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Vicarious Satisfaction: A Study in Ecclesiastical Terminology

By Henry W. Reimann

There is no dispute in modern theology on the importance of the work of Christ. Biblical, Reformation, and confessional studies have combined to recall theology to the importance of Christology and soteriology. Even the recent emphases on ecclesiology and eschatology, stemming from our ecumenical and apocalyptic times, have not been unproductive of more vital soteriological emphases.

Yet there is one soteriological formula, "vicarious satisfaction," which is frequently either criticized or simply discarded. The reason for this opposition may be exegetical — the variety of the Biblical pictures for the Atonement; or historical — the limitations of the Anselmic treatment; or theological — God is Love. Whatever the reasons, this criticism serves the helpful purpose of calling the church to re-examine its formula for the Atonement. Does vicarious satisfaction fully express the Biblical doctrine? Does this formula adequately meet the needs of systematic theology today? If not, what should we substitute, or how should we reinterpret?

This study will not present a full discussion of the Biblical doctrine of the Atonement. There are many such available.[1] Nor is it to be a detailed historical review of the many theories of the Atonement, including Anselm's famous emphasis on satisfaction. There are many such studies.[2] We shall focus our attention primarily on the use and usefulness of the formula "vicarious satisfaction" in Lutheran theology as an illustration of the function and limitation of ecclesiastical terminology.

For the Lutheran theologian it is not enough to examine this formula on the basis of Biblical word studies, but he must examine it on the basis of Biblical doctrine, which is given its clear and adequate summary in the Lutheran Confessions. In these unique testimonies to the faith once delivered to the saints, hammered out by the Spirit's guidance in the creedal and Reformation periods, there is inescapable evidence that both the language and meaning of later Orthodoxy's *satisfactio vicaria* is used often. This in itself gives any confessionally minded Lutheran pause in being too quick to follow any trends to discard or radically reinterpret the formula.

The crucial *propter Christum* of Augsburg Confession IV is qualified by the reference to the fact that Christ by His

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[1] Cf. Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956). Also the critical summary of modern exegetical views in Henry Hamann, *Justification by Faith in Modern Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary School for Graduate Studies, 1957). Also Martin Franzmann, "A Ransom for Many," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXV (July 1954), 497—515.

[2] Cf. Gustav Aulen. *Christus Victor.* American edition (New York: Macmillan, 1951). Also George Evanson, "Critique of *Christus Victor*," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXVIII (October 1957), pp. 738—749.

death made satisfaction for our sins.[3] The antithesis, to regard "human traditions" as such satisfaction, is condemned as contrary to the Gospel.[4] Also Luther, in the explanation of the Second Article of the Creed in the Large Catechism, although he uses other vivid terms, teaches that Christ suffered, died, and was buried that He might make satisfaction for me.[5]

Some theologians declare that the Holy Scriptures do not say explicitly that God is reconciled. The Lutheran Confessions, however, do not hesitate to describe the Atonement in this way. The one Christ, true God and true man, is born and truly died that He might reconcile God to us.[6] Our works do not reconcile God. These follow when we believe that for Christ's sake we are received into grace by the Mediator, through whom the Father is reconciled.[7] The faith that justifies is the "special faith" which believes that God is placated and propitiated *propter Christum*.[8] Very simply and very vividly the Apology affirms that the blood and merits of the Propitiator are the price to reconcile God to us.[9]

Some modern theologians are particularly disturbed by any talk of appeasing the wrath of God or satisfying divine justice. The Lutheran Confessions use both concepts in describing the Atonement. The wrath of God is not appeased if we "set forth our own works."[10] The entire obedience of Christ, says the Formula of Concord, is the most perfect satisfaction and expiation to satisfy immutable divine justice for the human race.[11] Christ's obedience, suffering, and resurrection has satisfied the Law for us.[12]

Yet it is surely significant that there is a variety of terminology in the confessions. Satisfaction, a non-Biblical term, lies side

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3 ". . . sed gratis iustificentur propter Christum per fidem, cum credunt se in gratiam recipi et peccata remitti propter Christum, qui sua morte pro nostris peccatis satisfecit." *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1952), p. 56. Hereafter this edition of the confessions will be cited as BK.

