

The UWC Reception of Gustaf Aulén's *Christus Victor* Typology

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Introduction

In this article I will not discuss in any detail Gustaf Aulén's (1879–1977) famous typology on atonement, offered in his highly influential book *Christus Victor*, first published in Swedish in 1930 and in English in 1931 – since this will be explored in more depth in other contributions to this special issue of *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift*. I will also not consider the Nordic, Germanic, or British reception of his argument, the societal significance of his notion of victory over the forces of death and destruction (see Hans S.A. Engdahl's contribution), or the many critiques on the details of his typology that have been offered since then (see Demaine Solomons' contribution). Likewise, I will not explore Aulén's famous retrieval of and preference for the "classic" type, his critique of the "Latin" type and his controversial interpretation of Luther's position in terms of images derived from the "classic" type, or the cultural lure of the "modern" or "moral influence" type.¹ Indeed, my focus will be less on Christological debates on atonement than on pneumatological debates on what may generically be called "salvation".²

1. Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*, Eugene, OR 2002.

2. For the use of such a notion of "salvation" (rather than atonement or redemption), given the metaphors employed and their original *Sitz im Leben*, see especially the two edited volumes Ernst M. Conradie (ed.), *Creation and Salvation: 1. A Mosaic of Essays on Selected*

Instead, the purpose of this contribution is to sketch the surprisingly vibrant reception of Aulén's typology at a university far away from Lund, in a different hemisphere, indeed a different world, namely the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in South Africa. Some comments on the history of this university, and especially on how the study of religion and theology unfolded, are indicative of the contrast between Lund and the suburb of Belhar where the UWC is located.

Becoming UWC

The UWC was established as a university college in 1960. It is located close to the working class suburb of Belhar in what used to be called “bush” – because in the urban planning under apartheid it was deliberately rendered invisible from any of the major arteries of the city of Cape Town in an area covered by dense forest of invader species. In terms of the race classification system implemented under apartheid, each population group had to have its own university, especially for the training of teachers, social workers, pastors, and so forth. In the 1970s the university rejected this basis upon which it was founded, opened its doors to all population groups and confronted the “white control” of the university, given the links of many staff members at the time with the Afrikaner Broederbond, a secret organization serving as an intellectual think tank for Afrikaner nationalism. The UWC became one of the major centres of student protest associated with the Soweto uprising of 1976, faced numerous class boycotts, experienced the imprisonment of student leaders and became a virtual war zone in many confrontations with the security forces in the 1970s and 1980s. Under the leadership of Professor Jakes Gerwel (1946–2012), later the General-Secretary in the office of President Nelson Mandela, in the 1980s, it became “the intellectual home of the left”, with strong Marxist leanings among many staff and students. During the transition period (1990–1994) it played a leading role in drafting the South African constitution while its staff and alumni provided intellectual leadership in almost every sphere of society. Many left the institution by 1994 to take up leadership positions at other tertiary institutions, in government and business. After a period of rapid decline (perhaps being a victim of its own success), the university started growing again in the 2000s under the remarkable leadership of Professor Brian O’Connell, especially in the natural sciences, where, surprising to many, it now has considerable strengths in

Classic Christian Theologians, Berlin 2011; Ernst M. Conradie (ed.), *Creation and Salvation: 2. A Companion on Recent Theological Movements*, Berlin 2012; and the two monographs Ernst M. Conradie, *Saving the Earth? The Legacy of Reformed Views on “Re-creation”*, Berlin 2013; Ernst M. Conradie, *The Earth in God’s Economy: Creation, Salvation and Consummation in Ecological Perspective*, Berlin 2015.

fields such as radio astronomy, nanotechnology, bioinformatics, and various other life sciences. With a predominantly black student body (including “Africans” and “Coloureds”³ in terms of apartheid race classification), it certainly remains the most significant “historically black institution” in the country and is typically rated amongst the top ten universities in Africa. It is interesting to observe that the identity of this university does not lie in the past (with its founding fathers or with its role as a site of struggle against apartheid), or for that matter in the present, but in the future, in serving as an experiment in constructing a new society, a world that has never been, a new world that may be possible. A volume on the UWC’s history and legacy is therefore aptly entitled *Becoming UWC*. Its identity is still in the making.⁴

Shifts in Soteriological Debates at the UWC

Why, then, would students and staff members from this university be interested in the typology offered by Gustaf Aulén? Let me offer a few perspectives in this regard.

