

# **WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL**



Published by the Wesleyan Theological Society  
623 S. University Boulevard  
Nampa, Idaho 83686

© Copyright 2015 by the  
Wesleyan Theological Society

ISSN-0092-4245

This periodical is indexed in the *ATLA Religion Database*, published by the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Chicago, IL 60606. E-mail: [atla@atla.com](mailto:atla@atla.com), or visit <http://www.atla.com/>. Available on-line through BRS (Bibliographic Retrieval Series), Latham, New York, and DIA-LOG, Palo Alto, California.

Available in Microform from University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Dept. I.R., Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. Other than the most recent issues, the journal is available electronically at the address below:

WTS on the Web: [www.wtsweb.org](http://www.wtsweb.org)

Views expressed by writers are not necessarily those of the Wesleyan Theological Society, the Editor, or the Editorial Committee.

Printed by  
Old Paths Tract Society  
Shoals, Indiana 47581

# CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTES .....	5
THE DEATH OF SIN IN THE DEATH OF JESUS: ATONEMENT THEOLOGY IN THE NT .....	7
Ben Witherington, III	
THE HOLY SPIRIT AND HOLY COMMUNION: TOWARDS A WESLEYAN LITURGY OF THE ATONEMENT .....	23
Jason E. Vickers . . . The Presidential Address	
ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION AND THE ATONEMENT: A WESLEYAN DEMONSTRATION .....	38
Heather Oglevie	
THE "NECESSITY" OF ANSELM: THE ARGUMENT OF THE <i>CUR DEUS HOMO</i> .....	53
Thomas A. Noble	
MORAL EXEMPLARITY AND RELATIONAL ATONEMENT: TOWARD A WESLEYAN APPROACH TO DISCIPLESHIP .....	67
Mark A. Maddix	
ATONEMENT AND COMMUNITY RECONCILIATION IN PAUL'S LETTERS: THE SHAME OF THE CROSS AS THE MEANS FOR RESTORATION .....	83
David A. Ackerman	
"OBEDIENCE IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE": ATONEMENT AS THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF TRUST .....	100
Patrick Oden	
THE POLYVALENCE OF ATONEMENT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: A WESLEYAN REFLECTION ON LEVITICUS AND JONAH .....	116
Ben Boeckel	
UNIVERSAL ATONEMENT OR ONGOING INCARNATION? COMPARING THE MISSIONAL THEOLOGIES OF WILLIAM BOOTH AND ISAAC HECKER .....	134
James E. Pedlar	
A CRUCIFORM MISSION? MISSIONAL EMBODIMENT OF THE ATONEMENT .....	153
Brian Gregory	
SANCTIFYING ATONEMENT: WOMANIST THEOLOGY, WESLEYAN ETHICS, AND THE FUTURE OF NAZARENE ATONEMENT THEOLOGY .....	162
Hank Spaulding	
BOOK REVIEWS AND ADVERTISING .....	187

## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS NUMBER

### WRITERS:

David A. Ackerman	Nazarene Theological Seminary
Ben Boeckel	Ph.D. Candidate, Southern Methodist University
Brian Gregory	M.Div. Candidate, Seattle Pacific University
Mark A. Maddix	Northwest Nazarene University
Thomas A. Noble	Nazarene Theological Seminary
Patrick Oden	Azusa Pacific University
Heather Oglevie	Southern Methodist University
James E. Pedlar	Tyndale University College and Seminary
Hank Spaulding	Ph.D. Candidate, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
Jason E. Vickers	Asbury Theological Seminary
Ben Witherington, III	Asbury Theological Seminary

### BOOK REVIEWERS:

David A. Ackerman, Jeremy Bangs, Ben Boeckel, David Bundy, Nathan Crawford, J. Gregory Crofford, B. Craig Drurey, E. Jerome Van Kuiken, Jackson Lashier, Jonathan S. Morgan, Aaron Perry, Stephen W. Rankin, Joshua Toepper, Robert Webster, Nathan Willowby

## EDITOR'S NOTES

The 49<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society convened on the campus of Northwest Nazarene University, Nampa, Idaho, March 7-8, 2014. Richard Thompson served as the program chair for the meeting and selected “Atonement in the Wesleyan Tradition” as the organizing theme. The articles in this issue are selections from the presentations made at the annual meeting, including a plenary address by Ben Witherington, III and the presidential address by Jason Vickers.

Looking forward, a few significant changes are worth noting. First, I want to express my gratitude to Stan Ingersol for his many years of service on the editorial committee. Second, I want to congratulate Jennifer Woodruff Tait on her recent election to the editorial committee. Third, I am presently undertaking a significant revision of the submission guidelines for the Journal. I will make the new guidelines available on the Wesleyan Theological Society’s website as soon as they are ready. Fourth, Chad Clark has agreed to serve as Assistant to the Editor of the *WTJ*.

Finally, after nine years of service at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, OH, I have accepted a position as professor of theology at Asbury Theological Seminary. Effective immediately, please use the following email address for all *WTJ* related correspondence:  
jason.vickers@asburyseminary.edu.

Jason E. Vickers, Editor  
Easter, 2015



# THE DEATH OF SIN IN THE DEATH OF JESUS: ATONEMENT THEOLOGY IN THE NT

by

Ben Witherington, III

## I. Setting up the Context of the Discussion Properly

One of the great problems one sees in the great debates about the meaning, significance, and effects of the death of Jesus is the problem of anachronism. Already in the classic discussions which begin at least as early as Anselm, significant terms, ideas, and concepts are being read into NT texts resulting in skewed interpretations of some of the more crucial and explicit NT texts that deal with atonement for sins. This trend unfortunately did not end with the Patristic period but continued on into the Reformation period, and indeed into the modern period. Juridical ideas and theories which did not even exist in the first century A.D., or did not have the bearing they were later to have, have been imported into the discussion *ad libitum* with telling effect.

For example, the theory that Jesus' death provides a ransom *to Satan* so that the sinner may be freed from bondage to the Diabolical One is not only absent from the NT, it is a theory that goes against the grain of much of what is said about the matter in the NT. Bondage in sin is not the same thing as demon possession nor does the NT suggest that *God owes* or pays Satan anything.

Unfortunately, the discussion has become rancorous at times to no good end, with one Christian group or another anathematizing each other (e.g., is the atonement limited or unlimited, and if limited who limited it?), despite the fact *that no ecumenical council in Christian history ever established what an orthodox belief about the atonement should and must include or exclude* (Robert Jenson *Systematic Theo. Vol. One*, 1997, 187: "It is one of the more remarkable and remarked on aspects of theological history that no theory of the atonement has ever been universally accepted. By now this phenomenon is itself among the things that a proposed theory of atonement must explain").

As a historian, a NT scholar and an exegete I am sometimes tempted to throw up my hands when some of these sorts of discussions are used as

a sort of Ockham's razor to exclude one or another person from: 1) one's denomination, or 2) one's academic or theological society, or 3) even from the category of biblical orthodoxy. It follows from this introduction, that the discussion of the atonement must be set up in careful terms, not taking theological terms in the NT in isolation from their original historical, rhetorical, social, and religious contexts. It is about those contexts that I want to speak next.

## II. Getting the Context Right

Most religions in the Greco-Roman world, like most religions in the Ancient Near East had three things in common—temples, priests, and sacrifices. One of the real problems Christianity must have had in the first three plus centuries of its existence was establishing that it was indeed a "religio" and should be taken seriously as such, despite the fact that it had no temples, no priests, and offered no literal sacrifices. True, there were fears of some pagans that those Lord's Supper meals were clandestine acts of cannibalism, but those fears were based on rumor not reality. Anyone who has read the works of scholars like Ramsay MacMullen or R. L. Wilken or A. D. Knox, to mention but three, will realize that Christianity will have appeared to most outsiders as some sort of philosophy of life, and all the more so as it became detached from and disassociated from early Judaism and its praxis. But if a non-Christian probed a bit deeper, he or she would discover a lot of discussion in early Christianity about non-philosophical matters like atonement for sin.

If one probes Greco-Roman religion, and indeed early Jewish religion when it comes to atonement thought, it becomes very clear indeed that offering sacrifices, and making atonement was seen as a way to deal with one god or another's anger with some action or attitude of the suppliant. It is hardly possible to remove the notion of anger or wrath and the notion of appeasement or satisfaction from these discussions, and have anything significant left to say about the atonement thought in play. And if a non-Christian Jew or Gentile in the middle of the first century had read the following words in Romans: "for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness . . ." (Rom. 1:18) and then went on to peruse the discussion of the **hilasterion** in Rom. 3, it can hardly be doubted that they would conclude that the Christian God as well was a God who was angry about sin and demanding atonement, or justice, or satisfaction or some such thing as a result. And when such a demand is stated or implied, we are most definitely in the territory of the term 'propitiation' which might as well include the notion of 'expiation' though not



necessarily. It was not Jonathan Edwards who invented the notion of a Christianity that included the concept of sinners in the hands of an angry God. My point is simply this—it takes a lot of ignoring of the larger religious context and conceptualities about God or the gods to be able to exclude ideas like appeasement, propitiation, divine wrath, and the like from the discussion of the atonement in the NT *whatever other sorts of concepts we might want to include in the discussion*.

The second important contextual matter that needs to be attended to at this juncture is the inter-relatedness of so many of the crucial ideas. By this I mean that one's conception of the atonement will be affected by one's conceptions of both sin and God to mention but two crucial correlates. One of the merits of Gary Anderson's recent book entitled *Sin, a History*, (Yale, 2009) is to emphasize not merely that ideas have a history, they develop and change over time, but also to make clear that ideas are inter-related things and they have consequences, often devastating consequences. To this I would add that when you are dealing with something as complex as atonement for sin, *you are not simply dealing with ideas or the history of ideas and a Religionsgeschichtliche approach to the matter will hardly be adequate, not least because it is the praxis of making atonement which also affects if not determines how one views ideas about atonement*. Herein lies one of the great problems for theologians—the danger is that history and praxis will be ignored, and one will try to settle theological controversies simply on the basis of debating ideas, or rearranging ideas, or logically thinking through and connecting ideas.

But alas for such approaches, before ever there were Christian ideas about the death of Jesus, there was the *event* of the death of Jesus, and it might be useful to ask if Jesus had any crucial religious or theological thoughts about the meaning and consequences of his coming death. Too often the discussion of atonement has begun and ended with some squabbles about whether St. Paul believed in propitiation as well as expiation when it came to atonement theory. Indeed, sometimes there has been the sneaking suspicion that Paul invented Christian thought about the atonement, and that we should blame him for the negative consequences. I am not one of those cynics, and I do not think we can get at a NT theology of atonement through an appeal that amounts to—"back to Jesus" with the implied agenda "away with and away from Paul the first great corrupter of pristine Jesus religion."

No, as I have argued in detail (perhaps too much detail) in my recent two volume work *The Indelible Image* a NT theology of anything needs to involve *everything* the NT has to say on the matter, and this includes the

atonement. What I intend to do in what follows therefore is to look at a variety of the things Jesus and the NT writers seem to think and say about atonement, whether it is congenial to our modern discussions or even our Wesleyan discussions of the matter or not. There is of course not time or space to include everything in this discussion, but we can make inroads in the right direction. Let's start with Jesus.

### III. Jesus the Ransom in Place of the Many

Of the various Synoptic texts we could focus on, I want to mention and discuss just three: 1) Mk. 10:45; 2) Mk. 14:36; and 3) Mk. 14:23-24. In some ways, Mk. 10:45 is the most crucial of these, but as we shall see, the other two are also very important, not least because we have a form of the Words of Institution also in 1 Cor. 11 which makes evident that the tradition about what Jesus said at his last meal with his disciples was handed down at an early juncture by those who were present at that meal to persons like Paul.

I have argued at length for the authenticity of the logion in Mk. 10:45 elsewhere and do not need to repeat that argument here (see my *The Gospel of Mark*, Eerdmans, 2001). I will also not repeat my discussion of whether the Servant Songs may be alluded to in this saying. In my judgment they surely are. Most tellingly, the contrast in both Isaiah 53 and in Mk. 10:45 is between the one who does the suffering, and the many for whom he suffers, not between the many as opposed to all. In other words, we have the classic contrast between the one and the many here, and this text does not favor the view that Jesus died for some rather than all. The 'many' here is 'the all' minus the sufferer himself, in this case Jesus. The one person for whom Jesus did not need to die was Jesus himself. In other words, the variant of this saying found in 1 Tim. 2:6 which speaks of Christ as a ransom for **all** got it right. Jesus' death had potentially universal benefits.

The second crucial thing to be said about Mk. 10:45 is that the noun **lytron** and its cognates entail in the LXX of Exod. 13:13-16 the concept of a substitutionary sacrifice. Indeed, Yahweh's work for Israel is described as a **lytron** throughout 2-3 Isaiah (35:9; 41:14; 43:1, 14; 44:22-24; 52:3; 62:12; 63:9). It is of course also true that we find the notion of a ransom paid by one party for the sins of another in the Maccabean corpus (2 Macc. 7:37-38; 4 Macc. 6:27-29; 17:21-22) as well as at Qumran (1QS 5:6; 8:3-10; 9:4). In short, there is no reason why Jesus could not have spoken of his death as a ransom, indeed as a substitutionary sacrifice for others.

The third thing to mention about Mk. 10:45, as my old mentor, C. K. Barrett once pointed out to me, is that the *basic notion* is the substitution of something of *equivalent value*. One has to ask how could the death of one man be of equivalent value to all the sins of the many? This would have to be a very unique death indeed and not just the death of an ordinary person, like say a Judas Maccabee. There is an exalted Christology implied in this saying, and I would suggest as well that what is implied is that Jesus was not a sinner and did not need ransoming himself. Therefore, he was free to provide the ransom for all the others, who indeed did need it, for they were in thrall to sin.

Fourthly, this saying explains the purpose of the Son of Man—why he came into the world as a human being in the first place, as 1 Tim. 2:6 makes even more clear. There was a sin problem, and God could not pass over sin forever. He could not simply forgive it without the provision of an adequate atoning sacrifice. This tells us something profound about the holy and righteous character of God. Just because God is love does not mean that God ceases to be holy, or ignores the issue of justice and righteousness in order to be forgiving. The death of Jesus was meant to put to death once and for all the sin problem in this sense—that a sufficient once for all time and all persons atoning sacrifice would never be needed again.

Lastly, Jesus the servant came to set people free, ransom them from the wrong sort of servitude so they could commit themselves to following the Son of Man and take up the right form of servitude. Ransom in this context refers to the deliverance of a slave or prisoner from some sort of bondage, in this case sin, and it also tells us something profound—God was prepared to go great lengths to accomplish this redemption. God wanted his possession, his people back (see Lev. 25:47-55).

The exposition suggested above comports nicely with what we find in Mk. 14:36. Jesus asks that “this cup” might pass from him, if it be possible and in accord with God’s will. Is Jesus simply having a failure of nerve in the face of death by execution? This would not be Mark’s view. Mark’s view is that the cup in question is the cup of God’s wrath or judgment on sin, and texts like Is. 51:17 (cf. Zech. 12:2) make this quite clear. Jesus realizes in the garden that his death will be no ordinary death. It will be the judgment of God on sin, including the sins of God’s people as the Isaianic reference suggests.

This brings us to the words of institution in Mk. 14:22-24. I have always found it remarkable that Jesus could be talking about some sort of benefit of his coming death *in advance of his dying*. More to the point,

Jesus is talking about a positive benefit of his coming death for his disciples, so sure is he there will be such an outcome. The reference to “my body” when coupled with the reference to the blood poured out for many, is surely a reference to the breaking and piercing of that body, leading to death. This dying inaugurates a new covenant which otherwise could not begin.

Put another way, covenants like suzerainty treaties were inaugurated by a sacrifice, and in the case of the new covenant it was Jesus’ death that “cut” and inaugurated the covenant. Here the old discussions of Meredith Kline (*By Oath Consigned*) are still valid and valuable. It is worth adding of course that Jesus’ audience were Jews, and had they thought he was literally talking about drinking his blood and eating his flesh, they would have run out of the room screaming. Rather, in the context of a Passover meal it was clear enough that he was re-interpreting some of the elements of the meal that had previously had other symbolic significance. Now the meal shared by the disciples would be focusing not on an Exodus or Passover from long ago, but rather one inaugurated on a cross in Judea in A.D. 30 (see my *Making a Meal of It*, Baylor 2008).

#### IV. Paul and the Mercy Seat

A long time ago (1974), James Dunn wrote a telling, and typically provocative essay on Paul’s theology of atonement (“Paul’s Understanding of the Death of Jesus,” in *Reconciliation and Hope*, ed. R. Banks, Eerdmans, 1974, 125-41). At one juncture in the essay Dunn suggests the following while discussing Rom. 3:25: “the way in which Christ’s death cancels out man’s sin is by destroying it—the death of the representative sacrifice is the destruction of the sin of those represented, because it is the destruction of man’s sinful flesh, of man as sinner . . . ‘God designed him to be the means of expiating sin by his sacrificial death.’”

Now the problems with this reading of the *locus classicus* in Rom. 3 are severalfold: 1) Paul did not believe that Jesus had sinful flesh, indeed he goes out of his way to say that Christ appeared *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, which is a different matter. Jesus is not merely Adam gone right in Paul’s theology, though clearly enough he is portrayed as the eschatological Adam who does not sin, and is the founder of a new race of persons who are neither Jews nor Gentiles but a third thing. Jesus, in Paul’s theology was neither a sinner in the active sense of the term, nor did he bear a sin nature. The author of Hebrews is equally clear on this point; 2) **hilasterion** has a semantic range which includes mercy seat, expiation and propitiatory sacrifice, with the former of these renderings being the literal

one. The term is most certainly associated with God's wrath in Exod. 32:14-14 and Dan. 9:16-19 in the LXX. In fact, propitiation of wrath is *the normal meaning* of this term and its cognates in Greek literature, and it is surely how a largely Gentile audience would have heard the term.

Consider for example an inscription found on the island of Cos which reads "The people, for the Emperor Caesar, son of God, Augustus, for salvation to the gods [offer] this propitiatory sacrifice" (**hilasterion**—see my *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, Eerdmans 2004, 108). God, in Paul's view is both the offerer and the recipient of this sacrifice that Christ makes. God, in other words, averts his own wrath through offering his Son as a sin offering. God propitiates himself, and in the process expiates (cleanses us from) sin.

C. K. Barrett gets at the very heart of the matter. "The paradox is rooted in the nature of God. It is the nature of God to be irreconcilably opposed to sin; it is the nature of God to love sinners and to seek reconciliation with them. No one but God could resolve the problem; and God himself could be faithful to both aspects of his being only at the cost of the Cross" (Barrett, *Romans*, 2nd ed. Hendrickson 1991, 74). We should also note the emphatic position of the word "all" in Rom. 3:23 at the beginning of the sentence. It was God's plan that Christ die for the sins of all. But equally clearly, while Christ's death is *sufficient* to atone for the sins of all, it is only *efficient* for those who have faith in Christ and in his blood sacrifice. And this death of Jesus reveals the righteous judgment of God on sin, while at the same time providing a propitiation for that sin that allows God to forgive sins without ignoring or passing over their sin.

Rom. 3:26 says that God previously showed tolerance not fully judging sin, but that that forbearance could not go on forever. Pardon without atonement would not have been just or right for a God in whom there is no darkness or shadow of turning. Rom. 3:21-26 makes clear that Christ's death is the definitive revelation of God's paradoxical saving righteousness which not merely gives us right standing with God and pardon, but which liberates the sinner from the bondage to and of sin, and in this sense frees them up to begin to be actually righteous in thought, word, and deed. This is why Paul does not stop at the forensic sense of righteousness here but adds (offering here a literal rendering): "for all have sinned and lack the glory of God, being righteous (no accounting language about being reckoned righteous here) freely by his grace through the ransom which was in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a means of propitiation through the faith in his blood as a proof of his righteousness, through the overlooking of previously committed sins, in the tolerance of

God, for the proof of his righteousness in the present time, unto his being righteous and setting right those through faith in Jesus.

## V. The Hapax Sacrifice

Perhaps no text in the NT so clearly makes evident the obvious connections in the ancient mind between priests, temples, and sacrifices as Hebrews does. Jesus has to be shoe-horned into the Melchizedekian priesthood in order for him to be able to offer the proper sacrifice, and indeed be the proper sacrifice. And no NT book makes clearer that the sacrifice of Jesus makes obsolete all previous sacrifices and otiose any future ones. It was *once for all* says the author. Furthermore, no author makes clearer the connection between covenants, priests, temples, and sacrifices. And for this author what is very clear is that the new covenant, grounded in the prophecy in Jer. 31 which is a major text for this author, is no mere renewal of any older covenants. It is, as the author says “ad infinitum”—better, greater, more adequate, perfect, and frankly final. Whether one calls this supercessionism run riot, or “completionism” to coin a term, our author is clear that we don’t need any more human priests, sacrifices, or temples. Jesus fulfilled and completed all of that, and the heavenly sanctuary was the blueprint and prototype for any earthly ones in any case. Our author is nothing if not ambitious and comprehensive in the way he views Christ’s atonement. Several aspects of this need to be highlighted.

Firstly, note that our author does not think that the death of Jesus merely provides right standing with God. To the contrary, Jesus the perfect sacrifice without blemish offered himself to God and as a result the blood of Jesus purifies our conscience from dead works so that we can worship the living God (Heb. 9:14). And this brings up another crucial point. Atonement theology is or implies worship theology, and when the situations with priests, temples, and sacrifices changes, so should worship. Jesus foresaw this when he said the day was coming when neither on Mt. Zion nor on Mt. Gerizim, but anywhere and everywhere one worships in Spirit and in truth it will happen (John 4). In other words, one doesn’t need a sacred zone, a priest, a literal sacrifice any more to offer the living God true worship—Jesus paid it all, and changed the patterns of worship into an eschatological mode. All now have free and direct access to God because all believers have free and direct access to Jesus who is their intercessor in the Heavenly Holy of Holies (see my *We Have Seen his Glory*, (Eerdmans, 2010).

Secondly, our author is adamant that God could not forgive sin without a blood sacrifice. He puts it this way “without the shedding of blood

there is no forgiveness of sins” (Heb. 9:22). So much for the modern notion that Jesus’ death was not absolutely necessary in order for God to forgive our sins. To those who like to make such statements these days, our author would rebut—“if Jesus’ death was not both the absolutely necessary and sufficient sacrifice to procure for us the forgiveness of sins, if God could do it just because God is a nice God who likes to forgive sin, then strangely enough that God is not a good God, not a good Father, for what Father would put his only and beloved Son through that agony if it was not the one means necessary to save the world?”

Thirdly, as Heb. 9:26 puts it, Jesus didn’t just come to pay for sins, he came to remove them. At the heart of the book of Hebrews is a theology of sanctification that tells us that we are indeed intended to go on to perfection, intended to be purified from sin, beginning now, and continuing on in our lives. A theology of atonement that does not realize that both what we call justification and sanctification are involved and implied in that atonement is not a NT theology of atonement. Heb. 10:10 says “it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Our hearts have been sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, and we should live accordingly (10:22). I must say it is a mystery to me how some theologians can talk about the sovereignty of God’s grace and yet refuse to come to grips with the implications of texts like Heb. 10 or Rom. 8 which tell us that as a result of Jesus’ death and by God’s Spirit and grace we have been actually set free from the bondage to sin and death, not just in principle but in reality. A theology of the power of God’s grace should entail a robust theology of sanctification, which theology, by the way, John Calvin certainly exhibits in his “Institutes.”

Lastly, the author of Hebrews works out the Christological implications of Christ being our perfect high priest, namely unlike all previous priests, this one was without sin. He was temptable but not contemptible (Heb. 4.15). And the point the author makes is that the Son was virtuous in resisting sin for he could have done otherwise. Therefore, he becomes the paradigm of faithfulness, as well as the paragon of virtue, and the trailblazer and finisher of faith, whose example Heb. 12 says we must follow until he returns in a blaze of glory.

## **VI. The Atoning Sacrifice for the Whole World**

1 John is an epideictic homily that uses the good preacherly practice of repeating key ideas and themes over and over again, but with variations. One of those themes is laid out in 1 John 1:7 and 2:1-2 where we

hear about Jesus Christ the Righteous One and what he did and does for us and in us. 1 John 1:7-9 speaks not only of our sins being forgiven but of our being cleansed from sin, cleansed from all unrighteousness. And we are told quite specifically that it is the blood of Jesus that does this cleansing, this sanctifying.

1 John 2:1-2 becomes even more specific and in some ways echoes Hebrews—when we sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus the Righteous One. Though Christ is not called a High Priest here, the job description fits. These verses give us an opportunity to talk more fully about the implications of the **hilas**—root and its various meanings.

The language of atonement in Greek is difficult to translate into proper English as a glance at recent translations of 1 John 2 will show where we find—atonement, atoning sacrifice, propitiation, expiation, sacrifice for sin and even remedy for defilement (which makes the matter seem as if ritual defilement were the main problem). Surprisingly, our author here does not do the expected thing. He is talking about a person, Jesus Christ, but he does not use the noun **hilaster** that means one who offers or makes atonement. The more abstract noun **hilasmos** however may be chosen to indicate that Jesus is paradoxically enough both the sacrifice and the priest who does the offering. A brief review of this language and its cognates may help a bit here.

There are two verbs used in the LXX to denote atoning action, **hilaskesthai** and **exilaskesthai**. While the latter term is never found in the NT, it is found in the LXX over 100 times, and it is also found in the earliest Church Fathers (cf. 1 Clem. 7.7; Hermas, *Vis.* 1.2.1) where it clearly refers to propitiation. **Hilaskesthai** is a much rarer word, found only eleven times in the LXX and twice in the NT—Lk. 18:13 (where it seems to be a plea for mercy) and more relevantly Heb. 2:17 where it seems to refer to Jesus' propitiating of sins of the people as the High Priest in heaven. In Zech. 7:2 and Mal. 1:9 the meaning is clearly propitiation.

The lack of use of **hilaskesthai** in the LXX is more than compensated for by the use of the cognate, **hilasterion** found twenty seven times in the LXX of which twenty two are referring to the mercy seat cover, or more broadly to the Ark of the Covenant. That cover is where the blood was sprinkled for the propitiation of sin, being the spot nearest to God that was possible. The mercy seat did not need cleansing, the people needed cleansing from the effects of their sin but that was only possible if God's righteous anger against sin was dealt with. We find this same noun used in Heb. 9:5 where it certainly refers to the Mercy Seat itself and the atoning that went on at that spot. The only other use in the NT is found at Rom. 3:24-25



where the stress is on the fact that God put forward Jesus as a **hilasterion** by his blood. As J. D. G. Dunn has said about this verse, the logic here is that God's wrath, previously discussed at some length in Rom. 1, is somehow averted by Jesus' death (cf. 2 Macc. 7:38), and averted amazingly enough according to this text by God offering to himself his own Son as an atoning sacrifice (J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Waco: Word, 1988, 151).

A few misconceptions need to be pointed out at this juncture. It is *not true* that **hilaskesthai** in the LXX is not associated with God's wrath, for as we already noted it certainly is in Ex. 32:12-14 and Dan. 9:16-19, so the translation propitiation cannot be ruled out by saying there is no precedent in the LXX for such a rendering. Returning now to the review of key terms, we note that **hilasmos** is a noun found ten times in the LXX and also in our present passage and at 1 Jn. 4:10 (the only two occurrences in the NT). Notice that the latter text is much like Rom. 3:24-25 in that it is stated plainly that God is the one putting forward Jesus as **hilasmos**. One gets the distinct impression that what we are dealing with in the use of this terminology involves an exchange or action that transpires between the Father and the Son not an action that is primarily focusing on what goes on within the believer as a result. When our author wants to talk about the cleansing effect of atonement he does so directly by using that language (i.e., **katharidzo** in 1:9). It would appear that both our author and Paul believed that unless God's wrath is propitiated by Christ's death, the effects of our sins are not expiated and so we do not receive either cleansing or, equally importantly, reconciliation and communion with God after the alienation caused by sin. The issue then being dealt with in this terminology involves guilt and cleansing but it also involves far more than that and tells us something profound about the righteous character of God that cannot be compromised just because God loves his creatures. As B. F. Westcott points out, fortunately for the sinner, the propitiating merit of Christ death is continual. It says here he *is* the atoning sacrifice, not "he was the propitiation."

There is one more related term of consequence, **hileos** found some 35 times in the LXX and it refers quite specifically to God as God turns the divine anger away from his people, and we have this same sense of the term in Mt. 16:22 and Heb. 8:12 quoting Jer. 31:34 where it is usually translated 'be merciful' which is the same thing as to turn away wrath.

It is true of course that the Hebrew term **KPR** lies in the background and it has as its basic meaning to cover or cover over and there can be little doubt that in various places in the LXX propitiation is in view (see Ps. 106:30 LXX and Sir. 45:23). Zech. 8:22 could hardly be more direct. It

refers to many coming to Jerusalem 'to propitiate the face of the Lord'. In the context of various of the LXX uses of the relevant terminology the wrath of God is referred to directly, for example in Micah 7:18-19 we hear "God does not retain his wrath forever because he delights in mercy." Our author as well is perfectly familiar with the connection of disobedience, sin, and divine wrath as a consequence as John 3:36 shows.

The question still remains as to where the focus lies in 1 John when this terminology comes up, and I agree with the lengthy and careful discussion of R. Brown that there seems to be more focus on cleansing, not surprisingly since our author is writing pastorally and he is not giving an abstract discourse on the nature of Jesus' atoning death, but on its benefits for the audience namely forgiveness and cleansing. I also agree that the echoes here of the Day of Atonement ceremony as described in Lev. 16 where the priest sprinkles blood of the mercy seat seems clear, especially 16:16 "thus he shall 'cleanse' the Holy Place from the impurities of the Israelites and from their wicked acts in respect to all their sins." We find this text in Leviticus directly applied to the work of Christ the high priest in Heb. 9-10. Nevertheless the idea of propitiation is clearly implied.

Sins do not need atoning for, if God does not need to be propitiated. They could simply be forgiven and cleansing could come through forgiveness rather than through an atoning sacrifice. But clearly enough our author does think that Christ's atoning sacrifice was necessary for the forgiveness of sins as does Paul. It is thus right to use the translation atonement or atoning sacrifice recognizing that while propitiation is clearly implied in 1 Jn. 2 and 4 the focus is on the benefits of the sacrifice for the sinner, namely cleansing and forgiveness. It is not in the end an either/or matter, for both propitiation and expiation are necessary to take care of the sin problem and reconcile God and humankind. And the marvel is that the Advocate is propitiator, expiator, and propitiation all in one. Lastly, it will do well to remember that the earliest commentators on 1 John were not squeamish when it came to saying that God's righteous wrath against sin must be propitiated. For example, Bede puts it this way: "In his humanity Christ pleads for our sins before the Father, but in his divinity he has propitiated them for us with the Father" (*On 1 John*—PL. 93.90). Notice once again, the strong stress in 1 John 2:2 that Christ is the atonement not just for the believer's sins, but for the sins of the whole world.

## VII. The Suffering Servant and His Precious Blood

No document in the NT more alludes to Christ as the fulfillment of the Servant Songs in Isaiah than 1 Peter. Our task here must be to focus

on 1 Pet. 1:18-19 and 2:24. Vv. 18-19 need to be read together and reveal what Christians know or ought to know about their redemption. The key term we must examine first is the verb **elutrōthēte** which here means either redeem or ransom. The idea of ransoming of course implies a form of redeeming, but the converse is not necessarily true. So we must examine how to translate this term. In favor of the translation “ransom” is: 1) the “not . . . but” structure we have here which contrasts two means by which one can be ransomed; 2) the reference to money—which was so often used to ransom various sort of captives or slaves; 3) “ransom” must be the meaning in Mk. 10:45 and it is quite possible and likely that Mark was dependent upon Peter for his gospel, which would thus suggest a similar translation here (cf. Titus 2:14); and 4) the use of the term in pagan and Gentile contexts would normally conjure up the idea of being bought out of slavery or buying oneself out of slavery (cf. 1 Cor. 7:22ff, Gal. 5:1, Rom. 6:14-23).

If we ask to whom this ransom was paid, the text does not say; however, it surely cannot be Satan since neither Christ nor God owed Satan anything. Later patristic theology went in the wrong direction here. Most assuredly it is the price paid to God Himself and the Judge who will indeed condemn us and cast us out if our sin is not dealt with, covered, paid for. A just God requires a just payment for sin—no more, but definitely no less. This implies that forgiveness for God is *very costly indeed*—nothing but Christ’s death was a sufficient price for ransoming believers from sure destruction and slavery to sin. God’s love then is a holy love—holy in that sin must be dealt with, paid for before forgiveness can be offered or a declaration of no condemnation pronounced, loving in that Christ paid that price with His blood in our stead. Not all the money in the world could have paid for our multitude of sins and bought us salvation. Such things, though valuable, are perishable and could not purchase something of eternal worth.

Notice here that Peter’s emphasis is on being ransomed from previous useless (or futile) and sinful behavior. There is probably a play on words here for the word **timē** refers to the price, in this case the price of manumission paid in the temple to the deity, and in turn the deity then pays the slave owner back, less a commission. But it is not a **timē** of silver or gold that ransomed the believer but rather the **timiō** the precious or valuable blood of Jesus that did the ransoming and paid the price. We may hear in this verse an echo of Is. 53:7 in preparation for the fuller Christological statement in 2:22-25 where Christ is more extensively por-

trayed as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, but already here Peter begins to paint that portrait. Jesus is seen as the flawless and faultless lamb.

Christ also did not die so that believers might sin all the more; now having a sure means of forgiveness. As Paul, in Rom. 6:1-2, says, “shall we go on sinning, so grace may increase—God forbid!” Rather, Christ spilled his precious blood so believers might be purified and holy. Christ’s death if we are to receive its benefits, implies our death to our previous sinful ways.

The reference to Christ’s blood as like that of a pure and spotless lamb (on the sinlessness of Christ see 1 Pet. 2:22; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Jn. 3:5), of course conjures up the idea of a sacrificial lamb. The Passover lamb in the OT times was apparently not seen as an animal which if sacrificed made atonement (see Ex.12:5). However, it had begun to have this significance in Jesus’ day in contemporary Judaism (cf. Jn. 1:29, 31; 1 Cor 5:7). Since Isaiah 53:7 seems to be in the background here, the atoning significance is surely implied. Of course, a lamb, if it was to be offered had to be perfect (Ex. 12:5, 29:1). On blood as a means of redemption or as a price see Eph 1:7, Heb 9:12, 22; Rev. 1:5, 1 Clement 12:7, Rev. 5:9. Let us turn now to 1 Pet. 2:24.

1 Pet. 2:24 gives Peter’s view of the atonement in some depth. Christ took up the cross or bore on the cross in his own body, our sins, which is to say the punishment for our sins. That it is “in his body” stresses Christ’s humanity. He was truly human and redemption came through a real historical person. He suffered too, he suffered unjustly, he suffered for those who deserved to suffer as sinners. Sins here may be seen as a burden that Christ lifts from human beings (against Anderson who over schematizes things suggesting the burden notion was replaced by the debt notion of sin). Since Isaiah 53 is likely in the background here, it is likely also that the implied idea is that Christ bore the punishment for human sins *in their stead*. Thus, we have here, substitutionary atonement by the suffering servant. It is also implied that Jesus takes away human sins, i.e., heals us. To what end? Not just so humans may experience redemption, but so they may die to sin and live to righteousness, as Christ himself died for sin and lived to righteousness. Christ’s death, if one accepts it, requires of us a willingness to go and sin no more, lest one crucify Christ afresh by one’s further sins. Thus, theology leads to ethics necessarily in 1 Peter. To accept Christ means to agree to follow in his righteous footsteps, and not to crucify him afresh by sinning again.

“By his wounds (welts, weals) we are healed of our sin sickness” **mōlōpi** means weal, that is, it refers to the marks on the body of one who

has been whipped, such as a slave (cf. Isaiah 53:5). We must remember that in Phil. 2, Jesus is said to be a suffering slave and he received a slave's final punishment—crucifixion. What better way to encourage Christian slaves here in 1 Peter than to say in fact that Jesus voluntarily became a slave for your sake? He knows what you go through. He's been there, too. Sin is also seen here as a disease that affects the whole person, not just his behavior, but his desires, his thought patterns, etc. It is a deadly cancer of which one must be healed lest they be lost. And atonement then must mean and offer more than forgiveness or right-standing, it must go "as far as the curse is found."

### **VIII. And So?**

We have roamed far and wide in the NT for the purpose of exploring in some depth its atonement theology. What we have discovered is a repeated pattern. The authors of the NT, or at least the ones we have examined here, agree that Jesus' death should be seen as a propitiatory sacrifice, dealing with the problem of sin and sinners in the hands of a righteous God who cannot pass over sin forever, but does wish to love his creatures forever. We have noted the use of the language of ransom and cleansing and forgiveness that were all intertwined with the language of propitiation and expiation. We also noticed that there is an emphasis on the comprehensive scope of Christ's death—sufficient to atone for the sins of all and efficient for those who believe. The scope of the atonement's benefits is limited by the response to the atoning death of Jesus, not by God.

We also saw an emphasis on the substitutionary nature of Christ's sacrifice. It should have been us on the cross. If there was one person who did not deserve to pay for sin, who did not deserve to die on the cross, it was Jesus himself, the Righteous One who paid the price for the Many. We talked about the notion of ransom, which clearly implied bondage, in this case bondage to sin, but not debt to Satan much less possession by demons. 1 Peter goes further and talks about being in bondage to false and fruitless ideas about God and life as well.

It is important to add at this juncture what I did not say. I did not say that a penal substitutionary propitiatory sacrifice is the only image of Christ's death that exists in the NT, nor is it the only language used to describe the atonement. What I would say is that it is the dominant model in the NT, and however squeamish this truth may make some folks because of its implications about God's character, at the end of the day one should not pit the Love of God off against his Justice, or the Righteousness of God off against his Mercy and Forgiveness.

Indeed, an adequately biblical theology of the atonement will show how all of these attributes of God are seen to be in play in the death of Jesus on the cross. Who wants to live in a world where justice is not finally done as well as a world where love conquers all? It is worth saying however that it is probably not an accident that when it comes to predicated nouns of God he is called light and life and love, but the adjectives appended to these terms include holy, righteous, just, and many more. God's love is a holy and just love, not love without holiness, and not holiness without love—thank God.

Finally, I have stressed that the effects of the death of Jesus amount not just to gaining us right standing with God, but also freeing us from the bondage of sin, cleansing us from sin, cleansing our consciences from guilt, and enabling us to live sanctified and holy lives that glorify God and edify our fellow human beings. In the end, atonement is just another way of talking about salvation, and as Titus 2:11 says “the grace of God *has appeared*, bringing *salvation to all*, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly while we await the blessed hope” who indeed will come and eliminate suffering sin and sorrow, disease, decay and death once and for all. Amen and Amen.

# THE HOLY SPIRIT AND HOLY COMMUNION: TOWARDS A WESLEYAN LITURGY OF THE ATONEMENT

by

Jason E. Vickers

*The 2014 WTS Presidential Address*

In the last decade or so, the doctrine of the atonement has once again become a flashpoint for debate in Christian theology. In evangelical and Reformed circles, a growing number of theologians are sounding an alarm over the disappearance of juridical and especially penal substitutionary theories of the atonement. For example, in a 2004 essay, George Lindbeck bemoaned the fact that penal substitutionary versions of the atonement that were “dominant on the popular level for hundreds of years” are “disappearing.”<sup>1</sup> More recently, after noting the absence of satisfaction and substitutionary motifs in contemporary theological reflection on the atonement, Richard Mouw urged evangelicals to recover “the notion of the Savior experiencing divine wrath for sin.”<sup>2</sup>

For many Wesleyans, news of the disappearance of penal substitution will be cause for celebration. If you are like me, then somewhere along the way you learned that penal substitution is more Calvinist than Wesleyan.<sup>3</sup> To be sure, there are penal substitutionary motifs *in* Wesley, but we take comfort in knowing that the “mature” Wesley may have distanced himself from this part of his Anglican and Reformed theological heritage. But before we resort to wild cheering over the demise of penal substitution, we should probably ask ourselves what, if anything, of theo-

---

<sup>1</sup>George Lindbeck, “Justification and Atonement: An Ecumenical Trajectory,” in Joseph A. Burgess and Marc Kolden, eds., *By Faith Alone: Essays on Justification in Honor of Gerhard O. Forde* (Eerdmans, 2004), 205.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Mouw, “Why Christus Victor is Not Enough,” in *Christianity Today* 56:5 (May 2012): 28.

<sup>3</sup>There is a long history of Wesleyan theologians characterizing penal substitution as Calvinist. For example, John Wiley refers to the penal satisfaction theory as “the Calvinistic theory” in *Systematic Theology* (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1892), 241.

logical importance is in jeopardy of being lost. Why are so many notable theologians expressing such grave concerns over the demise of penal substitution? Surely there is more going on here than blind allegiance to Calvinism.

According to George Hunsinger, the loss of penal substitution is a problem because it signals that “the social or horizontal aspect of reconciliation” has now eclipsed “its vertical aspect.”<sup>4</sup> Colin Gunton agrees, saying, “In place of an act of God” centered in the “historic life and death” of Jesus “towards the otherwise helpless,” the emphasis is now on “those who by appropriate action” can “help themselves.”<sup>5</sup> At the risk of oversimplification, one way to think about what is at stake is to see it in terms of a shift in theological sensibilities away from the question, “What has Jesus done?” to the question, “What would Jesus do?”

According to Lindbeck, Wesleyans are largely to blame for the disappearance of penal substitution, insofar as synergistic understandings of salvation have won out over soteriologies that emphasize the objective work of Christ on the cross. Synergism, says Lindbeck, appeals to an “increasingly feel-good therapeutic culture,” that is “antithetical to talk of the cross,” and to a “consumerist society” that has made the doctrine of penal substitution a pariah.<sup>6</sup> Finally, in what amounts to a declaration of the theological bankruptcy of the Wesleyan tradition (at least where the atonement is concerned), Lindbeck declares,

Those who continued to use the *sola fide* language assumed that they agreed with the reformers no matter how much, under the influence of conversionist pietism and revivalism, they turned the faith that saves into a meritorious good work of the free will, a voluntaristic decision to believe that Christ bore the punishment of sins on the cross *pro me*, for each person individually. Improbable as it might seem given the metaphor (and the Johannine passage from which it comes), everyone is thus capable of being “born again” if only he or she tries hard enough. Thus with the loss of the Reformation understanding of the faith that justifies as itself God’s gift, Anselmic atonement

---

<sup>4</sup>George Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 21.

<sup>5</sup>Colin Gunton, “The Sacrifice and the Sacrifices: From Metaphor to Transcendental?” in *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays*, edited by Cornelius Plantinga and Ronald J. Feenstra (Notre Dame, 1989), 211.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 205-06.



theory became culturally associated with a self-righteousness that was both moral and religious and therefore rather nastier, its critics thought, than the primarily moral self-righteousness of the liberal Abelardians. In time, to move on in our story, the liberals increasingly ceased to be even Abelardian.<sup>7</sup>

Many Wesleyans would no doubt argue that this is a caricature of synergism. I myself would argue that it is most certainly a caricature of revivalism and Pietism. As for synergism, I am prepared to concede that it can be understood in a way that foregrounds an “objective” view of atonement and justification. But I am also sensitive to Lindbeck’s point that there is something like a law of unintended consequences at work here. Advocates of synergism rightly begin with a doctrine of free grace or perhaps with prevenient grace, but in a therapeutic culture, free grace has a way of morphing, by almost imperceptible degrees, into free will. We naturally gravitate toward the human side of the equation. It’s all good and well that God may have done something back then. But we live in the here and the now. We want to know what we have to do. In this way, synergism tends to move the “objective” work of Christ from the foreground to the background of the picture.

To combat this tendency, suppose we were constantly to remind ourselves that we believe in free grace. I think a problem still remains. Synergism puts an emphasis on human agency that works fine most of the time, provided that we are dealing with able-minded and able-bodied adults. In other words, the advocates of synergism among us need to think carefully about the fact that some people have little to no agency, most notably the severely cognitively disabled. I’m going to leave this issue in mid-air for now. I will return to it in the concluding section of this address.

If we take the long view, then I suspect Lindbeck is right to blame Wesleyans for the disappearance of penal substitution in both academic theology and the popular theological imagination. Nathan Hatch, David Hempton, and John Wigger have shown that the Methodist message aligned with American political sensibilities in a way that the Calvinist message did not.<sup>8</sup> In other words, we Wesleyans won the war with the

---

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 207.

<sup>8</sup>See Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); and John Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Calvinists. Even non-Wesleyans like Lindbeck and Hunsinger have conceded this. The problem is that many of us don't realize that we won the war. Many of us are still fighting the Calvinists, when we should be assessing the damage that's been done to both traditions. The Wesleyan tradition, no less than the Reformed tradition, has suffered losses, and we need to figure out what those are. My own view is that, as a result of our centuries long blood feud with our Calvinist cousins, the Wesleyan tradition has severely under-developed doctrines of divine sovereignty and freedom, election, total depravity, and of what theologians have traditionally called the "objective" dimension of the atonement.

Lindbeck's claims notwithstanding, we Wesleyans are not the sole cause of penal substitution's demise. Over the last two decades, Mennonite and liberation theologians have severely criticized penal substitution and other juridical theories because, so the story goes, these theories depict an angry and violent deity who demands retribution either in the name of justice or the deity's offended honor. Most famously, Rita Nakashima Brock declared that penal substitution amounts to "divine child abuse."<sup>9</sup> Equally, if not more problematic, is the charge that the vision of God in judicial theories of the atonement legitimizes revenge and violence in society. Thus one theologian recently claimed that those "who believe in substitutionary atonement tend to support nastier prison systems."<sup>10</sup> These critiques have led J. Denny Weaver to discern an emerging "non-violent" view of the atonement.<sup>11</sup>

I suspect it is going to be hard for Wesleyans not to take a rooting interest in the growing debate between advocates of penal substitution and other juridical theories on the one hand, and advocates of non-violent views on the other. Our theological instincts seem naturally to align with the non-violent folks. For starters, there are few things that we Wesleyans enjoy more than seeing Calvinists take it on the chin. For some of us, that will be reason enough to embrace non-violent views. Beyond this, we Wesleyans love to talk about love. More precisely, we love to insist that love is God's supreme attribute. Some of us even have annual love feasts! So if it's true that penal substitution depicts an angry God whose wrath

---

<sup>9</sup>Rita Nakashima Brock, "And a Little Child Will Lead Us: Christology and Child Abuse," in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, edited by Joanne C. Brown and Carole R. Bohn (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), 54-59.

<sup>10</sup>William C. Placher, "How Does Jesus Save? An Alternative View of the Atonement," in *Christian Century*, June 2, 2009, 23.

<sup>11</sup>For a summary of this development, see J. Denny Weaver, *The Non-Violent Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

must be dissuaded or appeased by the death of an innocent, then count us out! Finally, if it's true that penal substitution and other juridical theories legitimize revenge and violence in society, then you can count us out on that score as well.

At this stage, another Wesleyan theological instinct shows up. When we are not beating up on Calvinists or talking about love, there are few things that we Wesleyans like to do more than to celebrate our so-called "conjunctive" approach to theology. We Wesleyans are a both/and kind of people. Or if you're a high brow Wesleyan, we're a *via media* kind of people. We instinctively want to say, "Let's just take the best of both theories!"

At one level, I've always been appreciative of this instinct. It's charitable. It's generous. It's ecumenical. At another level, I'm always suspicious that our both/and victories are won on the cheap and therefore prematurely announced. In this particular case, there is no quick and easy way to combine penal substitution on the one hand with non-violent theories of the atonement on the other. On the face of things, these theories appear to be mortal enemies. However, when viewed from the standpoint of dogmatic theology, they do have one very important thing in common: penal substitution and non-violent theories of the atonement offer no integrative account of the relationship between the person and work of Jesus Christ. Put somewhat differently, these theories fail to coordinate the work of Christ with an account of Christ's person. Such coordination, I propose, is the key that will enable us to affirm the theological concerns represented by penal and other juridical theories on the one hand, and the concerns represented by non-violent theories on the other. It may also allow us to do a little theological housekeeping where the challenge to synergism represented by disability is concerned. As I have already noted, I will pick this last theme up in my concluding remarks.

### **The Person and Work of Christ**

Before taking up the question of the relationship between Christ's person and Christ's work, we need to acknowledge that we cannot answer this question simply by turning to Wesley. Like most medieval and early modern theologians, Wesley doesn't offer us an integrative account of the person and work of Christ. This means we are going to have to look elsewhere for help. My sense is that this is a hard thing for some of us to do. We want to solve every theological problem internally either by appeal to Wesley or, failing that, by appeal to some reputable Wesleyan theologian whose work we presume is grounded in Wesley. But a willingness to look elsewhere can be seen as a sign of wisdom born of humility rather than

betrayal or a loss of nerve. We understand this when we have domestic problems. When we have a busted pipe, we call the plumber. When our car is making strange noises, we take it to the auto-mechanic. In other words, we know our limits, and we don't turn small problems into enormous ones by plowing ahead in ham-fisted way. So why do we not do the same thing when we have theological problems? Why not ask for help in those areas where our own theological tradition may be lacking in resources?

Where, then, can we turn for help? In recent years, Bruce McCormack, a friend to many people in this society, has done some splendid work on the relationship between the person and work of Christ. In what follows, I will provide a synopsis of the main contours of his position with a view toward assessing the criticisms lodged of late against penal substitution and satisfaction theories of the atonement.<sup>12</sup>

Historically and logically speaking, theologians have taken one of two approaches to coordinating the person and work of Christ. First, there are theologians who order the work of Christ to a metaphysical conception of his personhood. This is by far the more common of the two approaches. The list of theologians who take this approach is long and highly distinguished. It includes early Christian theologians like Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria, but it also includes an entire raft of contemporary theologians. Among contemporary theologians who take this approach, Marilyn McCord Adams is my personal favorite. Indeed, I find her *Christ and Horrors* downright enchanting. This is not to say that I am entirely persuaded by it. It is simply to say that it is one of those books that I can't put down. I'll say a little more about this work in my concluding remarks.

As you can probably guess by now, the second approach to coordinating the person and work of Christ is right the opposite of the first. The second approach orders the person of Christ to the work of Christ. The best example of this approach remains the work of Karl Barth. Following McCormack's lead, let's take a closer look at each of these approaches as represented by Chalcedon and Barth.

The Chalcedonian formula affirms "one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the

---

<sup>12</sup>The synopsis that follows is a summary of the argument in McCormack's splendid essay, "The Ontological Presuppositions of Barth's Doctrine of the Atonement," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological, and Practical Perspectives*, edited by Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 346-66.

same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and body; consubstantial [homoousion] with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial [homoousion] with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except for sin; begotten before the ages from the Father as regards his divinity, and in the last days the same for us and for our salvation from Mary, the virgin God-bearer [theotokou], as regards his humanity.”<sup>13</sup>

The purpose of this formula was not simply to say that Jesus Christ is both God and human, but to say something positive about the *kind* of unity that resulted from the coming together of complete deity and complete humanity. Thus it says, “[they] come together into a single person and a single subsistent being.” It testifies that Christ is “not parted or divided into two persons, but is one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ.” So the union is *not* a union of two distinct *persons*. Rather there is one “person” or “subject” in whom two distinct “natures” are joined. So the formula acknowledged Nestorius’s concerns insofar as it affirmed that each “nature” is “preserved in its *integrity* after being united in a single Person.” However, “the affirmation of a singularity of “Person” or subject meant that ultimately the victory belonged to Cyril of Alexandria. Chalcedon represents a decisive “no” to adoptionism. We are not to think of the Son as God *in* a human or as One who “indwells an already existing human being.” Rather, the Son is to be conceived as God *as* a human.

So far, so good, right? The problem is that the formula left unanswered the question pertaining to the *relation between* the “natures.” The Council was clearly trying to distance itself from Apollinarianism. Hence they insisted that the Logos assumed a perfect human nature. But notice that the one person or subject is identified as the only-begotten Son, God the Word. The central idea in Apollinarianism is that the Logos was “the *ruling principle* of Christ’s human nature.” In other words, the affirmation that Christ’s person included a complete or perfect human nature did not prevent theologians from viewing the human nature as “a *passive* instrument in the hands of the Logos,” or an object “upon which the Logos acts.”<sup>14</sup>

Chalcedon’s failure to clarify the precise nature of the relationship between the divine and human natures ultimately gives rise to the question, who, then, is the subject “who performs the work of reconciliation

---

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 349.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 350-51.

and redemption?" There are three logically possible answers to this question. First, we could say that the subject who redeems is the man Jesus, period. This answer, beloved by modern liberal theology, is ruled out of bounds by Chalcedon. The remaining two possibilities, however, can both be viewed as "consistent with the Chalcedonian formula." The second possibility holds that "the subject who performs the work of reconciliation and redemption is the Logos *simpliciter*." This is consistent because the Chalcedonian formula does not rule out "the Apollinarian tendency to make the Logos the operative agent in all that is done in and through the human nature of Christ." The third possibility is that "the subject who performs the work of reconciliation and redemption is the God-human in his divine-human unity."<sup>15</sup>

The problem with respect to the third option is that it is much easier to say than it is to maintain. Thus a vast majority of theologians have tended to parcel out the work of Christ in such a way that some actions (miracles, rising from the dead) are attributed to his divine nature and some (suffering and dying) are attributed to his human nature. As a result, "the singularity of the subject of these natures [is] lost to view" and with it the unity of the work. We either make the human nature a mere instrument of the Logos (Apollinarianism) or we make the human nature a subject in its own right in order to seal off the Logos from what befalls the human nature (Nestorianism). Thus the history of Christology consists of an almost constant vacillation between Apollinarianism and Nestorianism.