4 "Admonentur etiam, quod traditiones humanae, institutae ad placandum Deum, ad promerendam gratiam et ad satisfaciendum pro peccatis, adversentur evangelio et doctrinae fidei." AC XV 3 in BK, pp. 69 f.

5 ". . . darzu gelidden, gestorben und begraben, dass er fur mich genug täte und bezahlete, was ich verschuldet habe. . . ." BK, p. 652.

6 ". . . vere passus, crucifixus, mortuus et sepultus, ut reconciliaret nobis patrem et hostia esset. . . ." AC III, BK, p. 54.

7 ". . . credentes, quod propter Christum recipiamur in gratiam, qui solus positus est mediator et propitiatorium, per quem reconcilietur pater." AC XX 9; BK, p. 77. Interestingly enough this passage unites the concepts of propitiation and reconciliation.

8 "Haec igitur fides specialis, qua credit unusquisque sibi remitti peccata propter Christum, et Deum placatum et propitium esse propter Christum, consequitur remissionem peccatorum et iustificat nos." Ap IV 45; BK, p. 168.

9 ". . . Christi merita sunt pretium, quia oportet esse aliquam certam propitiationem pro peccatis nostris." Ibid., 53; BK, p. 171.

10 "Ira Dei non potest placari, si opponamus nostra opera, quia Christus propositus est propitiator, ut propter ipsum fiat nobis placatus Pater." Ibid., 80; BK, p. 176.

11 "Weil aber (wie oben vermeldet) der Gehorsamb der ganzen Person ist, so ist er eine vollkommene Genugtueung und Versöhnung des menschlichen Geschlechts, dadurch der ewigen unwandelbaren Gerechtigkeit Gottes, so im Gesetz geoffenbaret genug geschehen und also unser Gerechtigkeit, die für Gott gilt, so im Evangelio geoffenbaret wird. . . ." SD III 57; BK, p. 934.

12 ". . . die Gerechtigkeit . . . ist der Gehorsam, Leiden und Auferstehung Christi, da er für uns dem Gesetz gnuggetan und für unser Sünde bezahlet hat." Ibid., 14; BK, p. 918.

by side with sacrifice, reconciliation, propitiation, and expiation. But it is even more noteworthy to find that all these descriptions of the Atonement are connected to the doctrine of justification by faith. There is no abstract emphasis on the sacrificial work of Christ apart from faith. God is reconciled, but that is to be believed. Readers must be admonished, Melanchthon asserts, that it is as necessary to defend the truth that faith justifies as it is to uphold the truth that Christ is Mediator. And how will Christ be the Mediator if you do not "use" Him as Mediator? [13] Luther similarly points to the fact that although the work is done, if it would remain hidden, it would be in vain.[14] Thus the accent lies not merely upon the satisfactory atonement, or even the faith that justifies, but upon the Spirit's means to faith.

In the Large Catechism Luther has a rich doctrine of the Atonement that includes more than satisfaction language and the cross. The treasure is purchased and won through Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection.[15] It is usual to look almost exclusively to Luther for this victory theme of the Atonement and the correlation of cross and resurrection. But also the Formula of Concord, championing the sole merit and complete obedience of Christ, joins the suffering and death to the resurrection.[16]

Satisfaction language then is commonly used in the Lutheran Confessions, but significantly in great variety, and most significantly in the context of justification by faith and in correlation with the full doctrine that surrounds this *leitmotif* of the confessions. While the term *satisfactio vicaria* is not used as such, the language and meaning of this formula is present.