A Faculty of Theology was established at the UWC in the mid-1970s and at first served exclusively as the seminary for the then Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC). As its name indicates, this is a “daughter” church within the “family” of Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa, separated from the mother in 1881 on the basis of race classification, with an overwhelming majority of members from so-called “Coloured” communities. The name also indicates the missionary roots of and an evangelical ethos within this church.

Given the long-standing conflict between “mother” and an (outcast) “daughter”, the staff and students from this church were understandably interested in the theme of reconciliation, recognizing its promise, its necessity, and the many difficulties associated with that. In this context reconciliation had three connotations, namely reconciliation in Jesus Christ, reconciliation within the church as the body of Christ, and the ministry of reconciliation in a deeply divided society shaped by being held apart.⁵ There is a clear deductive logic here: the ministry of reconciliation in society has to be

3. The term “Coloured” was used in race classification systems in South Africa and is still retained but now for the purpose of affirmative action. A contested term widely regarded as pejorative (especially if used by outsiders), it refers to persons of “mixed” racial descent. Such mixed descent also applies to those “whites” of predominantly “European” recent descent, while the palaeo-archeological records amply illustrate that all humans originally emerged from Africa.

4. Premesh Lalu & Noëleen Murray (eds.), *Becoming UWC: Reflections, Pathways and the Unmaking of Apartheid’s Legacy*, Bellville 2012.

5. See especially Daan Cloete & Dirk J. Smit (eds.), *A Moment of Truth: The Confession of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, 1982*, Grand Rapids, MI 1984.

based on reconciliation with God. Theological reflection on reconciliation culminated in the Confession of Belhar, proposed by the General Synod of the DRMC in 1982 and accepted as a confession in 1986. The three main themes, church unity, reconciliation in Christ, and God's justice in society revolved around the critique, emerging from discussions on the UWC campus,⁶ that apartheid assumed the fundamental irreconcilability of people and that any theological legitimization of apartheid amounts to a fundamental distortion of the gospel, indeed to heresy. The metaphors employed to express such reconciliation are clearly derived from what Aulén would call the Latin type of atonement.

After 1982 the DRMC eventually united with other reformed churches of Dutch origin to establish the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA) in 1994. As the "uniting" in the name indicates, unity with the "mother", i.e. the Dutch Reformed Church (still with predominantly white membership), remains elusive. Indeed, Sunday roam is a deeply divided hour in these churches, while South Africa itself remains deeply divided in terms of the legacy of race and class. Reconciliation does not come to fruition readily. Although the Confession of Belhar is endorsed in many churches around the world, it remains a bone of contention within the church to which it was first addressed.

Since the 1990s, the theme of reconciliation (but then focussed on reconciliation in society) continued to attract attention – and controversy – given the role of the South African Truth Commission (TRC), that was established in 1996 and concluded its proceedings in 1998. This attracted the attention of many staff members and students at the UWC across several disciplines, including history, law, literature, ethics, and theology.⁷ For several years the poet Antjie Krog (whose award-winning *Country of My Skull* covered the hearings of the TRC⁸) and Hans S.A. Engdahl offered postgraduate courses on the concept of reconciliation, while several students explored the complexities of reconciliation as understood in the TRC, typically with some references to Aulén's typology.⁹ This is not the place

6. See H. Russel Botman, "Narrative Challenges in a Situation of Transition", in H. Russel Botman & Robin M. Petersen (eds.), *To Remember and to Heal: Theological and Psychological Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation*, Cape Town 1996, 37–44.