So what causes this vacillation? Why do we struggle to attribute redemption to the God-human as a singular subject or person? McCormack puts it this way, "The unseen guest presiding over virtually the whole of the christological developments . . . is the attachment to a particular understanding of divine immutability. At its root, this understanding of immutability is itself a consequence of an even deeper-lying commitment to the substantialist ontologies of the ancient Greeks."<sup>16</sup>

Now, many of us Wesleyans have heard about this sort of thing for years. We know that a substance-oriented metaphysics is supposed to be bad. But what, precisely, is the problem with it? Why is it so bad? The Greek category of "substance" (in its various forms) makes the self-identical element in "persons" to be complete in itself apart from, and prior to the decisions, acts and relations by means of which the life of the person in question is constituted."

---

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 353.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 354.

When a substance-oriented notion of immutability controls our conception of God, we end up with a God who is complete apart from, and prior to, all of God's decisions and acts. What God does (whether in eternity or in time) manifests, or gives expression to, what God is, "but what God does is in no sense constitutive of what God is." Consequently, it is impossible "to understand the human nature of Jesus Christ as the human nature of the eternal Logos." Any attribution of human qualities or activities or experiences to the Logos would set aside the "immutability" of the Logos. Hence the ordering of the work of Christ to a metaphysical conception of the person of Christ compromises the unity of the two natures in a single "person" or subject so that we really are "doomed" to a constant vacillation between Apollinarianism and Nestorianism."<sup>17</sup> Try as we might, we can't bring ourselves to say that God suffers and dies, at least not without winking!

Before turning to the second approach to the relationship between the person and work of Christ, we should note that when the work of Christ is ordered to a metaphysical conception of Christ's person, the charge of divine child abuse doesn't stick. The human instrument (on the Apollinarian scheme) or the complete human subject (on the Nestorian scheme) suffers and dies, but not the eternally begotten Son. So at worst, God is guilty of abusing and torturing the man Jesus; but not *divine* child abuse. I'm not sure that makes things much better for the penal crowd, but there it is.

The second way of conceiving the relationship between the person and work of Christ (which you will recall is right the opposite of the first), can be seen in the work of Karl Barth. Barth doesn't interpret "the ontological significance of the incarnation" based on "a concept of the 'divine' and a concept of the 'human' whose content has been determined in advance." Rather, Barth suggests we should learn "from the incarnation itself what it means to be God and what it means to be human." In one of the most succinct statements of his Christological method, Barth says,

The meaning of His deity . . . cannot be gathered from any notion of supreme, absolute, non-worldly being. It can be learned only from what took place in Christ. . . . Who the one true God is, and what He is, what is His being as God, and therefore His deity, His "divine nature," which is also the divine nature of Jesus Christ if He is very God—all this we have to discover from the fact that as such He is very man and a partaker

---

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 357.

of human nature, from His becoming man, from His incarnation and from what He has done and suffered in the flesh.<sup>18</sup>

So Barth begins with what God has done and then asks, “how must the being of God be constituted in eternity if he can do what we have seen him to do in time?” This, it seems to me, is Barth’s singular genius. Those of you who know me well know that I have never claimed to be a Barthian. But when it comes to this issue, I really do think Barth gets it right.

For Barth, the conditions in God for the possibility of the incarnation of the Son in time and the outpouring of the Spirit in time are provided by the doctrine of the Trinity viz. the doctrines of eternal generation and procession. As McCormack puts it, “To the movement (the lived history) of the Son in time, there corresponds a movement in eternity. And so also with the Spirit.”<sup>19</sup>

To the doctrine of the Trinity, we must also add the doctrine of election. Now this will be a little weird for us Wesleyans, because we normally think of election in connection with the doctrine of predestination rather than in connection with the doctrine of God per se. For Barth, the doctrine of election explains why these movements in time and eternity correspond to each other and why “God is not changed by the incarnation and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.” The divine self-determination “for incarnation and outpouring” is something that God decides from eternity. As McCormack says, “God’s being in eternity is a being-in-act.” And this means that when God does in time that which God determined for God’s self in eternity, “no change is brought about” in God on an ontological level.

Barth’s solution to the difficulties bequeathed to us by Chalcedon really is a stroke of genius. By reinterpreting Chalcedon through a “historicized” ontology, Barth overcomes the tendency in the tradition to “abstract the Logos from his human nature and the human nature from the Logos.” The singular “Subject of our redemption is neither the Logos *simpliciter* nor a mere human being but the Logos as human.” And that means that what happens to the God-human in and through the human nature happens to the God-human in the divine-human unity, so that even suffering and death, as a human experience, is “taken into the divine life” and not “sealed off from it.”<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup>As quoted by McCormack, 358.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 358-59.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 360-61.



So, how does this help with the contemporary debate concerning penal substitution? More precisely, if we order the person of Christ to the work of Christ, then how does this not still amount to divine child abuse? The first thing to say here is that, because the economic Trinity corresponds to the immanent Trinity, “an action by the first person upon the second, then, is not an action of the Father upon the “eternal Son” (conceived along the lines of a Logos simpliciter); nor is it an action of the Father upon a mere human being.” Rather, it is “an action directed toward the Logos as human (the God-human in his divine-human unity).” The second thing to say is that the trinitarian axiom *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*, means that if one member of the Trinity does anything, then all members of the Trinity do it. It is the triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) who gives himself over to the experience of suffering and death. The Father is “not doing something to someone other than himself.” Likewise, the Son is both the subject and the object of the passion. McCormack puts it this way, “He is the subject of his own passion . . . in the sense that his earthly trial and execution was the medium in and through which he himself was actively judging a sinful human race and executing a just judgment.” This entails that the proper meaning of “penal substitution” is that “the penalty that God as Judge willed to be the consequence of human sin is a penalty that God himself (the triune God in the person of the Son) takes upon himself.” As Barth himself says, “he acknowledges our sin and drinks to the bitter dregs the cup of temporal and eternal destruction which must follow our transgression.” So the charge of divine child abuse doesn’t hold. Nor does the charge that penal substitution legitimizes our violence against one another. “God’s action in punishing sin on the cross offers no example to be emulated” because it is not the action of one person against another. The event is “inimitable.” We couldn’t copy it if we wanted to.<sup>21</sup>

### **Holy Spirit and Holy Communion: A Wesleyan Liturgy of the Atonement**

So where does this leave us as Wesleyans with respect to theories of the atonement? It’s all good and well to order Christ’s person to his work, but on the face of things this only secures the fact that, as God-human, the Logos underwent suffering and death. It doesn’t automatically answer the questions that classical theories of the atonement pose, namely, 1) why did Jesus suffer and die, and 2) how does Jesus’ suffering and

---

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 361-63.

death accomplish God's purposes. So for the sake of the argument, suppose we follow Barth and order Christ's person to his work? This doesn't automatically commit us to penal substitution over against, say, satisfaction or ransom or recapitulation. And that, of course, raises the question, what theory of the atonement, if any, should we Wesleyans embrace?

Historically speaking, we Wesleyans have not embraced any one particular theory of the atonement, although you could make a good case that the governmental theory held sway among us in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I think we have been exceptionally wise in this, and so even though I don't think the recent charges against penal substitution can be made to stick, I don't think we should wed ourselves to penal substitutionary over against non-violent theories of the atonement or any other theories for that matter.

But where does that leave us? Do we just say he suffered and died and leave it to people to answer the why and how questions for themselves? This doesn't seem like a wise way to go. What, then, shall we do?

To begin with, I propose that we Wesleyans should apply Barth's logic with respect to the person of Christ to the doctrine of the atonement proper. In other words, I think we should begin with the suffering and death of Christ and work our way backwards. One way to do this is simply to ask, what does death signify?

From a biblical perspective, death signifies separation—both from God and from the world of the living. This is a simple observation, but I think it frames the issue in a way that should be appealing to Wesleyans. Friends, the language of separation is the language of holiness! And isn't this the sort of thing we Wesleyans should be doing—thinking about atonement from the standpoint of holiness.

In biblical religion, as you know, holiness denotes two levels of separation. The first level of separation has to do with the sheer otherness of God, the flip side of which is the radical vulnerability or fragility of creation. We are not God. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, but we are creatures, and as such we are subject to the ups and downs of creaturely life. The second level of separation has to do with our disobedience and sin and with impurity.

Suffice it to say, if we are going to approach the atonement from the standpoint of holiness, we are going to need to take both types of separation very seriously. And this may be where we Wesleyans can make a contribution to the wider conversation about the atonement.

The vast majority of theories of the atonement focus on the second type of separation, which is to say, the separation that results from our sin

and disobedience. This is certainly true of satisfaction and substitution, but I also think it is true of moral influence theories and non-violent theories. At first glance, ransom and Christus Victor might appear to be an exception. However, I think they actually make things worse where the first type of separation denoted by holiness is concerned.

But there is an even deeper problem here. It is not just theories of the atonement that focus exclusively on the second type of separation denoted by holiness; it is also our liturgies. When we shift from theory to liturgy, we raise the stakes considerably. For now, the issue is not what kind of contribution might we Wesleyans make to contemporary theology; but how might we actually be erecting barriers that prevent people from being reconciled to God through the passion and death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

The issue here can be put in a straightforward way. Not every story is about sin and disobedience. For example, consider the following excerpt from a story written by Christopher de Vinck shortly after his brother Oliver's death. De Vinck writes,

"I grew up in the house where my brother was on his back in his bed for almost 33 years, in the same corner of his room, under the same window, beside the same yellow walls. Oliver was blind, mute. His legs were twisted. He didn't have the strength to lift his head nor the intelligence to learn anything.

"My family and I fed Oliver. We changed his diapers, hung his clothes and bed linen on the basement line in winter, and spread them out white and clean on the lawn in the summer. We bathed Oliver. Tickled his chest to make him laugh. Sometimes we left the radio on in his room. We pulled the shade down over his bed in the morning to keep the sun from burning his tender skin. . . . We listened to him rock his arms up and down to make the bed squeak. We listened to him cough in the middle of the night.

"Oliver grew to the size of a 10-year-old. He had a big chest, a large head. His hands and feet were those of a five-year-old, small and soft. We'd wrap a box of baby cereal for him at Christmas and place it under the tree; pat his head with a damp cloth in the middle of a July heat wave. His baptismal certificate hung on the wall above his head."<sup>22</sup>

I ask you, who sinned, that Oliver was born this way?

---

<sup>22</sup>Christopher de Vinck, "Power of the Powerless: A Brother's Lesson," *Theosophy Northwest*, April 10, 1985, accessed March 26, 2015.

Earlier, I mentioned that I am enchanted by the work of Marilyn McCord Adams. In *Christ and Horrors*, Adams suggests that the first type of separation denoted by holiness is actually a bigger problem for us humans than the second, which is to say, the separation that has to do with sin.<sup>23</sup> For Adams, the first type of separation denoted by holiness is what gives rise to immense suffering, to horrendous evils, in a word, to horrors. And Adams contends that far more people have lived and died in the shadow of horrors than most of us in the West can conceive or imagine. This is the dark side of creation. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, and we are radically vulnerable to suffering. I'll say it again, not every story is about sin.

But most theories of atonement do not tend to speak to this kind of separation, focusing as they do on sin and its just deserts. I mentioned earlier that ransom and Christus victor theories only make it worse. For while they do not blame sin, they do blame the Devil, which only begs the question, why the hell would God make a world like this, a world in which a fallen angel gets to inflict suffering and death upon human beings.

At the theoretical level, Adams' solution is disconcertingly dark, and maybe that's why I'm so drawn to it. I don't know. Here is what she says. Perhaps we should conceive of the suffering and death of Christ as a propitiatory sacrifice, not for God's wrath, but for ours. In other words, perhaps Christ's passion is God's apology to us for having made a world like this. And perhaps that apology is also a veiled promise that God refuses to remain above the hell creaturely life can be—and that God is resolved to make it right, if only in a future that we cannot yet see.

Friends, my deepest concern here is not with Adams' theory. My deepest concern has to do with how we account liturgically for the separation that has nothing to do with sin—the separation that is the dark underbelly of creatureliness—the separation that has to do with our sheer vulnerability—with the fragility of creation itself. I don't know how to answer this question, except to say that this is the best argument I know for the use of the lectionary in worship. For the use of the lectionary requires us to think about the overcoming of separation not just in the light of Genesis, but also in the light of the book of Job. Which raises the question, how do we present the suffering and death of Jesus Christ in a way that answers not only the problem of sin but also the problem of the

---

<sup>23</sup>Marilyn McCord Adams, *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

suffering that has nothing to do with sin? That's an honest question that I'd love to see Wesleyans theologians and liturgists grapple with.

In closing, I need to let us up for air. I've had us pinned down under the objective side of the atonement, and that is not where we Wesleyans are most comfortable (though, as I have said, if we take our commitment to holiness seriously, it may very well be where we can make our best contribution to theological reflection on the atonement). But this wouldn't be a very good Wesleyan reflection on atonement if I didn't say something about its subjective dimension. Here I will be very brief and to the point!

In the epiclesis, we invoke the Holy Spirit to come and to make the elements the body and blood of Christ so that we might be the body and blood of Christ for the sake of the world. Notice that we do not ask the Holy Spirit to make us the body of Christ in the Eucharistic liturgy itself. We ask the Spirit to make the elements the body and blood of Christ so that we might be the body and blood of Christ in and for the world. And this means that, as the body of Christ, ours, too, is a being in act. We are the body of Christ when, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we participate in the overcoming of separation by leaving the sanctuary and eating with sinners, with those who our society has deemed impure and unclean, and with those who, in the shadow of immense pain and suffering, have come to despise God. In other words, we only keep the feast, when we give it away.

# ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION AND THE ATONEMENT: A WESLEYAN DEMONSTRATION

by

Heather Oglevie

The Wesleyan Theological Society's choice of Atonement in the Wesleyan Tradition as the theme for the 2014 meeting strikes me as a sign of the theological times; more specifically, a sign that the Wesleyan and Wesleyan-Holiness types are starting to consider the atonement on its own terms. This does not mean that Wesleyan theology neglected the atonement, but its concern to establish entire sanctification as a subsequent work—if not to say “second blessing”—means that justification, and by extension the atonement, are significant landmarks but not the final destination. It is no more ideal, however, to focus on justification and the atonement at the expense of entire sanctification. Surely the best of all would be to have both; to find in the atonement the very entire sanctification the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition prizes.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I propose one way in which this might be done. I shall argue that the models of the atonement can be seen as models of entire sanctification, and I will conclude with a brief examination of John Wesley's model of atonement to demonstrate how this approach works.

In my father's and grandfather's time, the Church of the Nazarene spoke of holiness in terms which were frankly pneumatological. For them it was “receiving the Spirit,” “being filled with the Spirit;” and (a great favorite) “the baptism with the Holy Ghost.” The Pentecost ring of this last had obvious appeal. For one, it shored up the “second blessing” model

---

<sup>1</sup>I am, of course, not the first to suggest this. Thomas A. Noble's recent book, *Holy Trinity: Holy People* (Cascade Books, 2013) is one attempt to find a deeper connection between entire sanctification and the doctrine of atonement. This book arises from Noble's 1988 Collins Lectures, so the ideas therein were clearly a long time brewing. Even at the March 2013 annual meeting, plenary speakers Ben Witherington III and Jason E. Vickers made suggestions for a closer link between atonement and entire sanctification. Their suggestions come very close to my own, but I daresay the method proposed here is distinct from the aforementioned great lights.

which had been a bone of contention with Methodism: that entire sanctification was an instantaneous, even sudden, change which followed after justification. For another, it suggested that this experience usually, but not always, followed a period of watchful waiting at an appointed place and time, and that this same experience would pack a weighty affective punch. These two implications perfectly suited the worship style of the camp meetings and revivals which gave the Holiness movement its impetus. The Pentecost model further benefited from the post-millennial optimism of turn-of-the-(20<sup>th</sup>)-century America; the descent of the Spirit was, after all, part of the *eschaton*. St. Peter quoted the prophet Amos at Pentecost and proclaimed that the Spirit had come in these last days; so too did the Holiness movement. God was doing something new in their midst which would eventually sweep over the entire world and change it forever. It was painful to leave parent churches, but new wine cannot go into old wineskins.

So the “baptism with the Holy Spirit” as an image for entire sanctification suited the early Holiness movement admirably. Yet the Pentecost metaphor in the Holiness movement hit its limits unusually quickly. For one, as Donald Dayton has pointed out,<sup>2</sup> it encompassed both purity and power, two concepts which went relatively well with the idea of fire but were often disjoind in daily experience. It was easy to see someone with the purity but without the power, and vice versa. From there it was a short step to a “three blessing” theology; justification for forgiveness, entire sanctification for purity; and the baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire for power. Ultimately the two movements split at the obvious seam, with the Holiness movement clutching the idea of purity and the emergent Pentecostalism going flat-out after power. Later discomfort with the idea of holiness as purity—historical theologians such as Paul M. Bassett<sup>3</sup> have adroitly pointed out how it shifted most of the blame onto women—has led Holiness theologians after 1960-1970 or so to look for new metaphors. But none have had the clarity, the passion, or the sheer conceptual power of the “baptism with the Holy Spirit.”

---

<sup>2</sup>Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 93ff.

<sup>3</sup>See Paul M. Bassett, “Culture and Concupiscence: The Changing Definition of Sanctity in the Wesleyan Holiness Movement, 1867-1920,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 28 (Spring-Fall 1993): 59-127; see also Diane Leclerc, “Gendered Sin? Gendered Holiness? Historical Considerations and Homiletical Implications,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 39 (2004): 54-73.

The main shortcoming of the Pentecost-model of entire sanctification is this: It makes the Godhead a Trinity of roles—Creator, Justifier, Sanctifier—with strong hints of dispensationalism at the personal level (i.e., those who have been justified can move on from the work of the Son and look for the work of the Spirit). To emphasize the Spirit as the sanctifier, especially in a phrase like “the baptism with the Holy Ghost” which makes him look like the sole agent, implies that mature believers do not need the cross as much as penitents and new converts do. But it is Christ—God incarnate—who is the center of our worship, and it is Christ who brings salvation. It is to Christ we must go to see what entire sanctification looks like and how it is accomplished in us—and not merely to Christ but to the cross.

I will argue in this essay that the link between the atonement and human holiness is that Jesus Christ was the first entirely sanctified man. In his cross his holiness was not merely displayed or demonstrated but perfected: consummated, and established in our race for all time.

My argument runs thus: The first premise is that sanctification is the perfection of human nature. Earthly sanctification is that perfection insofar as that is possible in this life; final sanctification or glorification waits for the life to come. Perfect humanity was brought into the world through the life and death of Jesus Christ, the God-human. His perfection was by personal merit; our perfection is by Christ’s grace. He offers the rest of humanity a share in his holy human life, and this is the means by which we become sanctified.

The second premise is that the death of Christ was the critical moment of his earthly life, his moment of entire commitment and self-consecration. Atonement models<sup>4</sup> reflect upon and explain Christ’s death;

---

<sup>4</sup>I use the word “models” instead of “theories” to refer to those semi-standardized theological explanations of the death of Christ and its accomplishments. The choice is largely based on personal preference, for the following reasons. Firstly, “model” suggests a pattern or process by which a complex system may be understood. It translates well into discussions of entire sanctification, on my view, which can also be described in terms of models. Secondly, “theory” connotes a coherent yet tentative explanation for phenomena, with the hint that the better part of intellectual virtue is to be ready to surrender or modify the theory in the face of new information. It also suggests a sort of evolutionary process, according to which the newer theories improve upon and thus supplant the old. This does not appear to me to be a good description of atonement theology, which is usually not considered to stand in a hierarchical arrangement with newer supplanting older.



by studying these, we may see what he did in dying, and subsequently we may understand what it is to be entirely sanctified.

Given these two premises, the argument states:

1. The doctrine of entire sanctification is properly located within Christology. It is a doctrine about the incarnate Son first and a doctrine about human persons and their salvation second.<sup>5</sup>
2. Jesus Christ was the first entirely sanctified human being, and he became so at the cross.
3. His sanctified humanity is now available to those who believe on the name of Jesus Christ. This is the fulfillment of God's promise to deliver those who call on him from sin and death.

The first point is that entire sanctification is not primarily a doctrine concerning humanity and human salvation. It is primarily a doctrine concerning God's dealings with the incarnate Son, and of the incarnate Son working out his own salvation through the Spirit. In Christ, God sanctifies the humanity which he has made his own. The death of the incarnate Son was the moment in which this sanctification became complete. All other humans who become entirely sanctified do so by the Son's gracious will that they be allowed a share of his sanctification.

This immediately raises a question: How can we say that the incarnate Son became entirely sanctified without making our theology incoherent or even blasphemous? To say that the incarnate Son of God *became* entirely sanctified suggests that there was a time when he was not. This in turn suggests that he may have been less than entirely holy; or to put it bluntly, sinful.

It is obvious why this is a problem. The Christian tradition maintains that it is not possible to predicate sin of God. There is nothing which is sin in the Godhead because God is entirely holy. Therefore, the Son of God cannot have been less than entirely holy in his divine nature. But it is possible to predicate sin of the incarnate Son, or more specifically, of his human nature, because the humanity of Christ was genuine and com-

---

<sup>5</sup>This particular line of approach takes a page from Barth, who did a similar reconfiguring of the doctrine of election in *Church Dogmatics*—the incarnate Son is elected in God by God's free self-determination, as part of the character and work of God. This somehow happens "before" creation, let alone Fall and sin, because in Barth the radical freedom of God must mean God never re-acts.

plete.<sup>6</sup> It was capable of sinning. Therefore, it is possible to say that there was a time when the incarnate Son of God, insofar as his humanity was concerned, was not entirely sanctified; which is also to say that there was sin in him. It may not be true, but we can say it.

Yet the testimony of Scripture and the teachings of the Church uphold the sinlessness of Christ without qualification. “You know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin” (1 John 3:5). “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth” (1 Pet. 2:22, quoting Isaiah 53:9). “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.” (Heb. 4:15). “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (1 Cor. 5:21). These verses make no distinction between the human and divine natures of Christ, except possibly the passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews which mentions temptation. Either the passage is predicating temptation only of the human nature, or it is making the point that the incarnate Son was subject to realities that cannot touch the Godhead—such as the possibility of sin—yet remained entirely without sin; there was no sin in him.

It is possible to disregard all of this, of course. The human Christ may have become entirely sanctified just as any other human person is; namely, brought out of sin into holiness. But this undercuts the theo-logic of the atonement. According to Christianity, Christ’s death was the act by which he took away the sins of the world (John 1:29). And interwoven into the fabric of the models of the atonement, whose job it is to explain how this takes place, is the premise that he could not have taken away the sins of the world *unless he had no sin of his own*.

---

<sup>6</sup>For the purpose of this essay, I follow a standard view like that expressed in the Chalcedonian Symbol (in all things like unto us, without sin). The Christian doctrine of two-natures Christology is a dissertation-sized discussion in itself, and there is not room to explore it in much depth here. John Wesley’s Christology, as Maddox notes, was traditional but Maddox adds that Wesley emphasized the divinity of Christ to the point where he resembles a practical monophysite (*Responsible Grace*, 114-118). Yet Wesley does have one use for the humanity in Christ which is quite germane to the discussion at hand; namely that Christ’s holiness in his humanity sets the bounds for Christian perfection. Believers should not expect that they will have no temptation once sanctified, for example, because Christ himself was tempted, and a servant is not greater than his or her master. “Christian Perfection,” *The Works of John Wesley* (Bicentennial Edition) 2:104; also *A Plain Account* pp. 11, 29-30. See also John Deschner, *Wesley’s Christology: An Interpretation* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1960).

Consider the priestly model of the atonement. On this model, the animals slaughtered in the Jewish temple system prefigure Christ: as individuals without defect, they are both valuable and blameless. They have no blemish which would give the owner a reason to destroy them. Therefore they do not die for their own faults but for another's: they die on behalf of the one who offers them. Christ takes on the role of the sacrificial victim—"the Lamb of God"—and allows himself to be offered up on behalf of the world. But who is worthy to sacrifice the Messiah? Only Christ himself, the greatest of all High Priests, as argued by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews; a priest of the line of Melchizedek. The logic of sacrificial atonement demands perfection in both roles: if Christ had any sin of his own, he would neither be the spotless sacrifice nor the worthy priest: he would die for his own sins.

According to other models,<sup>7</sup> which may loosely be grouped under the category of law and punishment, the incarnate Son settles humanity's account, pays its debt, endures punishment in its place, or satisfies the offended honor of its patron, freeing the justly-condemned mass of humanity from the impossible yet mandatory sentence it must serve before God as a result of sin. Again, if there were any sin in Christ, he could perhaps pay the penalty for his own sins, but he would be in no position to settle the account for anyone else.

Models that see the atonement as a victory over the devil or the powers of evil likewise insist there was no sin in Christ, since these models generally posit that the devil's hold on humanity is legal because humans are sinners, and that God must respect his claim. Satan oversteps his bounds by seizing the incarnate Son, whom he has no right to take. If there were sin in Christ, Satan would have had the law on his side. So there is no possibility for salvation according to this model unless the savior is both innocent and divine. If the savior is not innocent, he deserves to be imprisoned; if he is not divine, he himself is not in the sway of the evil one, but neither can he bring anyone else out of bondage.

---

<sup>7</sup>The following list or catalog of atonement models is of my own devising; a more standardized list can be found in any good theological encyclopedia under the entry for "Atonement." Two which I consulted were Eugene Teselle, "Atonement" in *A New Handbook of Christian Theology*, ed. Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 41-43 and John Murray, "Atonement" in Edwin H. Palmer and John Murray et al., *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Wilmington, DE: The National Foundation for Christian Education, 1964), 465-480.

At first glance, moral influence, exemplarist, or “middle” models like that of P. T. Forsyth (the cross is the confession to God of the world’s sin) do not seem to require the absolute sinlessness of the incarnate Son. Persons who are not completely holy can be examples of love or move others to love by their actions; it happens all the time. Yet these models state that the death of Christ was the utmost demonstration of love, which suggests that it surpasses the display that a sinful person can make. A display of love which is tinged, even slightly, with sin, is not the ultimate display of love. Therefore, we see that these models too require the sinlessness of the incarnate Son.

It may appear that it is not worthwhile to contend that the incarnate Son was entirely sanctified. The statement is either so obviously true that it need not be said, given the eternal holiness of the divine nature; potentially heretical, because it appears to predicate sin of the incarnate Son; or outright dangerous, since it threatens to remove a load-bearing pillar from the doctrine of atonement just when it is most needed. I am not willing to back down from this proposal so quickly, however, for the following reasons.

Scripture states that the incarnate Son changed and grew over the course of his life, even in his sufferings and death. These passages are generally read, correctly, as indicators that the humanity of Christ was real; like ours: capable of growth and improvement. And the plain meaning of the text does not imply vice or moral fault. The famous passage in Luke is perhaps the most straightforward: “And Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). This one is not difficult to understand: it refers the physical and mental changes which occur in a human person as he grows from infancy to adulthood, together with the social and psychological development appropriate to each age. This is a case of capability of improvement without necessarily suggesting sin or vice, as development is part of what it is to be human, and there is a sanctification or perfection appropriate to each stage. The perfection of an infant and the perfection of an adult are two different things. It is not a fault when my five-year-old niece Olivia acts like a five-year-old; she is showing the maturity appropriate to her age. I do not expect her to act like an adult. But I would be concerned if she continued to act like a five-year-old at age twenty.

Elsewhere, the Epistle to the Hebrews hints at improvement or perfection in the incarnate Son which goes beyond mere human maturation. “Although he was a son,” states Heb. 4:8-10, “he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal

salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.” In an earlier passage, the author wrote, “In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering” (Heb. 2:10). These verses rest within a complex argument about the real divinity of the Son of Man: that he was God and not merely an angel; together with his real humanity: that he was subject to the same temptations and weaknesses as we are. The argument also draws upon the Jewish ritual system, with its ready symbols of the high priest and the sacrifice, which the author of the epistle believes are particularly appropriate to explain the life and death of the incarnate Son. The inescapable conclusion of the argument is that the cross was a decisive moment in the life of the incarnate Son, through which he not only saved the world but became the one worthy to be the savior. These verses cannot be neatly excised from the epistle: they are woven into the very fabric of the argument.

Therefore, because the church has testified in Scripture to a perfecting of the incarnate Son, there is reason to look deeper into the puzzling statement “the entire sanctification of the Son.” Mystery invites contemplation. In what sense can it be true that the sinless incarnate Son became entirely sanctified or perfect through his suffering? Three possible answers suggest themselves.

The first is to reiterate that there is a perfection appropriate to each stage of human life, including the perfect death. On this reading, Christ had not achieved the totality of his perfection until Calvary for the simple reason that he had not yet died. This answer, though incomplete, is clearly true. The incarnate Son was genuinely human, and it belongs to the human condition to die. If Jesus had not experienced human death, he would not have known the whole of what it is to be human. And, as the Epistle to the Hebrews suggests, Christ is the worthy High Priest because he has shared all the sufferings of humanity, even death. He is therefore able to sympathize with humans in their weaknesses.

This answer is not sufficient on its own, however. It does not take into account the active, voluntary role Christ took in his own death, nor does it explain why that death should be on a cross. It also opens the door to suggestions that Christ perfected only what he personally suffered, which would mean that he failed to perfect a great deal of human experience. So it is not enough to say that Christ became sanctified at death because a holy death was the last act of his holy life.

A second answer makes a better case for itself. The death of Christ, as his last human act, was his last opportunity to forsake entire sanctification. Had he deviated even slightly from complete love of God or complete dedication of his will, it would have ended the life of holiness which he had led up to that moment. His death secures the entire sanctification of his life in two ways: firstly, by ending his life and making it possible to evaluate it as a whole; and secondly by putting his holiness to the severest test and showing it to be genuine. The cross exposed the true character of Christ's existence. Its raking light would have revealed the least flaw or deviation from perfect holiness. Christ endured its ghastly test and emerged vindicated: the perfectly holy man. From beginning to end, his entire life was entirely sanctified.

Even so, the second answer falls short as well. The real purpose of the question "How was Christ entirely sanctified?" is to learn how we—ordinary, fallen humans—can be entirely sanctified. The children of Adam and Eve do not start with native holiness and retain it; they come bereft of righteousness and must be given it. The acquisition of holiness is more than the steadfast refusal to break character; it is an active and vigorous commitment.

The third answer, which completes the other two, is this. Death is a unique event. It is not merely one act among others; it is the ultimate act, the fullest abandonment of the self, the last word. Greater has no one than this. Christ became entirely sanctified at death because it was there that he utterly surrendered himself to the purposes of God. He could do no more. In dying he gave every fiber of his being into the Father's hands. He was all in. He held nothing back. Therefore God was well pleased to accept his offering and to return to him, as his reward, his life renewed and restored. This same life is now his to impart to us, on the single condition that we would love him and trust in him.

This is the bridge from Christ's sanctification to our own. Like Christ, our holiness is not complete until our death. In his case it was physical death; in ours, death to self: utter commitment to God, reserving nothing for ourselves. His holiness is essential: he gained it by his own unique merit; ours is conditional: we receive it by his grace as he allows us to partake of his sanctified human nature. Christ was the first human being to be entirely sanctified.

This leaves the third point of the original argument to be considered: the nature of Christ's sanctification and its connection to our spiritual lives. The entire sanctification of interest to us is that which he gained in his humanity. As established in the ecumenical councils, particularly Chalcedon, the incarnate Son exists in two natures: divine and human. Only

the human nature of Christ became entirely sanctified at his death. It is important to emphasize this for at least three reasons. First, the Son was already entirely holy through his union with the Godhead as the second Person of the Trinity. Second, it was only by the union of the divine nature with the human that the entire sanctification of his humanity could occur. Third, the entire sanctification which is promised to believers (at least in this life) is the perfection of his humanity, not the perfection of the Deity.

Of these three, only the second and third appear to need further clarification. Since the third will be quicker, let us consider that one first. There exists a long-standing tradition of setting the life of Christ as the exemplar for a life well lived. Notable early appearances are in the Pauline epistles (Phil. 2:5-11, 1 Cor. 11:1), and in the Gospel according to John (John 13:13-17). This could be connected to the hope of bodily resurrection, as in 1 Cor. 15:12-23, or used to encourage perseverance in the face of hardship, in Heb. 12:2-11. In later Christianity, it often served as the engine driving asceticism (the word comes from the Greek *askesis*, "refining," used of the physical conditioning of an athlete); the steady pursuit of that perfection of which Christ was the model. Curiously, at least to Protestant ears, one use of the Christ model for asceticism was to *restrain* excessive self-discipline, noting Christ's relative indulgence in eating and drinking, in contrast to John the Baptist's rigorous self-denial.<sup>8</sup>

The theme of Christlikeness pervades the classics of devotional literature. Thomas á Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* (1418) was a widely-read devotional and ascetic guide which greatly influenced the young John Wesley. Wesley's own mature doctrine of entire sanctification incorporates elements of the *imitatio Christi* and self-discipline, with the life of Christ serving as his definition of the nature and extent of entire sanctification (temptation, for example, is compatible with entire sanctification, since Christ was tempted).<sup>9</sup> In more recent years, we have seen Charles Monroe Sheldon's *In His Steps* (1896), which helped popularize the mildly trite catchphrase "What would Jesus do?," and Oswald Chambers' *My Utmost for His Highest* (1927).<sup>10</sup> The characteristic of the life of Christ

---

<sup>8</sup>Franz X. Mutz, "Ascetical Theology" 613-621, in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Charles G. Herbermann, Vol XIV (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, 1913), 614.

<sup>9</sup>John Wesley, "Christian Perfection" in *Works* (BE) 2:104.

<sup>10</sup>The list is potentially endless: this is a very popular devotional genre. One of the better recent examples is Max Lucado's *No Wonder They Call Him the Savior: Chronicles of the Cross* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1986), which is particularly interesting in this context because its focus is on the last hours of Christ's life.

generally marked out for special observation is his selfless love for others; his patience, piety, power, and pacifism have also received mention.

The second point—the sinlessness of the human Christ—is more complicated. The accepted view of the Church is that the incarnate Son existed as one person in two natures, possessing all that belongs to the second Person of the Trinity and all that belongs to a human being. This includes human appetites and affections, physical finitude, a lifespan beginning at birth and ending at death, and a human will. He differed from any other human being only in this: he did not have the propensity to sin which is called Original Sin, nor did he have the associated Original Guilt. How this occurred is left somewhat mysterious, though Scripture hints that the circumstances of his conception, by the Holy Spirit, and birth, through the Virgin Mary, made this possible. In all other aspects, including the capacity to sin, he was like any other man.

Given the safe assumption that the incarnate Son did not commit voluntary sins; that is, sins willingly committed in full knowledge, the question remains whether he committed involuntary sins. If he committed involuntary sins, he still sinned, but if he did not commit involuntary sins, why is it that humans possessing Christ's entire sanctification can commit them? The answers are, firstly: he did not commit involuntary sins; and secondly, the ability to avoid committing involuntary sin was unique to himself. He was able to avoid such sins due to his union with the divine nature—he could not commit sins of ignorance because he possessed the divine wisdom—and due to the character of his mission—he could not commit sins of omission because he was not omitting anything. Jesus was perpetually set on the mission of greatest love and greatest conformity to the will of God for the salvation of the world. There was nothing greater he could be doing, and thus no good left undone; hence no sin. Other human beings, lacking this special charge, fall into sin by failing to do good they could be doing, although there is a tradition in Wesleyan theology of designating these “sins not properly so-called” because they are both unavoidable and involuntary.

What remains is to consider how Christ's entire sanctification relates to ours. The human life of Christ is the pattern for the holy life, but this is helpful only to a certain extent. Entire sanctification surely cannot be a matter of reproducing the life of a first-century Palestinian Jewish male. For one, this is impossible. For two, it has unfortunate implications. It would restrict entire sanctification to unmarried men without children who died at thirty-three. It would categorically exclude Gentiles. Taken to the logical extreme, it would exclude persons whose mothers were not



virgins, which covers pretty much everyone. And for three, the necessary data are not there. The gospels differ on the biographical details of the life of Christ, and attempts to get “behind” their narrative to the historical Jesus have ended in frustration.

I have said that the atonement is the entire sanctification of Christ, which means that his holiness was in his death; and correspondingly, our holiness is in death as well. What that death means or includes, for him and for us, is therefore of critical importance. For him it meant the physical death on the cross in all its gory brutality. But is that all it meant? Did it not also mean that ultimate surrender of self which ultimately constitutes death and gives it its horror: the loss of control, identity, memory, physical existence?

We must go to the tradition of the Church and its models of the atonement for the answer. Not one atonement model is primarily concerned with the physicality of Christ's death.<sup>11</sup> Their concern is in how that death is to be understood—how it was offered by the Son and received by the Father; what state of mind or will was required of the Son; which laws or codes were invoked and satisfied. That it was a death on a cross is secondary to these concerns, though some theologians find in it a particular appropriateness.<sup>12</sup> The models show what God requires of those who would be holy.

To read atonement models as statements of what it means—what it requires—to be entirely sanctified is to see them with fresh eyes. *If you would be entirely sanctified, you must die.* The models of the atonement describe the death you die. If Christ died as a sacrifice, then to be entirely sanctified is to be a living sacrifice. If Christ died overcoming the forces of evil, then to be entirely sanctified is to spend one's life combating sin—perhaps in the self, perhaps in others. Our sanctification is the same as his; the primary difference is that he accomplished his by his efforts, including his real, physical death. We accomplish ours by participating, by grace, in his perfect life, and thus the death he died is a death we share. Entire sanctification (for us) is death to self-will and self-interest; death to all but the pursuit of holiness in obedience to God.

---

<sup>11</sup>For that matter, no one today is entirely certain how crucifixion effected death, since the physical evidence is scant (the bodies of the crucified were not buried or preserved), and no ethical physiologist will crucify someone to find out.

<sup>12</sup>Athanasius, for example, found it particularly apt and fitting because “it is only on the cross that a man dies with his hands spread out.” Athanasius of Alexandria, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward R. Hardy (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1954), 24 (79).

On the cross we see it written in red: the holiest act is to die to self and live for God. Christ's death was not a tragedy or accident but the logical conclusion of a life lived in utter surrender. It was, truly, his utmost for God's highest. There on the cross, we see his mission and purpose most clearly. We as Christians see his entire sanctification *and our own* in the model that we use to express this great truth.

The subtitle to this paper promises "a Wesleyan demonstration." Let us consider John Wesley's model of the atonement and see if the model of entire sanctification it represents is in line with what he believed and taught it to be.

Wesley's model of the atonement is comparatively less explicit than his doctrine of entire sanctification. His sermon "Justification by Faith" presents it as penal substitution: in order for God to pardon the sins of the world without altering his law or engaging in divine self-deception, someone had to take the punishment so the rest of humanity could go free.<sup>13</sup> The following sermon, "The Righteousness of Faith," speaks in similar terms of two covenants, one of works and one of grace. It was no longer possible for humanity to gain righteousness by keeping the first covenant of works, so Christ paid its overdue balance of punishment and negotiated a second covenant of grace.<sup>14</sup> In the 1756 *Letter to the Reverend Mr. Law*, Wesley quotes with approval a passage by Anna Maria van Schurman: "There was need therefore of a Mediator, who could repair the immense wrong they had done to the divine majesty, satisfy the Supreme Judge, who had pronounced the sentence of death against the transgressors of his Law, suffer in the place of his people, and merit for them pardon, holiness, and glory."<sup>15</sup> The metaphors are slightly mixed, but it is clear Wesley's preferred model of the atonement falls within the "legal" category: models in which Christ atones with his own death for humanity's breach of God's law.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup>John Wesley, "Justification by Faith" in *Sermons* (BE): 1:188-190.

<sup>14</sup>"The Righteousness of Faith" in *Sermons* (BE): 1:203-9. What is particularly interesting about Wesley's line is that it nowhere allows the universal salvation that a full penal substitution would naturally imply. God can freely justify and make righteous the sinful persons of the world because of what Christ has done, but this is a conditional justification: only those who believe in Jesus Christ will be righteous in God's sight.

<sup>15</sup>Anna Maria van Schurman, *Eucleria*, quoted in John Wesley, *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. Law: Occasioned by Some of His Late Writings* (London: [s.n.], 1756).

<sup>16</sup>This is also the conclusion of Wesley scholars Kenneth Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 85; Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1994), 105.

At first glance it appears that the thesis of this paper cannot hold. Wesley's doctrine of entire satisfaction does not involve the believer enduring the just punishment for sin, so it is difficult to see how Christ became entirely sanctified by submitting himself to punishment. The answer emerges, however, when it becomes clear that Christ accepted the punishment of the cross voluntarily in the service of a larger cause. We can see it was of his free will because he could not have been taken unwillingly; he had shown himself capable of eluding capture many times before. Hence he submitted himself to the death on the cross. His reasons were three: to obey the Father, whose will it was to save humanity; to honor the law of God; and to love the world. First, he cooperated with the Father's will to save the world by satisfying divine justice. Second, out of obedience and love he honored the law of God by fulfilling its demands rather than looking for a quibble or an escape. His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane did not express rebellion but rather mental preparation; his struggles are evidence for believers that dying on the cross would cost him a great deal. Third, he loved the world to such an extent that he was willing to take on the burden of punishment that rightly belonged to humanity. In summary, the death on the cross on the penal substitution/satisfaction model was the ultimate act of love and obedience to God, honor to the law of God, and love to the neighbor. In Wesley, entire sanctification is love for God, which is identical with obedience to God, respect for the law of God, and love to the neighbor. It is the gift of God through the Spirit, the mark of the mothers and fathers in Christ, attained completely in a moment, subsequent to justification and regeneration, and capable of further maturation. In Christ it was entirely by his merit; in us it is entirely by his grace.

This sketch is sufficient to show that a legal substitution model does not necessarily yield a model of entire sanctification where holiness means enduring the punishment of sin to spare others. That said, Wesley might have agreed that the sanctified life is occasionally hazardous to one's health. "Love covers over a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8), after all, and loving the neighbor sometimes means shrugging off insults and injuries, without retaliating, which in a sense *is* taking the punishment for another's sin.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup>This paragraph does not support the view that "covering over a multitude of sins" means being a victim or a doormat. Christian love does not retaliate against abuse, but it does reprove it, correct it, and use every resource at its disposal to end it.

What I have proposed in this essay is that the conceptual power of the models of the atonement makes them strong enough to go beyond explaining human justification and reconciliation to God. They can also depict the entire sanctification of Jesus the incarnate Son of God, whose holy humanity was established for all time at that moment. The sanctified life for all persons is just as it was for Christ: to obey God unto death, to surrender to the utmost, to go all in. The main difference is that he accomplished his sanctification by his own works, while we gain ours through his.

The purpose of this approach to models of the atonement is not novelty for novelty's sake. It is an attempt to bring home to the wider Christian church a truth cherished by the Wesleyan tradition: that sin is not the inevitable condition of human existence. It can be resisted and overcome; first in deeds and words and then in inclinations, thoughts, and affections. The cross is our guarantee that this is possible for a human and therefore it is possible for us.

# THE “NECESSITY” OF ANSELM: THE ARGUMENT OF THE *CUR DEUS HOMO*

by

Thomas A. Noble

According to J. K. Mozley in *The Doctrine of the Atonement*, “If any one Christian work outside the canon of the New Testament may be described as ‘epoch-making,’ it is the *Cur Deus Homo* of Anselm.”<sup>1</sup> James Denney wrote that, despite its “inadequacy,” it was “the truest and greatest book on the atonement that has ever been written.”<sup>2</sup> In this paper we will not be attempting such a general assessment, but will restrict ourselves largely to examining the logic of Anselm’s argument that the Atonement was “necessary” in order to procure our forgiveness and salvation.

Before we come to that, however, two preliminary remarks seem to be ‘necessary.’

## 1. Authentic Wesleyan Theology Stands in the Anselmic Tradition

The influence of the *Cur Deus Homo* on the subsequent doctrine of the Reformers and therefore of John Wesley has been well documented. Randy Maddox places Wesley in the development of the Anselmic tradition, quoting a key passage in which he connects the Reformers’ concern with justification with the key Anselmic concept of satisfaction. Wesley wrote:

I believe three things must go together in our justification: upon God’s part his great mercy and grace; upon Christ’s part, the satisfaction of God’s justice by the offering his body and shedding his blood, “and fulfilling the law of God perfectly”; and upon our part, true and living faith in the merits of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>J. K. Mozley, *The Doctrine of the Atonement* (London: Duckworth, 1915), 125.

<sup>2</sup>James Denney, *The Death of Christ* (London, Tyndale Press, 1951), 188.

<sup>3</sup>*The Principles of a Methodist*, 3 (*Works*, 9:51); see Maddox, *Responsible Grace* (Nashville, Kingswood, 1994), 96-106. Nazarenes particularly should note Wesley’s use of the word “merits.”

Kenneth Collins notes various aspects of the atonement in Wesley's thought, but concludes that at the heart of his doctrine is the Anselmic notion of satisfaction conveyed through the Reformation theology of the *Book of Common Prayer* with its reference to "the one oblation of himself once offered making a full oblation, sacrifice, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." Collins quotes Lindström's conclusion that "orthodox satisfaction would seem to be the dominant conception in [Wesley's] view of the atonement."<sup>4</sup>

It is appropriate therefore that, at this conference of the Wesleyan Theological Society on the theme of Atonement, some attention should be paid to Anselm.

## 2. Anselm Presents a "Model," not a "Theory," of the Atonement

The language of "theories" of the atonement still persists in some quarters, but we need to drop it. The use of that language may be traced to the nineteenth century, I assume, when some liberal theologians such as Horace Bushnell and G. B. Stevens dismissed the whole development of the doctrine in the West from Anselm onwards through the Reformers. Their aim was to propose a second view which they claimed could be traced back to Abelard, the exemplarist or "moral influence" theory.<sup>5</sup> Gustaf Aulén then contrasted the "objective" view of Anselm with the "subjective" view, supposedly from Abelard, and proposed a third view which he designated the "classic" view, claiming that this view of the Atonement as Christ's victory of the powers of evil was the view of Irenaeus and the Greek Fathers, as well as the dominant view of Luther. Examining the doctrine of the Atonement through a whole collection of theories thus became a standard textbook approach. J. Kenneth Grider, for example, lists five apparently distinct "theories"—Ransom, Satisfaction, Moral Influence, Punishment, and Governmental.<sup>6</sup> The implication of this approach often seems to be that the student should adopt one of these and reject the others. But the very word "theory" seems to suggest a

---

<sup>4</sup>Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 101, quoting Harald Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification* (London: Epworth Press, 1950), 61.

<sup>5</sup>Alister McGrath long ago demolished the idea that Abelard was merely an exemplarist. See McGrath, "The Moral Theory of the Atonement. An Historical and Theological Critique," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 28 (1985), 205-220.

<sup>6</sup>J. Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1994), 326-335.

literal explanation employing strict logic and perhaps Anselm's stated aim in *Cur Deus Homo* that he intends to give the "necessary" reasons for the Atonement is the root of that approach.

But in contrast to the notion of "theories," it is now widely accepted that in the doctrine of the Atonement (as throughout Christian Theology) we employ metaphors, and metaphors that become definitive we call 'models.' This general approach from philosophy of language was applied specifically to the doctrine of the Atonement in Colin Gunton's book, *The Actuality of the Atonement*,<sup>7</sup> in which he identified three major metaphors or models, the battlefield, the law court and the temple sacrifice. With regard to the second of these, the legal metaphor which has dominated the Western tradition since Anselm, Gunton rejects what he sees as Schleiermacher's approach, which is to classify the language of law, judgment and penalty as metaphor in such a way as to deny that there is any objective law of justice, and to conclude that "we must therefore speak only or chiefly of an inner human transformation."<sup>8</sup> In opposition to that, Gunton maintains that metaphors are not fictions: they are ways of talking about what "actually" is the case. But Gunton equally rejects the "conservative opponents" of Schleiermacher whose reply has been to develop "an equally rationalistic theory of what has come to be called penal substitution."

With these two preliminary comments, we may now move to examine Anselm's theological method more generally before we come to the logic of the *Cur Deus Homo*.

### 3. Anselm's Theological Method

One question that has been discussed is whether Anselm's theological method is a kind of rationalism or whether it begins with faith so that it is indeed characterized by the famous statement inherited from Augustine, *credo ut intelligam*, The concept of "necessity" which he uses seems to lend credence to the former—that Anselm employs a kind of rationalism. "Necessity" is a characteristic of deductive logic. In a syllogism, for example, the conclusion *necessarily* follows from the two premises. Are we to classify Anselm along with the Deistic philosophers of the Enlightenment—Descartes, who gave his own version of the ontological argument, the Empiricists who endorsed the cosmological and teleological arguments—or even Kant with his "postulation" of a god to account for

---

<sup>7</sup>Colin Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988).

<sup>8</sup>Gunton, 16.

the objectivity of the moral law? Or is there something profoundly different in Anselm's methodology?

John McIntyre notes Anselm's enunciation of his methodological principle in the first paragraph of the *Proslogion*:

For I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, but I believe in order that I may understand (*credo ut intelligam*).

The logic of the whole *Proslogion*, according to McIntyre,<sup>9</sup> is a demonstration that even the fool is committed by the notion of God he already has in his understanding to affirm not only the existence of God but several of his attributes. Having that notion of God in the understanding then is a weak form of faith which is strengthened by the ontological argument. McIntyre demonstrates that in Anselm's earlier work, the *Monologion*, while he does not explicitly quote the methodological principle of *credo ut intelligam*, the method is in fact identical, as it is too in the *Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi*.<sup>10</sup>

McIntyre generally adopts the interpretation of Anselm which Karl Barth presented in the book which takes another phrase from Anselm as its title, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*,<sup>11</sup> and which is a commentary on Anselm's proof of God's existence in the *Proslogion*. McIntyre summarizes Barth's view:

Barth's most important contribution to the analysis of the Anselmic methodology is to be found in his contention that the *intellectus* consists in proving that an *x* not accepted by his theological opponents can be reached by a process of logical inference from certain premises, *a b c d*, which these opponents do accept, and that denial by them of *x* involves them in logical self-contradiction.<sup>12</sup>

Barth gives the argument of the *Cur Deus Homo* as an example which McIntyre summarizes like this:

---

<sup>9</sup>John McIntyre, *St. Anselm and His Critics* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1954), 8ff.

<sup>10</sup>McIntyre, 10-14.

<sup>11</sup>Karl Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum* (ET, London: SCM, 1960).

<sup>12</sup>McIntyre (1954), 34. McIntyre comments that this methodology more obviously fits Anselm's later works such as the *Cur Deus Homo* than the earlier works, the *Monologion* and *Proslogion*. He also thinks that Barth is wrong to conclude that Anselm has no place for natural theology since some of the premises he begins from are from observation of the world rather than from scriptural revelation.



The *x* of the *Cur Deus Homo* is the necessity of the Incarnation and of the reconciling death of Christ. . . . The *a b c d* are: the existence of a divine plan for humankind; the essential obligation of man to obey God, his Creator; sin as infinite guilt of man in the sight of God; God's relentlessness in his negation of sin; the incapacity of man to redeem himself; and finally, the aseity and honour of God.

Barth points out that these are all drawn, not from supposedly universal truths, but from revelation. McIntyre comments that that does not in fact apply to the *Monologion* or the *Proslogion*, but it does seem to apply to the *Cur Deus Homo*. Irrespective of that, however, what Barth is drawing to our attention is that, for Anselm, the meaning and truth of any proposition is only established when it is set in context. For Anselm, *intellectus* "is the sustained attempt on the part of the Christian to relate the *credo* to the rest of his beliefs."

With those general comments on Anselm's theological method, we turn then to a fuller examination of the specific argument of the *Cur Deus Homo*. We shall try to show how *x*, Anselm's doctrine of the Atonement, follows from *a b c* and *d*, substantially the same as the list just quoted from McIntyre.

### 3. The Argument of the *Cur Deus Homo*: Step One

Michael Root clarifies the argument of Anselm's treatise by focussing on the concepts of what is "fitting" (*conveniens*) and what is "necessary" (*necessity*).<sup>13</sup> He points out that the Commendation to Pope Urban II, the Preface and the opening chapters are "permeated" with the language of necessity. In Book 1, Chapter 1, Anselm defines the question he is setting out to answer:

The question is: for what reason or by what necessity did God become man (*cur deus homo*), and by his death, as we believe and acknowledge, restore life to the world, although he could have accomplished this by means of another person, whether angelic or human, or simply by an act of his will?<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup>Cf. also the analysis of the argument of the *Cur Deus Homo*, in Jasper Hopkins, *A Companion to the Study of St. Anselm* (University of Minneapolis Press, 1972), Chapter 6.

<sup>14</sup>Anselm of Canterbury, *Why God Became Man*, trans. Joseph M. Colleran (Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1969), 64. All quotations are from this translation.

But before that, in the Preface, Anselm had already explained the structure of the two books of the treatise which are to address that question:

The first of these [books] contains the objections of the unbelievers who reject the Christian faith because they consider it opposed to reason, together with the answer of believers. Later on, leaving Christ aside (*remoto Christo*), as if nothing had ever been known of him, proof is given by necessary reasons that it is impossible for any person to be saved without him. In the second book, likewise, as if nothing were known of Christ, it is shown with no less evident argument and truth, that human nature was created for the very purpose that finally the whole person, that is, body and soul, should enjoy blissful immortality. Proof is given also that it is necessary that man achieve the purpose of his creation, but that it could only occur through a Man-God; and besides, that all we believe about Christ must of necessity occur.

The question is sometimes raised how Anselm can be following the method of *credo ut intelligam*, if at the same time he is going to argue *remoto Christo*. Does faith not begin with Christ? But of course this is the specific form which Anselm's theological method takes in this treatise. Christ, the God-Man, and his death for our sins is the *x* towards which Anselm is going to argue. He is going lay out a number of other beliefs about God and the world and the human race as *a b c* and *d* —beliefs which are generally acknowledged, in this case from the Christian revelation, but perhaps also more widely by unbelievers. And he is going to demonstrate that given those beliefs, belief in the 'satisfaction' offered for our sins by the God-Man necessarily follows.