In the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy the satisfaction emphasis of the symbols becomes even more pronounced. However, both the variety of Scriptural and confessional terms (reconciliation, redemption, sacrifice, propitiation, satisfaction) and the close correlation with justification are continued. As Hoenecke notes, the earlier dogmaticians (Melanchthon, Chemnitz, Hutter, Gerhard) treat the priestly work of Christ not as a separate locus but as the *fundamentum iustificationis.* It is only the later dogmaticians (Quenstedt, Calov, Baier, Hollaz) who treat the Atonement as a special section under the *Officium Christi.*[17]

John Gerhard, for example, treats the Atonement as one of the causes of justification. Using Aristotelian causality Gerhard begins his *locus* on justification with a beautiful and thorough section on grace as the principle cause of justification. Next, with not even a special title in the text, Gerhard describes the redemption of Christ as the meritorious cause of justification. Obedience is often used as a parallel construction with satisfaction.[18]

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13 ". . . quod sicut necesse est hanc sententiam tueri, quod Christus sit mediator, ita necesse sit defendere, quod fides iustificet. Quomodo enim erit Christus mediator, si in iustificatione non utimur eo mediatore . . ." Ap. IV 69; BK, p. 173.

14 "Das Werk ist geschehen und ausgericht; denn Christus hat uns den Schatz erworben und gewonnen durch sein Leiden, Sterben und Auferstehung etc. Aber wenn das Werk verborgen bliebe, dass niemand wüsste, so wäre es ümbsonst und verloren." LC II 3; BK, p. 654.

15 Ibid.

16 SD III 14. Cf. n. 12 above.

17 Adolf Hoenecke, *Ev. Luth. Dogmatik* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1912) III, 198.

18 John Gerhard, *Loci theologici,* ed. Ed. Preuss (Berlin: G. Schlawitz, 1865), III, 309 ff.

The Law and justice themes of justification bulk very large in the dogmaticians, also the earlier ones. "Since God is a most just Judge" is a recurring theme in Gerhard.[19] God is not only merciful but just. Nevertheless when man's sin had made him subject to the judgment of God, the transfer of our sin to Christ was effected, according to Gerhard, by the immense, ineffable mercy of God.[20] The divine glory is at stake, and satisfaction is stressed, but the love of God does not fall away.

This is true even in the later dogmaticians, and in Quenstedt mercy is especially treated at the beginning and end of his section on the priestly office of Christ.[21] Here also, with the division of Christ's work into *satisfactio* and *intercessio*, there is naturally a stress on satisfaction language.[22] There is without doubt the same doctrine of the Atonement, but a narrowing of language may be discernible, and perhaps unfortunately, as mentioned above, the Atonement is somewhat separated from the special unit on justification. These later dogmaticians are more precise, but the unity of the formulation in the doctrine of justification may suffer.

Certainly the formulations of the dogmaticians are based upon careful Biblical study. At the same time polemical emphases are a significant part of the dogmatical treatment. As far as "vicarious satisfaction" is concerned, the Socinians are the primary target. These early Unitarians had taught in the Racovian Catechism that Christ was our Mediator in the sense that God used Him as an intermediary and interpreter over against men as He had used Moses; that the word "redemption" should be understood metaphorically as a general deliverance without the intervention of any price of satisfaction; that ἱλασμός (1 John 2:2) means expiation and not any satisfaction to divine justice, etc.[23]

Most of Gerhard's specific discussion of the Atonement (and very much that of the later dogmaticians who treat the errors

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[19] "Cum enim Deus sit iudex iustissimus, imo ipsa iustitia, ideo absque interventu plenae ac perfectae satisfactionis propitiatio illa per nudam submissionem vel deprecationem fieri non potuit." Ibid., p. 326.

[20] "Deus non solum misericors, sed etiam iustus est. . . . ideo postquam homo per praecepti divini transgressionem iudicio Dei ac peccatorum poenis obnoxius erat factus ex immensa et ineffabili Dei misericordia facta est quaedam translatio, ut poenas peccatorum nostrorum Christus in se reciperet, ne divinae veritatis gloria labefactaretur." Ibid., p. 320.