7. See the volume edited by UWC staff members at the time, H. Russel Botman & Robin M. Petersen (eds.), *To Remember and to Heal: Theological and Psychological Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation*, Cape Town 1996.

8. Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull*, Johannesburg 1998.

9. See, for example, Lerato Kobe, "The Relationship between Remorse and Offering Forgiveness: Selected Case Studies from the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission", University of the Western Cape M.Th. mini-thesis, 2015; Mbhekeni Nkosi, "The Concept of Restitution in South African Economic Policy Documents between 1994 and 2014: An Ethical Analysis", University of the Western Cape M.Th. thesis, 2016.

to discuss the TRC, its significance (widely heralded in countries such as Sweden), or its severe shortcomings (vehemently discussed within South Africa). In short, the critique is expressed in the question, “Where’s the justice?”, whenever there is talk about reconciliation. Notably, such questions were also raised by Jakes Gerwel, the former Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the UWC.¹⁰ Since the TRC focussed on gross violations of human rights *only*, it did not address the victims of economic injustices, or the so-called beneficiaries of apartheid.

Since the 1980s the former Faculty of Theology at the UWC opened its doors for students from a wide variety of other confessional traditions. It became a short-lived Faculty of Religion and Theology in 1995 and, after a drastic retrenchment of staff in 1998, a (now thriving) Department of Religion and Theology was established in 2000. Within this wider body of theology students (that included Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa students until 2000), there has been an increasing interest in the emergence of a cluster of contextual theologies, including liberation theology, black theology, Kairos theology, feminist theology, ecotheology, postcolonial/decolonial theology, and queer theology. In this context the dominant theological metaphor is no longer reconciliation but arguably liberation. Such liberation was understood in the 1980s as political liberation from the oppressive imperial, colonial, and apartheid regimes, but also as liberation from economic oppression, i.e. addressing the struggles of the black working class against capitalist exploitation. Accordingly, God is viewed as the Liberator, while the instruments used by God is no longer only or even mainly the church, but an array of other “carriers” of the revolution. The metaphor of liberation is easily further extended to include an affirmation of human dignity amidst white supremacy, the emancipation of women amidst patriarchal domination, the need for the psychological liberation of the colonized (emphasized by Franz Fanon [1925–1961] and Steven Bantu Biko [1946–1977]),¹¹ long after decolonization and political (if not economic) independence has been achieved, and also the liberation of the Earth, given the quest for ecojustice (the impact of ecological degradation on the poor and marginalized).¹² The metaphors employed here are clearly derived from what Aulén would call the classic type of atonement.

10. See Jakes Gerwel, “National Reconciliation: Holy Grail or Secular Pact?”, in Charles Villa-Vicencio & Wilhelm Verwoerd (eds.), *Looking Back, Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa*, Cape Town 2000, 280–286.

11. See Steven Bantu Biko, *I Write What I Like: Selected Writings*, Johannesburg 2017; Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Cape Town 2017.

12. See Ernst M. Conradie, Siphon Mtetwa & Andrew Warmback (eds.), *The Land is Crying for Justice: A Discussion Document on Christianity and Environmental Justice in South Africa*, Stellenbosch 2002.

At least since 1994, theology students at the UWC expressed interest in a wide range of ethical issues around the reconstruction and development of society. This was clearly influenced by the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), launched by the African National Congress as its 1994 election manifesto. This interest covered numerous concrete issues but increasingly clustered around the social impact of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. In terms of ethical theory this required interest in what is variously called “the dynamics of building a better society”, strengthening the “moral fabric” of communities, an “RDP of the soul”, “moral regeneration”, or more generically “social transformation”.