Given that defining of the question Anselm is setting out to answer, and given that synopsis of the two books, we can now trace the argument in more detail.

In Book I, Chapters 3 to 6, Anselm introduces the concept of what is "fitting" or "appropriate" (*conveniens*) for God. In I, 4, he gives us what Root identifies as a summary of the argument spelled out by the rest of the treatise:<sup>15</sup>

Do you not think this is a sufficiently necessary reason [*satis necessaria ratio*] why God should have done what we described:

---

<sup>15</sup>Michael Root, "Necessity and Unfittingness in Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 40 (1987), 211-230, cf. p. 213.

that the human race, that so precious product of his hand, had been totally lost, and that it was not fitting [*nec decebat*] that all that God had planned for man should come to nothing, and that this plan could not be realized unless the human race were liberated by its Creator himself?

Here we see one of the major beliefs which Anselm is taking as a starting point for his argument, and it is, interestingly, a teleological—or shall we say, an eschatological—starting point. The grand context within which the Atonement is to be understood stretches from God's original intention for humanity in the creation all the way to the eschaton. If we want to use more biblical language, it is that God's intention is to bring in his kingdom; it is that the human race should be his covenant people; it is that the holy city, the new Jerusalem, should come to earth and God's will at last be done on earth as in heaven. That is the primary belief, the *a* of the *a b c* and *d*, which is the first premise of Anselm's argument. It is this belief, *a*, that the end will complete God's original creative intention that leads to the key point about what is "unfitting" or "inappropriate" for God. It is "unfitting" that God's eschatological intention be unfulfilled. If God be God, his original intention in creation for the human race *must* be finally fulfilled even despite our sin. The *necessity* follows from what is *unfitting* for God.

But if faith in God is the starting point, and the fulfilment of God's eschatological intention for his kingdom or rule is premise *a*, then there follows from that an anthropology, a Christian doctrine of humanity, which we could label premise *b*. This is not actually laid out till Chapter 1 of Book II, but there it is made clearer that God's good intention is a good intention for humanity:

We should not doubt that God created rational nature in the state of justice so that it might be happy by enjoying him. . . . Hence rational nature was created in the state of justice (*iustitia*) in order to be happy by enjoying the supreme good (*summum bonum*).

And humanity's *summum bonum*, as Augustine taught, was God himself. It is "not fitting that God should give such a power uselessly," so here too is the concept of 'unfittingness' linking premise *b* with premise *a* as a corollary. It is unfitting that God's purpose for humanity be thwarted.

Michael Root argues that this is the hinge upon which the whole argument of the *Cur Deus Homo* swings, that God necessarily does not do what is "unfitting." We need to note here that the concept of what is "fit-

ting” or God or “worthy” of him is a key concept too in the argument of Athanasius in the *De Incarnatione*.<sup>16</sup> But Anselm more clearly spells out the consequence of “unfittingness.” Michael Root explains: “No certain or necessary conclusions about what God will do follow from an assertion of fittingness,” but, “To say that an act is unfitting is to say that God necessarily will not perform such an act. A certain and necessary conclusion does follow, though only a negative one.”<sup>17</sup> It is unfitting that God’s original intention be unfulfilled and therefore it necessarily will be. Anselm’s undergirding assumption is his faith in God.

In Book I, 6 to 9, there is what we may regard as a slight diversion in which Anselm considers the claim of the unbeliever that Christ’s death on the cross is ‘unfitting,’ particularly for God’s power and wisdom. Following again in the footsteps of Athanasius in the *De Incarnatione*,<sup>18</sup> but expressing it differently, Anselm pin-points the divine dilemma. If God could not save us by *fiat* he is not all-powerful, but if he could have saved us in another way how can he be wise? And for Christ to be so humiliated is unfitting even for a man, never mind one who is God Incarnate. And in addition (I, 8), what sort of justice is it to hand over to death the most virtuous man of all in place of a sinner? (That of course is a question that echoes down to current discussion.) Anselm’s immediate answer to that last question is that Christ was not compelled to die, but died voluntarily, but while that is relevant, it is not yet, of course, a full answer to the question. He returns again to what is essentially the same question in I, 10:

It is surely to be wondered at if God so derives delight from, or has need of, the blood of the innocent, that he neither wishes nor is able to spare the guilty without the death of the innocent.

Anselm is clear that that is not what is going on here. It is totally unworthy of God to even entertain the idea that he delights in the blood of the

---

<sup>16</sup>Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, 6 (Thomson translation, OUP, 1971): “For it would not have been worthy (*axios*) of the goodness of God that what had been brought into existence by him should be corrupted...”

<sup>17</sup>Root, 220.

<sup>18</sup>Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, 6): “For it was absurd (*atopon*) that, having spoken, God should lie, in that he had established a law that man would die by death if he were to transgress the commandment, and man did not die after he had transgressed, but God’s word was made void. . . . And furthermore, it would have been improper (*aprepçs*) that what had once been created rational and had partaken of his Word, should perish and return again to non-existence through corruption. For it would not have been worthy of the goodness of God. . . .”

innocent. That is indeed unthinkable. Any such notion of God is totally contrary to Anselm's position and anyone who attributes such a view to him is criminally distorting his doctrine.

We need to leave that there for the moment to return to the main line of the argument.

#### 4. The Argument of the *Cur Deus Homo*: Step Two

What Root identifies as the second step in the argument begins at Book I, Chapter 11. Having established that what God intends must come to pass, the second step is "the demonstration that the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ are necessarily the means God uses to realize the original creative intent."<sup>19</sup> They are the only possible means, i.e., the necessary means, because anything else would be "unfitting" for God.

This step of the argument introduces Anselm's definition of sin and of "satisfaction." "To sin then is nothing else than not to render to God his due." This is immediately identified as a "debt." But not only the outward deed or omission of the deed is considered: Anselm relates this to the will. It is "justice (*iustitia*) or rectitude (*rectitudo*) of the will which makes persons upright or right in heart, that is, in will." Such a will, whether it is able or unable to be fulfilled in action, is what gives "satisfaction" to God.

There are two points usually missed which we need to note very carefully about Anselm's linked concepts of "satisfaction" and "sin." The first is this: that this positive account of *satisfactio* logically precedes the definition of sin. A satisfactory or appropriate relationship with God is one in which human beings reflect his justice and uprightness: "This is the only and the total honour which we owe to God." The concept of *satisfactio* then does not follow from the concept of sin: on the contrary, the definition of sin follows from a positive concept of *satisfactio*. The negative follows from the positive. "A person who does not render God his honour due to him, takes from God what is his and dishonours God, and this is to commit sin." And it is this that leads to the requirement that this satisfaction, this obedience, be restored to God:

Thus everyone who sins must pay to God the honour he has taken away, and this is satisfaction, which every sinner must make to God.

The second key point to note carefully is that this is not a legalistic or juridical concept of sin: it is a *relational* one. Sin for Anselm is not break-

---

<sup>19</sup>Root, 220.

ing the law or disobeying the commandments: it is a break in the *relationship* with God because we do not “honour” him, i.e., in biblical language, love, serve and obey him, as we ought. Hans Urs von Balthasar makes a similar point, overstating his case by claiming that Anselm’s doctrine of satisfaction has in it nothing of the juridic.<sup>20</sup>

Having made these two very important points, this might be a good place to dispose of some of the frivolous criticisms of Anselm which seem to have begun with G. B. Stevens and have been repeated *ad nauseam*. One is the objection to the word “debt” as if this meant that Anselm was proposing a merely “commercial” doctrine of the Atonement. Even apart from the fact that the language of “debt” comes into the Matthean version of the Lord’s prayer and is deeply rooted in one Old Testament model for redemption as deliverance from debt and bankruptcy through the *go’el*, the kinsman-redeemer, the very language of “obligation” and “ought” which we use in Ethics is actually a dead metaphor. One might say that it is the definitive model on which all ethical reflection is based. As John McIntyre points out, the English word, “ought” was originally the past tense of the verb “to owe.” For Anselm, a *debitum* is simply something I ought to do, an obligation I ought to fulfil.<sup>21</sup>

The second frivolous comment (stemming from Stevens) is that Anselm’s thinking about “honour” and “satisfaction” is merely a “feudal theory,” based on what the feudal inferior owed to his overlord. Certainly this may mean that Anselm’s thought would resonate in medieval society, but we must not confuse the cultural relevance of an idea with its origin and basis. Ancient society was just as hierarchical as medieval society (as John Dominic Crossan has shown with his analysis of clients and patrons), and indeed, despite the best efforts of egalitarians, modern Western society is still hierarchical economically, politically and socially. We may mitigate the worst effects of hierarchy and ensure that it is fairer and that rising in the hierarchy is open to as many as possible, but it would be naive to think that we could eliminate hierarchy without destroying society itself. Indeed the very concept of a “meritocracy” presupposes hierarchy. As for the words “honour” and “satisfaction” which were indeed prevalent words and concepts in the age of chivalry, we can easily substitute biblical words for “honour” by talking about the “glory” or the “name” of God or the “holiness” of God. God had to be revered, revered, and worshipped. God had made that “necessary,” that is to say

---

<sup>20</sup>See Glenn Olsen, “Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Rehabilitation of St Anselm’s Doctrine of the Atonement,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 34 (1981), 49-61, cf. 56.

<sup>21</sup>McIntyre, 67.

that it was his *requirement* that Israel reflect his holiness and obey his law. "You shall be holy, for I am holy." Within the grace of the covenant therefore (and that of course is crucial to what Sanders called "covenantal nomism"), obedience to the Torah was not optional: it was required. The requirements of the law had to be "satisfied."

The concept of "satisfaction" is rooted then not in a specific medieval society, but in the necessary order in human society as such which is embodied in "the rule of law." Jurists in the Anglo-American tradition rooted in *Magna Carta* will remind us of that. Liberty depends on order, and order is embodied in the rule of law. Sin is not to be understood then only individualistically. Sin is a disturbance of "the order and beauty of the universe" (*ordo et pulchritudo universitatis*). Therefore, writes Anselm in I, 15:

If divine wisdom did not impose these sanctions where wickedness tries to disturb the right order, there would arise in the very universe which God has to keep in order, a certain deformity from the violation of the beauty of order, and God would seem to be deficient in his providence.

Once again the necessity arises from the unfitness. It is unfitting for God to allow disorder which would not only defame his name, but would bring yet greater suffering to his creatures. Human society is thus seen to present a pale analogy of the kingdom of God, and that YHWH is king and has asserted his *sovereignty* through the One who was "obedient to death, even death on a cross," is not an optional model for Christian faith and theology, but a biblical and essential one. It certainly must give way to the final word about God, that he is not only king, but "Our Father," but that does not mean that the model of kingship is jettisoned. It is precisely because Our Father is the Sovereign Lord that we can have any hope of the final defeat of evil and the coming of his kingdom. That is integral to the Christian faith and cannot be jettisoned to make the gospel more palatable to contemporary society. The early Arminian theologian and jurist, Hugo Grotius, so significant in the development of international law, was therefore developing an integral part of the Anselmic and Reformation tradition when he articulated what has been called the "Rectoral" or "Moral Governor" account of the Atonement.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup>This view was favoured by the Methodist theologian, John Miley, and by the late J. Kenneth Grider. As I read Grotius however, his doctrine is a species of penal substitution doctrine, differing only in that he adopts a deterrence rather than a retributive view of punishment.

We have jumped ahead to I, 15 to take account of Anselm's fuller development of this point. Perhaps we may label it premise *c*: that God maintains the order of his universe. But we now need to go back to I, 12 where he has already in fact used it in his approach to the doctrine of the Atonement itself. This chapter is a key one in his argument where he argues from *a*, *b* and *c* to *d*: namely, why satisfaction for sin is "necessary." The argument runs as follows.

Is it "fitting for God to remit sin out of mercy alone, without any payment for honour taken away from him"? The answer is, "no." Here is Anselm's key principle of *aut satisfactio aut poena*, inherited from the Latin Fathers, Cyprian and Tertullian, but developed by him with specific reference to the Atonement. There are several points to note about this.

First, the principle is *aut . . . aut . . .*, "either . . . or . . .," and so since Christ offers satisfaction on our behalf no one need be punished. This is a standard point, but missed perhaps in popular discussion, that Anselm does *not* say that Christ is "punished" on our behalf. His doctrine is not one of *penal* substitution.

Secondly, the basis for God's insisting on satisfaction is not because he is a petulant, spiteful deity, nor because he is a legalistic deity insisting on his pound of flesh. Anselm does not even refer to the biblical concept of the wrath of God. The reason why God insists that humanity fulfil its obligation to him is in order to maintain the order of creation. For God to remit sin without satisfaction and not punish it would be "inordinate," that is, an offence against his order. It is unfitting for God to allow something inordinate in his kingdom. The one who sins and the one who does not sin would then be equal before God and sin would be like God in not falling under any law.

Thirdly, Anselm deals with a common objection to his doctrine: is it not inconsistent for God to command us absolutely to forgive those who offend us? Why does God himself not abide by the rule which Christ gives us to forgive "unto seventy times seven"? Leaving aside the point that that is what in the end God actually does, and the point that our obligation to forgive is consequent on the Atonement not a rule which conditions it, Anselm gives a crucial answer to a question which still reverberates:

There is no inconsistency here, because God gives us this command precisely that we may not usurp what belongs to God alone.

In other words, when we try to bring God under a precept that applies to us, then we commit the original sin of making ourselves equal to God. Do



we not understand the uniqueness of God? That we must forgive to seventy times seven is indeed the precept which has been given to us by the God who has indeed forgiven us. But Anselm’s point is that his forgiveness of us was not “cheap grace” or mere leniency: it was supremely costly to God. He is insisting that we do not confuse mercy with leniency.

And fourthly, not only is it unfitting or inappropriate to the holiness of God for sin to be forgiven without satisfaction, but it would destroy the holiness of his coming kingdom. The point is best brought out in an analogy Anselm employs in I, 19.

Let us suppose that some rich man is holding in his hand a precious pearl, totally unspotted by the slightest stain. . . . What if he permits some envious person to knock the same pearl in his hand into the mud, although he could prevent it, and afterwards, picking it up from the mud, puts it away, soiled and unwashed, in some clean and costly receptacle to preserve it as it is. Would you think him wise?

I have long criticized Anselm for a doctrine of the Atonement which gives a basis for justification but not for sanctification, and I still think that is a major deficiency in the whole Western tradition influenced by him,<sup>23</sup> but is there not here an argument that satisfaction is not merely a matter of avoiding punishment or restoring to God the honour—the love and obedience and reverence and worship that we owe him—but that satisfaction is a matter of restoring humanity to holiness. In other words, there is just a hint here, sadly undeveloped, that “satisfaction” is not just a basis for our justification, but for our sanctification.

That brings us finally to Anselm’s doctrine of the Atonement itself. We have traced it from *a* through *b* and *c* to *d*. And now we must come to *x*. Having seen what is “unfitting” for God, and therefore the “necessity” that his kingdom come and his will be done; that the order of his universe be upheld and that therefore his creatures have to offer satisfaction for their failure to worship, love, service, honour and obey him; and that satisfaction therefore has to be given to God from humanity; we come to the miracle of grace. Grace began the sequence—God’s gracious gift of life to the human race and his intention at the last to bring them to the joy of his kingdom. But grace now completes the sequence. God in grace becomes human in order to pay the necessary “debt” of “honour”—that is, to make

---

<sup>23</sup>See T. A. Noble, *Holy Trinity—Holy People: The Theology of Christian Perfecting* (Wipf and Stock, 2013), 144f.

the ultimate self-sacrificing offering of faith, love and obedience as the representative Human to God. Anselm is a theologian of grace.

There are many other turns and twists in the argument which we have not the time nor space to trace now, but I think we have done enough to grasp the main line of Anselm's argument. The crucial conclusion on the doctrine of the Atonement comes in Book II, Chapter 6:

If then, as we agree, it is necessary that that heavenly city be completed from among men, and this cannot occur unless the satisfaction we have spoken of before is made, and if no one but God can make that satisfaction and no one but man is obliged to make it, then it is necessary that a God-man make it.

Anselm has much more to say, not least to develop his Christology, the doctrine of the God-man, but with that sentence he has arrived substantially at *x*, providing a demonstration of the "necessity" of the Atonement. This is not a "necessity" arising from some metaphysical system or from supposed universal truths: it is a "necessity" which belongs to revealed truth. Perhaps the key word in understanding it is "coherence." Anselm has not provided, and did not intend to provide, an argument to the necessity of the Atonement which will convince every sceptic. But he has made a remarkable attempt to demonstrate what we may call the "internal logic" or *coherence* of the Christian faith in the cross of Christ. Balthasar develops this in terms of intra-Trinitarian prayer.<sup>24</sup> And it may be that not only Christians, but theists who believe in justice and wrestle with the conundrum of how it can ever be just to justify the *ungodly*, i.e., to forgive, may find something here which will commend the Gospel of the crucified Lord to them.

---

<sup>24</sup>See Olsen (1981), 58-61.

# MORAL EXEMPLARITY AND RELATIONAL ATONEMENT: TOWARD A WESLEYAN APPROACH TO DISCIPLESHIP

by

Mark A. Maddix

The doctrine of the atonement, the claim that through Jesus's life, death and resurrection we are saved from sin and reconciled to God, is at the very heart of the Christian gospel. This unifying claim has been expressed in a wide variety of atonement theories throughout Christendom. Theologians continue to make connections between historic views of the atonement with the contemporary context, particularity with the move from modernity to postmodernity.<sup>1</sup> Recent contextual studies in such areas as African American and feminist studies argue that traditional atonement theories, such as penal substitution justify violence and the oppression of women by appealing to the suffering of Jesus as a divine mandate.<sup>2</sup> Often these critiques are dismissed by Evangelicals because of the lack of focus on Christ's death as a means of atonement for sin.

---

<sup>1</sup>The discussion regarding Postmodernity is taken up in other contexts. I recommend the reading of Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996); Jay Akkerman, Thomas J. Oord, and Brent Peterson, *Postmodern and Wesleyan: Exploring the Boundaries and Possibilities* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2009); Graham Ward, *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Company, 2004); Mirsolav Volf, *After Our Likeness: the Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997).

<sup>2</sup>Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire* (Boston: Beacon, 2008); Gregory Anderson Love, *Love, Violence, and the Cross: How the Nonviolent God Saves Us Through the Cross of Christ* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2010); Weaver, J. Denny. *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001); Andrew Sung Park, *Triune Atonement: Christ's Healing for Sinners, Victims, and the Whole of Creation* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009); James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation: Twentieth Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1990).

However, many Protestant theologians have raised serious questions about the exclusivity of a penal understanding of atonement, particularly as it relates to participation in the kingdom of God today.<sup>3</sup> They argue that those who hold to penal substitution view Christ's work on the cross as covers sin, but give little emphasis to participating in Christ's suffering as a life of discipleship. Other critiques have been leveraged by psychologists and social scientists who argue for moral influence and exemplar atonement as reflected in the work of empathy and emotional contagion.<sup>4</sup> René Girard's development of the ancient ideas of imitation, or mimesis, and scapegoating provides a framework to understand the meaning of atonement; Robin Collins' incarnational theory, which expands Girard's emphasis to include "mimetic participation," addresses humanities participation in the atonement.<sup>5</sup> Each of these theories provides a more "subjective" and relational understanding of atonement that are a helpful corrective to more "objective" or forensic views of atonement.<sup>6</sup>

Theologians in the Wesleyan tradition have provided a helpful balance to more traditional views of atonement by arguing for a more empathetic relational anthropology.<sup>7</sup> For example, Mildred Wynkoop and others have long emphasized the centrality of love and empathetic interpersonal relationships for an effective pastoral application of sanctifica-

---

<sup>3</sup>R. Larry Shelton, *Cross and Covenant: Interpreting the Atonement for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 2-5; Scot McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement: Living Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007).

<sup>4</sup>F. LeRon Schults, "Ethics, Exemplarity, and Atonement," In *Theology and the Science of Moral Action: Virtue Ethics, Exemplarity, and Cognitive Science*, eds., Jams A. Van Slyke, et. all. (New York, New York: Routledge, 2013), 170-172.

<sup>5</sup>See René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, Translator Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); *Sacrifice: Breakthroughs in Mimetic Theory*, Translated by Matthew Pattillo and David Dawson. (Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, 2011); *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978).

<sup>6</sup>Atonement being "subjective" is that the atonement works by affecting a change in human persons, whereas in the "objective" theories the atonement works by rending a change in God, such as satisfying God's demand that we be punished for our sins.

<sup>7</sup>H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1988; Thomas J. Oord and Michael Lodahl, *Relational Holiness* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2005); Mark Mann, *Perfecting Grace: Holiness, Human Being and the Sciences* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2008); Shelton, R. Larry, *Cross and Covenant: Interpreting the Atonement for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Mission*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

tion.<sup>8</sup> Also, Wesleyan theologians agree that Wesley did not have a unifying atonement theory because he gives emphasis to the function of the atonement as the covering of sin and guilt, and the function of human participation through the work of the Holy Spirit that enables believers to grow in holiness of heart and life.

This article explores the way atonement theories function in John Wesley's theology, with particular attention given to his Christology of the office of prophet, priest, and king. Wesley's Christology gives focus to a relational and participatory view of atonement that goes beyond his substitutionary language. The paper also attempts to critique more traditional penal and satisfaction views of atonement by giving focus to recent empirical insights gained from exemplarity research, empathy studies, and the mimetic theory as reflected in the work of René Girard. The paper will conclude by showing how moral influence or exemplarity views of atonement have particular significance for discipleship and formation in the twenty-first century.

### John Wesley's Atonement Views

#### *Penal Satisfaction Atonement*

John Wesley (1703-1791) never develops a comprehensive statement on the atonement, even though he believes it is foundational for the *ordo salutis*.<sup>9</sup> Wesley avoids the debate over atonement theories because his primary concern is the creation of a theology that supports his evangelistic efforts. He combines penal substitution and participatory themes to describe how the grace of Jesus Christ takes us from sin to holiness of heart and life. For Wesley, the atonement's primary function is the removal of guilt so that people can become holy, which is central to his moral theology. For Russ Long, Wesley is best seen as a moral theologian for whom our primary impediment is guilt.<sup>10</sup> For Wesley the aim of the atonement is the removal of guilt, and Christ's acceptance of underserved punishment is the supreme expression of divine love. The primary motive and aim of the cross always gravitates toward love because he understands that love is a more powerful animator than guilt.

---

<sup>8</sup>Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *Theology of Love* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1972); Shelton, R. Larry. *Cross and Covenant: Interpreting the Atonement for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Mission*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

<sup>9</sup>Darren Cushman Wood, "John Wesley's Use of Atonement," *Asbury Theological Journal*, 62(2), 2007, 56.

<sup>10</sup>D. Stephen Long, *John Wesley's Moral Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2005), chapter 2.

Even though Wesley refers to *Christus Victor*, it does not play a central role in his understanding of atonement. Randy Maddox notes that there are few military or ransom images in his references to the atonement, which is surprising given that the *Book of Common Prayer*, from which Wesley often quotes, contains ample references to ransom.<sup>11</sup> Wesley posits victory over sin in the themes of regeneration and sanctification. He describes how Christ destroys the works of the devil not with cosmic warfare but with an illumination of the heart, "It is by thus manifesting himself in our hearts that he effectually 'destroys the words of the devil'"<sup>12</sup> Here, Wesley personalizes *Christus Victor* by placing the victorious image on the human heart rather than the cosmos.<sup>13</sup>

Wesley also seems to reflect Anselm's idea that since sin is a violation of God's honor, it deserves infinite punishment. Christ is the second Adam who represents all humankind, makes himself an offering for sin, bears the iniquities of the human race, and makes satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. Wesley took an eclectic approach that drew from the metaphors of several perspectives on the issue and preached the sufficiency of Christ in his evangelistic efforts.<sup>14</sup> Most Wesleyan theologians agree that Wesley's view of atonement differed from both Anselmic and Calvinistic penal views. Wesley saw Christ's work as universal in extent and conditional upon faith. Wesley believed that humanity contracted a debt to God that it is unable to pay, but he rejected the implication that satisfaction was made to the divine law, because he objected to the personification of law as a "person injured and to be satisfied."<sup>15</sup> A true penal substitution view understands law as an impersonal cosmic structure, and not a relational personification.<sup>16</sup>

### *Participatory Atonement*

One of the central doctrinal tenets of Wesleyan theology is the co-operant nature of salvation. Wesley affirms that grace is a gift of God, and

---

<sup>11</sup>Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 97-98.

<sup>12</sup>John Wesley, *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, General Eds. Reginald Ward and Richard Heitzenrater. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976-), Sermon 62, II.7, Vol 2, 480.

<sup>13</sup>Wood, *John Wesley's Use of the Atonement*, 57.

<sup>14</sup>Dunning, 332.

<sup>15</sup>Ken Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The heart of John Wesley's theology*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 85.

<sup>16</sup>Shelton, 191-192.

that humans are agents who respond to God's gracious gift.<sup>17</sup> This co-operant view of grace is reflected in Wesley's understanding of atonement by affirming Christ's work on the cross to save humanity, and the role humans play in accepting grace in the pursuit of holiness. Wesley argued, on the one hand, that fallen humans cannot save themselves apart from the action of the re-creative Spirit. But he argued, on the other, that God continually intervenes in the human situation to open new possibilities for us to respond in love.<sup>18</sup> Wesley's intention is to hold together divine initiative and human responsibility, which is referred to as "co-operant grace" or "responsible grace."<sup>19</sup>

It is here where a *via media* can be established in Wesley's atonement theory. Wesley combines substitutionary and participatory dimensions of the atonement in order to hold together the paradox of God's grace and human agency. This participatory or covenant relationship is developed by H. Larry Shelton who argues that "rather than Christ simply being a substitution, Christ's work involves participation and identification with humanity, including those who respond in faith in his work as the Second Adam to restore us to life and renewal of the *imago dei* (Romans 4-8) through our renewed covenant interpersonal relationship in the Holy Spirit."<sup>20</sup> Shelton's covenantal model of atonement affirms that while Wesley held to a penal view of atonement, he did not set the atonement in a legal, forensic framework; rather Wesley believed that the atonement was primarily to transform the relationship and restore the *Image of God*.<sup>21</sup> The *renewal in the Image of God* is the primary focus of Wesley's soteriology. This soteriological focus is reflected in Wesley's view of salvation as a gift of grace and in the divine-human synergism which leads to the transformation of persons into the image of God. This view is reflected by other Wesleyan relational theologians who hold that the relational view of image provides not only a model for love, but for incarnational incorpo-

---

<sup>17</sup>See differences between Ken Collins and Randy Maddox on a Wesleyan view of grace. Collins gives more emphasis to God's gift of grace as reflected in the Roman Catholic tradition, while Randy Maddox gives emphasis on the co-operate nature of grace and human agency.

<sup>18</sup>Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 28.

<sup>19</sup>Maddox, 92.

<sup>20</sup>Shelton, 193-194.

<sup>21</sup>Shelton, 193.

ration into Christ. Thus, Christ's loving work is interpersonal, sacramental, moral, and restorative as humanity cooperates with divine grace.<sup>22</sup>

This participatory or cooperative approach is reflected in several aspects of John Wesley's soteriology which includes his focus on Christ as the prophet, priest, and king, in the Methodist hymns, and in the Eucharist.

First, this participatory view of atonement is central to Wesley's Christology that includes the office of Christ as prophet, priest and king.<sup>23</sup> Wesley understood the work of Christ in terms of this threefold office. The functions are objective in that they are designed and anointed by God. In terms of atonement, they are subjective, since they respond to the needs present within human experience. Humans need the prophet to enlighten and teach the will of God. Humans also need the priestly mediation to overcome alienation from God and re-establish right relationship. And humans need the kingly power of Christ to break free from enslavement to sinful appetites that reign within them.<sup>24</sup> Even though these are objectively the finished work of God, subjectively they require the existential faith response of the believer if they are to have value. In essence, God's intention for salvation is not complete in the work of Christ until we respond in personal faith and obedience.<sup>25</sup>

Second, this participatory approach is reflected in the hymns of John and Charles Wesley.<sup>26</sup> An example of this is the most widely used Scripture verse in Wesley's hymns, Galatians 2:20, "and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."<sup>27</sup>

Third, Wesley follows the Anglican tradition by affirming that when humans participate in the Lord's Supper that Christ is "present." Wesley's focus on the "Real Presence" provide a means of grace where participants see before their eyes Christ's death and suffering and are transported into an experience of the crucifixion. The Eucharist becomes a means of grace in which we are invited to participate in our/the atonement." We see in it the offering of God in Christ, and in turn, it is the opportunity for us to

---

<sup>22</sup>See Tom Oord and Michael Lodahl, *Relational Holiness*; Mark Mann, *Perfecting Grace*; Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace*; Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*.

<sup>23</sup>See Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace*; Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*.

<sup>24</sup>Shelton, 218-221.

<sup>25</sup>See Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness* and Shelton, *Cross and Covenant*.

<sup>26</sup>Wood, 62-65.

<sup>27</sup>See Wood who gives a complete treatment to this argument.



offer the sacrifice of ourselves to God, and to engage in God's mission in the world.

The Eucharist, according to Wesley, serves as a "channel of grace" that forms and transforms the believer. In Wesley's sermon on *The Duty of Constant Communion*, he asks why Christians should participate in communion on a regular basis. He responds by saying we are to participate in communion as much as possible because Christ commanded us, "do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). The benefits of doing communion are so great to all who participate in obedience to Christ that it includes the forgiveness of past sins, and the present strengthening and refreshing of our souls. Wesley states,

The grace of God given herein confirms to us the pardon of our sins by enabling us to leave them. As our bodies are strengthened by bread and wine, so are our souls by these tokens of the body and blood of Christ. This is the food of our souls: this give strength to perform our duty, and lead us on to perfection.<sup>28</sup>

Communion, as a "means of grace," matures those who are either being drawn toward holiness, or those who have been sanctified. As Rob Staples states, "the Eucharist is the 'sacrament of sanctification,' because it is ordained by God as a means of conveying sanctifying grace."<sup>29</sup> For those desiring to grow in God's grace, which results in a further deepening love for God and neighbor, communion serves as the ordinary means of such growth offered by God. The sacrament serves not to preserve and sustain, but to further progress and growth in faith and holiness.

### Alternative Atonement Theories

Wesley's relational approach to Christology and the atonement provides a theological anthropology that has meaning for Christians who struggle with more classical penal and satisfaction atonement theories on the basis of being amoral and abusive. This has particularity for those who argue for a more "contextual" theology based on what happens in the work of Christ on behalf of the oppressed, such as oppression based on race, class, or gender. For the oppressed it does not seem like good news that a cosmic battle has been won or a legal transaction has taken place

---

<sup>28</sup>John Wesley. *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, General Eds. Reginald Ward and Richard Heitzenrater. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984). Sermon 101, I, 2-6.

<sup>29</sup>Rob Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1988), 122.

since it has little bearing on the suffering of real life today. This has been reflected in the work of African American theologian, James Cone;<sup>30</sup> feminist theologians such as Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker;<sup>31</sup> and from a Mennonite theologian J. Denny Weaver who argues for a narrative *Christus Victor* as a non-violent atonement theory.<sup>32</sup> Each of these theorists criticizes traditional atonement theories primarily on the basis that they have no relevance to address the ethical concerns about how to live in the world. This is especially true given that the penal and satisfaction theories can be articulated and believed without any direct reference to how it aids in living a victorious spiritual life.<sup>33</sup>

### *Moral Influence Theory*

The problematic image of God reflected in Penal and Satisfaction theories has resulted in many theologians looking for an alternative view. Alternative atonement theories that are “subjective,” such as the moral influence or moral exemplary theories, have historical precedence from the early church fathers, such as Clement of Alexandria.<sup>34</sup> Clement understood that Christ’s blood was poured out to save us through the grace of repentance. He believed that Christ endured and suffered the cross on account of us, but Christ’s blood alone cannot save us. Salvation required our participation in Christ’s suffering. Also, the moral influence theory has been most attributed to the theologian/philosopher, Peter Abelard (1079-1142). Abelard, who argued against his contemporary Anselm, the author of satisfaction atonement believed that reconciliation is effected by God’s grace manifested in Jesus, who teaches us by word and example so that our hearts are rekindled by this grace, and we are fully bound to God by love.<sup>35</sup> For Abelard the moral example of Christ’s life and death saves us by revealing the depth of God’s love. This in turn liberates us from false understandings and inspires us to love and participate in good deeds. Christ’s life and death saves us by giving us a perfect moral example of love, humility, and obedience to follow. Abelard denies original sin and rejects the idea that Jesus’ death was for the forgiveness of

---

<sup>30</sup>Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*.

<sup>31</sup>Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, *Saving Paradise*.

<sup>32</sup>J. Denny Weaver, *The Non-violent Atonement*.

<sup>33</sup>Weaver, 2-6.

<sup>34</sup>Andrew Sung Park, *Triune Atonement: Christ’s Healing for Sinners, Victims, and the Whole of Creation*. (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 18.

<sup>35</sup>Schults, 166.

our original or actual sin. He believed it was cruel and wicked that anyone should demand the blood of an innocent person as the price for anything, and that God would consider the death of his Son to provide reconciliation for the world.

The benefits of the moral influence theory are that it stresses a love of God that is biblical and essential to Christianity. This theory emphasizes that Jesus' atonement is about God's love, not about God's dealing with the devil (ransom theory). It also gives focus that salvation is dependent on human participation and response to God's action on the cross. And finally, it emphasizes the importance of Jesus' whole life, particularly following the exemplary life of Christ as a model for Christian discipleship.<sup>36</sup>

Since Abelard several new versions of his theory have been developed including Friedrich Schleiermacher's focus on the feeling of absolute dependence which is mediated through participation in the Christian community, and Adolph Harnack's emphasis on the love commandment in Jesus' ethical teaching and its ramifications for social care for the poor.<sup>37</sup>

The primary reason the moral influence theory has been rejected by many theologians, especially those in the Reformed tradition, is that it is *subjective*, meaning that it only depicts the work of Christ as evoking empathic and emotional reactions in human life rather than substantially altering the real status of the relation between humans and God. Traditional atonement theories focus more on the *objective* aspects of atonement such as forensic, judicial, and warfare.<sup>38</sup>

### *Mimetic and Exemplar Theory*

Another alternative atonement theory is developed by René Girard (1923-). Girard is a Christian anthropologist who developed a theory of mimetic violence and has interpreted Jesus' death from that perspective. He found that human beings are fundamentally *mimetic* or *mimicry* since

---

<sup>36</sup>See Sung Park, 20-21.

<sup>37</sup>Schults, 166.

<sup>38</sup>See Gustav Aulén. *Christus Victor*, translator A. G. Herbert. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. 1969). He describes the traditional *Christus Victor* and Anslem's satisfaction theory of atonement. Also, reformed theologian such as John Calvin uses more penal substitutionary atonement to show that Jesus was punished instead of us in order to take away the wrath of God. Penal substitutionary atonement is the more dominate atonement theory in much of conservative Protestantism, including the Church of the Nazarene.

they tend to copy each other's behavior. Mimesis affects not only a person's outward behavior but also one's inner thoughts and feelings, one's desire and aversions. And it works spontaneously in one's consciousness before a person has begun to pay attention to, and intentionally weigh, his or her thoughts.<sup>39</sup> This mimesis does not have to generate conflict among us, but in actuality it spawns the conflict of rivalry. As mimetic conflicts increase people are more likely to join in the conflict. When this escalates the person becomes a victim of the community and is marginalized, and the result is what Girard calls a *scapegoating mechanism*. For Girard, scapegoating produces rituals of sacrifice to alleviate the social and cultural pressures of violence.<sup>40</sup> Scapegoating occurs when people's attention in a crisis is turned toward a particular victim or subgroup. The scapegoating death is meaningless other than as a result of this social construct. He argues that cultural, social, and even religious institutions are founded overwhelmingly on myths, prohibitions, and rituals that stem from the sacrifice of the single victim or scapegoat.<sup>41</sup>

Girard understands the meaning of Jesus' death in this light. He interprets the suffering and death of Christ, who is an innocent victim, as the revelation or unveiling of this mechanism, which loses its power precisely because it is no longer hidden. He views Jesus' crucifixion as a scapegoating mechanism. His cross restores all the victims of the scapegoating mechanism. He believes that God sent Jesus in human form, so that by his life, death, and resurrection he might give a two-fold communication: On the one hand, Christ exposes the single victim mechanism and thus strips it of power. On the other, he reveals God's nonviolent love. For Girard, this is why Paul calls the cross "the source of all knowledge about the world and human beings as well as about God."<sup>42</sup> God's love counters scapegoating by always working for the good, and it guarantees that God is not responsible for the deaths of innocent victims.

For Girard, the scapegoating of Christ makes the declaration of God's non-violent love. He rejects penal and satisfaction views of atonement and argues that Christ invites us to participate in the love of the father. God's love counters scapegoating by always working for the good, and it guarantees that God is not responsible for the deaths of innocent

---

<sup>39</sup>Mark T. Miller, "Imitating Christ's Cross: Longergan and Girard on how and why," *The Heythrop Journal*, LIV (2013), 869.

<sup>40</sup>Sung Park, 28.

<sup>41</sup>Miller, 870.

<sup>42</sup>Miller, 870.

victims.<sup>43</sup> Christ's whole life and message were characterized by non-violent love. The center of Christ's ministry and preaching is the theme of the Kingdom of God. It provides a positive alternative to societies founded on scapegoating and murder. He argues that if people would have accepted Christ's message of the Kingdom, there would have been no crucifixion. He believes it to be ironic that Christ's message of non-violence led to him being persecuted and crucified.<sup>44</sup>

For Girard, all of humanity is responsible for the crucifixion; it is not the product of God's wrath, rather it is Christ's ability to break the cycle of violence by giving up his own life which comes from his unity with God.<sup>45</sup> This represents God's love for us. It is this self-giving love that we should imitate. Christ calls us to imitate him because as humans we learn to desire and to act by mimesis in a pre-critical and pre-deliberate manner; Christ's acts of divine love effectively moves us to begin to imitate his and his Father's perfect, divine love.<sup>46</sup> As Girard states,

Christ is not simply another sacralized scapegoat. Christ became a scapegoat in order to desacralize those who came before him and to prevent those who come after him for being sacralized. It is as an interpreter of this role that he reveals himself both as the true god and as a man, long doomed to the colossal but inevitable error of holding God responsible for purely human violence. Christ, his Father, and the Paraclete are therefore themselves, the three of them, the one God who corresponds to John's definition—God is love.<sup>47</sup>

Girard's atonement theory articulates that God sides and identifies with victims since Jesus goes to his death as a scapegoat. God counterbalances our violence with nonviolent love. For Girard, God's solidarity with the victim is the core of the gospel message. He advocates on behalf of the marginalized, the oppressed, and victims, which is the heart of the gospel message.

It is here where Girard's theory has significance for Christian discipleship. Unlike penal and satisfaction atonement theories that focuses on God's wrath that has been appeased by Christ and there is no need for

---

<sup>43</sup>Miller, 871.

<sup>44</sup>Gerard, *Things Hidden*, 213-216.

<sup>45</sup>Miller, 871.

<sup>46</sup>Miller, 872.

<sup>47</sup>René Girard, *The One by Whom Sandal Comes*, Translated by M. B. DeBevoise (Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2014), 44.

disciples to take up their cross and follow, the moral influence theory gives focus to sharing in Christ's work of discipleship and radical participation with God in redeeming the world. The atonement of Christ calls people to participate in God's atoning activity in the Christ. It also calls for Christians to be engaged in acts of love and compassion, which imitates the self-giving love of Christ.

Also, Robin Collins takes Girard's view of mimesis by developing an incarnational theory of atonement that shows humans *participate* in Christ's life, death and resurrection. This participation is not something that humans simply imitate and possess on their own, but rather humans share as they remain connected to Christ and his body. Since the mechanism of this connection is mimesis (understood as contagion) then humans are involved in "mimetic participation" when referring to this participation with Christ.<sup>48</sup>

Research in social psychology and neuroscience confirm Girard's view of mimesis and mimicry through pro-social behavior and studies of empathy.<sup>49</sup> Empathy is preconditioned by the automatic of mimicry and the dynamics of emotional contagion. Neuroscientists view the body and brain holistically and reject Cartesian dualism.<sup>50</sup> This non-dualist view

---

<sup>48</sup>See Robin Collins, "Girard and Atonement: An Incarnational Theology of Mimetic Participation," In *Violence Renounced: Rene Girard, Biblical Studies, and Peacemaking*, ed. Willard Swartley (Telford, PA: Pandora Press, 2000).

<sup>49</sup>See the work done by Martin T. Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 79. Hoffman conceives of empathy as being various modes of arousal allowing persons to respond empathically in light of distress cues from another person. Hoffman mentions mimicry, classical conditioning, and direct association, where one empathizes because the other's situation reminds one of one's own painful experience, as "fast acting and automatic" mechanisms produce an empathic response. As more cognitively demanding modes, Hoffman lists mediated association, where the cues for an empathic response are provided in a linguistic medium and in role taking. Hoffman also distinguishes between five developmental stages of empathic responses ranging from the reactive newborn cry, egocentric empathic distress, quasi-ego-centric empathic distress, to veridical distress and empathy for another beyond the immediate situation. Hoffman argues that empathy is developed and activated by multiple modes or mechanisms. These modes are classified as basic (involuntary mechanisms of mimicry, conditioning, direct association) or as mature (representational or symbolic; mediated association, perspective taking); See Mark Maddix, "Unite the Pair so long disjoined: Justice and Empathy in Moral Development theory," *Christian Education Journal*, 8.2, (2011), 46-63.

challenges the argument between the inner and subjective state of an individual and his or her relationship to the outer and objective world.<sup>51</sup> The result is that empathy and emotions are embedded with the neural networks and are entangled within embodied fields of energy. Mimicry takes place through *mirror neurons* as feelings and intentions are enacted. Schultz argues that empathy itself is preconditioned by the automaticity of mimicry and the dynamics of emotional contagion. He says that all of our social relations are shaped by our embeddedness within emotional systems that are transmitted across generations through patterns of mimicry within nuclear and extended families of origin.<sup>52</sup> Schultz believes that the dynamics of human exemplarity are embedded within and have *objective* and potentially transformative effects in the real world. He argues that if persons are objectively altered in their social connectivity, then the objection that exemplarity is not objective begins to lose its plausibility.<sup>53</sup> In other words, salvation or reconciliation emerges in the objective spatial-temporal entanglement of energized subjective social mimesis.<sup>54</sup> Also, the transformation of humans is effected through and within the social dynamics of imitating and being imitated. Exemplarity is a generative and productive power for real transformation.<sup>55</sup>

Neuroscientists also understand that the human brain has the capacity to rearrange itself and be changed through the process of *neuroplastic-*

---

<sup>50</sup>See Malcolm Jeeves and Warren Brown, *Neuroscience and Religion: Illusions, Delusions, and Realities about human nature*. (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press 2009). Jeeves and Brown provide a more holistic view of the brain and human nature by showing that the mind as a nonmaterial Cartesian entity should not be separated from the body. They reject a dualistic view of the human person and argue that the continual experiences of behavior and environmental societal feedback that the mind becomes formed as a functional aspect of our brain and body. The Emergentist view or non-reductive physicalism or dual-aspect monism assert that humans are entirely physical beings and humans cannot reduce all causes of human behavior to simple chemistry and physics (130). Nonreductive physicalism suggests this rejection of reducing all life to its simplest parts. Many causes in life lie in the emergent properties of the whole person. Thus, dual-aspect monism singles out neither the physical nor the mental aspects of the whole of our mysterious nature, but says both aspects are necessary to do justice to reality (131).

<sup>51</sup>Schultz, 170-171.

<sup>52</sup>Schultz, 171.

<sup>53</sup>Schultz, 172.

<sup>54</sup>Schultz, 171.

<sup>55</sup>Schultz, 174.

ity—the mechanism that allows changes to occur in the brain.<sup>56</sup> It is through repetition of practices, or in the case of mimicry, through the imitation of persons, the brain can change and develop a greater capacity for empathy.

### *Wesleyan Atonement Theory and Formation*

A Wesleyan view of atonement is based on John Wesley's Christology as prophet, priest and king and reflects a relational and participatory approach. Relational theology moves away from more forensic and legal metaphors to give focus to Wesley's *ordo salutis*, which includes the transformation of the *imago dei*. The life, death, and resurrection of Christ provide the forgiveness of sins and humans participation through repentance. This relational atonement is more consistent with a Wesleyan understanding of salvation as interpersonal relationship and renewal in God's image rather than as an imputational penal substitution view. This relational and incarnational approach can be valued and understood in all cultural contexts.

First, Christ's sacrificial act of obedience to God is an example of God's self-giving love all humanity is to imitate and participate in Christ's life and death by faith. The incarnational theory depicts the transformational participation enabled by the Holy Spirit that results in the new birth and a holiness of heart and life.<sup>57</sup> In this view Christ's blood cleanses from sin, but not in a penal way. Christ's blood represents his life given to God and others in perfect trust and self-giving love. Christ is an exemplar who enacts restorative justice to bring about reconciliation, and as humans follow Christ's example (mimesis) they become more reflective of Him. In this relational and restorative view of atonement Christ identifies and participates with those who are broken, abused, and victimized because Christ actually participates in human brokenness and suffering. Christ suffered and died for the unhealed wounds, such as

---

<sup>56</sup>See Sharon Begley, *Train your Mind, Change Your Brain: How a New Science Reveals our Extraordinary Potential to Transform Ourselves* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 2007).

<sup>57</sup>See Robin Collins. "Girard and Atonement: An Incarnational Theology of Mimetic Participation," In *Violence Renounced: Rene Girard, Biblical Studies, and Peacemaking*, ed. Willard Swartley (Telford, PA: Pandora Press, 2000). He extends Girard's theory by developing a theory of incarnational theology. He asserts that the non-violent theory of atonement has deep roots in Scripture and in the Eastern Orthodox and Greek Fathers. He argues that the nonviolent atonement theory follows naturally from Girard's mimetic theory of culture.



oppression, abuse, injustice, poverty, and alienation.<sup>58</sup> This helps to address the question raised by African-American and feminists theologians as well as those who struggle with a God of violence.

Secondly, René Girard's scapegoating and mimesis theory and recent studies in social sciences and neuroscience provide a subjective view of atonement. Girard's work is a helpful reminder that the nature of sharing in Christ's life involves mimetically participating in Christ's subjectivity as expressed in his life, death, and resurrection in which Christ's subjectivity is integrated with each person by faith. This takes place as we consciously habituate our participation in the "means of grace" within the body of Christ.<sup>59</sup> This is expressed through our participation in the Eucharist as eating the bread and drinking the cup vividly re-enacts the participation in Christ's divine-human subjectivity. It includes our participation in baptism as identification, a portrayal of the union of Christ's death and resurrection life so that through identification with his subjectivity we become "crucified" to spiritual bondage. This research shows that the challenges of the moral atonement theory based on "subject" grounds are mitigated when human behavior is situated and mirrored in the context of social contexts. In other words, human persons are objectively altered in their social connectivity.

Finally, a relational approach to atonement theory that includes both the freedom of guilt from sin through the Cross and humans response through repentance provides a theological framework for Christian formation and discipleship. What Christ did on the cross is not complete until Christians are actively participating in their salvation through the context of community and engaging in God's redemptive work in the world. The call of Christian discipleship is to follow the example of Jesus Christ's self-giving love as expressed on the cross and to engage in his mission of redemptive and restoration of all creation.

## Conclusion

A Wesleyan view of atonement includes Christ's removal of guilt and the transformation of the person into the *imago dei*, which is more rela-

---

<sup>58</sup>See Andrew Sung Park's discussion about the Korean word *han*. He argues that the reason Jesus came was to liberate and heal people from their *han*. *Han* is a deep unhealed wound of a victim that festers in her or him. 39-72.

<sup>59</sup>For further reading on the "means of grace" and the implications for Christian formation see Dean G. Blevins, and Mark A. Maddix (2010). *Discovering Christian Discipleship: Foundations of Christian Education*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City; See Catherine Bells, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, USA, 2007).

tional than forensic. This is central to Wesley's *ordo salutis* by placing focus on the restoration of relationship between God, humanity, and creation. Salvation is not completed on the cross but requires human participation through following the life of Christ, empowered by the Spirit, in order to experience the abundant life. This "co-operative" view of grace is foundational for a Wesleyan soteriology.

Even though Wesley does not argue for a moral influence theory, his relational view of atonement provides an example of the importance of Christians being active in following the example of Christ, by not viewing the cross as a violent act necessary to appease the wrath of God ontologically, but rather as an act of God's self-giving love reflected in the life of Jesus Christ. The research and work of Girard and social psychologists in the area of exemplarity and mimesis provide a scientific framework to validate the "subjective" aspects of a moral atonement theory as an "objective" reality when situated in social connectivity. The nature of sharing in Christ's life involves mimetically participating in Christ's expressed life, death, and resurrection which shapes and forms us into Christlikeness.<sup>60</sup>

This view of atonement answers questions about a God who would require violence to avenge his wrath, and view violence as the primary means for salvation. It also gives comfort to those who have been victimized, oppressed, and alienated by viewing Christ's death as act of God's self-giving love to bring about healing and restoration.

---

<sup>60</sup>This view has historical significance in Eastern Orthodoxy's view of deification and the theosis especially in the work of Irenaeus. He described the relationship between the incarnation and deification as "How shall man pass into God, unless God has passed into man?" In other words, the incarnation was the initial action that God took to divinized humanity. God could not have begun such a process unless He Himself became man, which is central to his view of Salvation.

# **ATONEMENT AND COMMUNITY RECONCILIATION IN PAUL'S LETTERS: THE SHAME OF THE CROSS AS THE MEANS FOR RESTORATION**

by

**David A. Ackerman**

## **Introduction**

The mission of Paul the Apostle was effective in part because of his ability to identify with his Greco-Roman audiences and communicate to them in culturally relevant ways. One of the core cultural values that guided life in the Mediterranean region of the first century was the importance of honor and shame. Paul appealed to this cultural force in writing and in person as he attempted to “become all things to all people” and use whatever appropriate method he could to save them (1 Cor. 9:22). Many of his letters tackle the division, false teachings, and immoral living plaguing many early churches. He strategically attempted to isolate sinners and shame them into changing their ways in order to conform to what he considered the place of honor before God. He did this not only to preserve the holiness and integrity of the church, but also with hope in grace that the sinners would realize their problems, repent, and return to the church with restored honor.

What guided Paul's imperative for community reconciliation was a dynamic understanding of the indicative of what Jesus Christ did through his sacrificial death on the cross. Atonement language stands in the background contextually and thematically of many of the places where Paul attempted to correct the wayward. Sinners can be restored to honor because of the shame Christ took upon himself in their behalf. The atonement of Christ is the primary resource for restoring broken people and broken relationships. Simply stated, Paul used theology to develop stronger community.

## **I. The Social Force of Shame**

Shame was a powerful social force in the first century that isolated people and could lead to ruined relationships. Honor for Paul comes in

one's relationship to God in Christ and not how culture defines honor as power and position. He also uses shame to put social pressure on those who were not living up to his expectations.

### A. Shame as Ethical Motivation

Honor and shame are social constructs: others decide when they are to be given.<sup>1</sup> They are reciprocal social forces: when people have enough positive social rating, they reach a position of honor, but shame results when expected honor is removed or lost.<sup>2</sup> Aristotle called honor the greatest of all goods (*Eth. nic.* 4.3.9-12). Honor is a limited good: "No more honor is available in a given society than already exists."<sup>3</sup> Persons in the first-century Mediterranean region had "dyadic personalities" whereby their worth and identity were determined by others.<sup>4</sup> In group-oriented cultures like this, the group can exert tremendous pressure upon individuals to control their behavior.<sup>5</sup> Shame results if one does not agree with the expectations of the group.<sup>6</sup> Honor is given to those who fulfill certain expectations or roles within a group. A group or someone in the place of honor (such as a patron) can cast shame upon persons for not meeting these expectations, but it is really the persons who bring shame upon themselves.

The family (*oikos*) was the most significant place to find worth. In relationships of fictive kinship, as we find in the Pauline churches, the church as God's *oikos* determined one's honor and how one ought to behave (1 Tim. 3:15). As a corollary, the *oikos* could also decide one's shame. The Pauline letters provide a number of household codes that lay-out the expectations within God's *oikos* (Eph. 5:21-6:9; Col. 3:18-4:1; Titus 2:1-10). Honor was crucial for participation and smooth relationships within the household.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 27.

<sup>2</sup>Malina, *The New Testament World*, 26.

<sup>3</sup>Walter F. Taylor, *Paul, Apostle to the Nations: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 42.

<sup>4</sup>Taylor, *Paul, Apostle to the Nations*, 43.

<sup>5</sup>Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols* (New York: Pantheon, 1970).

<sup>6</sup>Bruce Malina, "The Individual and the Community: Personality in the Social World of Early Christianity," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 9 no. 3 (July 1979): 127-28.

<sup>7</sup>N. R. E. Fisher, *Hybris: A Study in the Values of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greece* (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 1992), 10.

The social boundaries for acceptable behavior (what is “honorable,” Phil. 4:8-9) are determined by “what is proper for a certain place at a certain time . . . with regard to society’s view of an orderly and safe world.”<sup>8</sup> Unacceptable behavior makes one dangerous to a group because it threatens the cohesion of the group. People come to know the boundaries of a group through socialization.<sup>9</sup> Much of the conflict within Pauline churches resulted from the fluctuation of group boundaries as the church incorporated new people from diverse backgrounds. Paul brought with him his socialization as a Jew but was willing to accommodate this for the sake of evangelism.