[21] Johann Andreas Quenstedt, *Theologia didactico-polemica* (Wittenberg: Johann Ludolph Quenstedt, 1696), Part III, Membrum II "De officio Christi," pp. 212—332. As Quenstedt treats the *finis* of the *satisfactio* proper he says that it demonstrates two things, divine justice and divine mercy. Of the latter he writes ". . . in eo elucet quod Deus Pater Filium suum unigenitum nostri loco in ignominiosissimam mortem tradit, eiusque satisfactionem pro nostra acceptavit, & quod Filius sponte peccata nostra in se suscepit eaque morte sua expiavit." Ibid., 248.

[22] "Forma Sacerdotii Christi secundum consilium Dei, constitit in actionibus & passionibus satisfactoriis, seu expiatoriis peccatorum nostrorum, & meritoriis, felicitatis nostrae, h. e., in legis perfecta impletione, pro peccatis nostris satisfactione, & intercessione tum generali, pro omnibus hominibus, tum speciali pro electis." Ibid., p. 222.

[23] Also that reconciliation implies not man to God but man with man; that λύτρον and ἀντίλυτρον must be understood metaphorically of sin and death rather than as a true price by which captives are freed; that Christ did not die for us in our place, nor was the shedding of His blood in the place of our satisfaction, but that His death for us and His blood establishes the way of salvation. Cf. Gerhard, pp. 320—336 *passim*.

also of the Romanists, Calvinists, etc.) revolves around an anti-Socinian polemic. It would surely be fair to say that Orthodoxy's particular emphasis on "vicarious satisfaction," as well as the emphatic judgment that the redemption words of the New Testament are not to be taken metaphorically, is a strongly polemically conditioned emphasis and judgment. The argument over the satisfaction of God's justice may help to emphasize the word "satisfaction" with its legal concepts.

If we could speak of loss in Orthodoxy's formulation of the doctrine of the Atonement, it would be partly in the removal of the *locus* on the work of Christ from the *locus* on justification, partly in the abundant use of scholastic categories which may tend to give the discussion an artificial quality, and partly in an overly polemical coloring given to satisfaction. Vicarious satisfaction became not only a Biblical but a polemical slogan for Lutheran Orthodoxy.

The dogmaticians of the Synodical Conference are not alone among Lutherans in America in emphasizing the vicarious satisfaction in the tradition of the Lutheran Confessions and Lutheran Orthodoxy.[24] But Francis Pieper is particularly insistent that the expression "vicarious satisfaction . . . fully and adequately expresses what Scripture teaches on the redemption which Christ procured."[25] Pieper finds three major Scriptural emphases in this formula: (1) The immutable justice of God demands perfect obedience to God's Law; (2) Christ willingly accepted the obligation to keep the Law and bear the punishment the Law exacts of transgressors; (3) Through Christ's substitutional obedience and death God's wrath against men was appeased.[26]

Once again, as in Orthodoxy, the Scripturally based polemic, this time against the 19th-century views of the Atonement (especially Ritschl and Bushnell), may account for the insistence on satisfaction language. Against all modern theories that make human renewal and sanctification factors in the work of atonement, Pieper holds that the process of atonement and justification (objective justification is treated here) is juridical through and through.[27] Nevertheless Pieper also insists that the death of Christ reveals both God's wrath and God's love.[28]

Adolph Hoenecke of the Wisconsin Synod, an older contemporary of Pieper, quotes the old dogmaticians at length. Yet on three points he concedes that one must be careful in using the formula "vicarious satisfaction." The necessity of satisfaction is not absolute, according to Hoenecke. God was not compelled. Rather we must think of necessity in terms of the free mercy of God.[29] Secondly, he criticizes Quenstedt for holding that God is the reconciled object of ἱλάσκεσθαι. This

[24] Cf. Henry Eyster Jacobs, *A Summary of the Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: General Council Publication House, 1907), pp. 167 to 179.