These interests were reflected in the establishment in 2000 of “Ethics” as a major subject that can be selected within various undergraduate degrees at the UWC. It focusses on what may be called the “moral and religious foundations of society” and helps future community leaders to understand what the building blocks of responsible citizenship entail. The theoretical backbone of all the modules included in the curriculum is a mapping of moral concepts¹³ that prioritizes the need for moral *visions*, recognizes the significance of a public form of *virtue* ethics, and only on that basis explores appropriate *values* (e.g. with reference to utilitarian theories) and *obligations* (or duties, e.g. with reference to deontological theories).¹⁴ Several modules focus on religion (e.g. worldviews, moral codes, and religious diversity), but there are no courses on any one specific religious tradition. The modules in Ethics have become increasingly popular amongst students (with theology students in a small minority) – to the extent that there are around 700 students in first year classes and around 200 students in third year classes. The metaphors employed here are clearly derived from what Aulén would call the “modern” type of atonement, i.e. based on the moral influence of religion. Indeed, “religion” (not so much “theology”) itself is typically understood in this modern functionalist sense as a significant role player (which is still the case in the South African context) in maintaining the social fabric of society. In other words, religion serves another purpose, often understood in terms of nation building.

Postgraduate Projects at the UWC Making Use of Aulén's Typology

The discussion above may give the impression that there has been a shift in the popularity of soteriological metaphors amongst theology students at the UWC, from reconciliation to liberation and then to reconstruction.

13. This mapping of moral concepts is developed in Larry Rasmussen, *Earth-Honoring Faith: Religious Ethics in a New Key*, Oxford 2013, 127–159.

14. See Ernst M. Conradie et al., *Morality as a Way of Life: A First Introduction to Ethical Theory*, Stellenbosch 2006.

This may be true in individual cases. However, it is closer to the truth to say that many of the postgraduate students who are attracted to Gustaf Aulén's typology intuitively recognize the significance of all these three types and would want to hold these together, despite the obvious conflict between them.

In this section I will mention and briefly describe a number of postgraduate projects in Christian theology completed at the UWC since 2006 that explicitly make use of Aulén's typology. It may be noted that all of these were done under my supervision. The following projects are mentioned in order of completion:

Cedric Jansen completed a PhD thesis in Afrikaans in 2008 with a title translated as "The Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) and Poverty: The Place of Poverty in the Multi-Dimensional Missionary Task of the Church". He is a part-time pastor in Wallacedene, a vast squatter camp on the outskirts of Cape Town. He observed that the AFM affirmed the need for both evangelism and for poverty relief, but that there is no theological clarity about how these are related. Some see poverty relief as a consequence of conversion (which therefore has a certain priority), while others regard poverty relief as a handy instrument in evangelism (where its priority is still maintained). Yet others see the liberating message of the gospel in terms of comprehensive well-being so that evangelism is at best an instrument for such purposes. In response, several South African missiologists have promoted a multi-dimensional understanding of mission,¹⁵ but this does not clarify the underlying soteriological tensions. Jansen used Aulén's typology to explore the links between evangelism, liberation, and moral upliftment, but had to conclude that this remains an unresolved tension – and not only in the context of the Apostolic Faith Mission.¹⁶

Heather Festus (now Bock) is a pastor in the Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa. She completed a Masters thesis in 2008 entitled "Bearing One's Own Cross: A Critical Analysis of Mary Grey's View on Atonement". She explores the typical feminist critique that the motif of "bearing one's cross" is often used to legitimize patriarchal oppression – in the sense that women have to accept not only being housewives, but also to endure domestic violence as a Christian duty. That leaves the question how this motif could be interpreted from a feminist perspective – if it is not simply to be discarded (which is not feasible in a Pentecostal context). She opted to focus on the work of the British theologian Mary Grey, given her emphasis on a

15. Jansen explores the positions of David Bosch (1929–1992), J.J. (Dons) Kritzinger, Willem Saayman, Klaus Nürnberger, and Japie LaPoorta in this regard.