## B. Shame as an Isolating Force

Actions in shame-based cultures are determined by external sanctions formed in the course of human opinion, whereas in guilt-based cultures, values are determined by internalized convictions of sin.<sup>10</sup> One way to bring shame to a person is through isolation from the group. Without the group association, the individual develops a sense of abandonment. The group can sanction the behavior of its members, which can lead to a loss of social position and lower one’s self-worth, result in shame, or worse, destroy one’s reason for existence. Shame before the group may be worse than death in many cultures, which is one reason why suicide is viewed as a better alternative than facing shame before the group. The Greek word *aischynomai* carries this strong public sense of isolation.<sup>11</sup> Lyn Bechtel makes this distinction between shame and guilt:

The feeling of shame is a response to failure or inability to live up to internalized ideals, social identifications, and roles inculcated by parents and society, which dictate expectations of what a person “should” be able to do, be, know, or feel. . . . In contrast, guilt is a response to a transgression against internalized societal or parental prohibitions or against boundaries that form an internal authority, the conscience. . . . Shame stimulates fear of psychological or physical rejection (lack of belonging),

---

<sup>8</sup>David Aurther deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 2000), 243.

<sup>9</sup>Jerome Neyrey, *Paul, in Other Words: A Cultural Reading of His Letters* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 23-24.

<sup>10</sup>Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside, 1946), 223.

<sup>11</sup>A. Horstmann, “*aischunomai*, be ashamed,” *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), vol. 1, 42-43.

abandonment, expulsion, or loss of social position and relies predominantly on external pressure from an individual or group.<sup>12</sup>

No culture is completely shame or guilt based, but all have a mixture of the two.<sup>13</sup> Shame and guilt are related. Shame by a group can lead to a psychological sense of guilt. Guilt may develop when individuals realize that they have associated themselves with the wrong behavior or belief. If their identity with a group is strong enough, their shame before this group may force them to rethink how they have behaved. Thus, the group has a vital role in developing the conscience of the individuals within that group. Individuals may feel more guilt when their actions become public and it is clear to the group that they have transgressed acceptable standards.<sup>14</sup> Developing the conscience may require individuals to go against cultural patterns or personal desires (Paul often refers to these as *epithymia* ["lust"] and *sarx* ["flesh"] when controlled by the power of sin) in order to follow the standards of the smaller group (such as a church). Although the conscience is crucial in guilt-based cultures, it still has a role in shame-based cultures. In many cases, it will need nurturing and developing so that the individuals within a group can become more aware of specific expectations and standards of this group and are able to stand against the pressures of larger cultural forces. The group sets the values for the individuals within that group and establishes a "court of reputation," the sole body of significant others who approve or disapprove what should be important to the individual.<sup>15</sup>

### C. Developing an Ethic of Honor

Shame is a significant force for controlling aggressive or undesirable behaviors in dyadistic cultures.<sup>16</sup> The group will put pressure on errant individuals to force them to conform to expected behaviors and beliefs.

---

<sup>12</sup>Lyn M. Bechtel, "The Perception of Shame within Divine-Human Relationships in Biblical Israel," in *Uncovering Ancient Stones*, ed. Lewis M. Hopfe (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 80.

<sup>13</sup>Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is influencing the way we think about and discuss theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 80.

<sup>14</sup>Jackob A. Loewen, "The Social Context of Guilt and Forgiveness," *Practical Anthropology* 17:2 (March-April 1970), 82.

<sup>15</sup>deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, and Purity*, 55.

<sup>16</sup>Lyn M. Bechtel, "Shame as a Sanction of Social Control in Biblical Israel: Judicial, Political, and Social Shaming," *JSOT* 49 (1991), 81.

People will behave in certain ways in order to avoid shame and preserve their reputations. This may involve giving up certain behaviors and embracing those viewed as honorable in the dominant culture.<sup>17</sup>

The early Christians came from different group associations. For Gentile believers, their new faith in Christ required removing themselves from many of the social, religious, and political voluntary associations found in the Roman Empire. The church provided a new association with new identities, forming a new social unit (Eph. 4:17-24).<sup>18</sup> Jewish believers, already separated from many of the Greco-Roman groups as a subgroup of their own organized around local synagogues, found themselves associating with Gentiles in the church, creating tensions with their Jewish roots (see Eph. 2:11-22). These early Christians had to make a choice between shame before their former groups by associating with the church or shame before God and the church because they failed to follow the new paradigm of new life in Christ. To accept honor before God and shame before the world potentially brought persecution.<sup>19</sup> Paul's letters are full of insider/outsider language that forges a third identity of *ekklēsia* as the body of Christ and creates a special bond of belonging (Gal 3:26-29).<sup>20</sup>

It is crucial in newly formed groups for this sense of group belonging to be well defined so that members have a clear self-identity and are able to bring new members into their group. This was accomplished in the early church by the personal presence of important and honored figures such as the apostles, the presence of their emissaries, and the power of language in letter writing. A person in the position of authority, power, or prestige within a shame-based culture has the ability to sanction an individual who has gone beyond the group boundaries. Paul functioned as the primary representative of Christ and the gospel to the churches he founded (1 Cor. 4:15) and for those colleagues whom he mentored (2 Tim. 2:13). In his letters, he is essentially remapping the zone of what counts as honorable and shameful. He often develops the honorable ethic in the thanksgiving sections of his letters where he thanks God for the

---

<sup>17</sup>David Aurther deSilva, *The Hope of Glory: Honor Discourse and New Testament Interpretation* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1999), 6.

<sup>18</sup>Wayne O. McCready, "Ekklēsia and Voluntary Associations," in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson (London: Routledge, 1996), 59-73.

<sup>19</sup>deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, and Purity*, 47.

<sup>20</sup>Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 86.

very attributes he hopes to see in the churches (Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4-9; Col. 1:3-8; 1 Thess. 1:2-10; 2:13-16).<sup>21</sup> His lists of vices and virtues essentially determine the boundary between insiders and outsiders. The next section explores what happened when group members in the Pauline churches transgressed the boundary demarcating honor and shame.

## II. Paul's Rhetoric of Reconciliation

Paul attempts at a number of places in his letters to bring shame upon those within the churches who transgressed the essential boundary of the truth of the gospel and a holy ethic consistent with this truth. He shames the wayward by isolating them from fellowship with the church with the goal of having them feel shame to the point of seeking the grace and forgiveness of God. He takes the risk in these places that the shamed will return to fellowship. This risk is based on the full confidence in the power of Christ's atoning sacrifice that offers the restoration of honor before God and the church for those who repent. Not all passages will reveal this strategy as a whole but each provides further insight into his thinking.

### A. 1 Corinthians 5:1-5

In 1 Cor. 5:1, Paul writes rather harsh and sarcastic words about a man in the church who was having incestuous sexual relations with his father's wife. This sort of behavior was not even accepted among pagans.<sup>22</sup> Paul is flabbergasted that the church remained complacent about this man and had done nothing to censure his behavior. Paul cannot even call this man a "brother" early in this passage, simply "someone" (*tina*, v. 2). He passes judgment on the man from a distance and urges the assembled Corinthian church to remove this man from fellowship and hand him over to Satan "for the destruction of his flesh" (v. 5). The phrase "the destruction of the flesh" has been much debated. Thiselton has argued that it refers to the "self-glorying or self-satisfaction" of the offender and perhaps also of the community.<sup>23</sup>

The only way this man can come to this recognition is if he still attaches some value to the opinions of the group, if indeed he has tasted

---

<sup>21</sup>deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, and Purity*, 58.

<sup>22</sup>For ancient references, see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 385.

<sup>23</sup>Anthony C. Thiselton, "The Meaning of *Sarx* in 1 Cor. 5:5: A Fresh Approach in the Light of Logical and Semantic Factors," *SJT* 26 (1973), 225-226.



the light of the gospel through his fellowship with the Christians in Corinth (Heb. 6:4). Satan will be the instrument of this recognition because Satan was shamed by Christ who disarmed the power and authorities, making a public spectacle over them on the cross (Col. 2:15). Satan and those who follow his ways face the ultimate shame of isolation from God and God's purposes. Essentially, the sin of this man must be exposed for what it is—so shameful that it was not even accepted by unbelievers in that culture. Paul may have been hoping for the development of the man's conscience by creating a sense of guilt based on the shame he would experience in being isolated from the group that was providing some meaning to his life. Apparently, this man claimed to be a Christian (v. 11) but his actions contradicted the type of lifestyle that comes in response to Christ's sacrifice on the cross (6:19-20). The church must acknowledge this shameful behavior by essentially isolating this man from the group in hope that he will eventually be eschatologically saved.<sup>24</sup>

Noteworthy is what Paul writes next. In the middle of his discussion of how to deal with this man (vv. 1-5, 9-13), he gives the theological reason for this shaming (vv. 6-8). He does not want the evil influence of this man's behavior to spread throughout the church like leaven spreads in dough (v. 6). To support this, he uses atonement language and a reference to the sacrifice of Christ as our Passover lamb (v. 7) who gave his life so that the church can be pure and in a place of honor before God by living with "sincerity and truth" (v. 8). Accepting shameful behavior ("malice and wickedness," v. 8) within the church contradicts what Christ has done.

Paul has already laid out in the letter the cross as the ultimate source of honor before God. In the context of the first century, dying on a Roman cross was a sign of weakness and foolishness (1:18, 23; Luke 16:1-8). Such physical exposure brought great shame to those executed in this way.<sup>25</sup> Paul reverses this notion and shows that the divine paradox is that the cross is the very power and wisdom of God (Matt. 20:16).<sup>26</sup> The cross actually exposes the shame (*kataischynē*) of the wisdom and strength of humanity (v. 27). Those who accept the message of the cross experience "righteousness, holiness and redemption" (v. 30).

---

<sup>24</sup>J. Gundry-Volf, *Paul and Perseverance*, WUNT 2:37 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1990), 113-120.

<sup>25</sup>Robert Jewett, "Paul, Shame, and Honor," in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*, ed. J. Paul Sampley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 558.

<sup>26</sup>Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 88.

These ideas surely stand in the background as Paul continues in 5:9-13 to direct the church to avoid any fellowship with those who claim to be Christians yet live like the world. Such people must be expelled from the church so their influence will not spread and bring shame to the whole group before God. Throughout chapters 5-7, Paul lays out the boundary of acceptable and honorable behavior for the church in relation to sexual ethics. He remains optimistic that those caught up in sin can change. This change comes through the sanctification and justification “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (6:11).

## B. 2 Corinthians 2:5-11

Many interpreters consider 2 Cor. 2:5-11 to be the outcome of Paul’s directions in 1 Cor. 5:5 and that the immoral man did indeed see the fault of his behavior and wanted to return to fellowship in the church. But there is no way to verify this assumption exegetically. Paul uses generic terms like “anyone” (*tis*) or the pronouns he/him, raising the possibility of this being a general principle, but the use of details assumes that the church knows the person to whom Paul is referring.

Several words need clarification in this passage. The “grief” (*lypeō*, pain, sorrow, or irritation) appears to be mental or emotional but exhibits itself relationally. The exact reason this person has caused Paul and the Corinthians anguish is not stated. The repetition of the verb *charizomai* (to pardon, show grace, be forgiving) five times in these verses (vv. 7, 10) suggests it was some sort of sin that affected the church. Such a sin could have two impacts: it could ruin the internal cohesion of the fellowship of the church in some sort of divisive activity, or harm the witness of the church before outsiders. What is clear is that the church has the ability to restore this person to full fellowship.

A second word is “punishment” (*epitimia*, v. 6). The clues in this passage imply that this was some sort of rejection or withholding of love since Paul directs the church to reaffirm their love for the person. This punishment was given by the majority (v. 6) and led to the man’s excessive sorrow (v. 7). These details fit well with the scenario of a person who had been cut off from close fellowship with the group, resulting in a sense of shame leading to “excessive sorrow” (v. 7).

There are two possible results. One is that the church could continue rejecting the man, but this would lead to victory by Satan (v. 11). This implies that Satan can use shame to defeat a person spiritually if the church does not act to restore a person when the person’s conscience has been pricked to the point of sorrow and repentance. The other result is

that the person could be fully restored to a place of honor within the group and reaffirmed in love. The only way to do this, as Paul wisely knew, is through forgiveness.

Paul does not use any specific language related to atonement in this passage, but if we look at his wider arguments and keep in mind the progression of his thought, we can see his theological underpinnings. He is greatly concerned in this letter about reconciliation, especially between himself and the Corinthians, and between unbelievers and God. He finds himself defending his ministry plans in chapter 1. His message has always been consistent: Jesus is the “yes” of God; in other words, what God promises in Christ will happen, and this is confirmed by the presence of the Holy Spirit (1:18-22). This optimism continues in 2:14-15 where Paul uses the illustration of the parades after Roman victories that were filled with the sweet smell of incense and perfume. To the conquered, these parades brought great shame and ended in execution, and the sweet aromas meant death. To the victorious, the smells of the parade meant honor. At the heart of Paul’s mission was to be “the pleasing aroma of Christ” (2:15). Salvation through Christ results in honor before God (3:4) but not before people (3:1).

Paul adds further theological support for reconciliation by comparing the ministry of Moses to that of Christ in 3:7-18. The veil of the old covenant and its system of atonement bring separation and shame before God (Rom 7:5, 9) resulting in death (2 Cor. 3:7). The law and its regulations cannot restore one to a right relationship with God (Rom. 8:3; Gal. 3:11). The new covenant inaugurated by Christ leads to glory and honor before God (Rom. 10:4; Gal. 2:16, 21; 3:13). Those who believe are transformed into Christ’s likeness through the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). This is the place of highest honor and the goal for believers (4:4, 6).

In chapter 4, Paul goes on to defend his ministry, which appears shameful before the world because of his suffering, but in the end will be vindicated in honor before God with eternal glory (4:17) because of resurrection (4:14). He illustrates in this chapter that people who have experienced shame can return to Christ and fellowship within the church by renouncing shameful ways (4:2). Paul is hoping to prick the consciences of the Corinthians so that they will accept him, just as they are to accept the repentant brother. He in essence is redefining honor and shame in this chapter. Suffering is viewed as shameful before the world and was one of the reasons Paul’s ministry was criticized by his opponents. Carrying around the shameful death of Christ in our bodies (4:10) ultimately results in eternal life and honor before God (4:17-18). Paul wants this

church to view reconciliation as the means to restore honor. Believing in Christ's personal sacrifice brings new life and honor. The phrase "present us with you to himself" in v. 14 expresses the hoped-for unity that will result from the Corinthians accepting Christ's statement as the badge of honor. The honor and shame language in relationship to reconciliation continues in chapter 5 with the use of the metaphor of body as a tent, which though wasting away in this life, will be clothed in honor at the resurrection.

After this significant theological excursion, Paul returns to the theme of reconciliation in 5:11-21. Because Christ "died for all" (v. 14), a new way of life characterized by his self-giving love is possible. With his love in us (reading *tou Christou* as a subjective genitive), we see people as potentialities (v. 16) because God's grace can make them new creations (v. 17). No one is beyond Christ's reconciling power. The atonement language gets specific in v. 19: "not counting their sins against them." This is even more explicit in v. 21: "[God] made the one who knew no sin to be sin in our behalf in order that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Because Christ has made it possible for any sinner to be reconciled with God, and thus in a position of honor before him, he has commissioned his followers to carry out this same mission of reconciliation (vv. 18-20). When the context and argument of the first five chapters of 2 Corinthians are considered, it becomes clear that the source for reconciling sinners to the church and to God is through what Christ has done by giving himself in our behalf. Paul is redefining honor in terms of Christ's atonement. It is not accidental that Paul brings up the subject of accepting the wayward brother back into fellowship. This situation fits in well with the overall purpose of his letter.

### C. 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15

In 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15, Paul once again instructs a church to ostracize certain people who do not live up to his standard for honor. The reason not to associate with such people is that they do nothing but disrupt the group (v. 6) and do not follow Paul's teaching (vv. 6, 14). The intended outcome of this disassociation (*synanamignysthai*, used also in 1 Cor. 5:11) is so that (*hina*) they will feel ashamed (*entrapē*, v. 15). The assumption is that this shame will cause them to see their error, thus prick their consciences so that they will repent and rejoin the church with acceptable thinking and behavior. This rejection and shaming should be done out of love and for the benefit of the errant, not out of spite (v. 15).

This short letter is missing specific atonement language, but some of the same themes as Paul's other letters lie in the background. Paul is not

so concerned about the content of the message as he is about keeping true to the message. He already made clear the core message in the first letter (1 Thess. 1:10; 4:14; 5:10). Like 2 Corinthians, this letter attempts to encourage the church to remain steadfast in the midst of persecution (1:4), with the result of being counted worthy (or honored, *kataxiōthēnai*) before God when Christ comes again (1:5, 11-12; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:10). The key decision the Thessalonians must make is to agree with Paul's teachings and accept the gospel (1:8, 10; 2:15). The letter is concerned with faithfulness to orthodoxy over against lawlessness and deceivers who think they deserve honor (2:4). Paul essentially shames anyone who follows this heresy and urges the Thessalonians to go the way of honor, even if it means suffering. Through their faithfulness to Paul's teaching, the gospel of Christ will develop a good reputation and be honored (*doxazētai*) by others (3:1). Paul's goal is for everyone "to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth," and to share in "the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2:13-14).

#### D. 1 Timothy 1:18-20

In 1 Tim. 1:18-20, Paul (the assumed author) reminds Timothy to hold true to the faith and a good conscience as he faced opposition in Ephesus. Some people, including Hymenaeus and Alexander, had rejected these and shipwrecked their faith. Paul's response to this type of rejection was to hand such people over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme (v. 20). Three significant thoughts are embedded in these directions. The first is that some people had deviated from the accepted truth of the gospel as taught by Paul (1:3-7; 4:1-3, 7; 6:20-21). Faithfulness to the gospel is a major theme in this letter. Paul uses the article with *pistin* in v. 19, likely referring to the content of what is believed, namely the gospel. Any teaching contrary to the apostolic faith must be rejected. Hymenaeus and Alexander, and others like them, made the conscious decision to go a different way from the truth taught by Paul to the Ephesians. They essentially put themselves outside of the group for which Paul was attempting to define orthodoxy. They did not realize that their position was actually one of shame, and so Paul hoped that by cutting them off from the group, they would realize their faulty thinking. Second, Paul was in the position as leader to shame Hymenaeus and Alexander, minimally by naming them here, but it is assumed that their rejection was public knowledge and the Ephesian church, through Timothy's instruction, would act on Paul's example and reject similar people from the fellowship. Third, Paul's intention in this shaming was so that the consciences of these two would

be developed to the point of realizing that they were headed in the wrong direction (cf. 4:2). Like 1 Cor. 5:5, Satan again is the instrument by which this realization would come. The word “taught” assumes that they would make a change and no longer reject (“blaspheme”) the Pauline gospel. This scenario fits what Paul did in other situations.

It is significant that Paul’s directions to Timothy here are embedded between two references to what Christ has done: 1:15 and 2:5-6. Paul personalizes the gospel in both places. In the first passage, he offers himself as example of one who had himself been a blasphemer and in a position of shame before Christ (vv. 13, 16). Even in this rejected state, Paul was shown mercy and patience by Christ (v. 13). The only way Christ could ever appoint someone like Paul to his service was out of grace (v. 14). Paul’s extreme position of being the worst of sinners and yet forgiven and called to be an apostle highlights the profound change that can take place for those shamed before God. Anyone in Ephesus, including Hymenaeus and Alexander, could experience this change of status as well.

The second passage continues this optimism but expands it to include “all people” (2:1, 4). No one is beyond the restorative grace of God in Christ. The atonement language in this second passage becomes more explicit. Christ Jesus brings two alienated parties together by serving as the perfect mediator and ransom. As mediator, he perfectly represents God to humanity (3:16; Heb. 2:12), and as the ransom, he brings humanity to God (2 Cor. 5:21). The aorist tense of the substantival participle *who gave himself (ho dous)* reflects back on the key salvific event of Christ’s death on the cross (Phil. 2:7-8; Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 8:3; Heb. 2:14). The *hapax legomenon antilytron* refers to the exchange price paid to free captive slaves. In this case, Christ gave his own life as the ransom price (Mark 10:45; Gal. 1:4; 2:20; Eph. 5:2). He took upon himself through death the shame of judgment, bringing reconciliation to shamed humanity through his resurrection (Heb. 12:2). Paul is totally optimistic and has experienced firsthand that this good news can transfer anyone (*hyper pantōn*, 1 Tim. 2:6) to a place of honor before God. It is crucial that the church maintain this truth against any onslaught of shameful heresy that distorts it. There is hope for those who find themselves outside of this truth if they will embrace “the faith and a good conscience” (1:19).

## E. 2 Timothy 2:25-26

This same idea is echoed in 2 Tim. 2:25-26. This letter is full of honor and shame language and imagery. These verses further reveal Paul’s strategy for restoring the wayward. First, he expresses his optimism

that those who are in a position of shame can change. The polemical language is strong in this letter as he delineates and isolates the opponents in Ephesus. His own testimony of transformation (1 Tim. 1:12-17) still rings in the background (2 Tim. 1:9), but the stress in this letter is more on remaining faithful to the truth of the gospel. Apparently Timothy was unsuccessful in removing all the problem people in Ephesus after receiving the first letter, and so Paul directs him here to "humbly teach" them so that they will return to orthodoxy (v. 25). There is no shame language used here, but shaming is what Paul essentially does in this letter with the many descriptions of those who oppose the gospel. If Timothy follows through with Paul's strong rhetoric, he will inevitably be shaming those opposed to Paul's message. What is noteworthy is that the opponents can repent and return to the truth by coming to their senses (v. 26). Essentially, they must develop a "good conscience" (1 Tim. 1:19) so that they are aware of the truth. Again, Paul mentions the deceiver ("devil," v. 26) who traps those who have forsaken orthodoxy.

Atonement language is not particularly abundant in this letter possibly because Timothy already knows Paul's message (1:13; 2:2). Rather, Paul simply reminds Timothy of some essential truths of the gospel that Timothy must make sure the Ephesian church knows well. Communicating this sound doctrine in Ephesus would be the primary way Timothy could isolate and correct the opponents (2:14). The core content of Paul's preaching is alluded to in 1:9-10. The thoughts of these verses echo other passages in the Pauline Epistles, especially Ephesians, and are a brief summary of Paul's gospel in application to the problems in Ephesus. They are expressed almost in creedal form and are ideas that the Ephesians should have clearly known. (1) God's purpose for humanity is to experience salvation in Christ and live this out in holiness (1:9a; Eph. 1:3-4). (2) This salvation comes as a matter of grace and not works (1:9b; Eph. 2:8-9). (3) God had salvation through Christ planned before creation (1:9c; Eph. 1:4). (4) Christ Jesus embodied salvation through his death, and through his resurrection brought victory over death and immortality (1:10; Eph. 1:20; 2:6). Paul gives a second condensed statement of his gospel in 2:8: "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David." Compromising this message, like the opponents had, or avoiding shame before the world out of fear of persecution results in shame (1:8, 12). Honor comes in following Paul's example of faithfulness even to the point of suffering (3:10-11). This faithfulness is shown through godly living, which should expect persecution by the world (3:12). The greatest honor of the eschatological crown of righteousness remains for those who are

faithful to the gospel (4:8). The resource for this honorable life of godliness is the Spirit of God (1:7).

#### F. Titus 3:9-10

Titus faced the similar issue of false teachers in Crete as Timothy did in Ephesus. Titus had a two-part mission: to encourage the church and its leaders in the truth of the gospel, and to refute those who reject this truth (1:9). In 3:9-10, Paul issues clear directions of what to do with the latter, in possible echo of Jesus' directions in Matt. 18:15-17. Titus should warn two times heretics (*hairetikos*) who are caught up in false doctrines (v. 9), and if they do not listen, have nothing to do with them. "Warn" (*nouthesia*) is a positive term that denotes giving instruction in order to help someone turn from the wrong way to the right.<sup>27</sup> Once again, Paul begins with optimism, but there comes a point when such people must be rejected (NASB, KJV) or expelled (*paraitou*) from fellowship in order to preserve the integrity of the gospel and the church. The warning and public exposure should result in shame. Paul does not explicitly say here what the intended effect of this shunning is, but *nouthesia* assumes some type of correction, and by implication, restoration.

Much clearer in the context is how one can be in the position of honor. These verses come at the end of a long section beginning in 2:1 in which Paul defines the boundary for honor and shame through a list of vices and virtues for different groups within the church. At various points in this list, he urges the Cretans to develop an honorable reputation before outsiders resulting in a positive witness to God's grace in Christ (2:5, 8, 10). The transfer from shame (the position of the false teachers, 1:10-16) to honor (orthodox Christians, 2:1) comes by Christ "who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good" (2:14). This significant statement captures the Pauline view of atonement. Christ gave himself "in our behalf" (*hyper hēmōn*) by taking our shame upon himself on the cross, freeing us from the control of sin and the lifestyle that brings shame before God and other people. The result of his sacrifice is that we are enabled through the presence of his Spirit to live holy and godly lives.

---

<sup>27</sup>Bauer, Walter, Frederick W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 679; Johannes Behm, "noeō," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 4: 1021-1022.



Paul expands this idea in 3:4-7 and echoes many themes from other letters. This creedal sentence is one of the most concise Trinitarian statements on salvation in the New Testament: (1) the love of God appeared in the person of Jesus Christ; (2) God saved us by mercy and not according to our works; (3) this salvation comes through the rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit; (4) this is all possible through Jesus Christ our Savior, and (5) it results in our justification and eternal life. Believing in this is "excellent and profitable" (3:8), in other words, the position of honor. Distorting or trivializing this message brings shame upon the church (3:9). This letter echoes other Pauline letters by showing that the primary way honor is restored and shame is removed is through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Accepting this "faith" (1:4, 13; 2:2; 3:15) and living it out in holiness and godliness removes shame before God, the church, and unbelievers.

### III. Honor Through Christ's Atonement

Paul's goal in confronting sinners was always reconciliation with God and with the church. The theological resource for restoring relationships is Christ's identification in shame with sinners. At the core of sin is a rejection of the law of love (1 John 5:3), and so as a result, sin brings alienation with God and with other people. The story of Adam and Eve in Gen. 2-3 sets the paradigm. Before they sinned, Adam and Eve felt no shame because they lived in perfect harmony with God and each other (Gen. 2:25). After their disobedience, the first thing they realized was their shame. So, they sewed fig clothes together to hide their shame from each other (3:7), and then they hid from God (3:8). When Paul writes that "in Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22), he is referring to the inherited consequence of this shameful act. Each of us stands in shame before one another and God because we are exposed in our rebellion and rejection. From the perspective of a dyadistic, collective culture, as a race we have robbed God of his honor (1 Cor. 15:22; Rom. 5:18).<sup>28</sup> As a form of shame, sin can be defined as a social ill manifested in brokenness and isolation. Sin is a transgression against acceptable boundaries stated in God's laws and results in dishonor before God, ourselves, and others (Rom. 2:23). "God's righteousness not only declares us forensically guilty, it also places us as relationally distant and shamed before the Triune God."<sup>29</sup> At the heart of this rebellion is seeking honor that should only be given to God (Rom. 1:21-23). As a limited good, honor must be given to the right per-

<sup>28</sup>Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 96.

<sup>29</sup>Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 97.

son. The results of this rejection of God are “shameful desires” (*pathē atimia*) that ruin human relationships (1:28).

Restoration to the place of honor before God comes through what Christ did on the cross. We become participants with Christ’s death by recognizing that we have fallen short of God’s glory (Rom. 3:24). God as the ultimate judge (2:1-16) overlooks our shame because Christ took this shame upon himself on the cross. Instead of receiving the shame of being enemies with God and exposed in our sin, we receive God’s unconditional love, forgiveness, and acceptance (5:1-11). Grace opens the door to honor and removes the shame (3:27). Boasting in one’s ability to keep God’s laws (a possible problem in Ephesus and Crete) usurps the honor that is only possible through Christ and ultimately results in shame (Rom. 4:2). The one who is reckoned righteous through Christ is the one who receives true honor.<sup>30</sup> It is God in Christ who can bestow true honor to the Christian, not society, and Christ alone can take away lasting shame and humiliation due to sin and failure. Because Christ overcame the shame of the cross (Phil. 2:8-11), those who follow him will overcome the shame of sin and death (1 Cor. 15:22-27, 42-49, 56-57). Accepting the salvation of Christ brings honor before God, for God is well pleased with his Son (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; 1 Pet. 2:6), which was verified by raising him from the dead (Acts 2:32, 36; 3:14-15). Christ’s resurrection was the great vindication of honor (Eph. 1:20-22; Heb. 2:9; Rev. 4:9, 11; 5:11-12).

The cross-event serves as God’s purposeful method for recreating sinners into the honorable image of Christ. New life in Christ does not bring shame but hope implanted within us by the Holy Spirit (5:5). Honor is maintained by growth in the knowledge of the gospel and by faithfully living out the gospel through holy love. Believers are given a new identity “in Christ” by living according to a new paradigm marked by the law of holy love (2 Cor. 5:14; Eph. 5:2). In Rom. 6:19, 22, the opposite of “shame” (*epaischynesthe*) is not “honor” but “holiness” (*hagiasmos*).<sup>31</sup> Holiness in shame-based cultures can be defined as a new self-image in the likeness of Christ’s own loving, self-giving character, empowered by the presence of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). This paradigm shift affects the conscience by providing the new criterion of love as the basis for making decisions. Those who were once shamed learn that they are loved by God and wonderfully made in God’s image.

---

<sup>30</sup>Halvor Moxnes, “Honor, Shame, and the Outside World in Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism*, ed. J. Neusner (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 71.

<sup>31</sup>Moxnes, “Honor, Shame, and the Outside World,” 67.

This new value system dramatically affects community, about which Paul is concerned in the passages explored earlier. The church is a new movement of God in the world by which God is fulfilling his plan for humanity (Eph. 1:3-14). Those who are redeemed by Christ receive the honor of being the children and heirs of God (Rom. 8:16-17). Together, we become the household of God, a community defined by relationship with Christ (Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15). Those who compromise the gospel or neglect to live by its new paradigm bring dishonor to God and detrimentally impact the effectiveness of God's plan. Such people must be rebuked in love, not only for their own sake but also for the integrity of the witness of the church to this hope.

## **Conclusion**

This study merely touches the surface of the crucial paradigm shift in the early church whereby Paul and other early leaders attempted to define theology and ethics in such a way that the people of that time could appropriate the gospel in their own lives. Paul repeatedly returned to the heart of the gospel and what Jesus Christ did on the cross as the basis for his theology and ethics. As a person of authority, Paul had the ability to bring shame upon those who followed the paradigms of the world. At times he had to use his emissaries and local leaders to accomplish this.

Those in positions of authority and influence in the church today can learn much from Paul and the early church, especially those who minister in shame-based cultures. Shaming can be used as a source of correction when it is done out of love and with the intention of restoration. The church must be a community of love willing to accept, restore, and renew those who repent of their shameful ways. Leaders in dyadistic settings have significant power to pronounce forgiveness upon sinners (John 20:23), which must be exemplified by accepting them back into the fellowship of the church. God in Christ provides the model and power to do this through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. We are called to be ministers of reconciliation, which is a significant tool for evangelism for those who have been shamed by their cultures, churches, or families. There may be times when leaders must be like Jeremiah and tear down in order to build up again (Jer. 1:10). Shame can be a dangerous tool if used to manipulate people. That is why it is vital that correction and restoration be done in the shadow of the cross.

# **“OBEDIENCE IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE”: ATONEMENT AS THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF TRUST**

by

**Patrick Oden**

Over the last half-century, there has been a shift in how we think about God’s eternal nature and work in this world. This relational turn in theology emphasizes a social model of the Trinity and with this a sociality of God’s kingdom rather than a political or hierarchical model.<sup>1</sup> This is not, to be sure, a new conception. The terminology of *perichoresis*—God’s eternal dance—has, for instance, been a key model especially in the Christian East for many centuries, dating back to the early church.<sup>2</sup> In what follows, I will propose a model of the atonement that derives from this emphasis on God’s relationality.<sup>3</sup> This is a preliminary exploration for what is a much larger project certainly in need of further refining and development. I will begin with a description of my initial proposal. I will then point to Scripture passages that seem to lend support to this model. Third, I will show how this model reflects views of salvation as indicated by Wolfhart Pannenberg and Jürgen Moltmann. Finally, I will show how this model may be more adequate in light of contemporary psychological models of human development.

A theology of the atonement involves two extremely important underlying questions. The first asks, what is sin? Is it a violation of God’s honor as Lord? Is it corruption that leads to death? The tendency to establish a scapegoat? The devil’s capture of us in enslavement? These

---

<sup>1</sup>For a quick summary as this relates, for instance, to the Trinity see David S. Cunningham, “The Trinity,” in *The Cambridge Guide to Postmodern Theology*, edited by Kevin J. Vanhoozer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 188-201.

<sup>2</sup>See Jürgen Moltmann, “Perichoresis: An Old Magic Word for a New Trinitarian Theology,” in *Trinity, Community, and Power: Mapping Trajectories in Wesleyan Theology*, edited by M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2000), 113-115.

<sup>3</sup>See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 291-293 for a brief discussion on how relationality is increasingly a key theme in discussions of the atonement.

questions point to the second key question. What is God's primary pattern of interaction with this world? In the late twentieth century there was a shift of understanding of the human condition away from a strict legal construction and towards understanding sin as more of a disoriented identity that results in relational violations.<sup>4</sup> Such a view on the human situation is key in the theology of many contemporary theologians such as Wolfhart Pannenberg and Jürgen Moltmann.<sup>5</sup> They both assert that attempts to establish our identity in a person, cause, activity, or goal other than God results in dis-integration—with God and with others—as nothing other than God can sustain identities into eternity. Such dis-integration requires re-integration. However, models of the atonement have not derived, for the most part, from the starting point that Pannenberg and Moltmann, and others, suggest.<sup>6</sup> This gap highlights the need for a new

---

<sup>4</sup>See for instance Alvin Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1995), 5-16, where he defines sin as the culpable disturbance of *shalom*, *shalom* here being the peace that exists, or should exist between relational subjects.

<sup>5</sup>Pannenberg expresses this most explicitly, as can be shown throughout a number of his works. See for instance, Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), 265-267. Moltmann's understanding is more implicit, however. In an interview with the author he noted that he agreed, for the most part, with Pannenberg on this topic, adding that he felt Pannenberg only emphasized one element of this, the proactive establishment of identity in insufficient sources. Moltmann pointed out that there is a passive counterpart, letting something or someone else serve as identity substantiation, essentially giving oneself wholly over to another for definition. He noted that Pannenberg's view was a male sort of sin and his addition was a female sort of sin, which is likely the case in traditional approaches to gender roles. However, I am wary about making such a clear distinction in our era, where such roles are not as defined, thus leading to men and women expressing either of these approaches.

<sup>6</sup>Moltmann develops themes concerning a theology of the particularity of the cross: how we can understand God in light of the cross and how this, especially, relates to our own experiences of suffering. Jesus is our brother in suffering. This is not, however, an atonement theory as much as addressing correlating themes. Moltmann does not seek, as he repeatedly notes, a fully systematic theology but instead tends to focus on elements he feels the theological discussions have neglected, thus he does not discuss the atonement as a focused topic. Pannenberg is more intentionally a systematic and comprehensive theologian. He offers a programmatic statement in *Jesus-God and Man*, 273 writing, "Jesus' death on the cross is revealed in the light of his resurrection as the punishment suffered in our place for the blasphemous existence of humanity." Thus, he closely identifies with the idea that the cross was vicarious penal substitution, suffering the punishment for our sin on our behalf. Cf. Pannenberg, JGM, 303. It is worth noting that Pannenberg "considers Moltmann's concern with the 'crucified God' as a supplementation to his own deliberation." See Herbert Neie, *The Doctrine of the Atonement in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), 216-217.

model, one that better incorporates contemporary understanding of the Trinity and anthropology. This may also become a model that can include other models within its scope as it suggests the underlying priority, expressed through different themes and models, of God's work throughout the biblical narrative.

My initial conception is this: The relational trust between God and humanity that allowed for relational intimacy was broken through sin. God's initiating movements then created contexts of obedience or disobedience as particular people chose where they would put their trust. The expressions of obedience were insufficient both as a sustaining and as a fulfilling expression. The judgment of God expresses a relational displeasure, a response to betrayal and falsehood in attempts to instantiate ourselves through alternative means. Yet, he continues to seek us in relationship and it is in the dynamics of a relationship that we should understand the nature of the atonement.<sup>7</sup> In light of betrayal in a relationship, the issue is not honor or justice; it is one of trust. Trust betrayed is not easily restored, not because of some superessential category that someone must align with, but because the nature of trust in relationships is very deep and personal. Humanity, in sin, betrays God, showing ourselves false and ultimately untrustworthy. How does one restore trust once it is broken? Obedience becomes the primary expression of restoration, restoring a relationship damaged by betrayal, a view on reconciliation that emphasizes a more intimate kind of relationship than other models suggest: a father reconciling with a son, a husband reconciling with a wife, etc.<sup>8</sup>

The cross, in this light, is the ultimate expression of obedience and thus trust, denying insufficient forms of identity and embracing the fullness of God's promise. This act of obedience becomes the avenue of trust for humanity and the avenue of trust for God, who trusts those who trust the Son.<sup>9</sup> Such trust is first an ontological restoration as it orients a person within God's field of force, his perichoretic substantiation that we call justification.<sup>10</sup> This then re-initiates those who trust in the cross into a

---

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Kärkkäinen, 348-351. Kärkkäinen, 349 writes, "Here is the motive for God's willingness to suffer, namely, love." He adds, "Perhaps the best parallel in human life is the self-sacrificial, persistent, and caring love of the mother."

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 51; 57-60.

<sup>9</sup>Here we might see elements of Barth's view on election. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 103-106.

<sup>10</sup>This phrasing brings in the pneumatological emphases of Pannenberg and Moltmann, which while certainly not expressing the same idea, are part of their individual wrestling on the work of the Holy Spirit being broad, thorough, and enlivening. That both tend towards a conception of human sin as distortion in identity suggests their pneumatologies have a shared goal if not a shared path.

new transformative path of obedience, a new birth that re-constitutes the human identity and leads it to a path of identity reformation, which we call sanctification.

While it would be impossible at this point to give a comprehensive examination of God's relationship with humanity, it is worth noting certain key scriptural passages.<sup>11</sup> The first begins with the original narrative of sin in the Garden. Adam and Eve were, as the narrative goes, provided with all their needs. God even, it notes, related to them in a surprisingly open, and curiously anthropomorphic way as he would walk in the garden on an evening. All the bounty of the garden was theirs, except for the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That one was forbidden. All was available, and in the context of such bounty, how could Adam and Eve express a reciprocal response? Performance of their responsibilities and taking the relationship with God more seriously than any other desire. No was no, in regards to the fruit, a very parental sort of explanation. They took and ate. They were false in the face of God's trust. The penalty was death and the outcome was banishment.

In contrast, the validation of Abraham came first through his willingness to go when God called him and second, in light of the fulfilled promise of Isaac's birth, to be willing to continue to trust God's provision, even and especially when God's very demand of obedience was to relinquish the seeming promised answer of a son.<sup>12</sup> Abraham's trust in God revealed itself in his willingness to let go of God's provision. Abraham was far from perfect, but could be trusted to do that which God requests. This is noteworthy as it is precisely the negation of the sacrifice that establishes God's favor for Abraham. The issue was trust, not sacrifice, so it was the expression of obedience, not the sacrifice itself, that was the primary event. Such trust, belief in God to the point of risk, was shown earlier to itself substantiate the relationship. In Genesis 15, his belief in God, his trust, was "credited to him as righteousness."<sup>13</sup> What followed was an act of obedience in expressing the covenant. In Romans 4, Paul emphasizes this initial faith as why circumcision is not needed for gentile Christians. The law brings wrath, faith brings hope. True faith is real trust.

---

<sup>11</sup>Note that while discussion of the following passages normally should involve more substantial exegetical analysis, my goal for the present is to focus on a narrativel reading. The passages, as part of the narrativel intent of Scripture, suggest a character and motivation of God in his responses to key figures as an expression of God's overall response and relation to his people and this world.

<sup>12</sup>Genesis 22:1-19.

<sup>13</sup>The narrative of Abraham is essential in understanding the work of Christ. See Wright, 891.

Moses serves as another example because Scripture asserts that God trusted him as much, if not more, than just about any other individual in Scripture. Moses was forbidden to enter into the Promised Land, even after all he did and experienced, because he struck the stone rather than spoke to it.<sup>14</sup> Numbers 20:12 highlights the key issue: “But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ‘Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.’” The penalty of this seemingly minor violation seems extreme in penal terms. However, in light of God’s insistence on obedience as an expression of trust, this is understandable, not as a punishment for a supposed crime but as a relational acknowledgement that Moses’s own exasperation is leading him away from a relational devotion to either God or the people. Moses does not trust God enough to be fully obedient. God can no longer trust Moses. Thus, his authority comes to an end.

Even more important is the narrative of King Saul in 1 Samuel. Saul is anointed the first king of Israel, but even from the beginning he shows a certain reticence in his role. Having taken up his role, this reticence is seemingly put behind him. However, his obedience to God, his trust in God, remains in question. The crucial moment comes in 1 Samuel 15. Saul is commanded to “utterly destroy” the Amalekites, all the people and all the possessions.<sup>15</sup> Saul, however, “spared Agag, and the best of the

---

<sup>14</sup>See Numbers 20:1-13. The Exodus narrative is filled with examples of obedience, two more of particular note. The first is the Passover commands that involve putting the blood of the lamb over the door in Exodus 12:7. Christ’s action on the cross is explicitly and closely connected to this event, and this has everything to do with obedience and relational covenant rather than sin. Understanding the role of the Passover lamb is itself worth much more examination in light of atonement theology. The second noteworthy event is the command God gives to invade the Promised Land. The caution of the Israelites is an expression of faithlessness and distrust. God revokes the command, and even though the people attempt to backtrack, the moment has passed. Their initial reticence and disobedience shows they cannot be trusted to obey when God commands. The attempt to invade the land is unsuccessful and the people wander the wilderness for forty more years. Only Caleb and Joshua, the two spies who expressed trust in God, were given access to the land.

<sup>15</sup>The word commonly translated as “utterly destroyed,” is a bit more complex than the translation indicates. The word basically means “devoted” to YHWH. Essentially anything “devoted” as such becomes wholly and irrevocably the personal property of God, and thus is holy as such, no longer available for use by humanity. These things, or people, oftentimes are then utterly destroyed if not specifically used by God. Their sacred quality may entail their destruction. God claimed the “holy land” for his people, thus those in the land which were not his



sheep and of the cattle and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was valuable, and would not utterly destroy them; all that was despised and worthless they utterly destroyed.”<sup>16</sup> In not being obedient to God’s command, Saul violated the trust God put in him as king.

In response, the narrative tells us that God regretted making Saul king. Samuel confronts Saul who explains that he saved the animals in order to offer a sacrifice to God. Samuel responds, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obedience to the voice of the LORD? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.” Saul is thus rejected as king, and the transition begins to give the kingship of Israel to David, whose morality is arguably worse than Saul’s but whose obedience to God’s particular calling is seemingly absolute.

In a relationship oriented around love, betrayal results in a breaking down of the underlying bond, and more important, a loss of trust in the other. This is true in parental relationships as well as with friends or romantic relationships. Such loss of trust initiates a mode of suspicion in human relationships, engaging stress and tension, so that a person is on their guard or breaks off the relationship entirely.<sup>17</sup> While God cannot be limited to such human reactions, we do find clear evidence of God’s increasing distrust throughout the biblical narrative, resulting in anger, wrath, mourning, and jealousy—a very non-legal reaction to loss of devotion from another. Seeing God’s jealousy as the definitive source of his anger and wrath leads us to decidedly non-penal considerations, yet maintains the need for atonement.

What is the root of this jealousy? Here is where Pannenberg and Moltmann can help orient the discussion. Pannenberg writes, “The focusing of salvation on the eschatological future of God stands in critical

---

“chosen” were removed from existence. Cf. Lev. 27:28ff.; Nu. 21:2ff.; Deut. 2:34; Jos. 6:17; 8:26; 10:28; 1 Sam 15:20, 22; Ezra 10:8 God is making a special claim upon the people or things and requires his people to follow the dictates of these claims.

<sup>16</sup>1 Sam. 15:9.

<sup>17</sup>This may be connected to the very primal “friend or foe” response that is key to survival. Babies imprint on faces very early on, showing a pattern of recognition—trust—for the loved one and anxiety with others. Recognition and response to faces is so important actually utilizes a specialized section of the brain, suggesting how basic trust continues to be a, if not the, core issue in human social interactions. Once trust is broken it may literally involve a physiological change in the brain. See Pascal Andersson, Frederic Sander, David Vuilleumier, Patrik Vrticka, “Memory for Friends or Foes: The Social Context of Past Encounters with Faces Modulates Their Subsequent Neural Traces in the Brain,” *Social Neuroscience* 4, no. 5 (2009): 1-18.

opposition to all achievement of human life in this world alone, for in striving for self-fulfillment in this world, we close ourselves off to God and his future.”<sup>18</sup> God is jealous in a relational and salvific way. Our only path of fulfilled identity is through communion with God, and seeking another source leads to death.<sup>19</sup> God is, in other words, jealous for us for our own sake. This leads to both his wrath and his repeated expression of reconciliation.

In his study on the Trinity, Moltmann writes, “The theology of the divine passion is founded on the biblical tenet, ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:16).”<sup>20</sup> He proceeds to develop this in six key themes. In the fifth theme, he notes, “the suffering of God with the world, the suffering of God from the world, and the suffering of God for the world are the highest forms of his creative love, which desires free fellowship with the world and free response in the world.” The God who is love seeks reciprocation of this love, but humanity has betrayed this love and thus God, leading to a crisis. Instead of destroying humanity, however, God in his love seeks to restore and renew that which he loves. Wrath in love is not penal or the payment of a fine rather it is corrective, a passionate interest in putting right what has been torn apart. Moltmann continues in his sixth theme, “This means that the creation of the world and human beings for freedom and fellowship is always bound up with the process of God’s deliverance from the sufferings of his love. His love, which liberates, delivers and redeems through suffering, wants to reach its fulfilment in the love that is bliss.”<sup>21</sup> This love can be fulfilled only in the context of trust, and so the issue of trust must be addressed in order to bring renewed freedom in the relationship between God and humanity.

The doctrine of the atonement intends to describe the resolution God initiates through the work of Christ that is fulfilled on the cross. However, as history suggests, even doctrines of the atonement can be co-opted, with the appropriation of Christ’s sacrifice or substitution becoming a justification for persecution and division between the supposedly saved and supposedly not saved, the elect or not elect. Obedience to the law of love is subjugated to perceptions of righteousness. Human ten-

---

<sup>18</sup>Pannenberg, ST 2:399.

<sup>19</sup>Cf John Wesley, Sermon 17, “The Circumcision of the Heart,” § I:13, in *Sermons III*, ed. Albert C. Outler, vol. 3 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville:Abingdon Press, 1976– ), 408-409.

<sup>20</sup>Jürgen Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 57.

<sup>21</sup>Moltmann, TKG, 60.

dency to co-opt religious favor for ego satisfaction is evident at every point and in every space throughout history. If the model can be co-opted to undermine the primary goal, then the model is deficient; it does not reach into the core part of sin that leads to distortion and dissolution. This is sin that embeds itself into our relationships with each other and with God. God simply cannot trust humanity. Even the best of us will betray him, oftentimes using the very tools and language he has provided for our reformation.

We cannot, or at least will not, trust God. God's patience and seeming distance creates a remote experience.<sup>22</sup> The allure of gain that bypasses God leads to the eating of the fruit in the garden. The wait for Moses on the mountain results in an idol made of gold. The frustration with perpetual need for basic sustenance leads the people in the wilderness to complain against God's provision.<sup>23</sup> Proofs of God's faithfulness become forgotten in the face of the next immediate issue or desire. In each of these God responds to the disobedience by punishing but also providing a way of resolution through a gesture of obedience. In the story of the golden calf, God seeks to destroy the people but Moses intercedes on their behalf. God does not trust the people. God does trust Moses.<sup>24</sup> The people are trusted through God's trust in Moses. In Numbers 21, the people are punished by venomous snakes, the crisis is resolved by Moses making a serpent of bronze. When the people looked on that snake, a gesture of obedience, they were healed. The gesture is more than a symbol. In being an expression of obedience for its own sake it reorients the relationship back into a zone of trust, and in this zone of trust, God provides salvation. It is worth noting that Jesus specifically referred to this passage when speaking of his own mission.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, the Law itself is a system of obedience that was intended to validate trust: the people who trust God are obedient and God trusts

---

<sup>22</sup>Note too that approaches to the atonement may themselves lead to forms of distrust, such as we see in the relatively recent responses to the penal substitution model as being a form of divine child-abuse. The God who forces his son to suffer is not really a God we should trust for our own security.

<sup>23</sup>See for instance Exodus 14:22-26; 17:1-7.

<sup>24</sup>Exodus 32. Note in vv. 11-14 Moses persuades God by reminding him of the covenant, thus it's more precise to say that God trusts God, and Moses appeals to this trustworthiness, that God should be trusted in fulfilling the covenant even if the people are not.

<sup>25</sup>John 3:14-15.

them because of their obedience.<sup>26</sup> As mentioned, however, this system could itself be co-opted, leading to the prophetic calls for true obedience. In order for trust to be perpetuated, an expression of obedience was required that by its very nature could not be co-opted, so that God could trust in this obedience and people could orient their trust through this obedience. This brings us to the cross, which while a sacrifice, is not itself primarily defined by its role as a sacrifice and, which while a substitution, is not primarily defined by its role as a substitution for punishment. It is defined by the enacting obedience of Jesus in intentional contrast to other forms of meaning and validation. The cross is a confrontation as much, indeed even more, as it is a sacrifice.<sup>27</sup>

At each point in the trial and the crucifixion, Jesus was confronted with definitive alternatives that sought to co-opt his mission and identity, or at least force him to conform to more rational, immediate patterns.<sup>28</sup> The particularity of the cross itself invites further reflection in this direction. God chose this method, this expression, as the gesture of obedience. Indeed, a sacrifice could only be seen as an analogy as there is nothing in Scripture to validate it as religiously appropriate.<sup>29</sup> As substitution, it is also an analogy as one person's assuming of a penalty does not, substantively, deal with the issue of justice. In this, we might suggest that it is more akin to Paul's discussion of the circumcision of the heart. As an analogy—as pointing to the deeper obedience that reveals a transformed

---

<sup>26</sup>A loose analogy of this can be seen in the oft told story of Van Halen's performance contract which stipulated that there would be a bowl of M&Ms backstage with all the brown ones removed. While typically told to mock celebrity whims, it was later revealed that this was an intentional test included in the contract. The complexity of the arrangements of the performance, in terms of lighting and other elements, was so vast that the contract was very detailed in order to maintain consistent quality and safety. By seeing a brown M&M the band members would know the contract was not read thoroughly and there were likely other mistakes, some potentially life threatening. See <http://www.snopes.com/music/artists/vanhalen.asp> [accessed February 23, 2014].

<sup>27</sup>See Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 72.

<sup>28</sup>Pilate, for instance, was not seemingly concerned at all with the religious or cultural issues. He just wanted Jesus to affirm the right of Rome in the trial.

<sup>29</sup>Seeing the cross as a sacrifice as its primary meaning insists we ignore the very strict passages in the Jewish Law on what makes a sacrifice acceptable to God. That it was performed outside of the Temple, by Roman soldiers, negates its absolute status as fulfilling Jewish law. Perceptions of Jesus' morality as creating the perfect sacrifice approaches it outside of a strict Jewish perspective.

trust in God rather than fulfillment of a practice—it fulfills the goal even more thoroughly than the legal practice.<sup>30</sup>

Christ, then, is the fulfillment of obedience that opens up our participation. To rephrase Irenaeus: Christ does what we cannot do so that we can do what he does. The work on the cross expresses absolute trust in God rather than human forms of salvation or devotion. It confronts human forms of identity and power and validation as Jesus risks his whole existence in the face of overwhelming negation. Death itself is engaged. The obedience in the cross leads to a trust that is absolute. As Philippians 2 puts it, “And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.” In the Philippians hymn, it is this obedience, even to the point of death, which led to God’s exaltation of Christ. Jesus negated the negation, proving himself true and trustworthy.<sup>31</sup> The Father could and does fully trust the Son, who as a human exemplified the obedience that God has always called humanity to fulfill.

This act of obedience is a source of trust for humanity, too. We cannot, or at least will not, trust a God who is seemingly distant and remote. We are impatient and anxious for identity substantiation or immediate satisfaction. In light of the cross, however, we see an example that is more than an example, it brings God’s work within our zone of trust. We can trust God if God himself shows us he is willing to risk his own self in the mode of salvation. We cannot be obedient in full, but we can be obedient by orienting our identity within the man who rejected false forms of identity, and in doing this express our trust that such an identity will bring fulfillment in contrast to other contextual models. Jesus is the man who we can trust because in taking on the burden of the cross he shows his willingness to do that which we must do. We cannot be whole but we can see him as approachable and trustworthy.<sup>32</sup>

We are not trustworthy in our acts because our disobedience continues in a myriad of forms, but we can be obedient in this one way: we can

---

<sup>30</sup>We can see reflected in the practice of the Lord’s Supper, which is (in some conceptions) a non-sacrificial commemoration of the act of obedience. The phrases, “take and eat,” and “take and drink,” become the coordinating practices that re-orient our allegiance in light of Christ’s obedience.

<sup>31</sup>Cf. Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 28.