[25] Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951) II, 344.

[26] Ibid., pp. 344—347.

[27] Ibid., pp. 354 ff.

[28] Ibid., p. 353.

[29] Hoenecke, p. 201. "Anmerkung: — Wir handeln jetzt von der *necessitas satisfactionis.* Wir nehmen selbstverstaendlich keine *absolute necessitas* an; denn das hiesse behaupten, dass Gott gezwungen war, durch eine veranstaltete *satisfactio* die Suender zu retten. Wir reden von der Notwendigkeit unter Voraussetzung des freien Erbarmens Gottes."

usage, Hoenecke points out, is found in heathen literature. Christian revelation teaches a God who from eternity is favorably minded in mercy. An atonement of guilt did not have to take place before God could first be merciful.[30] Finally, Hoenecke insists that the universal reconciliation through Christ cannot be understood as a change in God's attitude toward the world, but as a change in the relationship between God and the world.[31] Nevertheless the complete satisfaction through Christ's life and death for the sins of the world is clearly and vigorously upheld. Obedience, as in Orthodoxy and in Pieper, too, is often substituted for satisfaction.

Certainly "vicarious satisfaction" is still a valuable formula 50 years later against any continuation of the old subjective theories of the Atonement. There are still those who minimize the full force of the wrath of God that hangs heavy over man's sin. There are those who minimize the reality of substitution. The polemical background of the formula in the history of Lutheran theology shows that this is still a useful defensive and protective weapon against these errors. Here in a concise formula we can affirm with the Lutheran fathers that God's wrath, His holy justice, is a real threat for sinful man, and that Christ really "went under" that wrath, that holy justice, for us.

At the same time the church's formulations must clearly say what we do not mean, or at least we must guard them from being interpreted falsely. In this respect, Hoenecke apparently is more explicit than Pieper in calling attention to possible dangers of misunderstanding the term "vicarious satisfaction." In addition to those cited by Hoenecke, others deserve mention. This terminology with its emphasis on justice satisfied could be used to lead to the wrong conclusion that the Atonement is primarily the Law of God at work and not the Gospel.[32] This terminology, with a concentration on Calvary, could be used to isolate the cross from the total Atonement in the life and the resurrection of the God-man. Vicarious satisfaction could also be made to play a role in the dangerous separation of justification from God's intended goal in sanctification. In the necessary polemical denial of subjective theories of the Atonement the church must say more than no. She must

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[30] Ibid., p. 193. "Der eigentlich biblische Sprachgebrauch ist es nicht, dass Gott das zu versöhnende Objekt von ἱλάσκεσθαι ist. Aber die griechische Profanliteratur hat es so. Das ist erklärlich. Das Heidentum kennt nur einen Gott, der erst günstig gestimmt werden muss, den unwürdigen Menschen Gutes zuzuwenden. Die christliche Offenbarung lehrt einen Gott, der schon von Ewigkeit in Erbarmen günstig gesinnt ist, und nicht eine Sühnung der Schuld veranstaltet, damit er erst gnädig werde, sondern damit die Sünde bedeckt und seine Gerechtigkeit nicht gezwungen werde, den verdienten Zorn walten zu lassen, und er vielmehr seinem ewigen Erbarmen freien Lauf lassen könne." Cf. Morris' verdict: "It is of the utmost importance that we should understand that propitiation in the crude sense is not possible with the God of Israel . . ." (p. 155). Morris' entire treatment of ἱλάσκομαι bears this out. Cf. pp. 125—160.

