



Christus Victor

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Dr. Aulén was Professor of Systematic Theology in the University of Lund, and this book is a translation of the Olaus Petri Lectures delivered by him before the University of Uppsala in March and April, 1930. The same lectures were also delivered in Germany in September, 1930, in a much condensed form, the eight lectures being brought down to three, with the title of *Die drei Haupttypen des christlichen Versöhnungsgedankens*, and were published in *Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie*, 1930, pp. 501–538. This book is strictly an historical study; it contains no personal statement of belief or theory of the Atonement. Its important and original contribution is its strong delineation of the view of the Atonement which is summed up in such phrases as ‘Christus Victor,’ and ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself’—the view that sets the Incarnation in direct connection with the Atonement, and proclaims that it is God Himself who in Christ has delivered mankind from the power of evil. As soon as the meaning of this view is grasped, the patristic teaching at once stands out as a strong, clear, and consistent whole, and it becomes impossible to doubt that it is this view which also dominates the New Testament; it has therefore every right to be called the typical Christian view, or, in Dr. Aulén’s phrase, the ‘classic’ idea of the Atonement. Evidently, too, it is to be distinguished from the view which grew up in the West on the basis of the forensic idea of sin as transgression of law, and which received its first clear formulation from Anselm; for that view regards the Atonement as not in the full sense God’s work, but rather as the act whereby man in Christ makes reparation for man’s sin. Dr. Aulén proceeds to show that Luther revived the classic idea of the Atonement with mighty power, but that Luther’s successors went back to the forensic view, which thus came to dominate orthodox Protestantism; and that the theologians of the ‘subjective’ or exemplarist view, which arose to challenge the accepted forensic theory, so far from returning to the classic idea, diverged from it still further, and concentrated their whole attention on the psychological process of man’s reformation. Dr. Aulén closes with the hopeful expectation that we shall yet see the classic idea of the Atonement return in its strength; for with all his restraint, he cannot conceal where his own sympathies lie.

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