<sup>32</sup>Note that this brings it close to Abelard’s perspective on Jesus as an example. Again, as the emphasis is on God’s trust and our trust, the example of Christ is not a primary mode of interpretation, but it is easily seen how this proposal can be folded into the broader model of obedience and trust. Jesus is trusted, and in that can serve as an example for how we are to live.

trust Christ. The one tree in the Garden that provides the sole possibility of disobedience is contrasted by the one tree in Golgotha that offers us the sole expression of obedience. The old Adam brought death, the new Adam brings life. Jesus becomes the obedience of trust that dissolves the separation, uniting us in trust of each other.<sup>33</sup> In commenting on Romans 5:18-21, NT Wright notes:

Here might we stay and speak of a story divine and human, all-encompassing and many-sided, full of love and grief and purpose. . . . For the moment, we simply note the point: as the "faithfulness" of the Messiah was a way of referring to his death, making it clear that he was therein offering God the "faithfulness" to which Israel was called but in which Israel failed, so the "obedience" of the Messiah in this passage, also obviously referring to his death, is the way of making it clear both that he is being the "obedient servant" and that he is thereby reversing and undoing the effects of Adam's "disobedience."<sup>34</sup>

The Father trusts the Son; we put our trust in Jesus. The cross is the tree that provides the fruit of life, which we are invited to take and eat. This fruit is the fruit of the Spirit who then, in the zone of trust through Christ, enacts a transformation so that we who are not obedient become initiated into Christ's obedience and are conformed into the likeness of the Son.<sup>35</sup> Thus, instead of justification and sanctification being two separate strands, we can see obedience begetting obedience. Christ is not only a model for us in this but the very source of obedience that creates the context for our transformation.<sup>36</sup> In trusting Christ, we enter into his obedience, and the Father who trusts Christ, trusts us through Christ. In this act of obedience, we reject absolute trust in other forms of identity or satisfaction. The cross negates all of that, and in being obedient to the way of Christ we accept this negation for ourselves. Jesus isolates our trust and instantiates our identity. Indeed, in being obedient to the obedience of the cross we enter into the same risk of Jesus: it is all or nothing.

---

<sup>33</sup>Cf Wright, 890ff.

<sup>34</sup>Wright, 890.

<sup>35</sup>In commenting on Romans 5:15-17, Wright, 889 notes, "Thus the obedience of the Messiah is the means by which the purpose of election, the rescuing and restoration of the human race is accomplished."

<sup>36</sup>John Wesley, Sermon 19, "The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God," §2, 431-432 writes, "Justification implies *only* a relative, the new birth a real, change. God in justifying us does something *for* us; in begetting us again, he does the work *in* us."

Jesus became man so that we could become gods, as Athanasius put it, not as independent deities, but so as to become the sort of people who can relate fully and wholly with the eternal God.<sup>37</sup> Moses, who could not see God's face, shows how far humanity has to go to spend eternity with God. This is the perichoretic invitation.<sup>38</sup> God must trust us before he will transform us and he must transform us before he can invite us into his presence, not for the supposed sake of his righteousness but because we, in a non-transformed state, simply cannot experience God without dissolution. We can also, in Wesley, see a continual emphasis on obedience that goes beyond Wesley's initial legalistic interpretations prior to his Aldersgate experience.<sup>39</sup>

This idea of trust is not a formality or analogy. Trust has a substantive role in our sense of self and community. Indeed, in some theories of human development, trust is the essential category that is established in our earliest stages of life.<sup>40</sup> James Loder writes, "By the time the child is eighteen months to two years old, he will have come to some conclusions about whether the environmental relationship is predominantly trustworthy and to what degree and in what direction the balance is tipped."<sup>41</sup> Even the most supportive context, however, is not without its moments of anxiety. Thus, a child is never able to fully trust, and in this gap the psyche constructs the ego, which is oriented towards responding to experienced negation by attempts to control the situation and repress potentially sensitive parts of the self from being exposed to others. "By means

---

<sup>37</sup>Even earlier, Irenaeus, in *Against Heresies* Book V, urges obedience in resisting heresies, "following the only true and steadfast Teacher, the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself.

<sup>38</sup>See Loder, 194-199. Cf. Moltmann, "Perichoresis," 1771-118.

<sup>39</sup>Wesley, Sermon 18, "The Marks of the New Birth," §III:5, 427 writes, "A second fruit then of the love of God . . . is universal obedience to him we love, and conformity to his will; obedience to all the commands of God, internal and external; obedience of the heart and of the life; in every temper, and in all manner over conversation." It is, as mentioned, undeniable that Wesley himself held to a penal substitution model. The question that is in need of further study is whether that was more because it was the prevailing model of his context and Wesley assumed it rather than questioned it. I proposed that seeing atonement in the way I propose is not necessarily Wesley but may be more adequately Wesleyan, bringing together the various emphases in a more cohesive fashion.

<sup>40</sup>See Erik H. Erikson and Joan M. Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed: Extended Version with New Chapters on the Ninth Stage of Development* by Joan M. Erikson (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), ch. 3.

<sup>41</sup>Loder, 88. Cf. Pannenberg, ATP, 197-200.

of negation," Loder writes, "we construct the nonself, objective world over against and distinct from our human subjective sense of self."<sup>42</sup> This bifurcates human identity and creates a context of defensiveness or aggression in the context of others. Egos play a dance of dissolution with others, hiding, defending and attempting to dominate.

The only perceived way to address the anxiety is either to give into despair or to assert attempted independence from the untrusted source.<sup>43</sup> Even in the context of healthy development, there is a persistent longing for meaning and trust, which then always orients, to a greater or lesser degree, in dysfunctional approaches to satisfying this longing. Such longing may at times be distracted or repressed but finds expression throughout life in sometimes sporadic and sometimes persistent ways. Loder notes that "it is primal evidence that there is something theologically abnormal about so-called normal ego development."<sup>44</sup>

We can, in light of this, suggest a likewise deeper meaning for the idea of being born again. The cross re-initiates our identity that is established in Jesus. Freed in a new trust in God, we can proceed through a new path of human psychological development, established in the only trust that provides substantiation for each subsequent step. Thus, the idea of sanctification may be able to track through models of development themselves, stages of faith and identity renewed at each point, a dynamic experience of the Christian life.<sup>45</sup>

Such psychological transformation in light of God's trust in us through Christ and our trust in God through Christ goes beyond an indi-

---

<sup>42</sup>Loder, 93. On the next page he notes two unfortunate, and lasting, consequences: "First, all subsequent so-called normal development is ego development, so it takes place on the basis of repression that is on the basis of "no." Negation as separation is the basis for grasping the objective world objectively, for objectifying oneself in self-understanding and maintain interpersonal distance." The second consequence is "an emerging ego that is increasingly competent in ensuring survival and maintaining satisfaction, but underlying the ego's development and surrounding all its achievements is a profound sense of cosmic loneliness."

<sup>43</sup>Both of these result in expressions of sin, however, understanding the root of sin as either despair or attempted assertion of ego can and should lead to different responses to the sin. This distinction gives some clarity on why Jesus responded openly to some, for instance the woman at the well, while harshly with others, such as some Pharisees.

<sup>44</sup>Loder, 94.

<sup>45</sup>Loder's text is a significant resource in discovering how this may happen in light of psychological and theological development.



vidual experience of relationship with God. This reforms, or should reform, our ability to participate in community with each other. With trust being established in God, we need no longer protect our own ego or sense of self in the context of others. Thus, we can be more open and free in a way that should not be susceptible to contextual or environmental conditions. Just as Jesus could remain open and free with those who did not understand or actively betrayed him, as his trust for selfhood was fully in God, our trust in Christ likewise orients our identity and even safety within the context of God's protection. We can trust God through Christ and we can now trust each other as it is Christ who bears the surety of trust. Not trusting each other in light of Christ's work negates justification for God to trust us, pointing even more radically to the statement in the Lord's prayer, "forgive us as we forgive others." We cannot accept God's trust while denying trust to others, as that is establishing a double standard for our own benefit.

With this, a community formed in blame, or defining themselves in distinction from those who they feel deserve blame—for instance an elect versus non-elect distinction—is inherently isolating and negating. This does not mean there is not responsibility for causing dissension or evil. Rather, that in taking on the blame of all people, of being the expression of obedience that leads to trust, those who follow Christ cannot use the resolution of blame as a prior condition for community. We do not trust others because they are trustworthy. We are open to trust in others because Christ is trustworthy and because the work of God will validate our identity despite any lingering unresolved injustice.<sup>46</sup> In trusting others through the trust of Christ, we are able to participate in community formation that is not always susceptible to the whims of ego, ambition, competition, or suspicion. Even in the risk of being hurt by others we commit to them, as their hurt is not decisive for either our value or our hope. In such a persistent commitment, others come to overcome their distrust, trusting in Christ and the Christ-substantiated community. We build each other up. Or as Loder puts it, "Then the transformed ego can

---

<sup>46</sup>This might suggest a passivity in the context of oppression. I do not think it insists on it. Rather, resolution is pursued that has at its goal the ending of the oppression rather than the revenge or other payment to atone for evil. A loose analogy can be seen in the responses after World War I versus World War II. World War I enacted significant blame and reparations. World War II acknowledged the evil but the primary goal was to help the Axis powers integrate back into the global community.

be put into the service of the *koinonia* in which we mutually create each other in our particularity through our mutuality.”<sup>47</sup>

This understanding points to a potential universality of this model. Atonement theories are often dependent on culture or era, the context in space or time or both. Thus, how we understand sin and God’s response to it reflects our cultural location. However, if we see the issue of trust as fundamental to human psychological development, then this is consistent across human societies, with each specific setting giving specific expression to the ego formation and how one might form and retain trust in this world. An atonement model that is built on trust and obedience can incorporate the traditional atonement models as cultural expressions, indeed it could even open the door to further models that are contextually defined.<sup>48</sup> Humanity is very diverse in expression but very similar in developmental design. Emphasizing the underlying issue brings the topic of the atonement into a more universal expression, with the emphasis on trust in Christ breaking down potential cultural barriers that might otherwise prove divisive.

## Conclusion

If we begin with God as relational, existing and oriented in love, then we must extend this understanding into every subsequent element of theology. Understanding the intent of God in salvation to be itself relational changes how we interpret issues such as sin, wrath, and judgment, thus also issues of salvation and sanctification. Rather than seeing salvation in terms of honor or law, for which a price must be paid upon violation, in a relational approach, there is not something outside of God that God must fulfill. God himself seeks reconciliation for God’s own sake, he loves and seeks humanity but humanity has betrayed God. Obedience is, from the beginning, an expression of devotion more than Law. It is a way of prioritizing the relationship and a way of showing trust. Obedience, in this light, is a way of expressing commitment and trust. God trusted humanity with creation itself. Humanity did not trust God, repeatedly. God’s wrath, his jealousy, grew. Repeatedly, however, God invited humanity back into a zone of trust through specific paths of obedience. Particular people became expressions of this, but the state of dysfunction continued. People did not trust God. God could not trust people.

---

<sup>47</sup>Loder, 197.

<sup>48</sup>It would facilitate this by not insisting a culturally defined model is equally applicable to all settings, such as has been done with the penal substitution model in recent evangelistic history.

The work of Christ, which revealed obedience throughout his life, reflected the fullness of God in power and teaching, culminating in the obedience of entering into negation. Jesus confronted all forms of earthly validation and identity, the cross becoming the ultimate expression of obedience and thus trust in the Father who was able to fully trust the Son. This avenue of trust opens a new path of obedience for us, not merely as an example for us, but as a new beginning in relational openness. God trusts the son, and through the son trusts those who trust the son for their identity, meaning, salvation itself. Atonement in terms of trust does not only look backward, a resolution of the past, it also looks forward, a resoluteness in the future. Faith is trust, trust is hope. Love revives and remains.

# THE POLYVALENCE OF ATONEMENT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: A WESLEYAN REFLECTION ON LEVITICUS AND JONAH

by

Peter Benjamin Boeckel

In the Christian tradition, atonement is one of the doctrines that is so foundational to the faith that people think they know something about it, whether they do or not. Fortunately, the Church never saw fit to canonize a particular articulation of how the problem of sin was rectified in the work of Jesus. Though certain streams of Christianity gravitate toward different models of atonement, the Wesleyan position is complicated in that John Wesley never offered a sustained treatment of this doctrine. Though he tended to favor the satisfaction theory in certain places, many Wesleyans recognize that this theory—in at least some of its modern instantiations—is out of sync with Wesley’s soteriology.<sup>1</sup> Even Wesley detected certain potential problems with the satisfaction model, one of which was its potential to introduce antinomianism: if Christ atoned for sin by satisfying the Father’s anger once for all, then a problem arises if Christians infer that they are not bound by the moral law since the penalty of sin is already satisfied.<sup>2</sup> Wesley’s concern about antinomianism

---

<sup>1</sup>Specifically, if the theory is construed in such a way that Christ’s work only appeases the Father’s wrath without removing sin, this would be at odds with Wesleyan understandings of justification and sanctification. The primary articulation of the satisfaction theory that was problematic for Wesley himself was one that allowed antinomianism by saying that the moral law was fulfilled in Christ and no longer binding on Christians; we will see this below. However, it should be noted that to some extent such articulations of the satisfaction model are distortions of earlier forms of the theory. For instance, Bruce Marshall shows how a Thomistic understanding of the satisfaction metaphor allows for humans to claim victory over sin in Christ, which does make it compatible with Wesleyan sanctification. See Bruce D. Marshall, “Treasures in Heaven: In Gary Anderson’s *Sin: A History Theologian Bruce D. Marshall Finds the Great Biblical Change in Understanding Our Relationship with God*,” *First Things* 199 (2010): 23-26.

<sup>2</sup>For Wesley’s acceptance of satisfaction theory, see his *NT Notes*, 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 John 2:2; Sermon 20, “The Lord our Righteousness,” §II.6, *The Works of John*

is valid, though I suspect satisfaction theorists have ways of addressing this critique theologically.

In any case, I intend to consider how a Wesleyan reading of atonement in the Book of the Twelve, particularly Jonah, in dialog with a Levitical conception of atonement, can aid a Wesleyan articulation of this doctrine. I will show that the Old Testament depicts atonement in various ways, some of which stress the need for purification from sin through sacrifice and some of which emphasize the need for repentance and right action.

In order to examine atonement for Wesleyan theology, this paper proceeds in the following manner: I will begin by summarizing the sacrificial model of atonement found in Leviticus. After this, I will investigate the book of Jonah within its canonical context to argue that it is difficult to understand atonement in the Book of the Twelve as something brought about solely by the sacrificial system. I will then consider how Jonah unites elements of the different portrayals of atonement in the Old Testament. It will become apparent that the Old Testament's understanding of atonement is polyvalent, offering several ways to conceive the doctrine. Recognizing this, Wesleyan interpreters—those who use a Wesleyan hermeneutic—must hold these different aspects of atonement in tension: affirming both Wesley's concern to take seriously the sacrificial nature of Jesus' atonement while simultaneously affirming the need for repentance.

Before proceeding, however, the term "Wesleyan hermeneutic," which is the approach I assume in this article, should be defined. To be sure, there is no singular hermeneutic that is employed by every Wesleyan. As George Lyons remarked over three decades ago, references to "the Wesleyan interpreter" suggest "a non-existent uniformity among those who choose to so identify themselves."<sup>3</sup> An implication of Lyons' statement is that there are significant differences amongst Wesleyans, which result in differing hermeneutical approaches to scripture. Since the

---

Wesley (ed. Thomas Jackson; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 7:239; Kenneth J. Collins, *A Faithful Witness: John Wesley's Homiletical Theology* (Wilmore: Wesley Heritage Press, 1993), 49–50. Regarding Wesley's concern for antinomianism, see Sermon 20, "The Lord our Righteousness," §II.19–20, *Works*, 5:244; Sermon 35, "The Law Established Through Faith," §II.5–7, *Works*, 5:453–454. See also, Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 104–105; Collins, *A Faithful Witness*, 52.

<sup>3</sup>George Lyons, "Hermeneutical Bases for Theology: Higher Criticism and the Wesley Interpreter," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 18 (1983): 63–78.

publication of Lyons' article, much has been written on what constitutes or characterizes a Wesleyan interpretation. Unfortunately a summary of this body of material is beyond the scope of the present article.<sup>4</sup>

What then does the present writer bundle into the term "Wesleyan hermeneutic?" I contend that this term describes the many interpretations rendered by Wesleyans; it is not limited to one methodology such as form criticism, literary readings, etc., but rather describes interpretations that use such methodologies in service to a Wesleyan theology. Proper nuancing of what is entailed here would necessitate its own article, but I would posit that Wesleyan hermeneutics eventuate in two ways. First, Wesleyan hermeneutics often exhibit a soteriological emphasis that is commensurate with John Wesley's belief that the purpose of scripture is to make us wise unto salvation.<sup>5</sup> This does not mean Wesleyans read salvation into every text—if it did, then the present paper is greatly lacking—but rather that one of our purposes in reading scripture is to learn about salvation and sanctification, i.e., how to live and what it means to live a life that is pleasing to God.

Secondly, when not specifically dealing with salvation, Wesleyan approaches will address theological concepts in ways that speak to the concerns of Wesleyans. In the present paper, for example, I treat various texts relating to atonement in order to articulate a thesis that is consistent with Wesleyan understandings of this doctrine—understandings that hold in tension both divine and human action. However, when I state below that Wesleyan readers will want to interpret in certain ways, this

---

<sup>4</sup>The reader is encouraged to see Robert Wall, "Toward a Wesleyan Hermeneutic of Scripture," in *Reading the Bible in Wesleyan Ways* (ed. Barry Callen and Richard Thompson; Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press, 2004), 57–80; Joel Green, "Is There a Contemporary Wesleyan Hermeneutic?," in *Reading the Bible in Wesleyan Ways* (ed. Barry Callen and Richard Thompson; Kansas City, Mo: Beacon Hill Press, 2004), 123–36; Steven Koskie, "Can We Speak of a Wesleyan Theological Hermeneutic of Scripture Today?," in *Wesley, Wesleyans, and Reading the Bible as Scripture* (ed. Joel B. Green and David F. Watson; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012), 195–209; Frank A. Spina, "Wesleyan Faith Seeking Biblical Understanding," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 30 (Fall 1995): 26–49.

<sup>5</sup>John Wesley, *OT Notes*, 1 Kgs. 4:33. See also, Wall, "Toward a Wesleyan Hermeneutic of Scripture," 51–52; Green, "Is There a Contemporary Wesleyan Hermeneutic?," 130–132. On the theological and philosophical implications of Wesley's position, see William J Abraham, "Scripture and Divine Revelation," in *Wesley, Wesleyans, and Reading the Bible as Scripture* (ed. Joel B. Green and David F. Watson; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012), 122.

does not entail that the Wesleyan reading is necessarily distinctive since other Christian traditions may make similar moves in their theological interpretations. Having made this qualification, let us now end this brief excursus on Wesleyan hermeneutics and turn to atonement in the Old Testament.

## 1. ATONEMENT IN LEVITICUS<sup>6</sup>

In order to understand a biblical articulation of atonement, one cannot ignore Leviticus. This is especially the case for Wesleyans since their concern for holiness should attract them to Leviticus, with its sustained treatment of both atonement and holiness. The Holiness Code (and its relation to atonement) cannot be discussed at length in this study. Instead, I will focus on the Levitical articulation of atonement as it functions in the sin offering since it seems to be the archetypal example of sacrificial atonement in Leviticus.

### 1.1 THE VOCABULARY AND SYNTAX OF ATONEMENT

The primary word for atonement used in Leviticus is כָּפַר,<sup>7</sup> which most often refers to the priest's action of "making atonement" (NRSV) through the sacrificial cult.<sup>8</sup> Thus, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would sacrifice to atone for himself, his house, and the sanctuary. It is important to note here that the slaughtering of the bulls and goats in Leviticus 16 was not in and of itself constitutive of atonement. Rather, atonement was mediated through the priest's act of sprinkling blood on the surface of the mercy seat (פִּנְקֶת) (Lev. 16:11–16). Consequently, it was through the priest's action that atonement was made for the people and

<sup>6</sup>There are texts outside of Leviticus that are germane to the priestly/sacrificial conception of atonement. For a discussion of this material, see Fritz Maass, "כָּפַר," *TLOT* 628–629.

<sup>7</sup>The precise meaning of this word is uncertain. Some (e.g., B. Lang, "כָּפַר *kipper*; כָּפַרֶת *kappōret*; כֹּפֶר *kōp er*; כִּפּוּרִים *kippurīm*," *TDOT* 7:289) have suggested that it derives from the Akkadian *kuppuru* (to uproot, to cleanse) whereas others (e.g., Maass, "כָּפַר *kpr*," 627) argue for a connection to the Arabic, *kfr* (to cover). The more compelling argument seems to be that of the Akkadian camp. Hence, when dealing with Leviticus, I will interpret the word as being concerned with purging the impurity incurred by sin rather than covering it up.

<sup>8</sup>Excluding the places where Aaron is the one who makes atonement, the relevant passages are, Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:6, 10, 13, 16, 26; 7:7; 12:7–8; 14:18–20, 31, 53; 15:15, 30; 16:32–33; 19:22.

the sanctuary; the priest was a mediator in the process of reconciling YHWH and Israel.<sup>9</sup>

The role of the priest in atonement makes sense logically, but the question of what exactly transpires in atonement remains. What constitutes atonement in the in Leviticus? Does atonement remove sin? Does it cleanse? For these questions, it is important to discuss the concept of sin. Though this term carries moral connotations in Christian theology, in Leviticus this is not always the case. Whereas failure to abide by God's commands does generate sin (Lev. 4:2), one might also sin through touching unclean objects (Lev. 5:2-3). In Leviticus, both scenarios necessitate a sin offering, which rectifies the guilt incurred by the worshipper's actions and effects the removal of impurity. Otherwise, the sacrifice would be ineffective for reestablishing the relationship between God and Israel.<sup>10</sup>

At this point Wesleyan interpreters can draw a connection to the Holiness Code with its injunctions to be holy (Lev. 11:44 and 19:2).<sup>11</sup> For the Holiness Code, YHWH is the source of holiness and his people are called to be holy and imitate him.<sup>12</sup> In order to keep the command to be holy, however, it was incumbent upon Israel to avoid impurity, the antithesis of holiness in Leviticus.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>Though atonement clearly entails divine action in some sense (on which, see below), it cannot be denied that the priest played an important role in the atonement process. In Leviticus 4-5 and 16, the priest is not told to sprinkle the blood so that God could then atone; rather the priest is told to sprinkle the blood (in order) to make atonement.

<sup>10</sup>Interestingly, the Levitical articulation of atonement appears to remove the impurity from the cultic objects in the sanctuary, but not necessarily from the worshippers. A close reading of Leviticus 4:1-5:13 shows that it was not the people who needed to be purged of impurity. Rather, it was the articles in the sanctuary.

<sup>11</sup>Certainly, Wesleyans are not the only ones who might turn to the holiness code at this point. Indeed, many who practice theological interpretation could find warrant in this hermeneutical move. Nonetheless, this move is particularly apropos for Wesleyans with their concern for holiness.

<sup>12</sup>Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 730.

<sup>13</sup>Milgrom argues that "impure," rather than "profane" is the true antithesis for "holy" in Leviticus. He observes four conceptual categories here: a person (or object) can be holy, pure, common, or impure. Furthermore, it is possible simultaneously to be holy and pure, common and profane, or even pure and common. What is not possible is to be simultaneously holy and impure. See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 730-731.



This observation allows one to read Leviticus 5 through the lens of holiness. Though this text does not explicitly equate contact with unclean objects to the loss of holiness, it does assume that such activity results in uncleanness, or impurity (טָמֵא, cf. Lev. 5:2), which is antithetical to holiness. Consequently, by removing impurity, the sin offering facilitates Israel's ability to be holy as God is holy.

## 1.2 WESLEYAN REFLECTIONS

Having investigated part of what atonement entails as it relates to the sin offering, Wesleyans may feel they have reached an impasse regarding atonement in the Old Testament.<sup>14</sup> *Prima facie* it looks as though a simple performance of the sacrificial ritual(s) will, in and of itself, bring about atonement.<sup>15</sup> The problem is that this allows for the sort of antinomianism that was worrisome to Wesley in that sinners could essentially avoid the consequences of ongoing sin so long as they performed the necessary ritual at regular intervals. In short, the salvation that comes through this model of atonement lays little emphasis on the holiness of the believer—to use Dietrich Bonhoeffer's term, this is “cheap grace.”<sup>16</sup>

This, however, runs counter to a Wesleyan understanding of sanctification. In regard to Leviticus, Wesleyans are left with at least two options: (1) in the Old Testament God was less concerned with sanctification than he was in the New Testament, or (2) we have not yet fully grasped the nature of atonement in the Old Testament. The first option is at odds with too many texts in the Old Testament (e.g., Ex. 19:6; Lev. 19:2) and cannot make sense of the biblical commands to be holy. Consequently, a Wes-

---

<sup>14</sup>One might rightly observe that the sin offering is not the only sacrifice connected to atonement in Leviticus (cf. Lev 1:4; 5:16, 18-19, etc.). My reason for focusing on the sin offering is to use it as an example of how sacrificial atonement is understood in Leviticus. I also realize that atonement in Leviticus is not limited to the notion of the removal of impurity. Other important uses of קָפַץ connect it with ransom imagery (cf. Lev 17:11) and the mercy seat (תְּרִפֶּה) in Leviticus 16. I have not addressed these uses because I am particularly interested in the sacrificial uses of atonement.

<sup>15</sup>Erhard Gerstenberger does well at articulating what most Protestants will find discomfiting in Leviticus' understanding of atonement: “. . . the atonement effected according to these fixed rituals is not a ‘salvific event’ brought about in a one-sided fashion by God alone, as Protestants would like to believe on the basis of their doctrine of justification.” See, Erhard Gerstenberger, *Leviticus: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 61-62.

<sup>16</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 44-45.

leyan hermeneutic will attempt to reconcile Leviticus with what the Bible says elsewhere.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. SEARCHING FOR INTERTEXTUALITY

Our first task will be to determine the different ways in which intertextual connections may be established. This can be done along a number of lines. Firstly, we can employ an intertextual approach to examine places where כפר occurs but with different connotations than what is seen in Leviticus 4–5. This could allow us to widen the range of semantic meanings for כפר. Secondly, we can find alternate conceptions of atonement in the Old Testament by examining the places where the concept of atonement lurks in the background even if it is not stated explicitly.

Let us begin by making observations about the ways in which כפר is used. In Leviticus (as in other priestly literature), כפר often takes the priest(s) as its subject and is accomplished through a sacrificial rite (e.g., Lev. 14:20-21; 16:18, 20; cf. Ex. 29:33, 35-37; Num. 8:21).<sup>18</sup> When performance of this rite becomes perceived as that which effects atonement (as it did in Israel's late monarchial period), we find ourselves on a trajectory that could lead to the antinomian problems noted earlier.

However, once one moves outside the priestly literature, one sees that God plays a more active role in atonement. This becomes most evident in the places where God is the subject of כפר (cf. Jer. 18:23; Ezek. 16:63; Pss. 65:3; 78:38; 79:9; 85:1-2). In such verses, English translations often obscure the connection to atonement by translating כפר with words like “forgive,” even though the same form would be translated “atone” elsewhere. My point is not that “forgive” is an inadequate translation, but that it veils the terminological parallels between these passages and Leviticus when it comes to analyzing atonement in the Old Testament.

---

<sup>17</sup>In this intertextual endeavor, Wesleyans—like many other interpreters, including Wesley himself—employ the analogy of faith to allow scripture to interpret itself. In essence, a scripture passage that is perceived to be at odds with Christian theology (or the Wesleyan branch of Christian theology) is brought into alignment by interpreting it with reference to other passages that aid in elucidating its meaning. For bibliographic information on the analogy of faith, see footnote 19.

<sup>18</sup>An important caveat to make here is that, though the ritual is integral to atonement in these texts, the spilling of blood is not necessary, at least in principle. There are a number of texts (e.g., when people are too poor to afford the appropriate animal—Lev 5:11-13) where atonement becomes possible without killing an animal (see Maass, “כפר,” 627).

A Wesleyan interpreter will draw intertextual connections here so that the usages of כפר with God as the subject can supplement the usages in Leviticus. Doing this will allow our understanding of atonement in the Old Testament to cohere with the rule of faith, which locates the source of atonement in Christ alone.<sup>19</sup> One way this supplementation happens is by allowing the non-priestly texts to imply a new theological assertion: atonement is granted by God. Milgrom maintains that this does not represent a departure from the theology of atonement in Leviticus.<sup>20</sup> Rather, the prophetic and psalm passages make explicit what he believes to be implicit in the priestly literature, that the cultic ritual for atonement was only efficacious by the grace of God.<sup>21</sup> Put differently, the non-priestly texts allow us to see that atonement in Leviticus is not effected by the ritual in and of itself but is granted by God who receives the people's prayer and confession of sin and lifts any curses that might otherwise be imposed because of sin.<sup>22</sup> In short, the ritual may have been a necessary part of obtaining atonement, but it was not sufficient; in the end it was God who would grant it.

I suspect that Milgrom is correct theologically: human actions (ritual or otherwise) do not bring atonement apart from God's grace. However, whether or not that is what the priests in ancient Israel believed is a separate exegetical issue that cannot be solved here. In any case, in Leviticus, the emphasis is undoubtedly placed on the priest and on the ritual as the locus for mediating atonement from God. This is *at least* different in emphasis from the Psalms where atonement (or forgiveness—כפר) is requested from God rather than the priests. If one wants to understand how atonement functions in the Old Testament, both perspectives need to be considered.

However, even if we adequately account for all the usages of כפר in the Old Testament, we will still miss important aspects of atonement in the Old Testament. As with other theological concepts, word studies only take us so

---

<sup>19</sup>For the role of intertextuality and the rule (or analogy) of faith in Wesleyan hermeneutics, see Wall, "Toward a Wesleyan Hermeneutic of Scripture," 48–51; idem, "Reading Scripture, The Literal Sense, and the Analogy of Faith," in *Wesley, Wesleyans, and Reading the Bible as Scripture* (ed. Joel Green and David Watson; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012), 42–43; Scott Jones, *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1995), 43–53; cf. Wesley, *OT Notes*, Preface, §18; *NT Notes*, Rom. 12:6.

<sup>20</sup>Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1084.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>Hartwig Thyen, *Studien zur Sündenvergebung* (Neuen Testament und Seinen Alttestamentlichen und Jüdischen Voraussetzungen 96; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 34.

far since it is possible for a text to inform our understanding of a theological concept without making explicit use of the expected theological term. In recognition of this, we now turn our attention to texts that can inform a Wesleyan understanding of atonement without using the usual vocabulary.

### 3. JONAH AND ATONEMENT

The Book of the Twelve contains no explicit references to atonement, but nonetheless offers important insights for understanding this concept. This includes the apparent rejection of the sacrificial system as self-sufficiently efficacious for atonement. The prophets recognized the impossibility of rectification with God through cultic ritual without concomitant efforts to rectify society's social ills.<sup>23</sup> I will argue that Jonah offers a case study for atonement in the Book of the Twelve, but first we must situate Jonah within the context of the Twelve and grasp the general conception of atonement in this corpus.

#### 3.1 ATONEMENT IN THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

Though the word כפר does not occur in the Book of the Twelve, atonement is an important theme lying just beneath the surface. Micah 6:6-8 offers a good example of a prophet questioning the sacrificial system while also arguing that one can be set right with God:

<sup>6</sup>With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? <sup>7</sup>Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? <sup>8</sup>He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?<sup>24</sup>

This text offers a caricature of the sacrificial cult.<sup>25</sup> The hyperbolic suggestion that thousands of rams be offered to YHWH shows that no amount of sacrifice could substitute for repentance. Hosea 6:6 shows that God prefers steadfast love (חֶסֶד) and knowledge of God to sacrifice and burnt

<sup>23</sup>Christopher Wright, "Atonement in the Old Testament," in *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement* (ed. Derek Tidball, David Hilborn, and Justin Thacker; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 79.

<sup>24</sup>NRSV.

<sup>25</sup>See, James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Micah-Malachi* (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary; Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2011), 573.

offerings. Neither Hosea nor Micah advocates an outright rejection of the sacrificial cult; they rather suggest that sacrifice must be wedded to one's contrition and repentance.<sup>26</sup>

An additional text that describes atonement in the Book of the Twelve is Amos 5:22 and 24: "22Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon . . . 24But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."<sup>27</sup> Again, we find a heavy critique of the sacrificial system.<sup>28</sup> It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that one of the things criticized in these texts is an inadequate theology of atonement. The prophets reacted against those who relied on sacrifice in order to forego living holy lives; they were not about to admit any theology of atonement that enabled sin by allowing God's people to ignore God's law.

The point of the above passages is that the sacrificial system had failed to set Israel *at one* with God. Though the sacrificial rituals may have been performed correctly, unity with YHWH could not happen without righteousness and justice. The prophets argued that atonement could not become a reality if one refused to conform to God's character. One cannot be faithful to the God who calls people to holiness while simultaneously perpetuating oppression (cf. Amos 5:7–13; Mic. 6:10–12). In other words, repentance appears to be a necessary condition for the efficacy of atonement.

### 3.2 JONAH: A CASE STUDY

When one thinks of the story of Jonah, atonement is not the first thing that comes to mind.<sup>29</sup> One might more naturally associate Jonah

---

<sup>26</sup>Granted, the sacrifices mentioned in Hosea and Micah are not sin offerings but rather burnt offerings. However, in the time of the prophets these sacrifices were conflated. Neither prophet makes the distinction between burnt offerings and sin offerings that we find in Leviticus.

<sup>27</sup>NRSV.

<sup>28</sup>Some have argued that Amos' critique is even more than an admonition to supplement the sacrificial system with good ethics but rather an outright rejection of the system itself. See John Barton, *The Theology of the Book of Amos* (Old Testament Theology; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 195–198.

<sup>29</sup>It could be asked, does Jonah even represent adequately the theology of the Twelve? After all, it looks very much like parody and one might say that the only thing the book has in common with the other Minor Prophets is that the protagonist happens to be a prophet. I do not think such a parodic reading is needed (though it is defensible). Even if Jonah is a parody of its canonical context, we must ask in what way. If Jonah is a parody, it is a parody of the extremes (that only repentance or only sacrifice could bring atonement). This would cohere with my main thesis that atonement in the Old Testament is complex and polyvalent.

with the odd story about a man in a fish or about the irony of a prophet who does all he can to forestall God's mercy. I argue that a Wesleyan interpretation of Jonah can accomplish three feats: 1) it can show that Jonah, while not rejecting the sacrificial system, supplements it with repentance; 2) it can show an intimate connection between repentance and the notion of atonement that underpins the book of Jonah; and 3) it can demonstrate that atonement requires God's mercy and is not effected through human action alone.<sup>30</sup>

Before examining these accomplishments, we should pause to consider Jonah's name as a potential point of departure for considering the book's connection to atonement. "Jonah" derives from the noun "dove."<sup>31</sup> In the Old Testament, doves were occasionally used as metaphors for mourning or lamenting because of their moaning coo (cf. Isa. 38:14; 59:11; Nah .2:7).<sup>32</sup> However, they were primarily associated with sacrifices (cf. Lev. 1:14; 5:7, 11; 12:6, 8; 14:22, 30; 15:14, 29; Nu. 6:10).<sup>33</sup> Particularly, doves were used for sin offerings when worshippers could not afford the appropriate animal. Given this, if the connection to Jonah's name is significant, then the protagonist of the book of Jonah is presented as somehow connected to atonement and the sacrificial system.

Of course, it may be that Jonah's name is insignificant. Jack Sasson observes that various people in the Old Testament were named after animals and that "Dove" would have been a perfectly acceptable name for Hebrew parents to choose.<sup>34</sup> Douglas Stuart has posited that any argument in which Jonah's name is symbolic must (1) demonstrate that the allegorical meaning reflects both Jonah's personality and (2) reflect the personality of the prophet by the same name in 2 Kings 14:25.<sup>35</sup> Regard-

---

<sup>30</sup>The Wesleyan flavor of these theses is not so much reflected by the methodology used here (e.g., intertextual comparison) but by the desire to investigate how the divine gift of atonement connects to human repentance. This may reflect non-Wesleyan traditions as well, but Wesleyans are particularly concerned with analyzing the relationship between divine action in Christ's atoning sacrifice and human action in repentance inasmuch as repentance is necessary for holiness.

<sup>31</sup>Hans Walter Wolff, *Obadiah and Jonah: A Commentary* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 98-99; Jack Sasson, *Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretation* (AB 24B; New York: Doubleday, 1990), 68-69.

<sup>32</sup>Paul Gilchrist, "יֹנָה (yōnâ) dove, pigeon," TWOT 372.

<sup>33</sup>Johannes Botterweck, "יֹנָה yōnâ; (תֹּר) tōr II; גֹּזָל gōzāl; יְמִימָה yemimâ," TDOT 6:38-39.

<sup>34</sup>Sasson, *Jonah*, 69.

<sup>35</sup>Douglas K. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* (WBC; Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 447.

ing the second condition mentioned by Stuart (that both occurrences of the name “Jonah” must be taken as allegorical), I see no reason for this. It is perfectly conceivable that the author/editor of the book of Jonah intended some sort of symbolism whereas the Deuteronomist, probably working with a historical source<sup>36</sup> and writing for a different purpose, did not intend any sort of allegory.

In addition, there is no necessary reason to agree with Stuart that Jonah’s personality must reflect whatever symbolism we attach to the name. Jonah’s personality does not need to reflect atonement if we can understand Jonah’s character as allegorizing atonement in certain ways. This possibility will become apparent below as I argue that although sacrifice and atonement are not major themes in Jonah, they lie just beneath the surface as significant undercurrents in the text. I will demonstrate this by examining the perception of sacrifice in Jonah 1–2 and by using repentance in Jonah 3 to draw connections to the rest of the Book of the Twelve.

### 3.2.1 *Jonah, the Sacrificial System, and Atonement*

As has been noted, the Book of the Twelve in general has a skeptical view of the sacrificial system inasmuch as this system was thought to effect atonement in its own right. Though Wesleyans may agree with this critique, they may also find it problematic if the skepticism becomes a rejection of the sacrificial system in principle since Wesley understood Jesus’ atonement in sacrificial terms. Consequently, the Wesleyan interpreter will affirm the importance of human action (with the Minor Prophets) to avoid antinomianism, while also preserving an understanding of the importance of sacrifice (with Leviticus).

Jonah does well at retaining this tension. Though repentance is much more visible in Jonah than sacrifice, a latent approval of the sacrificial system can be detected at certain points. For instance, Jonah 1:16 and 2:9 contain explicit references to the action of sacrificing (זָבַח). Furthermore, this activity is not portrayed negatively. Having observed this, some will note that these sacrifices were not necessarily sacrifices of atonement (they may be more analogous to Noah’s sacrifice in Gen. 8:20).<sup>37</sup> Even so, the very mentioning of sacrifice in a favorable manner demonstrates that the book of Jonah was not at odds with the sacrificial system in principle. Rather, sacrifices could be acceptable to God under certain circumstances.

---

<sup>36</sup>E.g., the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel.

<sup>37</sup>Not every occurrence of זָבַח functions to bring about atonement in the OT. Cf., Gen. 31:45; 46:1; Ex. 3:18; 20:24; 24:5; Lev. 22:29; Josh. 8:31; 1 Sam. 16:2.

Further evidence that the sacrificial system was viewed amicably in Jonah may be that Jonah himself promises to make a sacrifice in 2:9 and in the very next verse he is released from the fish. Certainly, if Jonah's promise was at odds with God's desire, God would not have instructed the fish to eject the prophet (2:10). Additionally, as with the sacrifices of the sailors, we must observe that Jonah's sacrifice does not need to be an atoning sacrifice to demonstrate that the book's theology allows for the sacrificial system.

Other atonement allusions can be detected in the text as well. Jack Sasson observes that Jonah's instruction to the sailors in 1:12 utilized a verb that connects to the removal of sin. He states that the verb "lift up" (נָשָׂא) is rarely used to describe the lifting of an individual but rather predicates nouns such as "sin" and "evil."<sup>38</sup> When this happens, "lift up" often means something like "forgive."<sup>39</sup> For example, in Hosea 14:2, the prophet exhorts the people to ask YHWH to "take away (שָׁח—i.e., forgive) all guilt."

Jonah's instruction to the sailors was intended literally: they were literally supposed to lift him up and throw him overboard. However, the Hebrew and Wesleyan reader can be pleased with the double entendre inherent in the word choice. It would be difficult to argue based on vocabulary alone that this double meaning was in play. Still, the very fact that Jonah offered to let the sailors throw him overboard might constitute an allowance for them to use him as a propitiatory sacrifice of sorts: the sailors would assuage God's wrath through a metaphorical lifting-up of Jonah. Jonah would become the metaphorical sacrifice implied by his name.<sup>40</sup>

Taken individually, these lines of evidence (e.g., the use of נָשָׂא, the use of נָשָׂא, and the etymology of Jonah's name) would have difficulty in securing the conclusion that atonement is a significant undercurrent running through Jonah 1–2. However, when they are considered together, one can begin to make a cumulative case that atonement is a traceable theme in at least Jonah 1–2.

### 3.2.2 *Jonah, Repentance, and Atonement*

Although the case could be made that Jonah accepts the sacrificial system, it would be amiss to assert that Jonah's understanding of atone-

<sup>38</sup>Though I doubt Sasson would argue that such nouns are the most frequent direct objects of נָשָׂא. See Sasson, *Jonah*, 124.

<sup>39</sup>F. Stolz, "נָשָׂא nś to lift, bear," *TLOT* 372.

<sup>40</sup>Serge Frolov argues that the prophet was an unwilling sacrifice. See Serge Frolov, "Returning the Ticket: God and His Prophet in the Book of Jonah," *JSOT* 86 (1999): 85–105.



ment is congruous with that of Leviticus. For one thing, Jonah, as part of the Book of the Twelve, places a greater emphasis on repentance than sacrifice. Though the sacrificial system is not abrogated, it is secondary to repentance.

To make this argument, we must turn to Jonah 3. The fact that atonement is beneath the surface of Jonah 3 is seen in that the Ninevites' act of turning (שׁוּב) from their ways convinced God to relent (נָחַם) of what he intended to do (3:10). By the end of chapter three, God's anger against Nineveh had subsided. Though Jonah 3 never mentioned atonement, it happened somewhere along the way.

The people's response to Jonah's message was the occasion for the bestowal of atonement: they declared a fast and donned sackcloth. Regarding fasts, one might think of Esther as a typical example of how fasting functioned in the Old Testament (to gain divine help). However, in Jonah's context the notion of fasting demonstrated repentance.<sup>41</sup> Precedent for this particular use of fasting is seen in 1 Kings 21:27-29, where Ahab repented and was forgiven when he performed the same actions as the Ninevites.

It appears that without any apparent direction from Jonah, the Ninevites did what God requested of the Israelites in Joel 2:12: "... return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." This is most apparent in the king of Nineveh's speech, which sounds as though the king had been reading Joel 2:14: "Who knows whether [YHWH] will not relent, and leave a blessing behind him" (cf. Jon. 3:9). In short, the Ninevites did intuitively what the Minor Prophets had been attempting to get the Israelites to do: to "let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Am. 5:24); "to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God" (Mic. 6:8). These activities appear to have been instrumental in bringing about Nineveh's atonement.

### *3.2.3 Jonah and the Source of Atonement*

My argument thus far has been that Jonah and the Minor Prophets understand atonement to be somehow connected to human action. Though the sacrificial system is not abandoned completely, the Book of the Twelve teaches us that perfect performance of the sacrificial system will remain ineffective if it is not accompanied by repentance on the part of the worshipper. Thus, in Malachi 3, it looks as though part of the process of refining God's people involved obedience to God's injunction to

---

<sup>41</sup>See, Sasson, *Jonah*, 245.

“return (שׁוּב) to me” and to “turn aside” (סוּר) no longer from God’s statutes (Malachi 3:3, 7). Jonah 3 echoes this sentiment when the king commands the people to “turn (שׁוּב) each from his evil way and from the violence that is in their hands.” (Jonah 3:8, my translation).

If we compare this to Leviticus, the question must be asked, “Who causes atonement?” Is the action of repentance generative of atonement in and of itself? In the Minor Prophets, do people “make atonement” like the priests do in Leviticus (cf. Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:6, 10, 13, 16, 18)?<sup>42</sup> If this is the case, the understanding of atonement in the Minor Prophets does not seem all that different than that of Leviticus except that the people sacrifice through living rightly rather than the priests sacrificing animals.

This understanding of atonement is at odds with Christian theology. Though the ecumenical church never canonized a theory of atonement, the notion that humans are able to set themselves right with God through their own ability does not take seriously the power of sin and humanity’s inability to set itself right with God. Wesley follows Paul by arguing that justification is by faith alone and not by works.<sup>43</sup> Thankfully Jonah offers a corrective to this notion. In Jonah 3, the people’s repentance is not the end of the story. Rather, God responds to the people’s repentance and relents from the evil that he had planned (3:10).

This points to the complex relationship between human action, divine action, and atonement: both a divine willingness to forgive and human obedience are necessary conditions for atonement to become efficacious. In Jonah 3, the Ninevites could not have been set right with God had it not been for God’s willingness to forgive. At the same time, God’s willingness to forgive would have been rendered ineffective had the people refused to repent.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup>It could be argued that this is an inaccurate articulation of atonement in Leviticus. It may be that God granted atonement when the ritual was performed correctly. Thus, ritual performance may be necessary to effect atonement, but not sufficient in itself. This is a cogent argument and determining its validity or falsity cannot be done here. In any case, we should agree that the notion of the priest making atonement was at least how the term was understood in the time of the Minor Prophets. If people were not relying on ritual sacrifice without repentance to atone for sin, then the prophets’ critique of society dissipates.

<sup>43</sup>Ephesians 2:8. Cf. Wesley, Sermon 20, “The Lord Our Righteousness,” §II.6, *Works*, 5:239. See also, Sermon 35, “The Law Established Through Faith,” §II.6, *Works*, 5:453-454.

<sup>44</sup>James Nogalski puts this somewhat differently: “Going through the motions of repentance does not mechanically obligate God to act salvifically, but

The notion that atonement originates with God can also make sense of the sacrificial system. Hartwig Thyen has observed that even the sacrificial system did not grant atonement *ex opere operato*.<sup>45</sup> Rather, it was God's choice whether he wanted to accept the actions of the people.<sup>46</sup> A similar dynamic is detected in Jonah: the people's repentance, while used to persuade God to relent, did not obligate God to forgive. On the contrary, forgiveness is given by God alone and of his own volition.

### 3.3 CONCLUSIONS ON ATONEMENT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The complex nature of atonement in the Old Testament is beginning to emerge. In different parts of the Old Testament different activities and actors are emphasized as agents in the atonement process. One reason for this complexity may be that *atone* is an accomplishment verb. In other words, atonement is not something that one does through a simple action. Rather, atonement happens through an apparatus of actions. Accomplishment verbs are words like "reveal," "inspire," "teach," or "win." They are actions accomplished through means of secondary actions. For example, one can say that one is going to teach today, but teaching in itself is not a simple action; it is accomplished through secondary activities (e.g., lecturing, guiding class discussion, etc.). Similarly, atonement in the Old Testament is not a simple action as though God or a priest says that he is now going to atone for someone's transgressions. Rather, atonement occurs in the complex dynamic of humans responding to God's instruction (given through the prophets and/or the Torah) and of God's response to human obedience. In Christian theology, atonement is effected in the sacrifice of Jesus who rectifies the problem of sin. Atonement is offered by God through Jesus, but becomes efficacious through the Christian's belief in God and through repentance that brings one to live in obedience to God.<sup>47</sup>

Because of the complexity of this theological concept, it is providential that the Old Testament does not present one uniform depiction of atonement. Rather, the polyvalence of imagery in the canon allows for the

---

it is important to note how many times in the Bible God responds to the responses human beings make" (James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Hosea-Jonah* [Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary; Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2011], 441-442). Wesley would note that faith and repentance are necessary for justification.

<sup>45</sup>Thyen, *Studien zur Sündenvergebung*, 34.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>See Wesley, Sermon 14, "Repentance of Believers," *Works*, 5:156-170.

different features of atonement to be emphasized. The Levitical presentation emphasizes the gravity of sin and the need for purification if we are to be in a relationship with the holy God. Conversely, the Minor Prophets show that ritual purification is not sufficient in itself; we are also obliged to abide by the ethical standards that God requires of his people.

#### 4. REFLECTIONS ON THE PRESENT STUDY FOR WESLEY AND WESLEYAN THEOLOGY

Before concluding, it is important to discuss the ways in which the above study can inform (and is informed by) a Wesleyan reading of the Bible and atonement. We began by noting that Wesley, while espousing the satisfaction theory of atonement in places, saw problems with certain implications that people derived from the theory. One problem was the notion that, if Christ's sacrifice atoned for all sin, those who are saved do not need to follow the law because the consequences of sin were already dealt with.<sup>48</sup>

Wesley rejected this position, arguing that the moral law was binding on Christians.<sup>49</sup> He also did not believe that one had to follow the law prior to believing in Christ; fulfilling the law is not what Wesley believed made atonement for one's sin. For Wesley, atonement was accomplished by Christ's sacrificial death and the Christian was justified through belief in Jesus. However, if this faith did not immediately bear the fruit of "good works," then Wesley argued that "it is plain our faith is nothing worth."<sup>50</sup> Though human works do not bring about atonement for Wesley, they are intimately tied to atonement in that Wesley would not have allowed that a Christian could live in disobedience to God while reaping the benefits of Christ's work.

Wesley's reluctance to enable antinomianism is consistent with what we see in the Old Testament. On the one hand, Wesley used sacrificial imagery to understand the death and atonement of Jesus. In a manner similar to how the Levitical conception of atonement used the sin offering to bring purification, Wesley understood the believer to be sanctified through Jesus, who made satisfaction for all of the believer's sins prior to justification.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup>On how this implication of satisfaction theory became manifest in Wesley's time, see Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 97-106.

<sup>49</sup>For discussion of Wesley on the moral law, see Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 98-101; Collins, *A Faithful Witness*, 45-48.

<sup>50</sup>Wesley, Sermon 35, "The Law Established Through Faith," §II.6, *Works*, 5:454.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, §II.7, *Works*, 5:454.

On the other hand, Wesley's view of the ongoing authority of the law allows for the importance of human works. This is where the Book of the Twelve comes in: God offers us atonement and forgiveness, but this offering necessitates human obedience; salvation is from God alone, but divine forgiveness does not license antinomianism. Wesley would not say that human actions generate atonement. Rather, he would recognize (with Jonah) that atonement only happens through a divine act of mercy and grace. That said, the way in which this gift becomes effective in the believer is through faith in Christ and obedience to God's law.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that atonement in the Old Testament is polyvalent. Additionally, we have seen how Wesley's concerns surrounding atonement are legitimated by the Old Testament, which has been read unapologetically from a Wesleyan perspective. This Wesleyan bent has given the impetus for observing the importance of human participation in atonement as well as in the texts discussed in this study. Having admitted the Wesleyan bias of this paper, however, I will posit that my interpretation is not one that is ungrounded or unwarranted in the texts considered. Though there are other ways to interpret, the interpretation offered here does have a foundation in the text.

Lastly, one positive feature of this study is the attempt to retain the tension between differing biblical understandings of atonement. There appear to be differences between Leviticus and the Book of the Twelve when it comes to this doctrine. The way to resolve the situation is not to force one text into the framework of the other. Rather, the interpreter must recognize that the theology of these texts addresses complex concepts that do not leave us with simple categories. For this reason, it is best to understand atonement in the Old Testament as dynamic, taking on different emphases in different contexts. Happily, this dynamic is one that can elucidate Wesley's thinking on atonement and can help us to understand the complexity of this concept for Christian theology. For now, it will suffice to say that the Wesleyan can stand on firm ground in connecting atonement both to the work of Christ and to the importance of human action in response to God.

# UNIVERSAL ATONEMENT OR ONGOING INCARNATION? COMPARING THE MISSIONAL THEOLOGIES OF WILLIAM BOOTH AND ISAAC HECKER

by

James E. Pedlar

William Booth (1829-1912) and Isaac Hecker (1819-1888) are remembered as the founders of two nineteenth century missionary bodies —The Salvation Army and The Paulist Fathers. Neither man was a theological heavyweight, and yet there are many reasons why their missional theologies are worthy of comparison and consideration. First, the two men were contemporaries, born ten years apart, and as such they provide an interesting reference point for comparing Wesleyan-Holiness and Catholic understandings of mission in the late-nineteenth century. Second, both had Methodist backgrounds, although Hecker never explicitly embraced a Methodist perspective in the way that Booth did, and he would later go on to become an ardent Roman Catholic. Third, both men were revivalists. While Booth's revivalist credentials are obvious, Hecker is an example of what historian Jay Dolan calls "Catholic Revivalism," a movement among Catholic evangelists in America that made use of many Protestant revivalist techniques.<sup>1</sup> Both men began their careers as evangelists serving with established ecclesial bodies, but after conflicts each went on to found a missionary movement of their own. Booth served with multiple Wesleyan denominational bodies, and as an independent evangelist, before founding The Salvation Army in East London in 1865. Hecker was originally ordained as a Redemptorist Priest, but was expelled from that congregation for wanting to establish a distinctly American community of Redemptorists. He was then given permission, along with four other American converts to Catholicism, to found The Paulist Fathers in 1858. Fourth, both men also became possessed by expansive and comprehensive visions of worldwide reform and renewal in their

---

<sup>1</sup>See Jay Dolan, *Catholic Revivalism: The American Experience, 1830-1900* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978).

later years, each of which went beyond merely “spiritual” and personal concerns, and addressed larger social challenges. Finally, both Booth and Hecker believed that the movements they founded were perfectly positioned to be used by God to usher in this great coming renewal.

