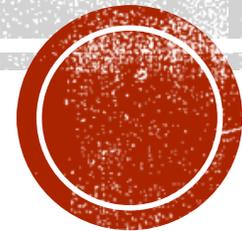


THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST

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THE QUESTION

- How does a perfectly good, righteous and just God pardon guilty sinners without violating his own perfect justice?



THEORIES OF THE ATONEMENT

- **Universal Theories:**
 - Ransom theory
 - Recapitulation theory
 - Moral Influence (Example) theory
 - Christus Victor
 - Satisfaction theory
 - Anselm of Canterbury
 - Thomas Aquinas
 - Moral Government theory
- **Particular Theory:**
 - Penal Substitutionary Atonement theory



ATONEMENT THEORIES

- All the universal theories of the atonement contain elements of truth they however they are incomplete in answering the greatest question.
- All universal theories of the atonement do not have a complete and finished work of Christ. Man always has to complete what Christ started.
- Many universal theories of the atonement begin with a kernel of truth but conclude falsely
- It must not be assumed that because a Church father, theologian or pastor espoused a particular view of the atonement that this was to the exclusion of other views.



RANSOM THEORY

- **Theory:**
 - This theory teaches that the atonement of Christ was a ransom sacrifice paid to either Satan or death or sometimes to God the Father. The theory would claim that Adam and Eve sold humanity to the devil at the Fall, so God was required to make a ransom payment to free us from the Devil. The devil did not realize that Christ would not remain dead so he agreed to accept Christ's death as a ransom.
- **Proponents:**
 - Held by some in the early church
 - Promoted by Origen
 - Some Anabaptists
 - Some Word of Faith teachers (Kenneth Copeland)
- **Scripture:**
 - Mark 10:45 *"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*
 - I Timothy 2:5 *For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*
- **Answer to the Question:**
 - The ransom theory does not answer the question of the justice of God. Why would God pay a ransom to free captive sinners when their captivity is not unjust? How does God maintain His justice if He pays a ransom to free guilty sinners?



RECAPITULATION THEORY

- **Theory:**
 - In the recapitulation view of the atonement, Christ is seen as the new Adam who succeeds where Adam failed. Christ undoes the wrong that Adam did and, because of his union with humanity, leads humankind on to eternal life and moral perfection.
- **Proponents:**
 - Irenaeus
- **Quote:**
 - He has therefore, in His work of recapitulation, summed up all things, both waging war against our enemy, and crushing him who had at the beginning led us away captives in Adam ...the enemy would not have been fairly vanquished, unless it had been a man [born] of woman who conquered him. ... And therefore does the Lord profess Himself to be the Son of man, comprising in Himself that original man out of whom the woman was fashioned, in order that, as our species went down to death through a vanquished man, so we may ascend to life again through a victorious one; and as through a man death received the palm [of victory] against us, so again by a man we may receive the palm against death. - Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.21.1 in A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (eds), *The Writings of Irenaeus Vol. 2* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1869), p. 110-111
- **Answer to the Question:**
 - If the atonement is only Jesus succeeding where Adam did not how does this satisfy the perfect justice of God? How does this atone for the willful sinful act of Adam let alone the rest of the human race.



MORAL INFLUENCE (EXAMPLE) THEORY

- Theory:
 - This view of the atonement teaches that the purpose and work of Jesus Christ was to bring positive moral change to humanity. This moral change came through the teachings and example of Jesus, the Christian movement he founded, and the inspiring effect of his martyrdom and resurrection. It is one of the oldest views of the atonement in Christian theology and a prevalent view for most of Christian history.
- Proponents:
 - Liberal Protestantism
 - Peter Abelard
 - Some Anabaptists
 - Some early church writers
 - Pelagians
- Answer to the Question:
 - How is the justice of God satisfied when sinners change course and begin to follow the example of Jesus? How does this satisfy God's justice for their past sins and their continued failures?