16. Cedric Jansen, *Die AGS en Armoede: Die Plek van Armoede in the Multi-dimensionele Missionêre Taak van die Kerk*, University of the Western Cape PhD thesis, 2008.

kenotic Christology and spirituality. For Grey, vulnerability may become an effective way of empowering people towards justice even though this may entail suffering and death. Using Aulén's typology, Festus shows that Grey intertwines various images and motifs, favours the classic and especially the modern types (in terms of moral influence) but resists the Latin type. On this basis she explores the significance of Grey's position for South Africa, especially the Cape Flats where domestic violence is rife.¹⁷

Robert Agyarko is from Kumasi in Ghana and completed a PhD thesis in 2010 entitled *God's Unique Priest: Christology within an Akan Context*. He coined the term *Nyamesofopreko* to suggest that Jesus Christ was God's unique priest. In traditional Akan religion and culture there was no priesthood for Onyame, the Supreme Being, since any such priests would need to be without blemish or else would die. Since being without sin arguably applies to Jesus, he is uniquely able to serve as Mediator between human and God. Agyarko develops a sophisticated understanding of atonement as interpersonal mediation with reference to traditional African culture to indicate what is required to address conflict within communities and to bring about reconciliation between people before God. He seeks to stay true to the Nicene formula that Jesus is truly human and truly divine and explains this again in terms of Akan anthropology. On this basis he criticizes both ancestor Christology and the portrayal of the work of Christ as conquering the Spirit world. With reference to Aulén's typology, his position is therefore much closer to the Latin type.¹⁸

Keith Brooks is a Cape Town based Pentecostal pastor. He completed a Masters thesis in 2015 entitled "‘Deliver Us from Evil’: A Critical Analysis of Soteriological Discourse in African Pentecostalism". He observes that Pentecostalism tends to favour soteriological images aligned to Aulén's classic type, especially regeneration (being "born again"), healing, and deliverance from evil. Deliverance is best understood here in terms of the ministry of deliverance where evil spirits are sometimes quite graphically exorcized. In global Pentecostalism, however, this is understood in different ways, e.g. at a personal level as psychological deliverance (from bad habits), at a political level as deliverance (from oppressive regimes), at an economic level as deliverance from poverty and the traps associated with poverty (often preaching the prosperity gospel), and especially at a cultural level as deliverance from hypostasized evil spirits that may undermine one's well-being in local communities (bad omens leading to diseases, "accidents",

17. Heather Festus, "‘Bearing One's Own Cross’: A Critical Analysis of Mary Grey's View on Atonement", University of the Western Cape M.Ph. mini-thesis, 2008.

18. Robert Agyarko, *God's Unique Priest: Christology within an Akan Context*, University of the Western Cape PhD thesis, 2010.

“misfortune”). In the thesis, Brooks focusses on Pentecostalism in Ghana and shows that Western and Ghanaian scholars working on Pentecostalism in Ghana interpret the ministry of deliverance in rather different ways because they understand deliverance in diverging ways, with (secular) Western scholars viewing it in terms of moral upliftment while Ghanaian scholars recognise the need for victory over evil.¹⁹

Kapemwa Kondolo is the current President of the United Church of Zambia (UCZ) University in Kitwe. He completed a PhD thesis in 2016 entitled *The Ministry of Music: A Case Study on the United Church of Zambia and the New Jerusalem Church*. The latter church broke away in the 1950s from what later became the UCZ. The New Jerusalem Church is regarded as an African Independent/Indigenous Church, while the UCZ is considered to be a so-called “mainline church”.²⁰ The tension between these two churches, for example in terms of membership adherence, is evident not least in their music ministries. The UCZ uses hymnbooks and Western-style rhythms and instruments, at least more so than the New Jerusalem Church that has an extensive and thoroughly indigenized hymnody. The link with Aulén is not with music though, but with the kind of soteriological images that are employed in the lyrics of the most popular hymns sung in these churches, both in an urban and in a rural context. Kondolo gathered information in this regard through empirical work and used Aulén’s typology to map the terrain. His hunch was that distinct soteriological images may be what attract people to the one church more than the other.²¹