Thus far I have been stressing the similarities between Booth and Hecker, but obviously there were significant differences, given the fact that Booth was a Wesleyan evangelical and Hecker was a Roman Catholic. Their differences are illustrative of the divergences that existed between Catholics and Wesleyans in the nineteenth century. While Booth’s grand missiological vision was built upon the universality of the atonement, Hecker’s view was built upon the foundation of the Church as the continuation of the incarnation in human history. These differing foundations funded very different understandings of the work of the Spirit, the place of the Church in God’s mission, and the relationship between missionary bodies and the broader Church.

### **BOUNDLESS SALVATION: THE ATONEMENT IN BOOTH’S MISSIONAL THEOLOGY**

Although he was baptized in the Church of England shortly after his birth, William Booth was converted under the influence of some Wesleyan Methodists as an adolescent, with a decisive turning point in his life occurring when American Methodist revivalist James Caughey held a campaign in Nottingham in 1846.<sup>2</sup> He became very involved in the Broad Street Wesleyan Chapel and was made a local preacher at the age of seventeen. Booth would later remark that as a young man he had believed that “there was one God, and John Wesley was his prophet.”<sup>3</sup> Though he was firmly Wesleyan, during the early period of his life Booth struggled to find a denominational home. Surprisingly, he briefly found his way into the circles of the Congregational Union in 1852, but it was their Calvinist soteriology that became a stumbling block for Booth. After giving Calvinist teaching due consideration, Booth decided he “would rather starve than preach such doctrine.”<sup>4</sup> After other similar false starts with various denominations, Booth was ordained in the Methodist New Con-

---

<sup>2</sup>For details of William Booth’s life, see the most important recent treatment: Roger J. Green, *The Life and Ministry of William Booth: Founder of the Salvation Army* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005).

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Frederick St. George de Latour Booth-Tucker, *The Life of Catherine Booth* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1892), I: 74.

<sup>4</sup>George Scott Railton, *The Authoritative Life of General William Booth, Founder of The Salvation Army* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), 31.

nection in 1858.<sup>5</sup> He would part ways with the New Connexion in 1861, but his Wesleyan theological commitments remained strong throughout his life. It is not surprising then that the universality of Christ's atoning work was a central facet of Booth's own theological perspective.

Booth's adherence to a universal atonement is encapsulated in his most famous song, which became known as "The Founder's Song" in Salvation Army circles: "O boundless salvation! deep ocean of love, / O fullness of mercy, Christ brought from above, / The whole world redeeming, so rich and so free, / Now flowing for all men, come, roll over me."<sup>6</sup> The importance of the universality of the atonement in Booth's thinking is further underlined by the fact that he included it in his fledgling movements official articles of faith. His intention was that his missionary organization would be a "big tent," with a very sparse set of doctrines, so as to avoid doctrinal controversy and "sectarianism," as much as this was possible. Yet in the several iterations of the movement's articles of faith during its formative years, an article on the universal atonement was always included.<sup>7</sup> William Booth did not enter into extended arguments about theories of the atonement, but it is clear that Catherine Booth favoured the Governmental view,<sup>8</sup> and an early edition of the Salvation Army's doctrine handbook, which was prepared by Booth for the training of his officers, also clearly leans in this direction.<sup>9</sup> The handbook also later

---

<sup>5</sup>On this period, see Green, *Life and Ministry of William Booth*, 51–74.

<sup>6</sup>*The Songbook of The Salvation Army*, American Edition (Verona, NJ: The Salvation Army, 1987), #298.

<sup>7</sup>Article Five of the first set of doctrines (1867), which numbered only seven, states, "We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has, by His suffering and death made an atonement for the whole world, so that whosoever will may be saved." This article remained, unaltered, throughout later revisions, and remains in the current set of 11 Salvation Army doctrines. The other articles affirm the inspiration of scripture (1), the Trinity (2), the Incarnation (3), total depravity (4), repentance, faith, and regeneration as necessary to salvation (6), and final judgment to eternal happiness or punishment (7). See Appendix 3 in Glenn K. Horridge, *The Salvation Army, Origins and Early Years: 1865-1900* (Godalming, UK: Ammonite Books, 1993), 253; also Appendix F in Robert Sandall, *The History of The Salvation Army* (London: The Salvation Army, 1947), I: 262–263.

<sup>8</sup>On this point, see John Read, *Catherine Booth: Laying the Theological Foundations of a Radical Movement* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 29–39.

<sup>9</sup>In explaining the atonement, the doctrinal handbook states in part: "Jesus Christ, though the only Son of the Father, came, and suffered as a sacrifice for us, and so magnified the importance of the law we had broken, and, at the same time, made a way for our deliverance from its penalty." William Booth, *The*



explicitly rejects a penal substitutionary argument for the atonement, on the grounds that it must lead either to unconditional election or universalism.<sup>10</sup> The greatest emphasis in early Salvation Army teaching on the atonement, however, was focused on its *extent*, and the doctrine handbook strongly asserted that the extent of the benefits of Christ's atoning work "were obtained, and are intended for the whole world; that is, for all who have lived in the past, for all who live now, and for all who will live hereafter."<sup>11</sup> In addition to defending this position with a plethora of scriptural arguments, the handbook also argued that the universality of the atonement is theologically necessary in order for Christians to obey Christ's call to preach salvation to all, and for us to act mercifully towards all.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the universality of the atonement was very intimately tied up with Booth's understanding of Christian mission, and it was this sense of the immensity of the salvation which was provided in Christ that led to Booth taking up a calling to be "an apostle for the heathen of East London."<sup>13</sup> Booth believed that these poor people of East London were not being reached by the churches, and so he felt compelled to preach the

---

*Doctrines of The Salvation Army, Prepared for the Training Homes* (Toronto: The Salvation Army Territorial Headquarters, 1892), 16. This governmental emphasis is not surprising, as it reflects the thinking of some of the Booth's formative Wesleyan and Revivalist influences. See John Read's discussion of how Catherine Booth's view the atonement was shaped by her reading of Richard Watson and Charles Finney, among others. Read, *Catherine Booth*, 32–39.

<sup>10</sup>The book identifies the "finished work of Christ" as a phrase which means that "Christ put Himself in the place of the sinner and bore the *exact amount of punishment* which he deserved, thus actually *paying the debt* that the sinner owed to Divine justice." This is then rejected: "If it were so, of Christ did literally pay the sinner's debts, in this sense, God cannot justly demand payment *twice* and consequently *no one will be sent to Hell*, and *all will be saved*." Further, the only way to support, this view, then, is "by rejecting the glorious truth that Christ died for *all*." Booth, *The Doctrines of The Salvation Army, Prepared for the Training Homes*, 23–24.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>12</sup>"... if Christ did not die for all, how could we urge all sinners to believe he died for them? Unless he died for all, no man could be sure He died for him. . . . The Bible says we are to offer mercy to all; but how can we do so and tell every man he can have salvation if Christ only died for a portion of the race?" *Ibid.*, 21–22.

<sup>13</sup>William Booth, "How We Began," in *Boundless Salvation: The Shorter Writings of William Booth*, ed. Andrew M. Eason and Roger J. Green (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 36.

gospel to them, because they too should be offered the free grace of salvation which was bought with the blood of Christ. As Catherine Booth said of her husband's original motivation to begin a mission in East London: "He believed that there had been an ATONEMENT made, sufficient for every sinner, and that by true repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the very worst might enter upon a new life."<sup>14</sup>

It was Booth's reflection on the extent of the atonement that also eventually led to his broadening his vision of salvation to include temporal as well as spiritual restoration. The younger Booth had engaged in various forms of social relief only as a means to the greater end of evangelization.<sup>15</sup> However, as time went on, and Booth spent more and more time among the "neglected masses," he changed his mind.

I discovered that the miseries from which I sought to save man in the next world were substantially the same as those from which I found him suffering in this, and that they proceeded from the same cause—that is, from his alienation from, and his rebellion against God, and then from his own disordered dispositions and appetites.<sup>16</sup>

Booth came to the realization that he had "two gospels of deliverance to preach—one for each world, or rather, one gospel which applied alike to both."<sup>17</sup> Thus, the "boundless salvation" which Christ offers, for Booth, extended to temporal matters as well as spiritual matters. Relief from temporal misery was indeed part of "the work that Jesus Christ came to accomplish," for he came "to dispossess all these fiends of evil for the souls of men, to destroy the works of the devil in the present time, and to set up in the soul the kingdom of heaven instead."<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup>Catherine Mumford Booth, *Life and Death: Being Reports of Addresses Delivered in London* (London: The Salvation Army, 1890), 203.

<sup>15</sup>"The Bible and my own observation concurred in showing me that the highest service I could render to man was to rescue him from this position of antagonism to the Divine Government. Alongside this aspect of his condition, any temporal modification of his lot appeared trivial – nay, almost contemptible. What were any of the sorrows of the earth when compared with everlasting damnation – let men interpret that terrible doom however they would?" William Booth, "Salvation for Both Worlds," in *Boundless Salvation: The Shorter Writings of William Booth*, ed. Andrew M. Eason and Roger J. Green (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 52.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 54.

In 1890, Booth published his most well-known book, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*. This book outlined Booth's ambitious "Scheme of Social Salvation," which offered a variety of programs and social service projects, all aimed at improving social conditions.<sup>19</sup> While much of the book laid out the details of his social agenda, Booth was also keen to offer a theological justification for this expansion of The Salvation Army's mission, in order to defend against his many critics. In doing so, he turned explicitly to the doctrine of the atonement:

The Scheme of Social Salvation is not worth discussion which is not as wide as the Scheme of Eternal Salvation set forth in the Gospel. The Glad Tidings must be to every creature, not merely to an elect few who are to be saved while the mass of their fellows are predestined to a temporal damnation. We have had this doctrine of an inhuman cast-iron pseudo-political economy too long enthroned amongst us. It is now time to fling down the false idol, and proclaim a Temporal Salvation as full, free, and universal, and with no other limitations than the "Whosoever will," of the Gospel.<sup>20</sup>

Roger Green writes the following regarding this shift in Booth's mature theology of redemption: "... just as there was the possibility of universal spiritual salvation (i.e., salvation was not limited to the elect), so there was the possibility of universal social redemption."<sup>21</sup> In making this argument, Booth believed he could say that the roots of his scheme for "Social Salvation" were "in the very heart of God Himself."<sup>22</sup> His statements were not always as clear as they might have been regarding the relationship between social and spiritual redemption, and Booth vacillated somewhat, sometimes portraying them as equally important, and at other times presenting social redemption as a less-important stage on the way to per-

---

<sup>19</sup>The projects were described under three headings: the "City Colony," the "Farm Colony," and the "Over-Sea Colony." For a brief overview see William Booth, *In Darkest England, and the Way Out* (London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1890), 91–93. See also Norman Murdoch, *Origins of The Salvation Army* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 161–163; Horridge, *The Salvation Army*, 119–121; Green, *Life and Ministry of William Booth*, 177–178.

<sup>20</sup>Booth, *Darkest England*, 36.

<sup>21</sup>Roger J. Green, *War on Two Fronts: The Redemptive Theology of William Booth* (Atlanta: Salvation Army Supplies, 1989), 88.

<sup>22</sup>Booth, *Darkest England*, 270.

sonal redemption.<sup>23</sup> In spite of these ambiguities, it is clear that Booth's expanded understanding of salvation in his later years was firmly grounded in the universal atonement of Christ.

Although the universality of the atonement was therefore foundational to Booth's theology of mission, he also asserted that Spirit-empowered human agents had been given a great deal of responsibility as co-workers in Christ's work of universal redemption. While he would certainly affirm that the atonement is the work of Christ *alone*, he nevertheless believed that the effective participation of human persons in the benefits of the atonement depended upon the missionary activity of believers. Standing in the revivalist tradition of Charles Finney and James Caughey,<sup>24</sup> Booth energetically employed a variety of "new measures" in order to awaken sinners of their need for a Saviour. The goal was to save souls, and he believed that the Spirit would use and bless the efforts of his Spirit-empowered Army to bring people to salvation.

Booth's heavy emphasis on the empowering work of the Spirit was, of course, related to a strong doctrine of entire sanctification, but it was also related to his view of the millennium, and it was his millennial expectancy which really gave urgency and importance to the activity of believers. Like many in his day, Booth was a post-millennialist, meaning that he believed that the millennial reign of Christ would precede Christ's second coming, and would take the form of a golden age of the Church, where the gospel would hold sway over the world. Booth believed that this millennial reign would be "preceded by further and mightier outpourings of the Holy Ghost than yet known," and that these outpourings would mean that the salvation "war" would "be carried on with greater

---

<sup>23</sup>As Green summarizes, "There were times when his whole redemptive picture included social redemption and personal redemption—side by side. Social and personal redemption were two sides of the same coin. Social redemption was an equal and natural part of the whole redemptive picture, and it would ultimately help God redeem this world and establish a physical kingdom on earth. . . . At other times the imagery of redemption is different, and Booth goes to great lengths to explain that social salvation is not an end in itself, and that the work of The Salvation Army in the social realm was not an end in itself. Here Booth attempted to explain a natural order of redemption as he believed God had ordained it and as he understood it. The work of physical or social redemption was preparatory, necessarily, to the work of spiritual or personal redemption." Green, *War on Two Fronts*, 94.

<sup>24</sup>For a discussion of the influence of Caughey, Finney, and Phoebe Palmer on the Booths, see Murdoch, *Origins of The Salvation Army*, 5–20.

vigor, although, in substance, on the same lines as those on which the apostles fought and died.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, the millennial kingdom could and would be established through the work of Spirit-empowered individuals using the same methods that the Church has always used to spread the gospel. The gospel could truly conquer the world, without the cataclysmic intervention of the personal return of Christ.

Booth believed this was possible because he believed that the millennial kingdom, which he called “the Good Time Coming,” would be established through the “throne of righteousness” being “set up in the hearts of men” when “the power and operation of the Holy Spirit” made them entirely sanctified.<sup>26</sup> And he believed that a people thus made righteous would govern themselves righteously. The many miseries which presently abound in the sinful world would be removed, and human happiness would be advanced through the reign of love, justice, and mercy.<sup>27</sup> “Just in proportion as these principles triumph in the hearts and consciences of men will millennial blessedness prevail.”<sup>28</sup> Booth’s assertion was that these very principles which he believed would establish the millennium were the very principles which The Salvation Army set out to propagate.<sup>29</sup> So he would claim, “A genuine Salvationist is a true reformer of men . . . because is the advocate of the only principles by which the reformation of society can be effected,” namely, “that millennial kingdom which God has already established in his own heart.”<sup>30</sup>

This brings us to the ambiguity in Booth’s thinking and practice as it relates to the place of the Church in Christian mission. While he sees an essential role for Spirit-empowered human agents in bringing about the millennial kingdom, he does not leave any role for the Church *per se*. The individualized account of how the Spirit will establish the kingdom by reigning in individual hearts reflects what David Rightmire has rightly

---

<sup>25</sup>William Booth, “The Millennium; Or, the Ultimate Triumph of Salvation Army Principles,” in *Boundless Salvation: The Shorter Writings of William Booth*, ed. Andrew M. Eason and Roger J. Green (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 60. This echoes Wesley’s late statements in Sermon 63, “The General Spread of the Gospel,” §16ff, in Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 492ff.

<sup>26</sup>Booth, “The Millennium; Or, the Ultimate Triumph of Salvation Army Principles,” 61–62.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 64–66.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>29</sup>“THE PRACTICE AND PROPOGATION OF THESE PRINCIPLES IS THE WORK OF THE SALVATION ARMY.” *Ibid.*, 70, capitals in original.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 71.

identified as a “pneumatological priority” in the thinking of many holiness movement revivalists. This pneumatological priority led to the subordination of ecclesiological and sacramental concerns in favour of attention to the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers.<sup>31</sup> For Booth, this meant that the Church became basically superfluous in his theology of mission. The superfluity of the Church can be seen in two ways. The first is his well-known decision in 1883 to discontinue the practice of the sacraments.<sup>32</sup> For Booth, it was baptism in the Spirit, and spiritual communion with Christ, which were the substance of the Church’s historic sacramental practice, and he believed both of these to be available without the actual observance of the sacraments. He was also concerned about the divisive debates which surrounded sacramental observance, and naively hoped to avoid controversy by doing away with them altogether. He justified his position in part by stressing that his Army was “not professing to be a church, nor aiming at being one,” but was “simply a force for aggressive salvation purposes.”<sup>33</sup> That brings us to the second way in which the superfluity of the Church is evident in Booth’s thinking: the ambiguous ecclesiological status of The Salvation Army itself. Booth and the other early Salvationists were insistent that the Army was not a church or a “sect” in the terminology of their day. “We are not and will not be made a Church,” Booth insisted. “There are plenty for anyone who wishes to join them, to vote and rest.”<sup>34</sup> He insisted that they were a missionary body, seeking only to save those who were not being reached by the churches. While the idea of a missionary society within the Church is a common one, normally the members of a missionary society would also be members of churches, where they would find Christian nurture, instruction, fellowship, and sacramental observance. Booth declared that

---

<sup>31</sup>R. David Rightmire, “Subordination of Ecclesiology and Sacramental Theology to Pneumatology in the Nineteenth-Century Holiness Movement,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 47, no. 2 (2012): 27–35.

<sup>32</sup>An excellent historical overview of this decision is found in Andrew M. Eason, “The Salvation Army and the Sacraments in Victorian Britain: Retracing the Steps to Non-Observance,” *Fides et historia* 41, no. 2 (Summer-Fall 2009): 51–71. The most substantive theological treatment is R. David Rightmire, *Sacraments and the Salvation Army: Pneumatological Foundations* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1990).

<sup>33</sup>William Booth, “The General’s New Year Address to Officers,” in *Boundless Salvation: The Shorter Writings of William Booth*, ed. Roger J. Green and Andrew M. Eason (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 192.

<sup>34</sup>William Booth, *Orders and Regulations for The Salvation Army* (London: Headquarters of The Salvation Army, 1878), 4.

this was his original intention with The Salvation Army, and that his movement was “a continuation of the work of Mr. Wesley.”<sup>35</sup> But from an early stage, probably within the first two or three years of its existence, the Army began to function as a church home for its members.<sup>36</sup> Unlike the early Methodists, Salvationists were not encouraged to attend churches to receive the Lord’s Supper—or for any other reason. The standard narrative in Salvationist history is that Booth’s ruffian converts were not welcome in established churches, and had no desire to go to established churches.<sup>37</sup> What is strange is that, even after failing to integrate his converts into other churches, and realizing that his mission would be the only spiritual home these people experienced, Booth continued to do all he could to maintain his Army’s un-churchly status. He further heightened the ambiguity by periodically making statements claiming that The Salvation Army was equal in every way to the other churches, and that its officers, though not ordained, were equal in every way to ordained ministers.<sup>38</sup> Booth maintained that the Army was a part of “the Church,” but was not “a church”; it was, rather, something akin to an evangelical order within the Church, though one without any formal ties to any other church body.<sup>39</sup> Thus, Salvationists were in the strange position of having no church membership, but considering themselves to be part of the universal Church.

### THE HAND OF GOD: THE CHURCH IN HECKER’S MISSIONAL THEOLOGY

Hecker’s theology of mission takes its starting point, not from the universality of the atonement, but from the universality of the Catholic

---

<sup>35</sup>William Booth, “Wesleyan Methodist Conference,” in *Boundless Salvation: The Shorter Writings of William Booth*, ed. Andrew M. Eason and Roger J. Green (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 173.

<sup>36</sup>See the discussion in Harold Hill, *Leadership in the Salvation Army: A Case Study in Clericalisation* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2006), 44–46.

<sup>37</sup>Booth, “How We Began,” 24.

<sup>38</sup>See Booth’s statement from 1894: “The Salvation Army is not inferior in spiritual character to any Christian organization in existence. We are in no wise dependent on the Church. . . . We are, I consider, equal every way and everywhere to any other Christian organization on the face of the earth (i) in spiritual authority, (ii) in spiritual intelligence, (iii) in spiritual functions. We hold ‘the keys’ as truly as any Church in existence.” Bramwell Booth, *Echoes and Memories* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925), 68.

<sup>39</sup>On the idea of The Salvation Army as an order, see Harold Hill, “Four Anchors from the Stern,” *The Practical Theologian* 5, no. 1 (2007): 26–41.

Church as the ongoing presence of Christ in the world. Indeed, it was this conviction regarding the Church's status that ended Hecker's long and varied spiritual quest and led to his becoming a Catholic. Hecker's parents were German immigrants to New York who had been married in a Dutch Reformed Church. However, his Mother became involved with the Forsythe Street Methodist Church soon after, and remained a member of that church throughout her life.<sup>40</sup> Hecker was exposed to Methodism as a child, but as an adolescent he decided that Methodism was not the answer to his spiritual needs. He first turned to political activity, then to involvement in Transcendentalist communities, before finding his way back to Christianity, and eventually to Catholicism.<sup>41</sup> It was his understanding of the Church as mediator between God and humanity that played a decisive role in leading him to Catholicism. A little over a year before he was baptized and entered the Catholic Church, Hecker wrote in his diary that he had come to see the Church as "the channel through which [Christ's] life has been continued through the past into our present time."<sup>42</sup> At this time he was still unsure as to *which* church should be considered to be God's "channel" in the world, and so he continued searching for the true Church for some months, believing that "the life of Jesus has perpetuated in a body called the Church and that this life is the true life & light of fallen and depraved Man."<sup>43</sup> On August 1, 1844, after being urged in a letter from his mentor Orestes Brownson to either become Catholic or choose no church at all, Hecker was baptized as a Catholic.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup>See the discussion of Caroline Hecker's involvement in the Forsythe Street Church in chapter 2 of John Farina, *An American Experience of God: The Spirituality of Isaac Hecker* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981).

<sup>41</sup>The most complete biography of Hecker to date is David J O'Brien, *Isaac Hecker: An American Catholic* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992). O'Brien deals with this period of Hecker's life in 77-81. Also of interest is Hecker's diary, which has been published in critical edition, and covers this same period. See Isaac Thomas Hecker, *Isaac T. Hecker, The Diary: Romantic Religion in Ante-Bellum America.*, ed. John Farina (New York: Paulist Press, 1988).

<sup>42</sup>May 10, 1843, in Hecker, *Diary*, 103.

<sup>43</sup>May 10, 1844, in *ibid.*, 180. All irregular punctuation and spelling is reproduced as it stands in the published edition of Hecker's diary, following the precedent of the editor, John Farina.

<sup>44</sup>The letter reads, in part, "You cannot be an Anglican, you must be a Catholic, or a mystic. If you enter the Church at all, it must be the Catholic. There is nothing else." Brownson to Hecker, June 6, 1844, in Orestes Brownson and Isaac Thomas Hecker, *The Brownson-Hecker Correspondence*, ed. Joseph F. Gower and Richard M. Leliaert (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 103-104.



Hecker had now come to believe that the Church was God's chosen means to extend the presence of Christ throughout history, and all throughout the world. He thus identified God's agency in a very direct way with the activity of the Church. Hecker argued that, in order for Christ to truly be Saviour of the world for all time, he must have left "a substitute or representative of himself, which should answer to all the wants of man for all generations."<sup>45</sup> These wants, Hecker argued, were that the human person should have authoritative guidance concerning their eternal destiny, and access to the means through which they might achieve this destiny. Christ had therefore left the Church as his representative to act on his behalf after his ascension.

He came to save all men to the end of time, and when he left the earth, he did not withdraw the powers he exercised and the gifts he brought, but communicated them to men, his chosen representatives, to be employed by them, as they had been by him, until the consummation of the world. The Church of Christ, therefore, must possess all powers and gifts, and among others, that of pardoning the sinner and reconciling him to God.<sup>46</sup>

Protestantism was rejected by Hecker, because, he argued, it elevated private judgement over the authority of the Church, which he believed was necessary to answer humanity's need for divine guidance.<sup>47</sup>

In his book, *The Church and the Age*, which represents Hecker's mature vision for world-wide renewal, Hecker wrote, "The Church is God acting through a visible organization directly on men, and, through men, on society."<sup>48</sup> Those who wanted God's guidance should seek it, therefore, in the Church: "To be guided by God's Church is to be guided by God. It is in vain to look elsewhere. . . . The hand of God is the Church. It is this

---

<sup>45</sup>Isaac Thomas Hecker, *Questions of the Soul* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1855), 112.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>47</sup>"How does Protestantism meet the want of a divine and unerring authority in matters of religion? In the question of man's destiny and true guidance? Is not the simple raising of the question of an unerring authority a patent condemnation of Protestantism? Does not the fundamental principle of Protestantism, the supremacy of private judgment, exclude all idea of an unerring authority in religion?" *Ibid.*, 128–129.

<sup>48</sup>Isaac Thomas Hecker, *The Church and the Age: An Exposition of the Catholic Church in View of the Needs and Aspirations of the Present Age* (New York: Office of the Catholic World, 1887), 22.

hand He is extending, in a more distinctive and attractive form, to this present generation.”<sup>49</sup>

Hecker's views on the Church as the “hand of God” were supported by his typical Catholic understanding of the relationship between nature and grace. Hecker saw nature and grace as synthetically related to one another, arguing, “Their connection is intimate, their relation is primary, they are, in essence, one.”<sup>50</sup> This meant that he had a positive view of reason, human nature, and the best of human desires, believing that they did not need to be cast aside, but rather taken up, elevated by grace, and directed toward divinely ordained ends. Of course, for Hecker the only place where this could truly take place was in the Catholic Church. He had a strong belief that the best of all human desires, thoughts, and culture should be taken up and synthesized in the Catholic Church. This meant not only that the Church was “the practical means of establishing the complete reign of the Holy Spirit in the soul,”<sup>51</sup> but that though the renewal of individual persons, the Church would also be God's means for renewing society as a whole. “The Church is the sum of all problems, and the most potent force in the whole wide universe. It is therefore illogical to look elsewhere for the radical remedy of all our evils.”<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 61.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 50.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 22. This is the view Hecker had held since at least 1858. In a statement he prepared for his Vatican superiors while seeking approval for the founding of the Paulist Fathers, Hecker narrated how he had come to this conclusion about the connection between personal, social, and religious reform: “Several years’ study and effort in the way of political reform made it evident that the evils of society were not so much political as social, and that not much was to be hoped from political action, as politicians were governed more by selfishness and a thirst for power than by patriotism and the desire of doing good to their fellow-citizens. Hence a social reform was called for, and this led me into the examination of the social evils of the present state of society. . . . The desire of bringing these opinions to bear upon society led me to seek and inquire among several social institutions which were then inaugurated and professing similar aims. A couple of years were spent among them in this inquiry, when it became clear to me that the evils of society were not so much social as personal, and it was not by a social reform they would be remedied, but by a personal one. This turned my attention to religion which has for its aim the conversion and reformation of the soul.” Found in *The Paulist Vocation*, Revised and Expanded. (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 51–52. On similar grounds, Hecker argued that all other religions, “as far as they contain truth . . . find their common centre in the Catholic Church.” Hecker, *The Church and the Age*, 38.

This led to his most distinctive idea about God's providential shaping of history and the role of the Catholic Church in renewing worldwide society. Hecker speculated about what he called "the providential mission of the races,"<sup>53</sup> and believed that the Catholic Church was God's instrument to synthesize all aspects of the good, true, and beautiful which could be found in different "races." By "races" Hecker meant different European ethnic groups, which he divided into four: Latins, Celts, Greeks, and Saxons, with "mixed Saxons" forming a further sub-division of Saxons. His understanding of these "races" drew upon common Romantic ideas regarding the nature of "genius" and how this related to particular destinies for various nations and peoples.<sup>54</sup> He laid out arguments that spoke of how each of these races had characteristic "gifts" which needed to be taken up and perfected by integration into the Church. This was built upon the assumption that God had created each of these "races" and gifted them, not so that that would impose their cultural traits on the Church, but so that these "races" would find their highest development in the Church.

It would also be a grave mistake, in speaking of the providential mission of the races, to suppose that they imposed their characteristics on religion, Christianity, or the Church; whereas, on the contrary, it is their Author who has employed in the Church their several gifts for the expression and development of those truths for which He specially created them. The Church is God acting through the different races of men for their highest development, together with their present and future greatest happiness and His own greatest glory.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, Hecker argues, for example, that the "Latin-Celtic races are characterized by hierarchical, traditional, and emotional tendencies," and that "These were the human elements which furnished the Church with the means of developing and completing her supreme authority, her divine and ecclesiastical traditions, her discipline, her devotions, and her aesthetics."<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, the Saxons "wrongly identified the excesses

---

<sup>53</sup>Hecker, *The Church and the Age*, 41.

<sup>54</sup>On the background for these ideas, see William L Portier, *Isaac Hecker and the First Vatican Council* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), 156.

<sup>55</sup>Hecker, *The Church and the Age*, 41.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 43.

of those races [meaning the Latin-Celts] with the Church of God,”<sup>57</sup> leading to the conflict of the Reformation.<sup>58</sup> Hecker held out hope, however, that the Saxon “races” would return to the Church, not by altering Catholic doctrine, but by presenting them the truth of Catholic doctrine so that they could recognize it as the truth.<sup>59</sup> The “penetrating intelligence” and “energetic individuality” which he considered typical of the Saxon races, would find in the Catholic Church an “elevation to a divine manhood.”<sup>60</sup> This is the culmination of his vision of renewal: with the “different races of Europe and the United States,” united and directed towards their proper end in the one Church, Catholics, “with their varied capacities and the great agencies at their disposal, would be the providential means of rapidly spreading the light of faith over the whole world, and of constituting a more Christian state of society.”<sup>61</sup>

What is surprising, and somewhat unusual for a Catholic of his time, is that in addition to his high view of the Church, Hecker also placed great emphasis on the direct working of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual. Indeed, Hecker believed that the solution to all social prob-

---

<sup>57</sup>He continues, They failed to taken in to sufficient consideration the great and constant efforts the Church had made, in her national and general councils, to correct the abuses and extirpate the vices which formed the staple of their complaints.” Ibid., 44.

<sup>58</sup>“It was precisely the importance given to the external constitution and to the accessories of the Church which excited those antipathies of the Saxons which culminated in the so-called Reformation. For the Saxon races and the mixed Saxons, the English and their descendants, predominate in the rational element, in an energetic individuality, and in great practical activity in the material order.” Ibid., 43. These misunderstandings, then, “led thousands and millions of Saxons and Anglo-Saxons to resistance, hatred, and finally open revolt against the authority of the Church.” Ibid., 45.

<sup>59</sup>“The return, therefore, of the Saxon races to the Church is to be hoped for, not by trimming divine truth, nor by altering the constitution of the Church, nor by what are called concessions. Their return is to be hoped for by so presenting the divine truth to their minds that they can see that it is divine truth...This will open their way to the Church in harmony with their genuine instincts, and in her bosom they will find the realization of that career which their true aspirations point out for them. For the Holy Spirit, of which the Church is the .organ and expression, places every soul, and therefore all nations and races, in the immediate and perfect relation with their supreme end, God, in whom they obtain their highest development, happiness, and glory, both in this life and in the life to come.” Hecker, *The Church and the Age*, 48–49.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 62.

lems would come from “a greater effusion of the Holy Spirit,” which in turn would depend upon human persons “giving increased attention to his movements and inspirations in the soul.”<sup>62</sup> He believed he was living on the edge of a new Pentecost,<sup>63</sup> in which the “increased action of the Holy Spirit, with a more vigorous co-operation on the part of the faithful,” would “elevate the human personality to an intensity of force and grandeur productive of a new era to the Church and to society.”<sup>64</sup> Thus, he argued that the “radical and adequate remedy for all the evils of our age, and the source of all true progress, consist in increased attention and fidelity to the action of the Holy Spirit in the soul.”<sup>65</sup> This drew criticism from more conservative Catholic sources, who saw Hecker as a crypto-Protestant.<sup>66</sup> However, those critics clearly failed to understand that Hecker saw the Spirit as acting in a two-fold manner—both “embodied visibly in the authority of the Church,” and “dwelling invisibly in the soul.”<sup>67</sup> Hecker saw these two types of pneumatological action as forming “one inseparable synthesis,” and he saw any attempt to undo this synthesis as leading to the destruction of the Church.<sup>68</sup> Of course, in practice, there are times when this two-fold action seems to lead to tensions—when individual discernment of the Spirit’s leading comes into conflict with the discernment of those in authority. Hecker, as a faithful Catholic, would resolve this difficulty by saying that the authority of the Church must be the final arbiter of all disputes.<sup>69</sup> Hecker lived out this conflict in his own life, making many compromises regarding the focus of the Paulist Fathers in order to gain the approval of his episcopal overseers. The primary compromise was that the Paulist Fathers were forced to take on responsi-

---

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>63</sup>“Are not all these but so many preparatory steps to a Pentecostal effusion of the Holy Spirit on the Church, an effusion, if not equal in intensity to that of apostolic days, at least greater than it in universality?” Ibid., 31.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 39–40.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>66</sup>Xavier Dufrense wrote to Hecker on March 31, 1875, that many “good Catholics” were dismissing his arguments as “nothing but mysticism and illuminism” and “a Protestant theory.” Cited in Farina, *An American Experience of God*, 156.

<sup>67</sup>Hecker, *The Church and the Age*, 33.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>“In case of obscurity or doubt concerning what is the divinely revealed truth, or whether what prompts the soul is or is not an inspiration of the Holy Spirit, recourse must be had to the divine teacher or criterion, the authority of the Church.” Ibid., 35.

bility for a parish, rather than remaining a community of purely missionary priests, as Hecker wanted.<sup>70</sup> This seriously inhibited their missional effectiveness, because they were a small community with precious little resources, and much of their time was taken up with the establishment and ongoing oversight of St. Paul the Apostle Church in New York City.<sup>71</sup>

As for his own community of missionary priests, Hecker envisioned that the Paulists would be “men of the age,” who, in their total availability to the Spirit’s leading, would be used by God to bring about the great universal synthesis of the best of all cultures in the Catholic Church. They would be those “who have that universal synthesis of truth which will solve the problems, eliminate the antagonisms, and meet the great needs of the age.”<sup>72</sup> The Paulists were envisioned as “a movement springing from the synthesis of the most exalted faith with all the good and true in the elements now placed in antagonism to the Church.”<sup>73</sup> In writing about “elements” that were “in antagonism to the Church,” Hecker meant aspects of the culture, such as American individualism and democratic values, which seemed to be at odds with Catholic theology and practice. As a proud and patriotic American, Hecker could not accept (as some conservative European Catholics would argue) that these aspects of American culture were truly opposed to the truth of the gospel, and so he held out hope that these, too, would be integrated into the great synthesis of the Catholic faith. Thus, he closed his book, *Questions of the Soul*, with a call to his American brothers to find their true destiny in Catholic religious orders.<sup>74</sup> Hecker truly believed that, in a community like the Paulist

---

<sup>70</sup>Hecker, writing to his fellow founding Paulist priests from Rome on March 27, 1858 had warned that parish duties would “prove the grave of our little bands and the death of our hopes.” Quoted in John Farina, “Isaac Hecker’s Vision for the Paulists: Hopes and Realities,” in *Hecker Studies: Essays on the Thought of Isaac Hecker*, ed. John Farina, (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 192. However, the only diocese that was willing to give episcopal support to the Paulists without requiring them to take a parish was Cleveland, and Hecker wanted his community to be based in one of the major American cities on the Eastern seaboard. Thus he settled on New York. O’Brien, *Isaac Hecker*, 174–175.

<sup>71</sup>This compromise and its effect on the fledgling Paulist movement is well summarized in Farina, “Isaac Hecker’s Vision for the Paulists.”

<sup>72</sup>*The Paulist Vocation*, 147.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup>“What was attempted by those engaged in such movements as Brook Farm, Fruitlands, and other places of similar character, the religious orders in the Catholic Church have always realized. Their most brilliant dreams do not present a fair picture of religious life in the Catholic Church. Their hopes and highest

Fathers, one could find “true greatness,” and real heroism, for “the Catholic Church,” he wrote, “is the mother of great men, the nurse of heroes, and of an unfailing succession of saints and martyrs.”<sup>75</sup> In contrast to Booth’s ecclesiological ambiguities, Hecker’s view of the Church is rather triumphalistic.

### WESLEYAN AMBIGUITY AND CATHOLIC TRIUMPHALISM

While their theologies of mission are built upon the contrasting foundations of the universal atonement and the Church as Christ’s substitutional representative, both Hecker and Booth have strong views of the work of the Holy Spirit, and both see the transformation of individual persons by the power of the Spirit as the key to worldwide renewal and reform. Booth magnifies the work of the Spirit in individual lives to the extent that the Spirit’s corporate work in the Church and ecclesial practices is completely overlooked. Indeed, Booth’s account has nothing to say about the Spirit’s corporate work in the whole people of God, and leaves one with no tools for resolving potential conflicts between individuals and Church authorities in regards to the discernment of the Spirit. Hecker, on the other hand, desires to affirm *both* the “internal” and “external” work of the Spirit. However, in authentically Catholic fashion, Hecker in fact ends up subordinating the personal work of the Spirit to the Spirit’s work in the structures of the Church. In conflicts between a believer or group of believers and Church authorities, the authorities are always presumed to be correct.

In relation to the role of the Church in mission, both men had a high view of human agency in bringing about God’s purposes for humanity. In Booth’s case, however, the Church was largely superfluous, as seen in his movement’s lack of ecclesiological grounding and accountability, and his cessation of sacramental observance. Hecker’s view, on the other hand, was highly triumphalistic, with the Church serving quite literally as Christ’s substitutionary representative, and God’s agency identified in a very intimate way with the agency of the Church. This also affected the way each man understood his movement’s relationship to the Church.

---

aims were but glimmerings of the reality existing in her bosom, and that for ages. It is a happy moment, indeed, when we find that the inmost sentiments of our hearts, the lovely dreams of our youth, the desire of our manhood for self-sacrifice and heroism, are not only understood, but fully appreciated, and all the means to their fulfillment are offered to us in abundance.” Hecker, *Questions of the Soul*, 275–276.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 276–277.

Booth insisted his movement was not a church, but also ensured that it remained completely autonomous and free of any formal ties to established churches. He did not require Salvationists to be members of a church, even as he claimed they were, corporately and individually, a part of the universal Church. For Hecker, as a Catholic, subordination of the Paulist Fathers to Catholic Church structures was a non-negotiable, to the point that, as noted above, he was willing to sacrifice important aspects of his vision for the community in order to ensure episcopal approval.

I have suggested that these two figures illustrate tendencies in nineteenth-century Catholic and Wesleyan-Holiness theology. Both sides have modified their theological perspectives significantly in the time that has passed since then. Generally speaking, contemporary Wesleyans are much more (small-c) “catholic” than Booth, and contemporary Catholics are more “evangelical” than Hecker in their understanding of the Church. Nevertheless, the examples of Booth and Hecker are worthy of continuing attention, because we may indeed recognize the shadows of these historical tendencies in our contemporary thinking and ecclesial practices. Wesleyans, especially of the Holiness tradition, may still be prone to ecclesiological ambiguity (though not so radical as Booth’s), and Catholics are still prone to ecclesial triumphalism (though not so radical as Hecker’s). Thus, in spite of their many admirable qualities, Booth and Hecker illustrate some of the potential pitfalls that have manifested themselves in the history of our respective traditions.



# A CRUCIFORM MISSION? MISSIONAL EMBODIMENT OF THE ATONEMENT

by

Brian Gregory

At the center of the Christian gospel stands the person of Jesus Christ. The story of the Christian faith insists that God has done something decisive for humanity in Christ's person and work. What exactly was accomplished in and through Jesus has been discussed and debated across the centuries. This paper will not propose a new model or motif through which to understand the atonement. I am primarily concerned with how our understanding of the atonement shapes the church into Christ's body in the world and into a people that participates in God's work in Christ. This paper will address the atonement from a missional perspective; I will show how we might understand the atonement as something in which the church is called to participate as an ongoing instrument of God's mission.

From the beginning of the biblical narrative we find God seeking to restore a fallen creation. Humanity was created to be in perfect union with God, others, and creation, but this intent was disrupted by sin. As *eikons*, or image-bearers of God, humanity no longer displayed the full and complete image of God.<sup>1</sup> Sin caused estrangement between God and humanity, and alienation between *eikons* so that the community of love and peace humanity was created to experience, a community that mirrored the *perichoretic* love of the Trinity, was no longer possible. With evil and sin standing between God and humanity, and between human beings, the barrier of sin needed to be removed so that reconciliation might happen. In its most basic sense the atonement deals with how the alienation and estrangement of sin is overcome and right relationship restored.

Numerous models of the atonement have been produced over the course of Christian history. Largely centered on the passion of Christ, these postulations seek to describe in a rational, and oftentimes-mechani-

---

<sup>1</sup>Scot McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 21.

cal way, what exactly happened through Christ. As helpful as these explanations are for theology, they do not necessarily lead us to consider the atonement as something that shapes the people of God as participants in God's reconciling action in Christ. Missional theologians have articulated the activity of God, in history and in the present, as the *missio Dei*. God is a God of mission seeking to restore the whole of creation. Samuel Wells offers a narrative view of the same concept of God's historic and present activity within creation with a slight modification to NT Wright's five-act play.

Along with Wright, Wells articulates the narrative scope of Scripture as consisting of multiple "acts" that correspond with God's actions in history.<sup>2</sup> In the first act, creation, we see God's creative intentions for union with creation as humanity participates in the unity of the Trinity. Subsequent to Adam and Eve's disobedience and the introduction of sin, which distorts humanity, comes act two: God's plan to save all the nations of the world through God's covenantal relationship with Israel. As Israel fails to remain faithful to this covenant, God enters creation in act three to defeat sin and the accompanying alienation and death. Act four begins at Pentecost with the gift of the Spirit and the creation of a community called the church. This is the act in which we currently find ourselves. God will bring about the final act, the eschaton, as God's kingdom is definitively established on earth as the only kingdom in heaven and on earth. As the act in which the notion of atonement takes place, let us take a closer look at act three.

Act three begins with the advent of Christ—it is not limited to Christ's passion. Christ's life, ministry, and miracles point to the inbreaking kingdom of God and the possibility of God's intended *shalom*. Christ's death confronts the reality of sin and evil and breaks down the barrier that had prevented humanity from fully participating in the divine life. And Christ's resurrection secures Christ's ultimate victory over evil and death, making all things new. As J. Denny Weaver says, "The resurrection as the victory of the reign of God over the forces of evil constitutes an invitation to salvation, an invitation to submit to the rule of God. It is an invitation to enter a new life, a life transformed by the rule of God and no longer in bondage to the power of evil that killed Jesus."<sup>3</sup> Although the

---

<sup>2</sup>Samuel Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Brazos Press, 2004), 51-57.

<sup>3</sup>J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 47.

two dominant motifs of the atonement in the West—satisfaction and moral influence—put their weight on Christ’s death as the atoning moment, to fully understand the scope of the atonement and develop a vision for how we might participate in the story of God as the body of Christ we must allow for the fullness of act three to inform our understanding of the Christ’s work. This means that we cannot limit our vision of the atonement to the singular moment when Christ hung on the cross.

Since Gustaf Aulén’s publication of *Christus Victor* in 1931, the classic view of the atonement as conflict with and victory over the forces of evil has experienced resurgence as a viable motif of the atonement for Protestants. One of the most valuable contributions of the conflict-victory motif is the fact that it holds together the full incarnation of Christ. As John Driver says, “. . . the dramatic view [of this motif] sees Christ’s saving work as a continuous divine operation. In addition to the death of Christ, this view stresses the incarnation as a whole.”<sup>4</sup> Jesus’ life—his miracles, his teaching, his confrontation with powers and principalities of evil and oppression—points to a shift in the center of power in the universe. The confrontation with the powers and principalities comes to a head on the cross with an apparent defeat of God’s reign by the forces of evil. But in a victorious turn of events, the resurrection of Jesus reveals the true basis of power in the universe, liberates humanity from the enslaving forces of sin and evil, and opens up the possibility of reconciled relationship with God as humanity inhabits God’s kingdom. In this classic view, Jesus’ life proclaims that the kingdom of God is at hand, his death is the final confrontation between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the world, and his resurrection is the victory over these kingdoms and the forces of evil that operate through them.

J. Denny Weaver points out that the classic conflict-victory motif of the atonement faded away and lost favor after the sixth century. One of the reasons Weaver points to as a cause is the “seeming lack of evidence of the victory of the reign of God in the historical realm in which we live. . . .”<sup>5</sup> Forces of evil are still alive and active in the world. Humanity is, in many ways, still estranged and alienated by sin. Reconciliation is, in all corners of the globe and in interpersonal relationships, oftentimes more of a hope than a reality. It is true that the objective reality of God’s reign in our world can be hard to see, but as Samuel Wells points out in the five-act play, God’s actions to restore creation are not complete. The pivotal

---

<sup>4</sup>Driver, *Understanding the Atonement*, 40.

<sup>5</sup>Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 106.

moment of the play has taken place with Christ's victory over evil in act three, but the play is not complete until the eschaton in act five. The church exists between the inauguration of the kingdom and the kingdom's final consummation. The creation of a community is not incidental to our understanding of atonement.

In post-Enlightenment Western culture, the atonement is often viewed through the framework of individuality. Christ's life, death, and resurrection are understood to reconcile *individuals* to God. Bryan Stone notes, "The modern notion of the self invented by the Enlightenment is essentially autonomous, abstract, empty of any 'necessary social content,' detached from its social context, and 'entirely set over against the social world.'" <sup>6</sup> Within this framework, modern individuals are essentially consumers, and the effect of Christ's work is commoditized as something to be acquired or consumed. Stone argues that the creation of a historic and specific community is foundational to God's action in history: "God's purpose in history is not just the creation of holy individuals but the creation of a holy people, a people whose very existence in the world is a living testimony to the rule of God." <sup>7</sup> The reconciling work of Christ is not an abstraction, but rather the action of God in history to restore and reconcile real people in real social and historic contexts. Atonement can only be understood within the social and relational fabric of life. John Driver says, "Reconciliation is not a mere projection of faith, but the social reality of a community in which love for one another is motivated by the love of God." <sup>8</sup> The community in which Christ's atoning work becomes a visible reality is not just any human community—it is the community shaped by Christ's resurrection and gifted with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

The resurrection of Christ creates something new. It transforms both the possibilities for life and the reality of life itself. If atonement cannot be understood through an individualistic framework, then the new creation is about the creation of a new social reality. Scot McKnight points out that when the scope of the atonement is restricted to the individual, "it destroys the fabric of the biblical story. That fabric is the community of faith, and atonement is designed to create that community." <sup>9</sup> The church is a community that inhabits and embodies a particular way of life—what

---

<sup>6</sup>Bryan Stone, *Evangelism After Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 133.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>8</sup>Driver, *Understanding the Atonement*, 180.

<sup>9</sup>McKnight, *Community Called Atonement*, 75.

Bryan Stone calls “an ecclesial *bios*.”<sup>10</sup> This particular way of life is shaped by Christ and, in fact, the church is Christ’s body enfleshed once again in our world. The life and ministry of the church is a continuation of the work of Christ in the world and a visible embodiment of atonement. Scot McKnight propels the discussion of atonement into one about mission by concluding, “atonement is something done not only by God for us but also something we do with God for others.”<sup>11</sup> The church is called to live out the narrative of God’s activity in such a way that the reality of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection are made present in this world as it participates in the *missio Dei*. This is the central thrust of missional theology.

Lesslie Newbigin frames mission as “. . . not primarily our work . . . but primarily the mighty work of God.”<sup>12</sup> A missional understanding of the church recognizes the Triune God as the *agent* of mission, and the church as God’s *instrument* in the continuing work of reconciliation; a witness to the final act of the drama of salvation—the consummation of God’s kingdom in the *eschaton*.<sup>13</sup> The task of the church then, is to live faithfully within the story it proclaims—making the work of God in history a tangible and social reality. What we need is not a better way to *communicate* the atonement or the narrative of God’s work in history; we need a church that is faithful to its calling to *embody* the narrative in its very way of life. If the demise of the conflict-victory motif of atonement was, in part, due to a lack of evidence that the reign of God had indeed been victorious, then this points to the failure of the church to embody the atonement in such a way that it pointed to the reality of God’s kingdom in the world. How might the church live once again as a distinct and embodied social witness to the reality of reconciliation in Christ and the victorious reign of God in history? Put more succinctly, how can the church pattern its life in such a way that it embodies the atonement?

The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus were God’s answer to the alienation and estrangement that are a result of sin. For the church to be a community that embodies the atonement, it must be a reconciling community. This is the ministry given to the church in 2 Corinthians 5. The apostle Paul says, “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new! All this is

---

<sup>10</sup>Stone, *Evangelism After Christendom*, 24.

<sup>11</sup>McKnight, *Community Called Atonement*, 117.

<sup>12</sup>Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 236.

<sup>13</sup>Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 5.

from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. . . .”<sup>14</sup> John Driver points out that any translation of this verse that frames the new creation in individualistic terms is misguided.<sup>15</sup> The new creation is a new social reality that continues the work of reconciliation that began in Christ. Reconciliation between humanity and God is the result of Christ’s work to break the power of sin and the Holy Spirit’s ongoing work to make us “more and more alive to God.”<sup>16</sup> But this reconciliation is not merely a spiritual reality. Reconciliation must be lived out in the context of community through the means of grace—the receiving of grace through acts of piety and the giving of grace through acts of mercy. The process of growing in Christ “involves not only working out one’s own salvation, but relating to others in a redemptive way, for each other and for the world.”<sup>17</sup>

The church, as an embodiment of the atonement, also offers a public and subversive witness against the powers, principalities, and narratives that rival God’s kingdom. If Christ’s life, death, and resurrection confronted and emerged victorious against the forces of evil in the world, it raises the question: why does the conflict continue? The final and complete victory of God is the eschatological hope of the church, but until the *eschaton*, as David Bosch points out, “. . . the church witnesses to the fullness of the promise of God’s reign and participates in the ongoing struggle between that reign and the powers of darkness and evil.”<sup>18</sup> The church witnesses to the reality of God’s kingdom already present in history by offering itself as a public and socially embodied claim to the kingdom of God over and against the rival narratives of the world. In the conflict-victory motif of the atonement, Jesus confronted the devil and all forces of evil. These forces of evil included imperial Rome, the religious authorities who created a closed community, and all manner of systemic corruption that broke down the peace and holistic unity intended by God in creation. As J. Denny Weaver says, “Evil accumulates in institutions, and shapes adherents of an institution in its own image, as a mob spirit leads people to commit acts they would never contemplate alone. . . .”<sup>19</sup> Evil still accu-

---

<sup>14</sup>2 Cor 5:17-18, NRSV.

<sup>15</sup>Driver, *Understanding the Atonement*, 184-85.

<sup>16</sup>John Wesley, “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert C. Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 275.

<sup>17</sup>Stephen W. Rankin, “A Perfect Church: Toward a Wesleyan Missional Ecclesiology,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 38, no. 1 (March 1, 2003): 94.

<sup>18</sup>David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 400.

<sup>19</sup>Weaver, *Nonviolent Atonement*, 307.

mulates in our world. The forces of evil might not be identical to those that killed Jesus, but the church that participates in God's victory over evil is called to confront and resist all manner of evil—whether personal or institutional. The church's witness to a different ethic, a different way of life, and a different kingdom points the world to the reign of God in Christ. But for the church to offer this sort of witness, it must reject the narratives of the world that rival the narrative of God's kingdom.

Bryan Stone identifies two narratives that are most detrimental to a socially embodied Christian witness: (1) the narrative of Constantinianism, in which the church becomes a chaplain to the state and is relegated to the edges of public discourse, and (2) the narrative of liberal modernity, in which individuality becomes the reigning paradigm and religion is forced to the private realm. Individuals then become consumers of what both the church and the secular marketplace have to offer.<sup>20</sup> The church needs to recover its identity as an alternative community shaped by distinct social practices that offer the watching world a new vision of reality and a reading of history that is full with the hope of resurrection. Its worship, its economic and material sharing, its offer of hospitality, its practice of forgiveness, and its unity in the midst of diversity are all done in faithful response to what God has called the church to do in light of the coming kingdom. These practices are also missional in that they offer the world something hard to strike against that is "an alternative to what the world offers."<sup>21</sup> The church's witness, therefore, must oppose all things that stand in contrast to God's present and coming kingdom. The church, through its life together as an alternative community, must confront the economic, political, and social realities that are being overturned by God's reign. This cannot be done when the church and society (or state) are in a state of symbiosis. During the church's early life, "it was publicly subversive by a life of radical discipleship that existed as a kind of antibody in society. However, with the Constantinian shift the story that governed the church's life and the story that governed cultural development were merged."<sup>22</sup> The church must recover its identity as a distinct and alternative society that witnesses to a new reality—the reality of the kingdom.

---

<sup>20</sup>Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom*.

<sup>21</sup>Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: A Provocative Christian Assessment of Culture and Ministry for People Who Know that Something is Wring* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 94.

<sup>22</sup>Michael Goheen, "The Missional Calling of Believers in the World: Lesslie Newbigin's Contribution," in *A Scandalous Prophet: The Way of Mission after Newbigin*, eds. Thomas F. Foust, George R. Hunsberger, J. Andrew Kirk, and Werner Ustorf, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 39.

In order to be an alternative society, we need a renewed sacramental imagination. There are two parts to this sacramental imagination. First, it relates to the sacramental nature of the church as a sign and foretaste of the kingdom. Lesslie Newbigin says,

[The church is] to be a sign, pointing men [sic] to something that is beyond their present horizon but can give guidance and hope now; an instrument . . . that God can use for his work of healing, liberating, and blessing; and a firstfruit—a place where men and women can have a real taste now of the joy and freedom God intends for us all.”<sup>23</sup>

Second, sacramental imagination is a renewed understanding of the formative and missional nature of the sacraments themselves, the means of grace, baptism and Eucharist. As a sacrament of initiation, baptism incorporates us into the life of Christ and the community of the faithful. Through the waters of baptism, we are enfolded in “the great sweep of salvation history from God’s mighty acts of creation through covenant making with Israel, redemption in and through Jesus Christ, the gift of the Spirit and birth of the church, to Christ’s promised return and the fulfillment of God’s Reign.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, baptism incorporates us into God’s mission of reconciliation, restoration, and the healing of creation. Baptism makes us part of God’s ongoing mission as members of the community that bears Christ’s name. Baptism gives us new eyes to see the world through the plausibility structure of the kingdom as we are socialized into the church’s way of life.<sup>25</sup> It is a communal act—not one of personal identification, but one of identification with a particular community, including the practices, ethics, and life of that community. A renewed understanding of baptism as a missional practice would confront the rampant individualism in our time. A renewed understanding of the ethical obligations of baptism would lead baptized members of the

---

<sup>23</sup>Leslie Newbigin quoted in Goheen, “The Mission Calling of Believers in the World,” 41.