[31] Ibid., p. 191. "Jetzt fragt sich, ob die Versöhnung, in welcher Gott die Welt mit sich versöhnt, in einer Änderung des Gemüts Gottes gegenüber der Welt besteht? Die Antwort lautet: Nein!" Cf. Morris' approving quotation of P. T. Forsyth's distinction: "God's feeling toward us never needed to be changed. But God's treatment of us, God's practical relation to us — that had to change." (P. 220)

[32] "While wrath is a dreadful reality, it must not be taken as the last word about God." Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

use her formulae also positively to set forth the whole doctrine of God!

Some limitations in the use of this formula are apparent when the church's main kerygmatic task is considered. Granted that the kerygma cannot be separated from a valid polemic, the preacher will not emphasize merely God's justice, Christ as man's Substitute, the reality of the Atonement, but he will proclaim the good news that here is justice and love, that love truly has conquered justice, that Christ is *God's* Substitute and not only man's, and that this substitutionary love has effects for life and for the judgment of wrath on the Last Day. It may be questioned whether any one formula can bear the burden of this kerygma in its entirety.

Finally, when the systematician and the preacher look to the Biblical doctrine of the Atonement, the limitations of "vicarious satisfaction" as an all-inclusive formula are apparent. Propitiation, to be sure, is what the Holy Scriptures say. But these inspired records of the Spirit also describe the Atonement as revelation, reconciliation, restoration, sacrifice, and ransom. The first and last of these Biblical pictures have frightened many theologians because of what the modern period has done with revelation or because of what some of the early fathers did with ransom. Can "vicarious satisfaction" embrace this Biblical variety of graphic description?

It may be argued that these are not mere metaphorical descriptions of the Atonement. But neither are they photographs which can be laid one upon the other so that the church has one absolutely unalterable facsimile of what the death of Christ meant to the early church or should mean to us. Perhaps some modern Biblical scholars go too far in stressing the variety of the pictures or the relativity of the pictures of the Atonement. With Orthodoxy against the Socinians we can say: These are not metaphors, as the Socinians understood metaphor. But it would surely be dangerous to say: These are not metaphors in any sense at all.[33] Not only has "vicarious satisfaction" at times been used to say this, but the actual reality in the unified but varied Biblical teaching has conceivably been narrowed into the frame of this one non-Biblical metaphor of satisfaction, even though based directly on the Biblical concepts of propitiation and justification.

But there is also a danger in discarding the churchly formula of vicarious satisfaction. A preacher's mind can run riot in Atonement imagery. One describes God spanking His Son in the hot anger of His love. Another has God frying His Son for us. We can think of Luther here.[34] Surely such imagery, even when it is non-Biblical, may be useful. But the danger is that the preciseness which even preaching needs is lost. Reveling in variety and multiformity of imagery, the preacher attempts no systematization — even as the preliminary "boards" for his preaching.

Another danger comes from the well-

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[33] Morris does not hesitate to use the word "metaphor." Note this sentence from his conclusion. "But these studies are in the nature of a preliminary approach wherein we have cleared some of the ground, and begun to appreciate some of the metaphors which the men of New Testament days found helpful when they wished to draw attention to one aspect or another of a divine action they found it impossible to describe fully." *Op. cit.*, p. 275.

[34] Cf. v. 3 of his famous Easter hymn which describes Christ "in heisser Lieb gebraten." The altered translation of Richard Massie (*Lutheran Hymnal*, 195:3) is quite different. "So strong His love."

meaning Biblical man who insists that churchly forms be couched only in the language of Scripture. Satisfaction is not Biblical, and hence out it goes — together with Trinity, person, essence. "Fried in hot love" is not Scriptural. Hence out that goes, even if it is Martin Luther. On the contrary, we must insist that neither the formulation nor the preaching can restrict itself to the Bible's words and pictures. But both the formulation and the preaching that ought to grow out of it must continually be based upon, and refreshed by, not only the Biblical doctrine in its living truth but also by the Biblical language.