Demaine Solomons completed a PhD thesis in 2018 entitled *Reconciliation as a Controversial Symbol: An Analysis of a Theological Discourse in South Africa between 1968 and 2010*. Since he will also contribute to this special issue of *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift*, I only need to mention his thesis here for completeness. Although his focus is on reconciliation, he demonstrates that theological discourse on reconciliation in South Africa follows three distinct tracts that he captures in the titles of the three main chapters as “Justice through reconciliation in Jesus Christ” (following Aulén’s Latin type, epitomized in South Africa by the *Belhar Confession*), “Justice and reconciliation after liberation” (following Aulén’s classic type, epitomized in South Africa by the critique of “church theology” in the Kairos Document), and “Reconstruction requires national reconciliation” (following Aulén’s

19. Keith Brooks, “‘Deliver Us from Evil’: A Critical Analysis of Soteriological Discourse in African Pentecostalism”, University of the Western Cape M.Ph. thesis, 2015.

20. For this contested distinction, see Ernst M. Conradie & John Klaasen (eds.), *The Quest for Identity in So-Called Mainline Churches*, Stellenbosch 2014.

21. Kapemwa Kondolo, *The Ministry of Music: A Case Study on the United Church of Zambia and the New Jerusalem Church*, University of the Western Cape PhD thesis, 2016.

modern type, epitomized in South Africa by the theological legitimation of the work of the TRC). It is clear that the conceptual relatedness of reconciliation and justice is understood here in diverging ways.²²

Towards an Integration of the Soteriological Motifs

From the above it is evident that UWC students and staff seek to understand the conflicting legacy of three broad schools of theology within the (South) African context, namely evangelical theology, liberation theology, and modern liberal theology, with reference to a wide range of ministerial, ethical, and theological issues. Most of the contributions show the influence of all three of these schools, although one is sometimes favoured above the others. In terms of the history of Christianity in (South) Africa, such a conflation of conflicting traditions is almost inevitable. At the heart of this conflict lies contrasting notions of salvation. This is why Aulén's typology is deemed so helpful – because it represents an influential mapping of terrain. It is not his Swedish background, his Christological focus, or his own constructive position that is relevant; his typology provides one clear, widely-referenced instrument for critical reflection on ecclesial praxis in Africa and a way of developing constructive positions within this context.

In my own contributions to this debate, I have focussed on the conflicting soteriological images and motifs that are gathered together under the three generic rubrics in Aulén's typology. I explored the original *Sitz im Leben* from within which such images are derived and then become metaphorically extended to speak to other needs.

Three examples derived from the story in Mark 2 may suffice.²³ This story may be interpreted as a healing miracle, in terms of the significance of the forgiveness of sins, or of exemplary friendship. The metaphor of healing may be extended to include psychological healing (psychosomatic paralysis) but also economic healing, indeed the “healing of the land”. Forgiveness may be understood as a response to interpersonal guilt, but also economic debts or what Karl Jaspers (1883–1969) called metaphysical guilt.²⁴ Likewise, friendship may be understood in an interpersonal context, as economic partnerships, as research collaboration or even as being “friends with the

22. Demaine Solomons, *Reconciliation as a Controversial Symbol: An Analysis of a Theological Discourse in South Africa between 1968 and 2010*, University of the Western Cape/Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam PhD thesis, 2018.

23. This was explored in an empirical study on diverse Bible study groups in and around Cape Town. See Ernst M. Conradie & Louis C. Jonker, “Bible Study within Established Bible Study Groups: The Results of an Empirical Research Project”, *Scriptura* 78 (2001), 381–398.

24. For a discussion in the South African context, see John W. de Gruchy, “Guilt, Amnesty and National Reconciliation: Karl Jaspers' *Die Schuldfrage* and the South African Debate”, *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 83 (1993), 3–13.

Earth”. As a result of such metaphoric extension, the avenues through which salvation enters, a particular *Sitz im Leben* is easily obscured.

