus is entirely one of us and has become like us in all things which concern body and soul, conflict and temptation. He who experienced the need of food and drink, sleep and rest, friendship and joy, in the same manner in which we require them; He who though victorious in the bitter warfare against temptation and sin, nevertheless experienced the full reality of this conflict, and that in a degree beyond our understanding: He understands us in all the phases of our earthly existence and can have sympathy with our weaknesses (Heb. 4:15). Thus He is qualified to represent our cause before God as well as He is able to represent God's cause with us.

But how did Christ, this unique Mediator of whom our Catechism paradoxically predicates *vere homo* — *vere Deus*, fulfill His office here on earth? Since He is a Mediator, therefore we have to follow Him on His way to the Cross from the double aspect of what He endures in obedience to God's command and what He suffers for our welfare and in our stead.

God sent Jesus into the world in order to initiate in the name of God the conflict against the world. In its attitude toward Jesus the world manifests its true spirit. For that reason the world violently opposes this Word, it refuses to be convicted by the Holy Spirit. It refuses to come to God as the poor in spirit and to be blessed by His love. But God does not cease with His wooing and urging, and Jesus, whose will is completely at one with the Father's, keeps on wrestling for the spirit of man until His death upon the Cross.⁶

⁶ The author indicated above that the doctrine of reconciliation is so rich that no one analogy can do justice to it, so many-faceted that no one theologian can set forth all phases of it. The facet of the reconciliation which Professor Koeberle here emphasizes is Scriptural. In the U. S. A. this approach is probably not so meaningful because in America the opposition to the message of the Cross manifests itself largely in gross indifference. In Germany, however, before and since the war, the great masses have assumed a defiant attitude against the Gospel. For this reason Koeberle directs his audience to a facet which will arrest their attention and direct them to the heart of this doctrine. However, we must always keep in mind that a *one-sided* emphasis of some facet of a Scripture doctrine may lead to disaster. Horace Bushnell, for example, in his *The Vicarious Sacrifice* uses similar terminology to support his moral-influence theory and to deny the vicarious atonement, while it is Koeberle's sole interest to emphasize the *pro nobis*.

We dare never forget that what we have done to Christ in His passion we have done to God Himself. Whatever Jesus suffered from Gethsemane to Golgotha, that the very heart of God suffered, as the ancient fathers stated, *filius patitur, Deus compatitur*. God assumes everything Himself. He wrestles to the utmost for His holiness, and at the same time sacrifices Himself in defenseless love. He who had the power to destroy entire humanity in its rebellion refuses to carry out the judgment on those who have fully deserved it. If, however, judgment must take place, then He would rather place it upon the One who alone has deserved to remain free of wrath and condemnation. Now the guilty stand guiltless, and the only guiltless and just One, whose very life is a complete fulfilling of the Law, assumes the entire burden of the punishment. It is indeed a most marvelous exchange which occurs on Golgotha when God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). In this, that God spares us and Himself bears the burden of the sacrifice in His own Son, He gives us an absolutely convincing sign of His redemptive love. From the Cross, God calls and pleads: "Behold, ye sons of men, I am not your enemy, notice and understand that I am your Friend! Therefore I come to you not with power, with recompense, but only with the most tender signs of My love. Through the manger and the Cross I woo your hearts; be ye reconciled with God!"

Thus Christ stands before us in the sign of the Cross as He who executes God's cause in holiness and love, in judgment and mercy. At the same time He is our Advocate who represents us before God and addresses God as follows: "If the hour has come when Thy holy zeal requires judgment, then strike Me and not My brethren, I will bear it in their stead and suffer on their behalf. Behold My *brethren* from now on as *My* brethren; do not behold them as they are, but as they are secure under My protection."

Truly, Jesus deserves our worship, praise, thanksgiving, as the great Mediator, as the true High Priest, who has overcome the separation between God and man and has established peace. In His Cross full justice has been done to God's holy demands, and in Him God's will to save appears in resplendent colors. By His life and death, Jesus has again united what had been separated in the most terrifying manner.

7

The Christian Church lives in and by the accomplished reconciliation. As ambassadors for Christ we must employ the indicative mood, because we declare an absolute reality. The real treasure of the Christian congregation is to offer this redemptive activity of God in the proclamation of the Word and in the administration of the Sacraments. The State elicits our admiration because of its power and influence; art is intriguing because of its ability to find new modes of expressing the beautiful; philosophy captures man's interest by its astuteness in formulating problems. But greater than all these treasures of the mind is the Word of Reconciliation, the miracle of the forgiveness, and the certainty of our salvation for time and eternity.

The redemptive activity of God requires no increase nor complement. The terms "reconciled," "justified," "saved," are incapable of the comparative degree. For this reason the evangelical message rejects every addition in the sense of *grace and merit, reconciliation and human propitiation*. The reconciled sinner can sing only one song of gratitude and joy: "I have been redeemed from the burden of my rebellion." Not for a moment will he dream that the liberation from the depths of his rebellion is based on anything but on the completed work of Christ.