"Vicarious satisfaction" may involve questions from kerygmatic and exegetical standpoints. But the formula is still useful and valuable. The fathers of the Reformation, of Orthodoxy, of the 19th-century confessional revival used "vicarious atonement" valiantly, and so can we in 20th-century polemics. But we cannot expect too much of this formula. We cannot be blind to its limitations or the necessity of continually surrounding this formula with the full Gospel, with the whole truth, the varied truth of the Scriptures.

No formulation can itself insure the proper distinction between Law and Gospel and the primacy and transcendence of the Gospel. There must be clarity, correctness, polemical precision, in rejecting errors to the right and to the left, but unless the use of the formulation in teaching and preaching is in the context of the Gospel of God's forgiveness so that the sinner hears above all this news: Christ died for me and my sins, the correct form will remain that — only a form, and it may even become an idol, a hindrance to the Gospel.

This is not to drive a wedge between dogma and kerygma, between dogmatics and preaching. It is to assert that important as true doctrinal formulations are, their meaning and use are much more important. And true orthodoxy lies not merely in the former but most truly in the latter.

Charity requires that we examine the reason why some have departed from the "time-honored" terminology. We should be willing at all times to subject formulations, even "vicarious satisfaction," to a constructive Biblical and historic criticism. The same charity is due the fathers who found in a formula like *satisfactio vicaria* a complete and fully adequate statement of Scripture on redemption. We must ask: What did they mean? What do we mean? Ultimately what do the Scriptures and our confessions mean?

In this analysis of churchly formulations like "vicarious satisfaction," the Lutheran Confessions are a norm for Lutheran theology. They are, in our conviction, the "summarischer Begriff" of Biblical doctrine. But we are not concerned merely with the words or external forms but with the meaning. Granted, at least according to Aristotelian thought, that meaning is never apart from words, yet modern Lutherans too should say: Meanings are more important than words.

We should therefore contend for the *doctrine* of the vicarious satisfaction rather than merely for any doctrinal slogan. And most of all we should be concerned how this doctrine of the Gospel — for that is what it is, that is what is at stake — is used in preaching and teaching. This is

the task of the church, not only Biblical study, not only orthodox doctrinal formulations, but preaching. *Das Wort muss geschrieben werden.* And for the sake of that task we exegize and formulate.

In the light of a study like this one, systematic theology is a very humble work. It analyzes, criticizes, evaluates, formulates, codifies, synthesizes, capsules for the sake of the Gospel. And sometimes, perhaps more often than most systematizers would like to admit, the formulations are weak. They overemphasize or underemphasize. And so the work must still be done and done again — all for the sake of the Gospel.

For the Gospel's sake the old Lutheran dogmaticians capsuled and defended God's work in Christ under this theological shorthand symbol *satisfactio vicaria.* For the sake of the Gospel we translate this not only into English but into the best possible "slogan" for our needs. Possibly the best is a transliteration: "vicarious satisfaction." Probably better is substitutionary satisfaction. Even better — substitutional atonement (to give scope to the Biblical variety). A longer paraphrase would be: God's substitutional atonement (or reconciliation) in Christ. Note what has happened. *Vicaria* is unchanged (although substitutionary is still a barbarous Latinism). *Satisfactio* has become reconciliation. What are the advantages? The formula is more immediately Biblical and just as concrete. What are the disadvantages? The formula is far less concise.

And here is the perennial problem in churchly formulations. The glory of systematic theology, its main task, is precision and clarity in doctrinal formulation. Yet this becomes also the inescapable weakness, a weakness that is uncovered afresh by every Biblical exegete and preacher.

Nevertheless — the bold word of the systematician for the Gospel's sake — we must capsule even as the fathers did. Their capsule is still good in spite of any criticism. But we will attempt to make it the best possible, always remembering that all our formulas, theirs or ours, are limited, that is to say, not perfect or unalterable. The doctrine is forever true. It's *done* in the action of God and *written* in the inspired Scriptures. But the formulations only relatively share that finality and that truth. They are not done. Not even "vicarious satisfaction."

St. Louis, Mo.