In various contributions, I have made use of such images and motifs to explore the notion of “healing” with reference to the HIV/AIDS pandemic,²⁵ anthropogenic ecological destruction (e.g. pollution in townships),²⁶ missiological paradigms (with reference to David Bosch),²⁷ and conflicting views on the relationship between justification and justice.²⁸ The focus of each of these contributions is on pneumatological discourse on salvation instead of the Christological discourse on atonement that is evident in Aulén’s typology. This follows a significant argument by the Dutch theologian Arnold van Ruler that there is a need for a relatively independent pneumatology (polemically aimed against a Barthian Christomonism), given important structural differences between Christology and pneumatology.²⁹ Within the South African context, I used three core theological concepts to group together the soteriological images, namely “liberation” (see Aulén’s classic type), “reconciliation” (see Aulén’s Latin type) and “reconstruction and development” (see Aulén’s modern type). Such generic rubrics may be helpful to understand the logic behind these images, albeit that they also tend to obscure the *Sitz im Leben* in which these make sense. This was explored through a postgraduate course on “South African Soteriologies” that I taught in 2013.

My constructive argument is an attempt to indicate the reason why an integration of all three of these types may not only be necessary but also possible. The core of the argument can be summarized in the following way:

There are some situations where a present predicament is so overwhelming that this needs to be addressed first, before anything else, to ensure comprehensive well-being. Examples include slavery, being held hostage, military threats, shipwrecks, drowning, life-threatening illnesses, tyranny, famine, and demonic possession. In South Africa it may be argued that apartheid first had to be overcome before many other social problems around

25. Ernst M. Conradie, “Healing in Soteriological Perspective”, *Religion & Theology: A Journal of Contemporary Religious Discourse* 13 (2006), 3–22.

26. Ernst M. Conradie “The Salvation of the Earth from Anthropogenic Destruction: In Search of Appropriate Soteriological Concepts in an Age of Ecological Destruction”, *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, Ecology* 14 (2010), 111–140.

27. Ernst M. Conradie, “Missiology and Soteriology: The Power and Limits of a Multi-Dimensional Approach”, *Missionalia* 39 (2011), 83–98.

28. Ernst M. Conradie, *Om Reg te Stel: Oor Regverdiging én Geregtigheid*, Wellington 2018.

29. Arnold A. van Ruler, “Grammar of Pneumatology”, in John Bolt (ed.), *Calvinist Trinitarianism and Theocentric Politics: Essays towards a Public Theology*, Lampeter 1989, 47–88; Arnold A. van Ruler, “Structural Differences between Christology and Pneumatology”, in John Bolt (ed.), *Calvinist Trinitarianism and Theocentric Politics: Essays towards a Public Theology*, Lampeter 1989, 27–46.

education, health, housing, and so forth, could be addressed constructively. If such predicaments are indeed overcome in one way or another, this may retrospectively be attributed to God's work, albeit that the role of Christ is not always clarified. Amidst the predicament it allows for the prospective prayer "deliver us from evil".

There are other situations where it is necessary to address the guilt of the past in order to address present problems. Again, there are many examples, including the long-term economic and psychological impact of slavery, imperialism and colonialism, financial debt between individuals, institutions, and countries, interpersonal guilt within a family context (e.g. over adultery), rape, assault, murder, and other gross human rights violations. In South Africa the injustices of the past continue to have an impact on education and this in turn exacerbates poverty, unemployment and inequality. If the legacy of the past is not somehow addressed, it will continue to undermine the present. This requires a complex process of establishing the truth in all its dimensions, remorse, showing signs of remorse, contrition, asking for forgiveness, offering forgiveness, conversion, restitution, compensation, reparation, and reconciliation.³⁰ These categories are obviously explored in the Latin type of atonement, with rich, if highly contested, biblical imagery, but they are certainly also debated in the public sphere with regard to a wide range of social issues.