<sup>24</sup>Fred P. Edie, *Book, Bath, Table, and Time: Christian Worship as Source and Resource for Youth Ministry* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2007), 134.

<sup>25</sup>Borrowing Peter Berger’s term, “plausibility structure,” Lesslie Newbigin articulates this as “the patterns of belief and practice accepted within a given society, which determine which beliefs are plausible to its members and which are not” (Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 8). He argues that “the gospel gives rise to a new plausibility structure, a radically different vision of things from those that shape all human cultures apart from the gospel” (ibid., 9).



community to a place of intentional participation in the narrative of the kingdom. But baptism cannot be understood apart from the ongoing life of the church. Our baptismal vocation—what we are called to do and be in and through baptism—is deepened by constant renewal and strengthening in the Eucharist.

Eucharist is a missional practice of the church in that it witnesses to the radical hospitality of God, practices the material and economic sharing that are characteristic of the kingdom, and (hopefully) witnesses to unity in the midst of diversity. But Eucharist is also a missional practice in that we receive the grace of Christ to *be* Christ in the world and participate in God's ongoing mission of reconciliation. Wells refers to the Eucharist as "a regular event in which the body of Christ meets the embodied Christ, in a drama of encounter, reconciliation, and commission."<sup>26</sup> It is from this encounter that the church is nourished to participate in the grand drama of God's kingdom as a public offer of Christ to the world.

The church, as God's people called to witness to the reality of the atonement, is an embassy of the kingdom that God is establishing on earth—pointing to the narrative of reconciliation and peace it proclaims through its social and public life in the world. It is a community through which the reconciling nature of the atonement becomes a socially embodied reality and offers the world a sign and foretaste of God's victory over the reigning powers of sin and evil. Christ's life, death, and resurrection were decisive moments of God's actions in history that restore and reclaim creation from the forces of sin, but the final and ultimate victory is still an eschatological hope. It is during this period, between the inbreaking and the consummation of the kingdom, that the church is called to be a community that participates in and continues the reconciling work of God in Christ to draw the world into God's kingdom. Animated by the Holy Spirit, the church is a resurrection community and a new creation, even as it awaits the final resurrection and completion of creation.

---

<sup>26</sup>Wells, *Improvisation*, 54.

# SANCTIFYING ATONEMENT: WOMANIST THEOLOGY, WESLEYAN ETHICS, AND THE FUTURE OF NAZARENE ATONEMENT THEOLOGY

by

Hank Spaulding

As theologian Hans Urs Von Balthasar writes, “God’s truth is, indeed, great enough to allow an infinity of approaches and entryways. And it is also free enough subsequently to expand the horizon of one who has chosen to narrow a starting point and to help him to his feet.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, differing theological perspectives not only approach the infinite nature of God, but when read in harmony with one another illuminate and deepen our understandings of certain theological positions on which we have been too narrow minded. This is especially true of the Church of the Nazarene where the doctrine of atonement is concerned. The doctrine of the atonement has not been integrated in the way we understand theological ethics and holiness. This is because the Article of Faith of the Church of the Nazarene on atonement has focused on a certain theory of the atonement (namely satisfaction theory) and not on how our entire theological reflection has a hole in it, lest we make connections between the various ways we see atonement fitting within our views of sanctification. What is missing is how both atonement and sanctification help inform our ability to be creatures in the way God intended, namely the *imago Dei*.

This paper will consider three subjects (i.e., atonement, sanctification, and ethics) together as uniquely informing a holistic understanding of the Wesleyan perspective on the economy of salvation and our participation in the life of God. This is partially in response to two major events at the 28<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. One is the response to JUD-802 and JUD-816 by the committee on the study of Scripture by the General Board that requested to expound “the concept of atonement, thereby enriching the Church’s comprehension and faith.”<sup>2</sup> To this end, I suggest a serious

---

<sup>1</sup>Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord Vol. 1: Seeing the Form*. Trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: T. & T. Clark. 1982), 17.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas King and Alexander Varughese, “Report of the Scripture Study Committee to the Twenty-Eighth General Assembly Church of the Nazarene” *Didache Vol. 13 no. 1*. Ed. Dean Blevins. Accessed: 5/1/2014.

exploration of the work done by Womanist theologians on the atonement provides such an enrichment. This paper will also attempt to answer the conundrum of the rejected USA-920 on racial reconciliation from the North American Caucus of the Church of the Nazarene. The previous consideration of Womanist theology might provide an avenue for a theologically robust language of reconciliation that can emerge from pre-existing confessions in our tradition. This might seem like an odd choice with an immense task for theological discussion, but the promise of such an engagement should prove valuable to both our reconciliatory efforts and theological confession. If nothing else, I would hope that this paper may spark conversations about our article of faith on atonement and the language of racial reconciliation. My argument will be that when Womanist theologies of atonement are read next to Wesley's own views on holiness, a certain type of moral theology—centered on a concrete participation in the work of Christ—emerges.

To begin, I will briefly explore the Image of God at the heart of humanity's original stage of righteousness and its loss in the fall. This will set up what kind of action a savior needs to take in order to make atonement for us. Next, I will briefly lay out where the socio-political language of the satisfaction theory of atonement comes from. Third, I will detail the Womanist construction of atonement, which is firmly committed to articulating atonement through the life of Jesus rather than through his death. This will help show what is at stake for the Nazarene/Wesleyan tradition in explaining atonement; namely, the provision of a ministerial vision of abundant relationship. Fourth, I will bring this into conversation with Wesley's virtue ethics and view on holiness. By placing these two side by side, I hope to show that a Womanist reading of the atonement unifies the economy of salvation in that both seek a similar end, namely the reconstruction of the Image of God. These two theological schools will be juxtaposed in order to show how they argue similar theological themes. Finally, I will show how this answers the call of both an "expounding [of] the concept of atonement, thereby enriching the Church's comprehension and faith" from the Committee for the study of scripture and, by extension, answers the call for rich language of racial reconciliation. This will mean offering a new language for Article VI and a theological critique of USA-920's rejection through an adaptation of this language.

### **I. Imago Dei**

In order to understand the work of atonement from Womanist thinkers, we must understand what type of atonement we need. Thus, it

would be important to note not what humans were created in (i.e., *imago Dei*) but what they fell into (i.e., *sicut Deus*). What we will notice from such a comparison is that humans have fallen from their relationships with God and others. Thus, the sin that needs to be redeemed is our loss of vision of what it means to be creatures. Instead, we have become trapped by bent and disordered desires.

The reality of *sicut Deus* comes to pass through the promise of having a better relationship with God. It happens in the fall when Adam and Eve eat the fruit, which humanity's reorganization. This reorganization comes to Adam and Eve via the serpent's promise over and against the statement of God that eating the fruit would lead to their death. (Genesis 2:17) As Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes,

How can Adam understand the serpent's *sicut-deus* promise? At any rate not as the diabolical promise of death and of rebellion against the Creator. As one who is altogether ignorant of the possibility of evil he can understand the promise in no other way than as the possibility of being more pious, more obedient, than he is in his *imago-dei*-structure. *Sicut deus*—for Adam that can only be a new possibility within the given possibility of being a creature in the *imago dei*. It can only mean a new deeper kind of creaturely being. *That* is how he is bound to understand the serpent.<sup>3</sup>

The promise to be like God is a promise for a deeper relationship. However, it is a relationship that is coded under death. For as long as the serpent tries to re-articulate in a more positive light the stipulation that if they eat of the fruit they will die, it is still the end result of the fall.<sup>4</sup> When Adam literally ingests the fruit he ingests death.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to digesting death, Adam and Eve birth a tangential mode of being human not intended for them in the original creation. When humanity becomes *sicut Deus* they cease to be *imago Dei*. To be in the image of God means to be free, like God is free.<sup>6</sup> Bonhoeffer stipulates,

To be sure, it is free only through God's creation, through the word of God; it is free only through God's creation, through the

---

<sup>3</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1-3*. Trans. Douglas Stephen Bax, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 2004), 113.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, 112.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, 135.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, 62.

word of God; it is free for the worship of the Creator. For in the language of the Bible freedom is not something that people have for themselves but something they have for others.<sup>7</sup>

The human as *imago Dei* is free, but it has limits imposed upon it; namely, it is not the creator and it must rely on God for its existence and freedom. Now, these realities still exist, but they are hampered. As Bonhoeffer writes,

It now lives out of its own resources, creates its own life, is its own creator, inasmuch as it creates its own life. Thereby its creatureliness is eliminated, destroyed. Adam is no longer a creature. Adam has torn himself away from his creatureliness. Adam is *sicut deus*, and this “is” is meant with complete seriousness—not that Adam feels this, but that Adam is this. Losing the limit Adam has lost creatureliness.<sup>8</sup>

It is not that the creature becomes closer to God, but rather denies his/her limit and creates life for him or herself. Thus, the central problem in *sicut Deus* is not that a person has ceased to be a creature, but that she has ceased to let God create her life. This means that *sicut Deus* creates life for herself and attempts to exist as an unprepossessed reality by which she can remain creator of her life and world. In this creation, it is important to realize the disastrous result for other humans who live with the *sicut Deus*.

It is important here to briefly summarize the positive side of the Image of God. In short, the Image of God means that we were made to have freedom with God and not to rely on our own resources. This “freedom is,” as Bonhoeffer writes, “a relation between two persons.”<sup>9</sup> This is “likeness,” note, not “like God.” We only know of this freedom to be in right relation (to God, people, and creation) because of Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup> It means that to be restored is to be visited with a new vision. Our freedom is not understood in terms of substance—in which we receive a new substance in the coming of Christ—but rather as something that happens through Christ.<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, this is the result of the anhypostasic union of Christ uniting himself to us. Bonhoeffer writes,

---

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, 115.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, 63.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, 62.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, 63.

God's freedom has bound itself to us, that God's free grace becomes real with us alone, that God wills not to be free for God's self but for humankind. Because God in Christ is free for humankind, because God does not keep God's freedom to God's self, we can think of freedom only as a 'being free for. . . .'<sup>12</sup>

If the atonement is meaningful then it must seek to restore what was lost in humanity, namely this freedom. This is in fact what it means to be made in God's image, to be free in relationship. The term Bonhoeffer uses is *analogia relationis*.<sup>13</sup> We share in God's nature through this ability to be free for relationship. As Bonhoeffer writes,

Only where God and the brother, the sister, come to them can human beings find their way back to the earth. Human freedom for God and the other person and human freedom from the creature in dominion over it constitute the first human beings' likeness to God.<sup>14</sup>

Two things must be noted here, that this is the relationship of original humanity and that we have lost this ability to be in relationship.

## II. Socio-Politics of Satisfaction Theory of Atonement

The satisfaction theory of atonement was born out of a certain socio-political reality in the eleventh century. Amid the bloodshed that arose at the beginning of the feudal period, cultural leaders were forced to try and find a theo-political answer to the problem.<sup>15</sup> Among the places being ravaged were holy places such as churches and monasteries. To respond, bishops and leaders began, among other councils and ecclesial initiatives,

---

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, 63.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, 65. This actually comes from a different conversation, in which Bonhoeffer sees that humanity is not sharing in the nature of God through his being (i.e., *analogia entis*) but rather through the ability to be in relationship. This in fact is a larger discussion/argument between Protestants and Catholics in this time period. A good example would be the attempt by Hans Urs Von Balthasar to convert Karl Barth in the early twentieth century, but the main point of argument was in fact the *analogia entis*. This was ultimately what kept Barth from conversion. See D. Stephen Long, *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Preoccupation*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 2014), 7-36.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, 67.

<sup>15</sup>Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire*, (Boston: Beacon Press. 2008), 254-257.

emphasizing the death of Christ as that which bound Christians together.<sup>16</sup> Rita Brock and Rebecca Parker note that

Christianity [already had begun] to lose its grip on the sinfulness of killing. A new age began—one in which the execution of Jesus would become a sacrifice to be repeated, first on the Eucharist altar and then in the ravages of a full-blown holy war.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, we see a shift taking place in the element of the blood of the cross as not only salvific in itself, but an action that demands repetition through the spilling of the blood of others. This was promoted as a salvific act as humanity was increasingly reminded of their guilt for the execution of Jesus. Therefore, to achieve peace in the eleventh century Holy Roman Empire, the cross became a central aspect for political peace.

The feudal theology of crucifixion increasingly began to be read as a salvific, peace-giving source and was ultimately taken up not just as a political tool, but as central to the theological account as well. This is no clearer than in the theology of St. Anselm of Canterbury, chief architect of the satisfaction theory of atonement. In Anselm's time the cross had already begun to be venerated as a sign of peace between people. However, Anselm had unique life problems of his own surrounding his role as bishop. As Brock and Parker write,

[Anselm] was called to Canterbury as archbishop in 1093, during a lull in a long-standing conflict between the church in England and King William Rufus. Rufus wanted the churches and monasteries to swear allegiance and donate their revenues to him rather than to the pope. Anselm opposed Rufus and became embroiled in the fray, which erupted intermittently through two popes, two kings, and two periods of exile. During his exiles, Anselm struggles to find resources to meet community's needs. The conflicts trapped Anselm in a lifelong struggle with debt.<sup>18</sup>

Anselm was embroiled in a particularly difficult problem with the feudal order. He was left with the choice to give honor (i.e., pay allegiance) to a feudal king or to the Vicar of Christ. Thus, debt imagination ruled his

---

<sup>16</sup>Ibid, 252-3; 258-306.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid, 252.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid, 266.

thought as he turned to his work on the atonement.<sup>19</sup> As Brock and Parker write,

Anselm did not base his theology on scriptural interpretation and disputation with other thinkers. . . . Rather he drew his analogies of sin and recompense from an emerging monetary system that, for many, resulted in crushing debt and the desperate struggle to pay it off. The obedient loyalty and honor due to feudal lords provided the framework of values for his thinking.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, it is clear that in Anselm's thought God serves in place of the feudal lord, but instead of paying him honor through monetary means we pay God through pious actions.<sup>21</sup> However, we are incapable of paying God honor and thus sin against God. Furthermore, since the one we sin against is God, we incur an infinite debt that we can never repay. Therefore, as Anselm writes,

The life of this man [Christ] was so sublime, so precious, that it can suffice to pay what is owed for the sins of the whole world. . . . Did he not give up His life for the honor of God? . . . He freely gave to God his honor [to] make compensation for all the debts of all human beings.<sup>22</sup>

Anselm provides the Church with a full-fledged account of the atoning work of Christ in relation to feudal monetary systems. In order to be freed from sin someone must satisfy the debt. We cannot satisfy this debt, but Christ does. This may not be the first time debt language has been used to express the atonement.<sup>23</sup> However, Anselm provides a system based on a specific economy. Therefore, this is the first systemic account of monetary recompense for salvation. Thus, Anselm gave Christianity a theological and economic account for a certain social order. This is an order in which certain members of a socio-political class/status must live their lives based on the life of another. Furthermore, this order is coded

---

<sup>19</sup>Ibid, 266-267.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, 267.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus Homo?*, 155-156. Cited in Brock and Parker, *Saving Paradise*, 167.

<sup>23</sup>See for example St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (20.2;5-6), cited in Thomas Weinandy, *Athanasius: A Theological Introduction*. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company. 2007), 33.



through death. Rather than the atonement be about the restoration of the *imago Dei*, it became about the satisfaction of a monetary debt.<sup>24</sup>

### III. Womanist Theology of Atonement

The Image of God as right “relationality” is of chief concern for Womanist theologians. Womanist theology was born out of a close examination of the experience of African American women’s lived experience. As Katie Geneva Cannon, Emilie M. Townes, and Angela Sims sum up,

Womanists share extensive stories full of contextual complexities. . . . We speak from a bittersweet place that is informed by our daily reorientation in a race-, sex-, class-conscious society. We talk about African American women’s multiple labels—some self-applied, others culturally imposed. As daughter, sister, niece, cousin, mother, lover, wife, friend, girl, woman-child—each of us speaks from a place that has been turned upside down and inside out by inequities in a social system that is anything but just.<sup>25</sup>

Womanist theology then is a project gear that addresses the social situation of African American women and their unique experience of the unjust nature of society. Womanist theologians rightly recognize that many of the social constructs that oppress African American woman are theologically mediated, and were especially so during the time of antebellum slavery. Thus, the critique of the Womanist theological movement is both theological and social.

One such theological position that is critiqued from its theological confession and social construction is that of atonement and redemption. The reason for the concern for this doctrine is the way that the slave owner articulated his relationship to the slave, similar to the popular theory of atonement, namely satisfaction theory. For the female slave, the

---

<sup>24</sup>Though it is important to note that Anselm’s theology is not limited to debt-satisfaction language, but finds its full realization in the perfect obedience offered to God on behalf of humanity by Jesus Christ. As we shall see based off the same logic offered by Womanist theologians the language of obedience should become equally suspect. One only images the daily experience of African American women on the plantation and the consequences of perfect obedience to their masters included large amounts of humiliation and grief. Therefore, neither can serve as a suitable theory of the atonement in the Womanist tradition.

<sup>25</sup>Katie Geneva Cannon, Emilie M. Townes, and Angela Sims, *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox. 2011), xv.

social embodiment of this theory of the atonement was surrogacy.<sup>26</sup> In short, the way that Jesus is portrayed as humanity's surrogate—by paying the price for our sin on the cross—is recapitulated in African-American women's experience through the fact that their masters become the surrogates through which they are granted life on earth.<sup>27</sup> Specifically, this entailed their lives being lived through the master who guaranteed their life by contract. Traditionally, in ancient slavery the master would commute a death sentence of a slave who was normally procured through an act of war. In the antebellum period the master, rather than assuming the salvific relationship by commuting the death sentence, would assume a debt through payment of the "price" for the slave.<sup>28</sup> Either way the slave owner was the avenue of life for the slave. Either in the case where the slave's life is spared in times of war, or if a slave owner frees a slave in the antebellum period, the legitimacy of their freedom is guaranteed through the slave owner. This was generally the language of surrogacy played out in slavery.

Certain roles for African American women were also forced through a relationship of surrogacy. For example, Delores Williams offers an anamnesis to modern culture, in that, during the slave period, African American women were forced into roles of forced labor to substitute for their white masters in the field as well as their white female masters by cooking.<sup>29</sup> Even more troubling was the fact that black women were subject to the sexual lusts of white men in the fields as they served in these roles. In some Christian households, wives of plantation owners would force specific female slaves into roles as sexual surrogates to their husbands so that the wives could maintain their consecrated virginity.<sup>30</sup> Even

---

<sup>26</sup>See specifically, Delores Williams, "Black Women's Surrogacy Experience and the Christian Notion of Redemption," in *Cross Examinations: Reading on the Meaning of the Cross Today*. Ed. Marit Trelstad. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 2006), 19-32.

<sup>27</sup>See J. Danny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Press. 2011), 198. See also Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: the Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*, (New York: Orbis Books. 1993), 161-162.

<sup>28</sup>For a thorough and detailed analysis of the slave/master relationship with special attention to the avenues of life assumed by the master see Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, (Boston: Harvard University Press. 1982).

<sup>29</sup>Williams, "Black Women's Surrogacy Experience and the Christian Notion of Redemption," 19-27.

<sup>30</sup>For examples of this during early Christianity see: Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 2006), 24-52. The.

after the end of the Civil War the end of coerced surrogacy gave rise to voluntary surrogacy in the role of the “mammy,” where African American women became forced surrogates of white mothers at the cost of caring for their own children. There is much more to explore here, but Williams summarizes the issue at stake here when she writes,

All . . . forms of . . . surrogacy illustrate a unique kind of oppression only black women experienced in the slavocracy. Only black women were mammies. Only black women were permanently assigned to the field labor. Only black women permanently lost control of their bodies to the lust of white men. During slavery, black women were bound to a system that had respect for neither their bodies, their dignity, their labor, nor their motherhood except as it was put to their service of securing the well-being of ruling-class white females.<sup>31</sup>

Williams and other Womanist scholars deeply question the strict satisfaction theory of atonement that much of the Church confesses. In fact, this particular theory of the atonement is the stance of the Church of the Nazarene. Article VI of the Manual of the Church of the Nazarene states,

We believe that Jesus Christ, by His sufferings, by the shedding of His own blood, and by His death on the Cross, made a full atonement for all human sin, and that this Atonement is the only ground of salvation, and that it is sufficient for every individual of Adam's race. The Atonement is graciously efficacious for the salvation of *those incapable of moral responsibility* and for the children in innocency but is efficacious for the salvation of those who reach the age of responsibility only when they repent and believe.<sup>32</sup>

The proposed amendment, JUD-802, to the Article of Faith in the Manual of the Church of the Nazarene sought to reinstate the word “meritorious” before death in the article as it has been previously left out.<sup>33</sup> The rejection

---

evidence for the continuity of this with antebellum slavery was provided through conversations during preparation for my thesis with my professors J. Kameron Carter, Ph.D and Willie Jennings, Ph.D.

<sup>31</sup>Williams, “Black Women’s Surrogacy Experience and the Christian Notion of Redemption,” 23.

<sup>32</sup>“Article VI: Atonement.” *The Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*. Ed. Dean Blevins, Charles Crow, David Downs, Paul Thornhill, and David Wilson. (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House. 2009), 30-31.

<sup>33</sup>“Report of the Scripture Study Committee to the Twenty-Eighth General Assembly Church of the Nazarene,” 14-15.

tion of this, and the call for an exploration of new ways of articulating the atonement in the Church of the Nazarene, should be greeted as a chance to service a more robust account of the atonement that considers the full humanity of all individuals who are lovingly freed from the effects of sin by Jesus Christ.

Womanist theologians recognize that theories of the atonement and redemption have been at the forefront of the Christian imagination since its earliest days. These early Christians (from Irenaeus to Anslem) utilized their socio-political language to express the nature of how the atonement could be achieved. Williams writes, "so the Womanist theologian uses the sociopolitical thought and action of the African-American woman's world to show black women that their salvation does not depend on upon any form of surrogacy made sacred by traditional and orthodox understandings of Jesus' life and death."<sup>34</sup> Thus, it is a critique embedded within the lived experience of African-American females and thus a uniquely liberative language for how death and sin are defeated in Jesus Christ. This takes place in three general shifts: a general shift from the death of Jesus to his life, a shift of the blood of the cross to the empty cross, and a shift from the execution of Jesus to the resurrection of Jesus.

First, Delores Williams helps us see what is at stake in shifting perspectives from the death of Jesus as a coerced surrogacy role for the sins of humanity to the life of Jesus. This is the strongest shift that needs to happen in the Womanist theology of atonement. Williams writes, "salvation is assured by Jesus' life of resistance and by the survival strategies he used to help people survive the death of identity caused by their exchange of inherited cultural meanings for a new identity shaped by the gospel ethics and world view."<sup>35</sup> The ethics of resistance is primarily seen in the temptation account of Jesus in the Wilderness located in the Gospel of Matthew (4:1-11). That Jesus was able to break the power or influence of sin shows that the breaking of the power of sin and death happen in Jesus' life, not death. She writes, "Jesus therefore conquered sin in life, not death. In the wilderness he refused to allow evil forces to defile the balanced relation between the material and the spiritual, between life and death, between power and the exertion of it."<sup>36</sup> Thus, Williams understands the root of sin (both individual and corporate) to exist primarily in the playing of life and death off one another. Jesus, as narrated by

---

<sup>34</sup>Williams, *Sisters in the Spirit*, 164.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid, 166.

Williams, refuses to live in that scenario and play by those rules, but reveals those systems as corrupt. Therefore, the scene before Pilate in the Gospel of John highlights just this type of scene as well. It is written,

<sup>10</sup>Pilate therefore said to him, “Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?” <sup>11</sup>Jesus answered him, “You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin” (John 19:10-11 NRSV).

The choice Jesus is given in this moment is the chance to play into the systemic orders of sin, namely life and death, created by humanity in this situation. However, his response represents the ethic of resistance that is his new “ministerial vision” of right relationships.<sup>37</sup> This means that the life of resistance helps eliminate the identity of those forced to live in systems of sin that claim the power of life over death.<sup>38</sup> This makes sense of what Karl Barth calls the Judge judged in our place. He writes,

Why did the Son of God become man, one of us, our brother, our fellow in the human situation? The answer is: in order to judge the world. But in light of what God has actually done we must add at once: in order to judge it in the exercise of His kingly freedom to show His grace in the execution of His judgment, to pronounce is free in passing sentence, to free us by imprisoning us, to ground our life on our death, to redeem and save us by our destruction.<sup>39</sup>

“Our destruction” is not of us in our particularity, but the identity that sin has created for us. Furthermore, this destruction also defeats the sins that misappropriate humanity’s relation to material and spiritual orders.

It is the misrelating to spiritual and material realities that is the systemic order of sin that leads to Jesus’ death. In short, because Jesus refuses to relate to the material and spiritual orders in a manner defined by sin, the orders of sinful humanity seek to put an end to his defiance. As Williams writes, “The cross is a reminder of how humans have tried throughout history to destroy visions of righting relationships that involve transformation of tradition and transformation of social relations

---

<sup>37</sup>Ibid, 164-167.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid, 164.

<sup>39</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV.I: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*. Trans G. W. Bromiley. (New York: T. & T. Clark. 2004), 222.

and arrangements sanctioned by the status quo.”<sup>40</sup> This means that the mission of Jesus was not to die to satisfy a debt incurred by humanity, but to provide a means to cure the problem of sin as it is lived by humanity. It is cured because of the hypostatic union, (anhypostatically) the very nature of humanity is given a path to follow in the Spirit. In the words of Irenaeus, “what He appeared to be, He really was. God recapitulated in Himself that ancient handiwork of His which is man, in order to kill sin, to destroy death, and to give life to man. These are His true works.”<sup>41</sup> The cross then is just the inevitable response to anyone who would challenge the systemic order of sin. Williams will even go so far as to say “there is nothing divine in the blood of the cross” in order to shift the perspective of Jesus on the cross, not by divine sanction, but by the persecution of innocence.<sup>42</sup>

Second, a shift must take place from the blood of the cross to the empty cross. Picking up on the profound insight of Delores Williams, Womanist scholar JoAnne Marie Terrell defines the relationship the cross should have in relation to atonement and Womanist theology in general. Terrell starts by affirming Williams’ view that the crucifixion was not a violence condoned by God.<sup>43</sup> However, Terrell does believe something divine happens in the blood of the cross. She writes, “Thus while there is ‘something of God in the blood of the cross,’ it is not an act of divinely sanctioned violence. Rather, it ‘highlights the egregious nature of every historical crime against humanity and the Divinity,’ which means that ‘the cross is about God’s love for humankind in a profound sense.’”<sup>44</sup> The point is that Jesus is raised from this death of innocent suffering, and echoing Williams, this affirms the efficacy of this life. Terrell sees this as a sign of our own resurrection from our own graves.<sup>45</sup> This also means that Terrell does not think that the resurrection is the end of the gospel mes-

---

<sup>40</sup>Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 167.

<sup>41</sup>Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, III 18, 7, cited in *The Scandal of the Incarnation Irenaeus Against the Heresies*. ed. Hans Urs von Balthasar (San Francisco Ignatius Press, 1990), 58.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>JoAnne Marie Terrell, *Power in the Blood? The Cross in African American Experience, The Bishop Henry McNeal/Sojourner Truth Series in Black Religion*, no. 15, (Mary-knoll: Orbis Books. 1998), 121. Cited in Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 200.

<sup>44</sup>Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 201. See also Terrell, *Power in the Blood?* 123-124.

<sup>45</sup>Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 201. See also Terrell, *Power in the Blood?* 125.

sage. Rather, “Terrell,” as Denny Weaver sums up, “will keep the empty cross, saying that it signifies God’s continuous empowerment, and the continuous intercession of the spirit of Jesus Christ with God’s people.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, the atonement is a reality that we are to participate in daily in the Spirit. Christ’s intercession brings life from the death of sinful condition. What was said of Williams’ account of Christ’s atoning work through the breaking of systems of sin that distorts our ability to be in relationship with God, creation, and other humans is still true. However, in shifting our attention from the blood of the cross to the empty cross, we begin to see the continual work of Christ through the Spirit so that we can have participation in this restoration of right relationship.

The focus on the cross must also include the resurrection. Probably the most troubling fact of Article VI is that it makes no mention of the resurrection, effectively removing from it a proper understanding of the atonement. This piece is also missing from Delores Williams’ account of the atonement. Another Womanist theologian, Karen Baker-Fletcher, helps fill this void both for Williams and for the Church of the Nazarene. Baker-Fletcher does uphold the insights of Williams and the problematic, traditional ways of viewing the atonement. However, she reminds her readers that while, “atonement theory is problematic, we are still left with the historical reality of the cross.”<sup>47</sup> Baker-Fletcher argues that we cannot just ignore the reality of the cross; instead, we should switch the emphasis to the resurrection rather than on death of Jesus. She writes, “an emphasis on the resurrected Jesus refocuses the interpretation of Jesus’ death as well. We need to rethink ‘how we preach Christ crucified,’ so that preaching glorifies God. Glorifying the cross as though Jesus came to die actually glorifies the ‘human capacity to oppress others.’ In contrast, emphasizing the resurrection shifts the focus to the power of God to overcome oppression.”<sup>48</sup> This oppression is twofold, but both are intimately intertwined. There is first the social political realities of oppression that Baker-Fletcher and the other Womanist theologians actively resist. Second is the powers of sin that cause such oppression, as well as temptation to commit sin. This would include systemic evils of oppression such as addiction, as well as racism and oppression. Baker-Fletcher writes, “[a]ccompanied by

---

<sup>46</sup>Weaver, 201.

<sup>47</sup>Karen Baker-Fletcher and Garth Kasimu Baker-Fletcher, *My Sister, My Brother: Womanist and Xdous God Talk*. (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Pub. 2002), 77. Cited in Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*. 202.

<sup>48</sup>Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 202. See also Baker-Fletcher and Baker-Fletcher, *My Sister, My Brother*, 79.

the risen Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, men, women, and children are to overcome suffering and evil.”<sup>49</sup> This is a fortunate consequence arising from Baker-Fletcher especially for a tradition that values deliverance from systemic, oppressive orders of sin that attempt to define our lives.

To sum up the argument to this point, traditional satisfaction theories of atonement arise from a particular socio-political worldview. They become solidified in the feudal period and in the theology of Anselm of Canterbury. Judgment aside, this view of atonement, and its corresponding worldview, is responsible for the world that created the conditions of antebellum slavery.<sup>50</sup> We are in an age that follows the physical realities of the antebellum slave period, but the theological justification has not changed. Recognizing these theological realities, Womanist theologians have begun to critique and re-articulate theology in light of a different socio-political experience, namely as African American women. Their theological fruit bears a robust theological account of the atonement that accounts for the oppressive social realities, such as racism, by providing a new vision of resistance. Furthermore, other Womanist theologians have sought to show the ethical nature available through their articulation of the atonement, namely through the life and resurrection of Jesus.

The activity of the atonement as actually breaking the powers of sin through Jesus’ life is underscored in the activity of the Spirit. Moving into a discussion about holiness, this will become our central focus. Whatever it is that we are doing when we, as Wesleyans, profess being “empowered” by the Holy Spirit, it is connected to the life of Jesus.<sup>51</sup> For Jesus’ ministerial vision of life takes place within the life of the Spirit. Furthermore, acting within the Spirit leads to the confession “Jesus is Lord!” This is a necessary connection to make in our discussion because atonement is seen as an act of Jesus, while sanctification is seen as one in the Spirit. However, we must recognize that the same power exists at the heart of both. Therefore, when we confess with Womanist theology that in Jesus’ life he breaks

---

<sup>49</sup>Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Dancing with God: The Trinity from a Womanist Perspective*. (St. Louis: Chalice Press. 2006), 137.

<sup>50</sup>The realities of feudal lordship and plantation masters both represent similar social/economic realities with similar structure and aims. Shearer David Bowman, *Masters and Lords: Mid-19<sup>th</sup>-Century U.S. Planters and Prussian Junkers*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1993).

<sup>51</sup>Language of empowerment appears in Article X of the Church of the Nazarene. See “Article X: Christian Holiness and Entire Sanctification.” Accessed 5/3/2014.



the power of sin and death and that sanctification is “wrought by the Holy Spirit” and “transforms us into the likeness of Christ,” then we acknowledge the deep connections between a theology of atonement and holiness. When we sing “Holiness unto the Lord” we sing of this connection. The life of right relationship and the breaking of the power of sin is the life of Jesus. It is participation in this life that the Spirit deepens our understanding of holiness by giving it flesh. Furthermore, it helps us understand what our particular moral theology is and provides insights into the connections between atonement, holiness, and Wesleyan ethics. What Wesley will mean by the development of holy tempers and his moral psychology can be explained using what we have already defined in the Womanist theology of atonement.<sup>52</sup>

#### IV. John Wesley's Moral Theology of Holiness

Though John Wesley's view of the atonement is very close to our implications about the view of the atonement detailed by Womanists, it is our discussion here to connect this view more to his theology of holiness and his moral theology.<sup>53</sup> This idea needs to be addressed in our discussion of Article VII because it appropriates a Wesleyan understanding of Article X. Also, it answers the charge of Article VII, “The Atonement is graciously efficacious for the salvation of those incapable of moral responsibility. . . .”<sup>54</sup> John Wesley's Christian virtue ethic arises out of the plentitudinal reality of God. Wesley's main emphasis is on the love of God

---

<sup>52</sup>Wesley's moral psychology and the development of holy tempers serve as the vocabulary for John Wesley's virtue ethic. In short, Wesley argues that there is reciprocity psychologically with the experience of God's love in our hearts and the way we, in turn, act in love. It is a psychology because it takes seriously experience of God as the fundamental basis for our affections. For more see Randy L. Maddox, “A Change of Affections: The Development, Dynamics, and Dethronement of John Wesley's ‘Heart Religion’” in *Heart Religion in the Methodist Tradition and Related Movements*. Ed. Richard Steele, (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press. 2001), 3-31.

<sup>53</sup>Wesley's view of the atonement is closer to the Eastern Fathers' than to ransom or satisfaction theories of atonement. Wesley describes the work of the atonement as helping to restore us to the Image of God from captivity. This resonates with the Womanist theologians, because it is not a debt to be satisfied, but rather our way of relating (i.e., the *imago Dei*) that must be restored. Thus, Wesley's theology is a great conversation partner for theologically engaging the work of Womanist scholars. For a detailed description of Wesley's view of the atonement see: Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1994), 97-109.

<sup>54</sup>“Article VI: Atonement.” Accessed 5/3/2014.

that believers experience through the Spirit. Wesley writes, “let us love one another. . . . It is by the Spirit that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. Every one that truly loveth God and his neighbor is born of God.”<sup>55</sup> The heart of ethics, holiness, and the renewal of the Image of God all lie in this understanding. The believer experiences the love of God in his/her heart. This is essential for Wesley because for Wesley, one cannot do what one has not experienced, namely love. He writes in a letter to one possibly pseudonymous John Smith,

I believe firmly, and that in the most literal sense, that “without God we can do nothing. . . .” What do I mean by saying that faith, hope, and love, are not the effect of any, or all, our natural faculties? I mean this: That supposing a man to be now void of faith, hope, and love he cannot effect any degree of them in himself by any possible exertion of his understanding, and of any or all his other natural faculties, though he should enjoy them in the utmost perfection. A distinct power from God, not implied in any of these, is indispensably necessary, before it is possible he should arrive at the very lowest degree of Christian faith, or hope, or love . . . he must be created anew, thoroughly and inwardly changed by the operation of the Spirit of God; by a power equivalent to that which raises the dead, an which calls the things which are not as though they were.<sup>56</sup>

This quote illustrates what Wesley scholars understand as Wesley’s articulation of his “Spiritual Senses.” We sense the love of God “shed abroad in our hearts.”<sup>57</sup> experiencing the inward power to love in a way distinctly Christian. Thus, the love of God experienced in the heart of the believers initiates a process of transformation in them. This is what Wesleyans should understand as the beginning of Wesley’s view of holiness and moral theology.

The work of the love of God spread abroad in our hearts achieves the forming of holy tempers from unholy tempers.<sup>58</sup> The Holy Spirit and

---

<sup>55</sup>NT Notes, 1 John 4:7.

<sup>56</sup>“Letter to John Smith,” (June 1746) §7. *Works* (Jackson), 12:75.

<sup>57</sup>NT Notes, 1 John 4:7.

<sup>58</sup>For Wesley, the tempers function in much of the same way that the virtues do in the work of Aristotle. So they were acquired excellences of a theological nature. A proper understanding of what holy tempers in fact are might lie in the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. For a thorough explanation of all the different possibilities of the holy tempers see, D. Stephen Long, *John Wesley’s Moral Theology: The Quest for God and Goodness*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press. 2005), 245-247.

grace work persuasively in order to shape *bent* tempers (i.e., those bent towards sinful inclinations) and reshapes/redirects them to holy ones. As Wesley writes,

We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel the “love God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us,” producing love to all mankind, and more especially to the children of God; expelling the love of the world, the love of pleasure, of ease, of honour, of money; together with pride, anger, self-will, and every other evil temper—in a word, changing the; “earthly, sensual, devilish” mind into “the mind which was in Christ Jesus.”<sup>59</sup>

This is a work of God and of grace in the heart of the believer. It is a therapy and a work of the Holy Spirit which regenerates the believer. This grace is not unilateral; it is responsive. Thus, grace is “responsible grace”<sup>60</sup> in the sense that we are encouraged to cultivate and respond to the work of God in us. The combination of our response and God’s grace leads to the creation of holy tempers (i.e., virtues).

We can begin to see here through Wesley’s emphasis on holy tempers the connection with the life of Jesus and his vision of renewed, positive relational life. Utilizing the insight of Jesus’ atoning work in defeating sin through his life, specifically in encounters with the devil, Pilate, and others attempting to define life with death, the holy tempers serve as a habituation into that life through the Spirit. Since it is the Spirit (i.e., the power of God) who communicates this life to us, then it is Christ who provides a continuing vision of abundant relational living. In short, in the Spirit we are given the power to participate in the ways Christ has righted relational living from sin. Of course doing this requires practices that leave their mark in the formation of holy tempers as mediated by the Holy Spirit. This is the quintessence of holiness, moral theology, and the insight of atonement at work in everyday life.

These practices help cultivate holy tempers in what he calls “attending to the means of grace.” Chief among the means of grace is the Lord’s Supper. He writes, “all who desire an increase of the grace of God are to wait for it in partaking of the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>61</sup> This is a way of daily

---

<sup>59</sup>Sermon 43, “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” I.4 (*Outler*), 373.

<sup>60</sup>I am of course referring tangentially here to Randy Maddox’s seminal work, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).

<sup>61</sup>Sermon 16, “The Means of Grace,” III.11, (*Outler*), 165.

remembrance of the passion, but also of a visible sign before God.<sup>62</sup> This is a very practical, embodied way of experiencing the love of God. Now, one could raise the point about the Lord's Supper being broken body, and shed blood. This might call to mind Delores Williams' insistence that there is nothing divine in the blood of the cross, so why venerate it in this study? I think theologically we can lift both of these up, namely the Eucharist and the womanist theology of atonement, if we understand what the Eucharist actually does. The body of Jesus is displaced in the resurrection and now made available to all through the mediation of the Holy Spirit. As Graham Ward writes,

What had throughout the Gospel story been an unstable body is now to be understood as an extendable body. For it is not that Jesus, at this point, stops being the physical presence. It is more that his physical presence can extend itself to incorporate other bodies, like bread, and make them extensions of his own.<sup>63</sup>

This is precisely the *means* of the grace that is communicated. The Eucharist body is the very real body of Jesus present to us. This is also the body that breaks the power of sin in our lives. Wesley understands that participating in the Lord's Supper is a *means* of grace, because it communicates the grace of Jesus as the *means* by which we can participate in the ministerial vision of relationships restored in our lives. Christ breaks the power of sin, so it is no longer our ability to do so but to instead focus on how we participate in the life of Christ. This is what it means to partake of the Lord's Supper and the Means of Grace.

In addition to partaking of the Lord's Supper there are many other practices of the means of grace that encourage the forming of the holy tempers. Such examples include: love feast, works of mercy, participating in the class meetings and bands, etc.<sup>64</sup> These all represent practical examples of exercising one's volition towards the cultivating of the holy tempers. It arises from the fullness of God, for in experiencing the love of

---

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Graham Ward, "Bodies: The Displaced Body of Jesus," *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*. Ed. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, (New York: Routledge Press. 1999), 167.

<sup>64</sup>For a succinct, thorough survey of the means of grace and how they function in Wesleyan theology, see "Section IV: The Means of Grace: Practices God Uses to Make Us Holy." Point Loma Nazarene University. Accessed March 4, 2014. See also for the way Wesley understood the Means of Grace to work toward our holiness, Sermon 16, "The Means of Grace," III.11 (*Outler*), 158-171.

God we are encouraged to practice that love. The more we practice the love of God and allow the presence of God to continue to work in our hearts, the stronger the holy tempers take root in our hearts. Wesley writes, "deny yourselves every pleasure which does not prepare you for taking pleasure in God, and willingly embrace every means of drawing near to God, though it be a cross, though it be grievous to flesh and blood."<sup>65</sup> Though here Wesley references the cross, it corresponds with what Williams says of the cross, namely its persecution of innocence. If you are drawn near to God you will, through participation in the Means of Grace and the development of holy tempers, find the ministerial vision of life found in Jesus. What Wesley shows here, and I think is affirmed by Williams and the womanists, is that going against the status quo is what it means to grow in holiness and to develop holy tempers (though it may lead to our persecution). Thus, the restoration of the ministerial vision of Christ can be achieved in the development of holy tempers through the Holy Spirit. This is not only the connection between the atonement and sanctification, but between the second and third members of the Trinity, and between all of this and the Christian moral life.

To sum up, the height of Wesley's moral theology lies in the renewing of the Image of God. This is the culmination of our discussion on atonement, holiness, and moral theology. It all begins with Jesus in his own life breaking the powers of sin and death. This is the act of the atonement. This breaking of sin is the power communicated and experienced initially through the Spiritual Senses. This gives us the ability to break the power of sin and wrong relatedness in our life through participation in the ministerial vision of Jesus. This is the beginning of the act of sanctification. This life becomes habituated through the development of holy tempers. This is what the Christian moral life looks like. From beginning to end, it is about the Image of God being restored in humanity. As Wesley writes, "Ye know that the great end of religion is to renew our hearts in the image of God, to repair that total loss of righteousness and true holiness which we sustained by the sin of our first parent."<sup>66</sup> The image of God comes in three forms: the natural image (our original capability with God), the political image (our correct relationship with creation and humanity), and the moral image (the ability to act as God would want). The fall removes the third and distorts the second, leaving the natural image crippled. The process outlined above, from initial experience to the

---

<sup>65</sup>Sermon 85, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," II.4. (*Outler*), 490.

<sup>66</sup>Sermon 44, "Original Sin," III. 5, (*Outler*), 334.

love of Christ to the habituated practice of love, is a process of God drawing us to the image of God. This is the end (*telos*) of the Christian life. Wesley writes,

One more excellent end may undoubtedly be answered by the preceding considerations. They may encourage us to imitate him whose mercy is over all his works, they may soften our hearts towards the meaner creatures, know that the Lord careth for them. It may enlarge our hearts towards those poor creatures to reflect that, as vile, as they appear in our eyes, not one of them is forgotten in the sight of our Father which is in heaven. Through all the vanity to which they are now subjected, let us look to what God hath prepared from them. Yea, let us habituate ourselves to look forward, beyond this present scene of bondage, to the happy time when they will be delivered therefrom into the liberty of the children of God.<sup>67</sup>

The excellent end in the theology of Wesley is the life of God. The goal is not the satisfaction of a debt but rather habituating ourselves forward and ultimately to regain the image of God, and thus going on to perfection.<sup>68</sup>

## V. Preliminary Responses to Article VI

*"We Believe that Jesus Christ, by His sufferings, by the shedding of His own blood, and by His death on the Cross, made a full atonement for all human sin, and that this Atonement is the only ground of salvation."*<sup>69</sup>

If the Article of Faith on the atonement for the Church of the Nazarene is going to have a future in a truly Wesleyan articulation of the econ-

---

<sup>67</sup>Sermon 60, "The General Deliverance," III.10 *Works*, 2:449.

<sup>68</sup>Though I don't address it much in this paper, Wesley's moral theology is deeply embedded within his doctrine of Christian Perfection. The reason I do not make more of an effort to explain the two is twofold. First, for many in the Wesleyan tradition, morality and Christian perfection have been equated. I do not want to even begin to try and say that, so that is why a more explicit account of Christian Perfection is left out. For a more detailed account of the perils of morality and Christian perfection talk see Henry Spaulding II, "A Postmodern Re-Thinking Of Ethical Reflection in the Wesleyan/Holiness Tradition," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*. Vol. 35. No. 1. Spring 2000. 41-66.

Secondly, and most importantly, this paper seeks to address primarily the issues pertaining to the reception of John Wesley's moral theology by contemporary ethicists and to give a robust account of Wesley's moral theology as grounded in the nature of God.

<sup>69</sup>"Article VI: Atonement." Accessed 5/3/2014.

omy of salvation, then it cannot remain merely about the death of Christ satisfying a debt. For John Wesley, the role of Christ is not merely to satisfy a debt but to help restore us to the Image of God. This is because, as Randy Maddox writes, Wesley “understood fallen humanity to be enslaved less to Satan than to corrupt tempers.”<sup>70</sup> This means the atonement provides a freedom from these tempers such that, without such an act, we would not have the ability to pursue holiness. There are complications with the way Wesley words this (i.e., Christ freeing humanity from guilt), but the end of Wesley’s theology of holiness matches the theology of atonement articulated by the Womanist tradition. In short, the Womanists argue that the atonement reveals the ministerial vision of Jesus and of what it means to possess right relation to God, self, and the world. Wesley argues, “by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God.”<sup>71</sup> Thus, read in this fashion, the atonement is essential to the work of sanctification. If the Church of the Nazarene wishes to continue preaching holiness (which I think it should), then it must provide a robust theology of the atonement whereby Jesus breaks the powers of sin that corrupt our ability to relate to spiritual and material realities. Therefore, language from the womanist scholars—in which the life of Jesus is central to the atonement—must be utilized; the empty cross must be a sign of the intercession in our time of temptation; the resurrection must be a sign of the power over death; and sin must appear in Article VI. Without a connection between atonement and sanctification our articulation of the economy of salvation will possess a gap. The question posed at the title of this essay is “Holiness unto Whom?” I believe the answer is undoubtedly, through the atonement, the Lord.

**Proposed change:** *“We Believe that Jesus Christ, by His life, death, and resurrection, broke the power of death and healed the corruption of unholy tempers. This means that the life of Jesus provides as much insight into the Atonement as does His death and Resurrection, but the Resurrection is of higher importance than his death. Jesus is not satisfying a debt of humanity, but is*

---

<sup>70</sup>Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 98. It is important to note that the terms slave and enslavement are problematic for the Womanists. These terms, in addition to the surrogate role of Jesus, are interrogated. The fact that terms with so much historical and cultural baggage/oppression are so ubiquitous in soteriological language is a problem. This is a problem that needs to be explored. It is not a critique I am levying against Maddox; these are terms he is merely repeating from Wesley.

<sup>71</sup>Sermon 85, “On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” II.1 (*Outler*), 488.

*breaking the powers of unholy tempers and corruption/death. (sufferings, by the shedding of His own blood, and by His death on the Cross, made a full atonement for all human sin, and that) Ultimately though, Jesus is the center and this Atonement is the only ground of salvation."*

## VI. Racial Reconciliation and Atonement: Response to USA-920

The reconstruction of the Article itself and the proposed new language above will provide an avenue for racial reconciliation. Though no specific time has been spent on the resolution USA-920, I hope that a theological conviction has emerged from our comparison of a womanist theology of atonement and Wesley's ethics of holiness. This conviction can be summed up by Delores Williams when she writes,

There is nothing divine in the blood of the cross, God does not intend black women's surrogacy experience. Neither can Christian faith affirm such an idea. Jesus did not come to be a surrogate. Jesus came for life, to show humans a perfect vision of ministerial relation that humans had very little knowledge of.<sup>72</sup>

Williams shows that the theological affirmations of the church go a long way to either promote or discourage persecution of individuals. In short, if this way of articulating atonement shows that God does not intend the surrogacy experience of African American females, and we adopt it, then we show that we too do not want that life for anyone. The fact that Williams' exploration of the atonement articulates both a theology that frees itself from the language of persecution and also a relational vision of the atonement with so many profound insights into sanctification, our Article of Faith and moral theology is just a bonus to the work it does toward a theological language of racial reconciliation. If we can adopt similar language when discussing the language of atonement for our Articles of Faith, then we can confess with her that God indeed does not intend African American woman's surrogacy experience.

In addition, Womanist theology of atonement helps us critique our language of sin in relation to its troubled history with racism. The Church of the Nazarene has a troubled history with its understanding of the nature of sin. Namely, sin has been articulated in such a way that allowed for the Church of the Nazarene, not universally, to preach entire sanctification without critiquing racism. For example, J. Kenneth Grider, long time professor of theology at Nazarene Theological Seminary, writes,

---

<sup>72</sup>Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 167.



One whole set of deficiencies we come by during this life, not nullified when the carnal mind is *expelled* at the time of our entire sanctification, is prejudices. Take racial prejudice. It is not inherited from Adam; we do not enter the world with it. We acquire it from our environment.<sup>73</sup>

Grider provides a misunderstanding of the nature of sin through his understanding of holiness. In Grider's analysis sin is cast in terms of substance (i.e., that it can be expelled) rather than in a systemic, relational category. Therefore, one can be sanctified and be racist. Even if sin was a substance as in Grider's estimation, then the sin would reveal itself in relational terms (if nothing else, in the way we relate to God). The Womanist theologians help us see this in the nature of sin by showing it in its relational categories through the history of persecution of African American women. Thus, when we say that in the atonement God broke the power of sin, as the Womanists show, we break the systemic, relational order of sin that causes such oppression. Therefore, to adopt such language theologically starts a conversation about racial reconciliation. It would move the conversations from what is a good and right social order to what types of relationships does God call us to in the life of Jesus Christ. These types of relationships are not the ones that lead to the oppressive regimes the Womanist theologians reveal. Furthermore, if we can theologically articulate the defeat of sinful relationships in the life of Jesus, then we learn where we need to be reconciled. Theologically it provides a mission to seek out those places where the sinful orders have claimed relationships gone astray. Finally, we would learn that to be the Image of God, we must be the Image of God together.

## IX. Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been my objective to show the fruits born from a pairing of Womanist theologies of atonement and Wesleyan virtue ethics/theology of holiness. My hope is that in bringing the pair together we have brought together the economy of salvation and the unity of the work of Christ and the Spirit in sanctification and salvation. The reading explored above presents an opportunity to engage a unique language of liberation to the oppressed, here explored through the liberation of African American women. By bringing together the breaking of powers in the act of sanctification with the breaking of relational powers in

---

<sup>73</sup>J. Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press. 1994), 414. Emphasis mine.

oppressive *sicut Deus*, this reading runs counter to the satisfaction theory of atonement the Nazarene Church currently possesses. This language arises from a feudal context in theology and provides legitimacy to the feudal-like order found in antebellum slavery. Thus, a theological critique of slavery is necessary, and the subsequent conditions it creates for African American women means articulating a theology of atonement that confronts the powers of oppression over it. This connects to our restoration of the Image of God as likeness to God in relationship. I connected this to the development of holy tempers in Wesley and showed how the unique moral theology of Wesley mirrors the confessions of womanist theology, but practiced in the very lives of believers. It is a practice of developing the type of tempers that lead to the breaking of the powers of oppression, namely sin. Thus, Wesleyan moral theology has at its heart the reconciliation sought at the heart of the Nazarene bill USA-920. Our moral theology also participates in the work of Christ in the breaking of power through the work of the Holy Spirit, which leaves its mark, namely sanctification. For a Church that has preached freedom to the captive from its inception, it seems that a theological restructuring of its language of the atonement would be attractive. It would be attractive because in promoting Christ-likeness the Church needs to answer what that is, and I believe the Womanist language of atonement names that Christ-likeness.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Gunter, W. Stephen. *Arminius and His Declaration of Sentiments: An Annotated Translation with Introduction and Theological Commentary*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012. xiii + 213 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1-60258-567-6.

Reviewed by Jeremy Bangs, Director of the Leiden American Pilgrim Museum, Leiden, Netherlands.

In seventeenth-century England, “Arminianism” became the ill-defined label for theological positions in the Church of England and among General Baptists that differed from the Calvinism of Puritans and Particular Baptists. In the eighteenth century, John Wesley so esteemed the theology of the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius (Oudewater, 1559 – Leiden, 1609) that he named his anti-predestinarian periodical publication “The Arminian Magazine.” For Wesley, Arminius signified a theological framework in which individual choice to respond to the grace of a universal offer of redemption could be understood and proclaimed as a liberating gospel. Opponents of Wesley became opponents of Arminius, assuming that the later interpretation of Arminius adequately represented the Dutchman’s position on the subject that most concerned them: the possibility and value of free will with respect to divine sovereignty, or predestination. That Wesley and later self-proclaimed Arminians might not fully have understood the thought of their hero has been a growing perception among historians.