The Apostle Paul expresses the appropriation of the reconciliation by faith in the particularly felicitous phrase "justification of the sinner." "Justifying faith" accepts God's judgment over me which He rendered in the Cross of Christ; it affirms the overwhelming fact that God has abandoned His wrath, which I had merited; and it believes that God accepts me for Christ's sake, absolves me, and bestows upon me without any merit on my part His fellowship, in short, considers and treats me as a brother of Christ.

Only because Easter follows Good Friday, it is possible to comprehend this unspeakable certainty. Without Easter we would constantly be troubled by doubts whether Christ, after all, was not conquered in His terrific strife for our sake. In the resurrection of Jesus, God spoke His holy "Yes" to Christ's life. He who had been despised and rejected by the world is confirmed by God, is justified and exalted. As the resurrected One, as the Lord who is

the Spirit, Jesus Christ is present at all places and at all times with His cleansing and comforting Word, with the power that conquers our hearts and engenders faith and confidence in His person and mission. We know Him and love Him from the history of His earthly life as recorded in the Gospels. But we experience His presence also as members of His body and in union with Him as the Head.

Lutheran theology has always considered it important, yes, essential, that justifying faith be not confounded with the dynamic process of our moral cleansing and sanctification (*sittliche Heilung und Heiligung*). True, wherever the enmity against God has been removed, there the power of the redemption is immediately at work as a real liberation from our sinful bondage, our impotence and dependence under the tyrannical power of the demoniac forces. Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life, there Christ bestows, in the language of the Church Fathers, *sanatio, renovatio, sanctificatio, nova obedientia, unio mystica personalis per fidem*.

Nevertheless Lutheran theology maintains firmly and properly that the imputed righteousness dare not be confounded with the regenerating grace, which begins to work in us toward the restitution of the divine image. In other words, the gracious gift of God's love in its magnificent glory is one fact, and the chapter dealing with our sanctification must be written on another page. The perfect and the imperfect, the "given" and the "becoming," dare not be expressed by the same word. The grace *for* us is greater than the grace *in* us, as John Tobias Beck has expressed it. Pardoning grace and infused grace (*Begnadigung und Begnadung*)⁷ are not identical in this world. It is therefore significant that Scripture always employs two words to show the connection and the distinction between justification and sanctification. In Psalm 103 we are asked to praise the Lord, who forgives all our sins *and* heals all our weaknesses so that our strength is renewed like the eagle's. Likewise St. Paul uses the conjunction "and" when he says that Christ has been made unto us for righteousness *and* sanctification. This maintains the distinction between the treasure of justification

⁷ Dilschneider in *Gegenwart Christi* points out that the first term describes the Scriptural-Lutheran and the second the Roman way of justification; cp. previous issue of C. T. M., p. 637.

and the gift of the new life, and at the same time the fragmentary character of our sanctification constantly points to the day when we shall participate in the full redemption.

8

Let us briefly illustrate what the reconciliation means for our personal faith life. The vital breath of true piety is prayer. It is often very difficult to pray, because we are tormented by the question whether we dare approach God, since we have so often forgotten and despised Him in our life. Through Christ the Mediator, however, we receive the joy and the liberty to approach God with all confidence and to address Him as dear children address their father. When we pray in the name of Jesus, the door to God's Paradise is again open, and no cherubim with a flaming sword dare forbid us entrance.

If the guilt question in our life has been solved, then we have the confidence that He who has helped us in our most dire necessity will provide all things in our life. In Rom. 8:32 justifying faith and our faith in the election are intimately united. The problem of theodicy, which today prompts many people to question the justice of God, can be solved only in the light of the proclamation of God's redemption and reconciliation.

Our reconciliation with God has wrought a radical change in the relation to our fellow man. Alienated from God, man leads a terribly egocentric life. He either does not see his fellow man at all because of his self-centered detachment; or if he sees him, he has a distorted view of him because of his lovelessness and prejudices. Does this dreadful reality not come to light constantly in the petty quarrels between spouses, members of the family, fellow workers? But when the Word of Reconciliation is active in our life, then we are able to bear with even the most unbearable, who not only places a burden on us, but on whom we also have placed a burden. In the shadow of the Cross we learn our common guilt, but experience also the common love of God. Being reconciled with God, having been received into the fellowship of Christ, we are enabled to forgive our personal enemy, lest through being unmerciful we again lose the treasure of the forgiveness of sins.

Christians serve God joyfully. But there can be no joy in our service in Christ's kingdom and for mankind's welfare unless we

are unencumbered by guilt and have solid ground under our feet. You cannot build a house with debts. My faith in the forgiveness of sins assures me that though I have often been a failure in my calling, I am nevertheless privileged as "an unprofitable servant," to glorify God in my life, because through the blood and righteousness of Christ I have been counted worthy and have been cleansed for the service of being a witness to God.