There are yet other situations where the recognition slowly dawns that, in this dispensation, the kind of present predicaments mentioned above can never be overcome fully. Evil cannot be completely eradicated, not least because the instruments that may be used to eradicate evil will only exacerbate it. Moreover, if evil lurks in every heart, every community, and every institution, if the victims of yesterday may well become the perpetrators of today, then the eradication of evil is not possible without self-annihilation. In addition, injustices can never be fully undone. It may be possible to ameliorate the impact of past injustices but the fact that it happened is subject to the arrow of time. When death intervenes, such injustices have to be buried, and not only proverbially. Given this recognition, there is a need to explore ways of restraining, containing the spread of evil in order to work towards a better tomorrow. In all societies this is done through moral codes, policies, penalties, rules, regulations, middle axioms, programmes,

30. See the leading essay and responses in Ernst M. Conradie (ed.), *Reconciliation: A Guiding Vision for South Africa?*, Stellenbosch 2013. See also Kobe, "The Relationship". I developed a distinction between restitution (giving back what can be given back), compensation (for what cannot be given back), reparation (creative responses to address long-term injustices), and restoration of relationships (reconciliation) in Ernst M. Conradie, "What Diagnosis? Which Remedy? Critical Reflections on the Diagnostic Overview of South Africa's National Planning Commission", *Scriptura* 117 (2018), 1–21.

and procedures. It requires the participation of most, if not all, citizens who do abide by these rules – or else this will lead to the disintegration of the social fabric of society. In order to find sources of inspiration to build the moral and religious foundations of society, the soteriological metaphors associated with Aulén’s modern type may be influential.

Conclusion

In short, my argument is that it typically depends on a particular context to indicate which soteriological metaphors may be preferred. The emphasis on the present, the past, or the future suggests that all three types may be needed for adequate theological reflection. At the same time, each of these types can be readily abused and then become rather crude. The mechanisms of liberation may include violence, while it is not always clear how the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit makes a difference. The metaphors associated with reconciliation, including forgiveness, satisfaction, penal substitution, retribution, sacrifice, and scapegoating, have each become highly contested since they have left behind a trail of blood in history. The metaphors associated with reconstruction and development may have less baggage but the modernist assumptions that are typically carried with them may become theologically shallow, leading to a form of self-secularization: God helps us to help ourselves. When we become autonomous, we may no longer need God to address societal problems. In fact, bringing God into the public sphere is often highly problematic, also in the (South) African context. Accordingly, particular religious categories (on reconstruction) need to be downplayed in order to find common ground between religious tradition or, more broadly, between people of good will. If such religious categories can indeed be translated into other, more secular categories, this seems to lead to an ever-shrinking sphere of influence for religion.

Even if one concurs about the need for such an integration of the models, it is necessary, if only for the sake of honesty, to acknowledge that a priority is typically assigned to the one or the other. Understandably, this remains contested, also among UWC staff, students, and alumni. Unlike Aulén, I would, if necessary, privilege theological reflection on reconciliation (more or less the Latin type, especially as expressed through the *Belhar Confession*), precisely because it addresses the roots of the problem. One may argue that a lasting solution can only be found on that basis. This is the gospel of God’s work to overcome the main predicament in history, namely human sin (and not so much natural evil).³¹ This requires a retrieval of the very category of

31. See Ernst M. Conradie, “On Social Evil and Natural Evil: In Conversation with Christopher Southgate”, *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 53 (2018), 752–765.

sin, not only in Christian theology but also in the public sphere. My current project on “Redeeming Sin?” seeks to address that task.³² Such views on salvation from sin need to be situated in the more encompassing narrative of God’s work, from creation to consummation or else it will lose an anchoring in this world in which we live.³³ ▲

SUMMARY

This contribution highlights the remarkable reception of Gustaf Aulén's famous typology on atonement, as offered in his book *Christus Victor* (1930), at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa since 2000. It explains the background to this reception in terms of the need amongst staff and students to hold together the core tenets of evangelical theology, liberation theology, and liberal theology. It describes the content of this reception with reference to teaching, postgraduate theses, and ongoing research. It also comments on the possibility of holding together all three of Aulén's types in terms of the need to address present predicaments, the injustices of the past, and to contain the future spread of evil.

32. See, especially, Ernst M. Conradie, *Redeeming Sin? Social Diagnostics amid Ecological Destruction*, Lanham, MD 2017.

33. See my constructive position in this regard as developed in Conradie, *The Earth in God's Economy*.