CHRISTUS VICTOR

- **Theory:**
 - A modern rendition of the Moral Influence (Example) Theory. Christus Victor (Christ the Victor) is a view of the atonement taken from the title of Gustaf Aulén's book, published in 1931. Gustaf referred to this view as the classical view of the atonement. This theory says the atonement was a divine conflict and victory over the hostile powers that hold humanity in subjection. The atonement is a drama, a passion story of God triumphing over the powers and liberating humanity from the bondage of sin. Gustav Aulén writes, "the work of Christ is first and foremost a victory over the powers which hold mankind in bondage: sin, death, and the devil."
- **Proponents:**
 - Eastern Orthodox
 - Some Lutherans
 - Some Anabaptists
 - Liberal Protestants
- **Answer to the Question:**
 - Why should God liberate guilty sinners from a bondage to sin? How does God remain perfectly just if He liberates guilty sinners who require punishment?



SATISFACTION THEORY

- **Theory:**
 - This theory states that human sin takes away from God the honor that is due him. Christ in his death gave more honor to God than he was obliged to give therefore he had excess/surplus merit. This surplus of merit can be used to pay our deficit of honor due to God because of our sin. Christ pays the honor to God instead of us paying. The honor taken away must be repaid, or punishment must follow, by Christ satisfying our debt of honor to God, we avoid punishment.
- **Proponents:**
 - Roman Catholicism
 - Anselm of Canterbury
- **Thomas Aquinas:**
 - Thomas modified the theory in contrast to Anselm. Instead of being an excess of the merit of honor due to God, the atonement was a punishment bore for sin that could be used to restore a fallen sinner to a state before God where they could then work out the merits of their salvation through penance and the sacraments which are also made efficacious by the atonement.
- **Answer to the Question:**
 - How does God remain just if he gives a guilty sinner a portion of the honor merit from Christ when they are still guilty before Him? How does God remain just if the atonement of Christ is not what actually perfects a sinner but his continued obedience in his restored state. If Christ's work did not atone for all of his sin, how can God overlook the sin that was not atoned for and remain just?



MORAL GOVERNMENT THEORY

- **Theory:**
 - This theory holds that Christ's suffering was a real and meaningful substitute for the punishment humans deserve, but it did not consist of Christ's receiving the exact punishment due to sinful people. Instead, God publicly demonstrated his displeasure with sin through the suffering of his own sinless and obedient Son as a propitiation. Christ's suffering and death served as a substitute for the punishment humans might have received. On this basis, God is able to extend forgiveness while maintaining divine order, having demonstrated the seriousness of sin and thus allowing his wrath to "pass over." According to governmental theory, Christ's death applies not to individuals directly, but to the Church as a corporate entity. Individuals then partake of the atonement by being attached to the Church through faith.
- **Proponents:**
 - Arminians
 - Pelagians
- **Answer to the Question:**
 - How is God just if He simply displays His displeasure with sin on an innocent sacrifice, yet this sacrifice does not commute the guilt of any particular sinner?



PENAL SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT THEORY

- **Theory:**
 - This theory says that Christ, by his own sacrificial choice, was punished (penalized) in the place of sinners (substitution), thus satisfying the demands of justice so God can justly forgive the sins. It is thus a specific understanding of substitutionary atonement, where the substitutionary nature of Jesus' death is understood in the sense of a substitutionary punishment. Penal substitutionary atonement means that the sin of the sinner is imputed to Christ and he bears the penalty for that sin.
- **Proponents:**
 - Calvinists
 - Some Arminians
 - Confessional Lutherans
- **Answer to the Question:**
 - God remains just and saves sinners. He himself takes the punishment due to the sinner, He takes the place of the guilty sinner and therefore expiates the punishment required for that sinner.
- If this theory of the atonement is taken as universal than there are two options: First either all people are universally saved or if God still punishes a sinner who has been atoned for by the vicarious sacrifice of Christ then He is not just. This view of the atonement can only be particular.



SCRIPTURE

- I Peter 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*
- II Corinthians 5:21 *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
- Isaiah 53:11 *Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.*
- Matthew 1:21 *She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."*



SCRIPTURE

- *1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,*
- *Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"*
- *Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*
- *Hebrews 10:1 For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. 2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? 3 But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*



SCRIPTURE

- Hebrews 10:14 *For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.*
- Colossians 2:14 *by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.*
- John 19:30 *When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*
- Romans 3:23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