The highest form of serving God is the total commitment to the Church's world mission. The Savior's commission: Go into all the world, rests solely on the fact of a world reconciliation. Without this event there would be no ground and no occasion to send messengers of the Gospel into all the world and—this is implicitly associated with it—to "sacrifice" them for this mission. Neither our Occidental culture, which incidentally we have shamefully abused, nor the highly developed American standard of living gives us the right to approach the Eastern cultures in a spirit of superiority. The Indian Yoga religion, for example, has developed psychology and soul discipline to such a degree that in this area we are learners, not teachers, amateurs, not professionals. The only reason why we enter upon a program of world missions is the glorious reality that Christ's work of reconciliation is intensively and extensively all-sufficient. He who cannot personally witness to this fact in full confidence had better leave the work of world missions alone.

Our mission program, based on the universal reconciliation, rivets our eyes upon all nations. Ought we, however, not expand the circle to include the entire cosmos? Because of man's sin the entire creation was subjected without its will to infirmities (Rom. 8:20). But not only we who have experienced the first fruits of the Spirit, but also the whole creation awaiteth the redemption of the children of God (Rom. 8:22). Golgotha was the hour of the reconciliation not only between God and man, but also between God and the cosmos. That means that our physical life, yes, the life of the entire creation, is to be embraced in the great opportunities which God has established on the Cross.⁸ It is therefore

⁸ On this *crux interpretum* see Stoeckhardt, *Roemerbrief, ad locum*. He believes that in some manner the dumb creation will share in the glorious liberation of the children of God.

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quite proper that crucifixes are erected on our hills and at the borders of grain fields not only to remind the tourist of the certainty that his guilt has been removed—the meaning is deeper—the crucifix is to remind us that in the death of Christ an event of cosmic significance has taken place, for we can now see God's favor upon the entire universe. For that reason we no longer need to be frightened by the mysterious powers of the universe, nor are we to be enraptured by its fascinating beauty, because we know Him who said to us, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but . . . I have overcome the world." For that reason the question is apropos whether anthroposophy could have gained such a following among us if we had made more of the significance of Christ's redemption for the entire cosmos.⁹

In conclusion, a word on the relation of faith and the Christian's view of death. The charge is often made that Lutheran theology concentrates so much on the "blessed last hour" of the individual that it loses sight of the over-all history of the Kingdom. True, there is a danger in this regard, and we are indebted to Oscar Cull-

⁹ Anthroposophy as developed by Rudolf Steiner and as adopted by the newly organized "*Christengemeinschaft*" with headquarters in many larger cities of Germany, is currently making a strong appeal to the intelligentsia, particularly to the scientists. As the name indicates, it is an attempt to substitute human wisdom for divine revelation and faith. The advocates of this "human wisdom" attempt to unite all the sciences, such as biology, chemistry, physics, medicine, biochemistry, into a unified and all-embracing world view. In reality it is a glorification of man and his vaunted wisdom. In the "*Christengemeinschaft*" a "liturgy" has been developed, which, however, is not a service of God, but, according to their own terminology, is "*die Menschenweihhandlung*." They have adopted Goethe with his worship of nature as their patron saint. As far as we are able to tell, anthroposophy is closely related to some of our American theosophical cults, particularly "New Thought" and "Unity." Both anthroposophy and theosophy ascribe divine potentialities to man which enable him to participate in the creative forces of the universe. Both advocate occultism. Steiner, like Swedenborg, claims to have made excursion into the metaphysical realms, which are described in his book *Erkenntnis der hoeheren Welten*. Occultism always appeals to frustrated people, and it is easily understood how the disillusioned German scientists would embrace Steiner's occult views. Both anthroposophy and theosophy believe that man is able by "soul discipline" and even through a series of reincarnations so to perfect himself that he will increasingly be able to use the secret powers of nature, such as the atomic energy, the cosmic ray. Naturally anthroposophy denies all the fundamentals of the Christian faith. It has no place in its philosophy for sin, the need of redemption, and the essence of salvation. Cp. Ernst Emmert, "Die lutherische Kirche und die Anthroposophie," *Jahrbuch des Martin Luther Bundes*, p. 126 f.; also CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, April, 1950, p. 310 f.

mann and Ethelbert Stauffert, who have reminded us again of a Christocentric theology of history. On the other hand, we must also keep in mind that death is a part of our existence, and everyone of us must meet and conquer death. In death each one of us will stand entirely alone. No one can take our place on this last journey. How great the anguish if we did not know where our anchor is firmly grounded. As we approach the end of our days, we shall become conscious of the unalterable fact that we cannot live our life over again, and then our conscience will remind us of all the sins of omission and commission. How important, therefore, that we have a message which can properly prepare people for dying! The crowning glory of Lutheran theology is that she has a message which enables people to go home in peace, because the burden of her message always is *reconciliation and justification*.

May God grant unto us as ministers of the divine Word that our consciences accept the Word of the Separation and our hearts embrace the Word of Reconciliation. Then we shall witness with divine authority to a God-estranged world of its reconciliation and reunion (*Heil und Heimkehr*) as a divinely accomplished reality.