Attention to Arminius and his theology has been increasing since the 1971 publication of a scholarly biography by Carl Bangs. Book-length studies of Arminius’ theology by Eef Dekker, Richard Muller, Keith Stanglin, F. Stuart Clarke, Roger Olson, and Willem den Boer have done much to enable the modern historian or theologian to move beyond the stereotyped controversies in which Arminius was set in stark opposition to Calvin (meriting either admiration or condemnation, depending on one’s point of view about Calvinism). These authors have examined Arminius’ complete works to understand and summarize the extent and development of his thought. Arminius himself, however, composed a concise statement of belief to explain himself to his contemporaries. Yet that document, his “Declaration of Sentiments,” has until now never been fully

translated into English from Arminius' original manuscript. Stephen Gunter presents us with an excellent, annotated translation accompanied by helpful contextual and theological analysis.

Arminius' background and biography occupy the first third of Gunter's book (to page 86). Born in Oudewater and named Jacob Harmanszoon, after his father died the boy studied at Utrecht and then at the University of Marburg. The Roman Catholic Spanish massacred Oudewater in 1575, a town that had just declared itself Protestant. The boy's mother and siblings were among the victims. Returning to his boyhood home brought only grief. Arminius learned of the founding in 1575 of a new university: Leiden. He enrolled as the twelfth student registered in the new school, inscribing himself as *Jacobus Arminius* (recalling the first-century Germanic hero who had fought against the Romans). Leiden was the center of a controversy about the question of authority over the church: did this reside with the civil magistracy (in their role as keepers of the peace) or with the clergy (as guardians of dogma)? That question became central to the Arminian controversy and how it was handled. The "Declaration of Sentiments" (1608) would be addressed to the provincial civil authorities, the States [parliament] of Holland and West Friesland. Gunter skillfully delineates Arminius' theological training (including study under Beza and Perrot at Geneva and a visit to Padua to hear Zabarella), then his career as a pastor in Amsterdam (where he ran into opposition from Plancius), followed by his appointment in 1603 to be professor of theology at Leiden (where he was strongly opposed by Gomarus). Arminius died in Leiden October 19, 1609. The Amsterdam and Leiden years involved growing controversy on the topics of predestination and the authority of the magistracy to supervise religion, controversy with which Arminius' name is now most generally associated. Those years also saw professional and personal congeniality or at least courtesy among the disputants. Following Stanglin, Gunter calls attention to the theology faculty's declaration in 1605 "that they 'were not aware of any differences among the professors in the faculty that affected the foundations of doctrine'" (66-67).

What, then, were the disputes and differences? Gunter's book lets Arminius speak for himself with a full translation of the "Declaration of Sentiments" (88-157). Arminius first sketches the preliminary confrontations that preceded the invitation to present his views in person and in writing to the States of Holland, an invitation received just a week and a half before the date of the session, October 30, 1608. Next, Arminius describes the supralapsarian view of predestination that he opposes. Sec-

tion headings (that first appeared in the 1610 printed edition) summarize his sentiments about the views of his opponents: "This Doctrine is Not the Foundation of Christianity, of Salvation, or of Certainty; The Doctrine of Predestination Does Not Contain the Gospel, or Any Part Thereof; [It] Was Never Affirmed in a General or Special Council; The Divines of the Church Have Not Affirmed This Doctrine as Orthodox; [It] Is Not in Harmony with the Confessions of the Reformed Churches; [It] Is Not in Agreement with the Belgic Confession or the Heidelberg Confession; [It] Is Repugnant to the Nature of God; [It] Is in Conflict with Human Nature; [It] Is Diametrically Opposed to the Act of Creation; [It] Is in Open Hostility to the Nature of Eternal Life; [It] Is opposed to the Nature of Eternal Death; [It] Is Inconsistent with the Nature and Characteristic of Sin; [It] Is Destructive to the Nature of Divine Grace; [It] Is Injurious to the Glory of God; [It] Is Dishonorable to Jesus Christ as Savior; [It] Is Hurtful to the Salvation of Humanity; [It] Inverts the Order of the Gospel; [It] Is Hostile to the Ministry of the Gospel; [It] Subverts the Foundation of Religion." Arminius concludes, "Finally, this doctrine of predestination has been rejected by the majority of Christians in ancient as well as modern times." He then proceeds to explain his own views in structured detail (130-56). On "Human Free Will" he states that "In a lapsed and sinful state without divine assistance, humanity is not able to think, will, or do that which is truly good. The regeneration and renewal by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit of all human capacities, including the intellect, affections, and will, is required for humanity to understand, esteem, consider, will, and perform that which is truly good . . . and yet not without the continued assistance of God's grace" (140).

Arminius' long text ends with the Latin statement, "SAT ECCESLÆ, SAT PATRIÆ DATUM." Gunter renders this as "I have fulfilled my duty to the Church and to my native land." Carl Bangs translated this strictly literally as "Enough given to church and country."<sup>1</sup> James Nichols' version was, "ENOUGH HAS BEEN DONE TO SATISFY THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AND MY COUNTRY!"<sup>2</sup> These differences raise the question of Gunter's fidelity to the text. His style is easily readable for a modern reader, although with a loss of the flavor of professorial dignity (or occasional academic pomposity) that characterizes seventeenth-century

---

<sup>1</sup>Carl O. Bangs, *Arminius, A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 316.

<sup>2</sup>James Nichols and William Nichols, trans. and ed., with an Introduction by Carl Bangs, *The Works of James Arminius, The London Edition*, 3 vols. (originally published in 1825; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 1:732.

Dutch formal prose such as this, which Arminius aimed at an official convocation of high government officials. What is gained by Gunter's choice of style, which he calls a "dynamic equivalent," is an accessibility for the readership he hopes to serve: students and scholars confronted by the upsurge of neo-Calvinist and neo-Fundamentalist attacks on a caricature of Arminian theology. For that discussion a careful, sensitive clarity is more useful than all the exact historic phrases of a document addressed to the "Noble, Puissant, Highly Wise, Very Perspicacious Lords" (the States of Holland and West-Friesland). Having checked, before the text went to the press, every line of Gunter's translation against Arminius' manuscript, I can attest to the accuracy of Gunter's translation and the success of his dynamic equivalent.

The third section of Gunter's book provides theological commentary relevant to the ongoing discussion of Arminius' ideas, with the title "The Evangelical, Practical Theology of Jacob Arminius" (161-184), and a "Conclusion" (185-194).

Gunter's annotations to the "Declaration of Sentiments" call attention to variations between the manuscript and the Dutch printed version published in 1610. He repeats Nichols' opinion that the Latin version that came out in the *Opera* of 1631 was "probably not done by Arminius." Nothing either indicates or contradicts the possibility that Arminius worked towards preparing that translation to make his ideas known to the broader academic world. That question remains unanswered, although the Dutch text was brought out in 1610 through the efforts of Arminius' widow and her brothers, presumably helped by his colleague Johannes Wtenbogaert.

In a book of such high quality as Gunter's, attention to typographical errors might seem picayune. I noticed only two. Twice the book gives October 4, 1574, as the date of the relief of the Siege of Leiden (18, 22). It was October 3.

Stephen Gunter has provided a very valuable contribution to the ongoing re-evaluation of the theology of Jacobus Arminius. The book will serve many Wesleyan-Arminian students and scholars well; it may even be predestined to accomplish a change of heart among hitherto anti-Arminian neo-Calvinists!

Porter, Stanley and Beth Stovell, eds. *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012. 224 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0830839636.

Reviewed by Ben Boeckel, Ph.D. student, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX.

Porter and Stovell's *Biblical Hermeneutics* makes a valuable contribution to InterVarsity's Spectrum series, which provides scholarly discussion of topics about which Christians disagree. Porter and Stovell's book focuses on the topic of biblical interpretation by presenting (part one) position essays advocating five different approaches to interpreting Christian Scripture and (part two) each author's response to the other four essays.

The editors made the helpful decision that each position essay should examine the same biblical text: Matthew 2:7–15, which gave some focus to the book while highlighting the similarities and differences between the approaches. The choice of Matthew 2:7–15 was also strategic since its quotation of Hosea 11:1 required the authors to consider how their respective approaches address the New Testament's use of the Old Testament as well as the relationship between the Bible's "original/historical" meaning(s) and later meanings discovered by readers.

In chapter one, Craig Blomberg explains the historical-critical/grammatical approach, which some hold distinct from historical criticism with its "antisupernaturalist worldview" (30). Blomberg advocates the recovery of "authorial intent," but rejects that this means recovering the author's mental processes (31). Rather, it is shorthand "for discerning the most likely meaning of a given text in light of all that we can recover" (31). Blomberg also argues his approach is logically prior to literary and theological ones (28, 41). Although he acknowledges that Christians can and must use such approaches, Blomberg contends the historical-critical/grammatical approach "is the necessary foundation on which all other approaches must build" (47).

There is much to commend Blomberg's argument, but one should note two weak points. First, as one respondent observed, it is questionable whether Blomberg's method can so easily bracket historical criticism's "antisupernaturalist" tendencies (179-182). Secondly, while Blomberg's analysis of Matthew 2 is helpful, Matthew's use of Hosea raises some serious questions. Since Matthew was not a historical critic, is his exegesis of Hosea anathematized by Blomberg since it has no foundation on the historical-critical method? If the answer is "no," Blomberg has at least two

options available. First, he could claim that Matthew's use of Hosea is "historical" in the sense of offering a meaning that is consistent with—though different from—that of Hosea's author. Secondly, he could say Matthew's typology, while not historical-critical, is a kind of theological approach that is legitimate but necessarily bracketed from this essay.

Scott Spencer explains the literary/postmodern approach in chapter two. Spencer focuses on the text itself rather than the author; he also notes that postmodern approaches emphasize the role of readers in hermeneutics. However, Spencer distinguishes himself from many postmodern interpreters by conceding that there are "limits of interpretation" and that it is possible to misinterpret (57-58). One sees the literary nature of Spencer's approach in the centrality given to five textual foci: the final text, cotext, intertext, context, and open text (49-54). Spencer shows how each of these relates to Matthew 2 where he deploys a deconstructive reading that, among other things, destabilizes the magi's status as wise men by depicting them as foolish.

One final comment should be made about Spencer's chapter. Although it is commendable that he does not push the deconstructive angle to the extent of "hermeneutical anarchy," it would be helpful to have some reflection regarding where to draw the line. Also, one might ask how his notion of "limits of interpretation" (57) relates to broader postmodern discussions about interpretation.

Merold Westphal outlines the philosophical/theological view in chapter three. Of the five position essays, this one alone deals with hermeneutics as such; the others each address particular hermeneutical methodologies. Westphal brings Gadamer, Derrida, and Wolterstorff into conversation with each other as he advocates a "double hermeneutic" that is both reproductive (in exegesis—recovering what the author said) and productive (in application—asking what God is saying now) (85). Westphal concurs with Wolterstorff that recovery of authorial meaning entails recovery not of a writer's psychological state, but rather the speech acts employed by the writer (76). However, Westphal thinks Wolterstorff places too much emphasis on the author, given the differences between a text's original meaning and latter applications. That said, Westphal probably fails to consider the extent to which Wolterstorff thinks the later meanings *were* intended by Scripture's divine author.

Westphal also interrogates the question of objectivity and relativity. He notes that conservative attempts at objectivity fail to recognize readers' finite status and their inability to grasp the opposite of "relative," which is the "absolute" (God, acc. Westphal) (82). It is true that inter-



preters are finite beings, but a different reading of conservatives would say they conceive of objectivity in the sense of a rational capacity, rather than apprehension of a God's-eye view of reality.

Richard Gaffin outlines the redemptive-historical view in chapter four. Drawing on Geerhardus Vos, Gaffin articulates a conception of history as revelation and develops six elements of the redemptive-historical approach. The outcome of these elements is a position that sees Jesus as the culmination of the history of redemption (92). However, more clarity is needed from Gaffin on the concept of revelation. On the one hand, Gaffin sees revelation as (human?) interpretation of God's redemptive activity, but on the other hand, God's activity itself is revelatory. Granted, revelation can be verbal or nonverbal, but acceptance of the latter makes it difficult to say "revelation is the interpretation of redemption" (93).

Gaffin makes other problematic claims (e.g., approaches reading an Old Testament document on its own terms are "illegitimate" for "new-covenant readers;" 101), but the benefit of his approach is its ability to secure a thoroughly Christological reading of the Old Testament. Gaffin also helpfully explains Matthew's typology as consistent with Hosea's intention, a consistency Gaffin thinks a legitimate typology requires (104).

Robert Wall introduces the book's final approach, a canonical one. Canonical approaches, Wall claims, are committed "to a theological conception of the Bible's final ... shape and to those Bible practices performed by a community of faithful readers" (111). Wall unpacks five orienting concerns and practices of canonical approaches that include reading Scripture both as a human text and as the Church's text. Although Wall affirms the importance of exegesis that "mines the raw materials of a biblical text," paramount importance is given to the rule of faith that constrains exegesis and to which a text's interpretation must cohere (115-116). In his response to Wall, Blomberg raises the important issue of whether this presumes "creedal formulations of the faith are as inerrant as the Scriptures themselves" (143). This question is important for Wesleyans—inerrantist and otherwise—as they reflect on Wall's important contribution, which has much in common with his earlier works on Wesleyan hermeneutics.

Wall concludes with three probes into Matthew 2. In these, he reflects on the significance of the canonical (as opposed to temporal/historical) prioritization of Matthew over the other Gospels and considers intertextual references in the text before concluding with an anagogical reading of the magi's star.

After the responses of each author in part two of the book, the editors offer a concluding chapter that synthesizes the approaches while recognizing their tensions and commonalities.

*Biblical Hermeneutics* would make useful contributions to upper-level undergraduate and graduate courses that survey different hermeneutical approaches to Scripture. This is especially the case given the commendable inclusion of authors from several theological perspectives. For Wesleyans, the book is also praiseworthy in that it brings into conversation five major approaches to biblical interpretation that can be found within the Wesleyan tradition.

Radner, Ephraim. *A Brutal Unity: The Spiritual Politics of the Christian Church*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012. 482 pages. ISBN-13: 978-160258629-1.

Reviewed by Nathan Crawford, Director of Youth and Young Adults, Trinity United Methodist Church, Plymouth, IN; Adjunct Professor, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY.

In his *A Brutal Unity: The Spiritual Politics of the Christian Church*, Ephraim Radner lays out an argument for the way in which the Christian Church can be viewed as a unity in spite of—and actually due to—its differences. In doing so, he also makes the case that Christian thought on the nature of division in the Church leads to and has a correlate in modern liberal thought. His goal is to discuss the nature of the Church in light of its current constitution instead of discussing the Church as an ideal entity. He brings a distinct realism to his argument that does not eschew the black marks of Christian division. In doing so, he offers an account of Christian unity that is rooted in reality, while still pointing to the ideal found only in the eschaton.

Radner's argument begins by taking on the work of William Cavanaugh. Cavanaugh has argued previously for the "myth of religious violence," saying that wars fought over religion are really only about political or economic concerns—at least, this is how Radner presents Cavanaugh's work. Also, Cavanaugh is quite critical of any relationship between Christianity and modern, liberal thought; Radner will defend such a relationship. So, Radner takes on the thought of Cavanaugh (and, to be fair, that of others like John Paul II), who tries to say that Christians doing violence is different from the Church being implicated in violence. Radner does not see such a distinction and actually points to the complicity of Christians in major conflicts, specifically Nazi Germany and Rwanda, which result in genocide. Radner finds the Church responsible to an extent for the way its members behave and act in such situations since the Church is responsible for these individuals' formation.

Next within the structure of his argument, Radner discusses the nature of the Church as divided. For him, this is not necessarily a bad thing; it simply is a descriptor of the reality that the Church inhabits. As such, we must understand the way in which Christian unity functions within and in spite of such division. This question really drives the argument of Radner, because it ultimately finds its answer in a form that looks like a precursor to the way in which the liberal state looks in the contem-

porary world. It is only as people come together and work together through their differences for some common cause that unity occurs.

Radner ultimately concludes that Christian unity only occurs as the body with Christ as its head. The way he gets here, though, is interesting. He goes through a number of ways in which Christian unity has been thought and debated, and he describes the merits and limits of each. So, for example, he takes on the "conciliar ideal" in one chapter and shows that the move to procedure is a good thing for getting at what is Christian truth; however, there is a limit since Christians cannot decide on the proper procedures, let alone what Christian truth is. Similarly, there is a discussion on the nature of following one's conscience, which should lead to ethical and right behavior on the part of an individual, but then Radner shows that the conscience is formed within and through communities and, as such, it leads different people to different conclusions. He ultimately comes to the place of solidarity, seeing this as the most adequate form for what happens in the unity of the Christian Church. In solidarity one gives oneself over to the other, to understand the other and to be with the other. The ultimate example of this is Jesus giving himself over to humanity, the godless, so that humanity could be united with the divine. As the Church unifies under this ideal, it also practices solidarity with one another to give the self over to the other to understand the other. This may not cover over differences or disagreements, but it gives a way of being unified in spite of them. Through this discussion of solidarity, Radner definitely gives a more than adequate account of what Christian unity looks like and how the Church may look when Christ is its head.

For all of its benefits, Radner's text falters at times under its own weight and discussion. This reviewer found, at times, that the argument Radner makes is difficult to follow: while the text is about Christian unity, the nature of that unity is not clear for much of the text. Similarly, Radner takes side roads into various subjects, like linguistics and liberal democracy, which are meant to undergird his argument but can, at times, actually take away from the flow of what he says. Lastly, liberalism plays a strong part in the argument of the book, but he never defines the nature of liberalism about which he writes. Is it historic liberalism? Is it neo-liberalism? Is it purely political? Does it contain elements of the economic? Etc. Liberalism is such a slippery term that this reviewer wishes Radner would have devoted at least some attention to laying out the type of liberalism that he discusses.

In all, though, Radner presents the reader with a very detailed, learned study on the nature of Christian unity in and through the

Church. He does so with an ear to numerous voices in the Christian tradition, as well as to the many atrocities that have been committed with Christian help (e.g., the 1940s church in Germany, the church in the 1990s in Rwanda and Burundi, and the like). Due to this, *A Brutal Unity* is a must read for anyone dealing with issues of ecclesiology in the contemporary world.

Mattox, Mickey L. and A.G. Roeber. *Changing Churches: An Orthodox, Catholic, and Lutheran Theological Conversation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012. 326 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0-8028-6694-3.

Reviewed by Jackson Lashier, Assistant Professor of Religion, Southwestern College, Winfield, KS.

The last few decades have witnessed what seems like a steady stream of high profile Protestant conversions to Roman Catholicism or Orthodoxy, often with little more than anecdotes and hearsay as an explanation. Finally, the book *Changing Churches: An Orthodox, Catholic, and Lutheran Theological Conversation*, co-written by Mickey L. Mattox and A.G. Roeber, Lutheran converts to Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy respectively, appears as an honest and reasoned firsthand account of the theological reasons for such conversion. The authors are excellent theologians who bring their historical and theological acumen to the difficult question of ecumenism in the twenty-first century. Their goal is to present “a theological, spiritual, and sometimes personal reflection on the gains and losses, the reasons and regrets that inform and follow from the decision to leave Lutheranism in order to embrace Orthodoxy or Catholicism” (3). While this book is autobiographical (which, in large part, adds to its charm and appeal), it is more broadly a sophisticated theological and historical account of the distinguishing marks of Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Lutheranism.

The conversation unfolds under three subjects, namely, justification, ecclesiology, and what might be called a loose collection of ‘hot button’ issues, among them, anthropology and specifically issues of gender and sexuality. In separate chapters under each subject, Mattox and Roeber in turn offer their respective Roman Catholic and Orthodox positions, addressing both the areas of promising rapprochement and those areas that remain church dividing. These sections are followed by one response essay written by Paul R. Hinlicky, a Lutheran who, despite theological affinities with Roman Catholicism, has chosen to remain Lutheran and presents compelling reasons for so doing.

The hopeful note comes in the area often identified as the primary cause of the historic Reformation, namely the doctrine of justification. Mattox, leaning heavily on the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ), which Catholic and Lutheran bodies together composed and signed in 1999 (and onto which the World Methodist Council signed in 2006), declares that “the ‘convert’ from Lutheranism to Catholicism may be confident that the Roman Church does not preach a ‘different gospel’”

(60). The authors support this position through a historical study that rightly presents Luther as a product of late medieval theology (as opposed to a theological anomaly as the traditional reading often makes him to be). Wesleyans are sure to be intrigued by Mattox's Luther who, in addition to teaching a forensic view of justification, also emphasizes the new birth and a real change occurring in the Christian. And Roeber's account of the Orthodox focus on salvation as *theosis*, or the gradual growth of Christians becoming more and more like God, is arguably more similar to Wesley's account of sanctification than anything found in Luther. Thus, this correlation demonstrates that churches in the Wesleyan tradition ought to have as much stake in the question of ecumenism as do Lutheran churches.

The book is less hopeful of the possibilities of reconciliation in the latter two sections. In the area of ecclesiology, for example, both Mattox and Roeber stress the centrality of the sacraments, and in particular the Eucharist, for a well ordered understanding of the Christian life. Here again, Mattox convincingly shows through a historical approach that Luther and Lutheranism in its original manifestation stressed the real presence in the Eucharist, which is clearly non-negotiable for Catholic and Orthodox theology. Nevertheless, the *lex orandi* of the Lutheran Lord's Supper reveals a "creeping Zwinglianism." Wesleyans familiar with and still employing Charles Wesley's hymns on the Eucharist will be convicted by the existence of the same breach in the *lex orandi* and *lex credendi* insofar as, generally speaking, our Eucharistic practice rarely does justice to the real presence.

Both authors, however, are hardest on recent moves by the ELCA branch of Lutheranism, mirrored in other denominations, to ordain homosexual clergy and perform and acknowledge same sex marriage. For both Roeber and Mattox, these moves are indicative of a general capitulation "to the demands of culture . . . [which] typically take place within churches that are governed democratically" (247), a clear argument for hierarchical leadership structures that mark in different ways, both Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Significantly, both authors make it clear that visible unity with Lutheranism is now not possible, given these decisions. This negative implication of the damage to a broader Christian unity is rarely discussed in the recent debates on these difficult issues in, for example, the United Methodist Church and ought to be weighed more seriously.

As noted, the strength of this book is the clarity with which it addresses the theological differences of the historic churches as well as the thorough and honest arguments offered by the authors for their conversions. Readers wanting a primer on the positions of these churches on a

number of key theological issues will be rewarded. Protestant readers may also be introduced to beliefs and practices missing from their own church experiences. For example, Roeber's discussion of the sacramental life of Orthodoxy is compelling and exposes what can be a quite impoverished experience of, for example, the Eucharist in many Protestant churches. Moreover, both the unity that the authors identify in the areas of justification and salvation and also the ecumenical reading of Luther are crucial ecumenical gains to be celebrated. Protestant readers interested in the greater unity of the body of Christ should be encouraged to engage in further work in those areas that the authors have helpfully articulated as church dividing.

As a viable approach to ecumenism, as the subtitle advertises it to be, the book falls somewhat short. Although the authors' firsthand experiences in the different churches lend authoritative weight to their discussion, one wonders if they have demonstrated by their conversions the futility of the ecumenical project, unless one conceives that project as a return of the protestors to Rome or Constantinople. A persistent lack of acknowledgment on the part of both authors to the gifts the Protestant traditions can offer to the body of Christ affirms this underlying position. Instead, both authors take the common approach that any gifts Protestantism can bring are already present in the fullness of the Catholic or Orthodox Churches. This is typified by their persistent claims that Luther was actually just a good Catholic and, when Protestants convert, they "[return] to Rome as the only home [they] have ever truly known" (265). This position seems theologically and historically problematic, given that (a) the Catholic Church of the sixteenth century did not recognize Luther's theology and (b) the theological emphases that led to, for example, the agreement on the JDDJ were muted in the Catholic Church prior to Luther and may still be so apart from the enduring witness of Protestantism. These issues were broached to a certain degree in Hinlicky's afterword but, because he did not have chapter length discussions on all of these issues, the Lutheran voice remains largely in the background (which makes the ecumenical promise of the subtitle somewhat misleading).

Nevertheless, the first step toward true ecumenical discussion is an honest account of what each church believes and uncompromisingly holds in order to move forward. *Changing Churches* offers this first step for Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy. One hopes that a Lutheran theologian, perhaps Hinlicky, will write a more comprehensive response to continue this work. Wesleyan theologians would also do well to enter the conversation.



Brian, Rustin E. *Covering Up Luther: How Barth's Christology Challenged the Deus Absconditus that Haunts Modernity*. Veritas. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013. 202 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1620321737.

Reviewed by Nathan Willowby, Ph.D. candidate in Theology and Ethics, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI; Pastor, Crossroads Church of God, Milwaukee, WI.

Rustin E. Brian argues that, for Karl Barth, the Christian message is “thesis, antithesis, Jesus” (150). *Covering Up Luther* is more about Barth than it is about Martin Luther, but the aim of the book is certainly to make clear the ways Barth corrects logical consequences that Brian sees resulting from Luther's theology. This book makes the case that Barth's theology of paradox, especially his Christology, overcomes the temptation to think dialectically because Barth allows his theological logic and understanding of God to be oriented by the paradox of Jesus instead of the dialectical theology of Protestant Liberalism or the *Deus absconditus* (hidden or unrevealed God) that is the god of Luther and modernity.

To this day, an ornate rug hangs to cover the section of books written by Martin Luther in Karl Barth's home library. Brian explains that Barth was doing more than decorating; the rug represented an intentional decision to “cover” Luther's theology. Brian's argument includes three moves and offers a suggestion for Barth studies going forward. First, he addresses the problem of “the type of God that emerges from [the] privileging of divine power and will above all else” in nominalism (17). Second, Brian engages Bruce McCormack's description of Barth as always utilizing dialectical theology. Third, Brian offers a close reading of Barth's writing and presents a case that it increasingly follows a paradoxical rather than dialectical logic. Finally, Brian suggests that future Barth studies should engage Roman Catholic theology because Barth himself focused on Catholicism and also because Brian sees Protestant theology moving away from Christology while “Roman Catholicism is returning to a position where Christology is seen as central” (189).

Brian states that Barth saw the effects of a world that Luther's theology helped create and ultimately “made an intentional decision to distance himself from the theology of Martin Luther” (2). Luther's primary way of understanding God through the *Deus absconditus* was the primary reason Barth needed to distance himself. Instead of emphasizing the hiddenness of God, Barth pointed to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Brian claims that the logic of dialectic led to the *Deus absconditus* becoming the dominant doctrine of God in theology. The key issue is whether

theology assumes categories or allows Christ to determine how these categories are understood—especially on this issue of the *Deus absconditus*, which Brian claims logically leads to nihilism. For those already convinced that modernity is plagued by nominalism and tends towards nihilism, Brian's argument will help explain the dangers of dialectical theology and his proposed theology of paradox will offer a fruitful way of describing what Barth is doing in his Christology and "method" (though Brian is both correct and quick to note that this is a description of what Barth is doing, not an intentional methodological approach taken by Barth). We should not expect a 200-page book to accomplish too much and this is one area in which Brian makes some leaps that likely require more explanation for those who doubt the powerful role of nominalism in modern theology (the other scope-driven weakness is not adequately treating the nuance of natural theology that Barth rejects). Because of this, Brian's book may not spend enough time to convince a skeptic of modernity's nominalism. Brian builds his case for modernity's nominalism and nihilism on the work of Michael Gillespie and Conor Cunningham, and their works are the crucial background for Brian's understanding of nominalism and modernity.

The second move in Brian's argument is both to affirm and debate the powerful description of Barth's theology that has been made by Bruce McCormack in his influential book, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909–1936* (Clarendon, 1995). Brian accepts McCormack's claim that "the two primary aspects of Karl Barth's theology are: (1) the distinction that God is God and the world is the world, and (2) the knowledge of God" (4-5). However, Brian disputes the assessment that Barth was and always remained a dialectical theologian by pointing out that McCormack follows Michael Beintker, who missed Henning Schröer's distinction between *Paradoxie* and *Dialektik*. Brian carefully but confidently argues that Barth's theology of paradox is different from dialectic (a disagreement with McCormack on this point).

In order to provide support for the case for paradox instead of dialectic, Brian examines eight of Barth's works where McCormack's two primary aspects of Barth's theology are treated and shows that paradox is a better explanation of his theology than dialectic. Part of this demonstration entails minor acceptance of a shift in Barth's approach away from dialectic (a shift that is rejected by McCormack but akin to periodization thesis arguments made by Balthasar and others, though Brian's argument is not dependent on them). Brian does see Barth's "mature" Christology as

holding fast to the paradox of the cross and an “and, yet” approach instead of one characterized by the agonism of “thesis, antithesis, synthesis.” What emerges in Brian’s examination is the powerfully foundational role of Jesus Christ’s birth, death, resurrection, and ascension for *all* knowledge, most importantly the knowledge of God. In the paradox of the cross, the paradox of Jesus, and the paradox within Scripture, humanity is given the impossible possibility to know God in Jesus such that Jesus Christ is the formed reference of knowledge of God rather than the hidden, wrathful *Deus absconditus*.

Beyond the fruitful emphasis on the paradox of Scripture and the “and, yet” nature of Barth’s theology, another interesting aspect of Brian’s book for Wesleyan theologians is his treatment of Barth’s ecclesiology and proposal that Barth studies should go forward in dialogue with Roman Catholic theology. Although Brian does not expressly invite Wesleyan theology to this proposal, he does mention that Barth is very similar to John Wesley on justification and sanctification (172). Something that I think Brian could have included (but likely did not because of the scope and context of a dissertation) is to point to the similarity between Barth’s biblical paradoxical logic and what I find to be good Wesleyan theology that follows the same path. If Wesleyan theology is part of a movement that seeks “scriptural holiness,” then Brian’s presentation of Barth as a theologian who allows the scriptural paradox of Christ to explain and interpret all knowledge means that there are ways that the Reformed Barth is also a fruitful Wesleyan theological interlocutor.

The most powerful aspect of this book is the explanation of paradox. So much of Christian theology entails making sense of seemingly contradictory statements—Jesus is fully human; Jesus is fully divine. The kingdom of God is both here and not yet here. *Covering Up Luther* is an important book for those who are interested in Barth’s theology and ethics as well as those who are curious about or convinced by arguments that nominalism and modernity lead to nihilism, secularism, and atheism. Brian’s book is a welcome contribution to the continuing evaluation of Barth’s theology and offers an interpretation of that theology that emphasizes the importance of Christology, especially by allowing Jesus to define and determine the way categories are understood instead of accepting the formative power of other methods and concepts to shape theology’s task of synthesizing “God’s foolishness [which] is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness [which] is stronger than human strength” (1 Cor. 1:25).

Lamp, Jeffrey S. *The Greening of Hebrews? Ecological Readings in the Letter to the Hebrews*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012. 134 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1610976558.

Reviewed by David A. Ackerman, Pastor, Church of the Nazarene, Buhl, Idaho, Adjunct Professor, Nazarene Theological Seminary (Kansas City, MO), Nazarene Bible College (Colorado Springs, CO), Northwest Nazarene University (Nampa, ID), and Indiana Wesleyan University (Marion, IN).

The church and its theologians have been slow to address the increasing environmental crises adversely affecting the health and welfare of humans and other-than-human creation. More serious study is being devoted to the intersection of the Bible, theology, and ecology. Jeffrey Lamp has approached this challenge with a creative reading of the Book of Hebrews. Lamp's basic thesis is that the voice of earth has been suppressed in Hebrews because of the Christological and anthropological bias of the author. Lamp builds his ecological hermeneutics in reflection of his dialogue with the Consultation on Ecological Hermeneutics of the Society of Biblical Literature.

Lamp's method is defined by three criteria. The criterion of suspicion attempts to hear the voice of earth behind the author's bias. Lamp's goal is for readers to become more sensitive to the prophet voice of creation. It is not so much what Hebrews says about creation but what it does not say. The criterion of identification builds on the author's emphasis on the superiority of the Son. The incarnation of the Son allows humans to identify with creation because the Son took upon himself the stuff of earth. Through the Son, humans and earth are brought together. The resurrection of the Son marked the final redemption of the physical. The ascension of the Son placed something of earth in heaven and anticipates heaven and earth joining as the dwelling place of God and humans. Finally, the criterion of retrieval examines earth as an object of divine care and concern in its own right. Earth is co-beneficiary with humans of God's redemptive work through the Son. Earth calls humans to actualize new creation in the present anticipation of eschatological fulfillment.

The anthropological bias of the author is apparent in the opening verses in 1:2-3a. Because humans are the pinnacle of God's creation, the voice of the rest of creation is suppressed and ignored. In chapter two, Lamp lays the groundwork for "creational Christology" that posits that the Son's incarnation bridges humans with earth, brings their experiences together, and shows the worth of both. The Son's suffering draws our

attention to the suffering of creation and that we share in its pain. The Son's redemptive work through death shows that the stuff from which humans are made is an object of redemption. The way to honor the Son is to care for all that is part of the Son's redemptive mission.

In chapter three, Lamp explores the struggle of animals behind the atonement language in 9:11-10:18. Animals served as the "fuel for the engine of the sacrificial cult" (24) in the human drama of sin and redemption because their sacrifice was not adequate for salvation. Animals participate in Christ's redemptive work because they no longer must lose their lives for human benefit. Because animals were created from the ground (Gen. 2:19), they share in the same corporeality as the incarnated Son. Both animals and humans share in the "breath of life" that makes them living beings (Gen. 2:7; 6:17; 7:15, 22).

Traditionally, the promise of rest (4:1-11) has been spiritualized or restricted to possession of the literal land, such as with dispensationalism, that the land serves only to produce the benefit rest for people. In chapter four, Lamp argues that the Sabbath provides the context for care for the land. The land belongs to God and was granted in trust to the Israelites to be cared for in Sabbath economy. The land was connected with its inhabitants (Exod. 23:10-12; Lev. 26:3-45). The cycle of rest for the people also brought rest for the land. Violating Sabbath led to the abuse of the land. If people rejected God and God's laws, the land would not produce and the people would lose the land. Thus, human sinfulness disrupts the well-being of the land. The only way for the land to be restored would be the expulsion (exile) of the perpetrators. In the bias of the author, the Sabbath rest of God is found in the Son, and this rest should also include the land.

In chapter five, Lamp builds on J. Moltmann's idea of "immanent transcendence," that God is distinct from creation but present within it through the Spirit. Hebrews contains few references to the Spirit (2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8; 10:15), and these largely support the development of Christology, what Moltmann calls the "Spirit of Christ." The Spirit calls for the community to enter into the Sabbath rest provided by the Son (4:1-11). Lamp argues that the reference to the "eternal spirit" (9:14) refers to the Holy Spirit in line with the author's bias to set off the temporalness of the old covenant with the eternality of the new covenant inaugurated by the Son. The Son offered himself as the perfect sacrifice through the eternal Spirit, thus connecting the Spirit with the materiality shared by humans and earth. Through the Spirit, God enters into the struggles, victories, and sufferings of creation and moves it towards new creation, which brings humans and creation together in the eschatological kingdom of God. The

Spirit empowers believers to participate now in the liberation of the earth from its corruption.

In chapter six, Lamp critiques reading 11:16 with an escapist eschatology of the removal of the faithful and the destruction of the present order. The author spiritualizes earthly realities into corresponding heavenly ones. This view could result in indifference in caring for creation and justification for its exploitation. Lamp builds on N. T. Wright's view that the resurrection of Jesus anticipates the final coming together of heaven and earth. The Son exercises sovereignty over creation now through the Spirit and the Eucharist. His resurrection connects the present order to its redemption and transformation in the future (12:25-29). Humans and creation are connected presently and are both destined for better things. The encroaching kingdom brings both together in the present. We can evidence this eschatology in the present by caring for creation.

Building on the work of Denis Edwards, Lamp argues in chapter seven that the Eucharist (implied in 13:10) and Melchizedek's offering of bread and wine (7:1-10) connect humans and creation. (1) Eucharist lifts up all creation to God and brings humans into relation with creation. (2) Eucharist is a living memory of creation and redemption. (3) It is the sacrament of the cosmic and risen Christ who is the beginning of transformation of the whole cosmos. (4) Eucharist is a participation with all of God's creatures in the communion of the Trinity. (5) The memory of the cross brings solidarity of victims, one of which includes nature.

Hebrews 2:1-4 contrasts the eternal Son with the transitory nature of angels and creation. Lamp argues in chapter eight that this subordination by the author has the unintended effect of making creation a casualty of an escapist eschatology. The Son as the superior wisdom and direct revelation from God was the agent of creation and continually sustains it. Through the Son, humans are enabled to identify with creation and to come to know more about God through the indirect revelation of the Son's wisdom. Psalm 104 expresses God's passion and joy for creation. Destroying natural habitats contributes to the diminishing of God's joy. Earth calls humans to be doxological intercessors on its behalf. The Son who brought the world into being and sustains it provides for its ultimate redemption.

Lamp has challenged a casual and traditional reading of Hebrews. The suppressed voice of creation is allowed to speak through the author's Christology and rhetoric. Those who want to better understand Hebrews and would like resources for the ecological dialogue would find this book a gold mine for exploration and an example of creative exegesis.

O'Malley, J. Steven, Editor. *Interpretive Trends in Christian Revitalization for the Early Twenty First Century*. Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2011. 298 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1-60947-018-0.

Reviewed by Joshua Toepper, Discipleship Pastor, Peachtree City United Methodist Church, Peachtree City, GA.

Call it revival, renewal, an outpouring, revitalization, or whatever, but the fact remains no one can deny the impact of spontaneous, indigenous movements on the growth and vitality of the global Christian church. Revitalization movements have defined a church that has a history of regression and progression the way partners dance: back and forth. According to contributor Beverly Johnson-Miller, "The presence and revitalizing work of God in the world resemble a dance, having movement, music, rhythm, harmony, and dissonance" (9). With facets and aspects as diverse as the types of dance, it is no small task to write about trends in revitalization movements. But that is exactly the task taken up by J. Steven O'Malley, a host of expert scholars, and the Center for the Study of World Christian Revitalization in the book *Interpretive Trends in Christian Revitalization for the Early Twenty First Century*. With essays on the nature of revitalization, the present realities, how the past shapes the present, and where these movements are headed, *Interpretive Trends* adds much to the conversation on what "old time religion" might call revival and what has formed much of the Wesleyan movement to date.

In the first section on the nature of revitalization, Johnson-Miller writes "the goal of a revitalized church . . . is to engage God's mission in the world, renewing culture and faith" (11). She continues that "the dance of revitalization consists of God's initiative and human response. Dance makes it possible for revitalization to be both fully God's action and fully human action" (14). This dance "is not limited to one form or style or step" (18) but extends to all humanity, which has been given the "opportunity to participate in God's redemptive work" (17).

Yet, revitalization is often stunted, and William Abraham offers a compelling reason why in his "A Barrier to Revitalization: Ecclesial Alienation." Abraham posits that, for revitalization to be more than a movement that disrupts patterns of church and societal life, the movement needs to connect the larger catholic church. Using the Methodist movement of the eighteenth century as an example, Abraham states "there is no way we can microwave what happened in the eighteenth century, but very few have caught a vision of the possible connection between robust

and lively Eucharistic practice and widespread spiritual awakening” (26). For revitalization to truly take effect, it must move past alienation and join the wider stream of the church catholic. If that does not take place, it will flounder into obscurity.

Moving past the nature of revitalization, Michael Rynkiewicz dives into present realities by showing that patterns of revitalization are always rooted in anthropology. To discover a model of revitalization, one must account for the milieu in which the movement is occurring; otherwise, neither the practitioner nor the social scientist will know what abundant life looks like for society. With this assumption, one can find the work of the Holy Spirit exploding in various ways across various cultures.

Thomas Kane takes special note of the way traditional dance and the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church have begun to intersect. He suggests that “inculturation is becoming a hallmark of the Vatican II Church and many Pacific Islands are beginning to develop a Pacific Theology by exploring the interaction between their island way of life and the age-old traditions of Christianity” (76).

Roberta King shows how music also plays a major role in revitalization movements that are firmly rooted in their social context. She suggests that the birthing of new songs in different cultural contexts, along with innovations in liturgy, are indicators of fresh engagements with God (88). Revitalization movements are present all over the world, and they are unique to the people and cultures in which they are happening.

Part three of *Interpretive Trends* seeks to show how the past shapes the present. J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu indicates that the deliberate work of the Edinburgh 1910 conference, which focused on indigenous leadership, helped establish the African independent church (AIC) movement, which had profound effect in the Christian mission in Africa (119). In Brazil, the Toca de Assis movement displays the outcomes of Vatican II and its dialogue with the Western world (144). Asamoah-Gyadu suggests, “All world contexts offer something to advance the innovation processes necessary for the adaptation and development of world Christianity” (144).

The final section discusses where the study of revitalization is heading and highlights several important areas that are gaining attention or need more focus, globally speaking. One area discussed is revitalization and ecology. Howard Snyder begins the discussion by raising the issue whether revitalization touches only humans or also includes their environment (185). He responds by offering what he describes as “a vision for renewing the church and restoring the land” that he contends is essential for revitalization in our day (195).



Revitalization movements have changed the landscape of Christianity and have dramatically impacted society at large. To ignore these movements—from a social, theological, or anthropological perspective—would be to the detriment of Christians everywhere. *Interpretive Trends in Christian Revitalization for the Early Twenty First Century* goes a long way in making sure that does not happen.

Knight, Henry H., III. *Is There a Future for God's Love? An Evangelical Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012. 200 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0687660339.

Reviewed by Stephen W. Rankin, Chaplain and Minister to the University, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX.

This book completes a project the author began with his work, *A Future for Truth: Evangelical Theology in a Postmodern World* (Abingdon, 1997). In that previous volume, Knight addressed challenges associated with theological epistemology. *Is There a Future for God's Love?* stems from Knight's concern to show that, in spite of the longstanding evangelical prejudice that Wesleyan theology does not pass the sound doctrine test, in fact Wesleyan theology is evangelical in the full sense of the word. Knight also seeks to explain and encourage the actual transformation of life envisaged in Wesleyan soteriology: "Christianity has insisted to varying degrees that we can . . . at least begin to manifest God's will in our lives . . . and that God's will can be done on earth as in heaven" (x). This book therefore illustrates the author's concern over the relative lack of fruit in so much Christian experience: "God promises us much more than marginal improvement in this life" (xi).

The book divides into four parts, each except the first comprising two chapters. Part I (chapter one) summarizes three major areas of focus characteristic of evangelicalism: (1) apologetics, (2) church renewal and (3) the church's larger mission. In good introductory fashion, this chapter sets the framework for the project.

Part II (chapters 2 and 3) makes use of sociological analysis on the specific issues of racism and consumerism to show that the church's problematic complicity with modernist individualism has serious practical consequences. In taking this tack, Knight intends to show in later chapters why a Wesleyan holiness soteriology actually can change the hearts and practices of Christians in ways precisely relevant to the cultural conditions the sociologists are critiquing. The quest for personal freedom predominates through both Rationalist and Romanticist strands of holdover Enlightenment assumptions. Whereas Postmodernity partially set aside Rationalism, Romanticism continues to exercise power, yet the promised freedom remains beyond reach and the church lives under the pall of a largely unnoticed authority inimical to its own stated beliefs.

With regard to racism, Knight deploys the work of Michael Emerson and Christian Smith (*Divided by Faith*, 2000) to conclude, "The problem for many is not racism in the heart. It is instead a culturally conditioned

freedom that, in its exercise, makes us complicit with racism in society" (49). With consumerism, it "makes self-centeredness normal and natural" (58). Our advertising culture creates a sense of deprivation and "makes it difficult to think in terms of community or of the common good" (60). The modern myth of individual autonomy "actually creates a vacuum for other, subtler authorities to limit reasoning and inculcate desire" (63).

The reader should take care not to let Knight's understated style blunt the sharpness of his analysis. He so succinctly pinpoints large forces and key factors that it would be easy to miss how devastating these movements have been to Christianity, especially in the West. Evangelicals' talk of grace, coupled with the Romantic individualism that Knight has pinpointed, results in a number of serious problems.

With Part III, Knight offers the corrective to such problems in the constructive work of a Wesleyan vision for transforming love. In chapter four ("The Particularity of the Presence of God"), he describes first how we can know God through God's incarnational and pentecostal action. Experiencing God evokes true understanding of God's trinitarian nature (87ff). Rather than starting with a classical theistic approach to being and attempting the chain of logic to God known in Christ, Knight follows a number of contemporary theologians (e.g., Barth, Gunton, Grenz) to argue that we start with the story of God in Christ made known to us through the work of the Spirit. Here we find evangelical theology in its fullness: In Christ, God is demonstrably present to humans in a revelatory and redemptive way, through Jesus' teachings and actions, and supremely in his death and resurrection. This action removes the penalty and power of sin and enables intimate relationship between God and humans (95-96). With regard to the aim of the book, Knight states that God's Spirit:

Enables everyone in all times and places to know and be transformed by this God. The focus of pentecostal presence, then, is the actual salvation of persons, understood both as justification and sanctification, as well as the empowerment of persons to enable their participation in the mission of God in the world. (100)

In this divine act, we find true freedom in a way not found through the promise of Romantic individualism. Here we see a classic Wesleyan concern that sound Christian doctrine always aims at transformation, not merely developing an accurate Christian worldview.

The foregoing theological summary shows why Knight calls his theology evangelical. In chapter five ("The Transformation of the Heart"), he

turns expressly to the Wesleyan experience of the promise of freedom found in the Gospel. Conversion (however experienced) is the necessary beginning of the transformation of heart that leads to holiness of life. Conversion begins the pneumatological transformation of the affections, with consequent practices. The author circles back to the earlier critique in Part II: "The culture of the market evokes and shapes very different affections from those of the gospel" (133). A relationship with God, analogous to a relationship with another human person, is "intrinsically transformative" (135) through the means of grace (works of piety) as understood in a Wesleyan framework. Here we find classic Wesleyan themes related to works of piety.

In the final chapter, Knight takes up the theme of grace-induced love for neighbor (works of mercy). He describes what we might ironically call a kind of "collective individualism" in which groups of like-minded Christians gather in self-reinforcing homogenous groups to the detriment of effective witness in serving neighbor. Quoting Putnam and Campbell's *American Grace* (Simon and Schuster, 2010), he pinpoints the tragic consequence: "Social interaction among likeminded co-religionists reinforces and even hardens one's beliefs, even if the process is subtle" (154). This problem is firmly rooted in the individualistic expressivism analyzed in chapters two and three.

Grace-formed affections, in contrast to culturally captive evangelical biases about grace, turn us outward toward the neighbor in love. By linking this Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification with intentional practices (e.g., conversation and undertaking common projects), Christians develop a certain kind of empathy, "a capacity to affectively share something of the situation or experience of another" (157). Empathy shaped by Wesleyan teaching becomes a source of compassion "for just *action* in the world" (157). The Wesleyan understanding of the transformation of affections under the Spirit's hand thus demonstrates that there *is* a future for God's love.

This book, spare in number of pages, addresses fundamentally important themes that draw on the author's long engagement with them. It stays true to theological reflection while making good use of sociological analysis. In other words, the social science remains in service to the theological project, yet helps to show how practical (in the best sense of that word) the doctrine of holiness of heart and life truly is. The book thus would work well in two types of classes often isolated from the other in the academy: (1) in courses dealing with the distinctive witness of the church in the world, and (2) in spiritual formation courses, especially those aimed at showing how life in Christ provokes and enables ministry in the world.

Kimbrough, S. T., Jr. *The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley: A Reader*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011. 360 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1606086537.

Reviewed by J. Gregory Crofford, Coordinator for Education and Clergy Development, Africa Region, Church of the Nazarene.

Charles Wesley has long been in the shadow of his older brother, John. This unfortunate state of affairs has been partly remedied in recent years by a renewed interest in the younger Wesley and what he contributed to Wesleyan theological discourse. S. T. Kimbrough, Jr.'s *The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley: A Reader* may be the most significant contribution to Charles Wesley studies since the Epworth Press publication of Kenneth Newport's and Ted Campbell's *Charles Wesley: Life, Literature, and Legacy* (2007).

Kimbrough's *Lyrical Theology* is thorough enough to treat the author's subject matter but still keep the reader's interest. Part one of the book raises interpretive issues that are prolegomena to any foray into Charles Wesley's literary output, mainly his nearly 9,000 hymns and sacred poems. The second (and larger) section of the volume provides a representative sample of his verse. Helpfully, Kimbrough structures his selections after the theological outline of *The United Methodist Hymnal* (1989), yet chooses many hymns not contained in that collection.

Chapter one defines "lyrical theology" as "theology couched in poetry, song, and liturgy, characterized by rhythm and expressive of emotion and sentiment" (3). For those used to doing theology as prose, such a clarification is necessary if the author is to gain a hearing from the reader. Kimbrough develops the meaning of lyrical theology by qualifying it in seven points: (1) "world-making," i.e. hopeful; (2) a "theology of sound"; (3) able to "appropriate itself to where we are"; (4) not "seeking to impart information" but expressing "the full spectrum of human emotion"; (5) emanating from "a life of prayer"; (6) "evoking a life of service"; and (7) "mandating proclamation," meaning participating in evangelism through doxology, the rendering of praise to God (see 13-22).

Chapter two includes the mention of three daily practices in the life of Charles Wesley. These were reading of Scripture, praying the Psalms, and—an eye-opener for the reader from a low-Church background—receiving the Eucharist. Less surprisingly, Kimbrough quotes hymns from Wesley related to his weekly practice of fasting and regular service to the poor.

In chapter three, Kimbrough paints the historical context, describing key events that brought forth the muse in the poet and theologian. These

included the March 8, 1750 earthquake in London (66) and the summer 1759 public frenzy over an expected invasion of England by France (69). The portrait that emerges of Charles Wesley is of a man with his finger on the public pulse and staunchly patriotic. Disappointingly, Kimbrough passes over the earthquake episode without theological critique. Readers will question Wesley's belief that earthquakes are the sign of an indignant God, a contention that by today's standards seems pre-scientific.

Chapters four and five are the most pedantic of the volume, tracing the literary, ecclesial, and poetical sources that Charles Wesley appropriated. Nonetheless, they provide for the researcher excellent background on the various hymn collections, whether those edited early on by John Wesley or the later hymnals produced by Charles alone.

While the opening section of Kimbrough's book is valuable, the later portion of *Lyrical Theology* is itself worth the price of the volume. In it, the author mines gems on multiple topics from the Charles Wesley corpus of hymns and sacred poems. Of interest to those who engage the debate of whether John Wesley viewed God's nature as essentially love or holy love is the first half of verse one of Charles' 1742 hymn, "Praise the Lord Who Reigns Above" (117):

Praise the Lord who reigns above  
And keeps his court below;  
Praise the holy God of love  
And all his greatness show.

Besides addressing the doctrine of God, the Charles Wesley hymns included in *Lyrical Theology* also touch upon the perceived spiritual status of many of his day. In the 1762 hymn, "Who Are Not Born Again," he speaks of the "baptized or unbaptized" who have not received the "Spirit" as being "heathens still in heart" (180). One can imagine how this evangelical emphasis would have done little to ingratiate Wesley to those who did not share his view.

A third topic of interest that emerges from Kimbrough's selection of Charles Wesley's verse (230) is the relationship between Scripture and experience. In the 1762 "The Sacred Standard," Wesley wrote:

Doctrines, experiences to try,  
We to the sacred standard fly,  
Assur'd the Spirit of our Lord  
Can never contradict his word:  
Whatever his Spirit speaks in me,  
Must with the written word agree;

If not: I cast it all aside,  
As Satan's voice, or nature's pride.

The supremacy of Scripture for Wesley is clear, and must be taken into account in any reckoning of the relationship between divine revelation and the empiricism of human experience.

While Kimbrough's *Lyrical Theology* has many strengths, a revised edition would do well to correct a few flaws. Endorsements for the book at the front of the volume include an erroneous claim by Young-Ho Chun that "after 500 years" it is time to re-consider the significance of Charles Wesley. Since Wesley was only born in 1707, Chun's calculation is off by two hundred years. Another curiosity of the book is the differing indentation of Wesley's verse, some poems including left-margin justification, others indenting alternating lines. The reader is left wondering if this was a decision of the publishing editors or whether Kimbrough is simply respecting how it appeared in the original sources. Some explanation from the author would have been appropriate.

Despite these minor weaknesses, *The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley: A Reader* is an excellent addition to the growing literature on the life and work of the younger Wesley. Attractively bound and well edited on the whole, it will be used for years to come as a useful introduction to the man and his thought.

Pritchard, John. *Methodists and their Missionary Societies, 1760-1900*. Ashgate Methodist Studies. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013. Xxiii + 293 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1409470496.

Reviewed by David Bundy, Research Professor of World Christian Studies, New York Theological Seminary.

An important book has been added to the slowly growing corpus of research on Methodist contributions to the development of World Christianity. This volume is not a history in the traditional sense of mission histories that move relentlessly through the decades, chronicling the evolution of institutional structures. Instead, it is a series of learned essays that engage aspects of the story of British and Irish Methodist missionary movement. In this first of two volumes, the author focuses on the first 140 years of British and Irish Methodist mission.

It is written by John Pritchard, who was General Secretary of the Methodist Mission Society from 1991 to 1996. He worked as a missionary in Cote d'Ivoire (1966-1975), edited *Urban Africa*, a periodical published by the All Africa Council of Churches, and has worked with the ecumenical Friends of the Church in China. He has served, with Andrew Walls, as the leader of the Methodist Mission History Project (1994-2013), a project that produced significant research on British and Irish Methodist mission history and that served as a context for the discussion of issues related to this book. His diverse publications have established Pritchard as a historian of Wesleyan Methodism.

The narrative of British and Methodist mission history developed by Pritchard is inclusive and global. It begins with a careful critical analysis of earlier efforts to write histories of Methodist mission, giving attention to most of the older branches of the tradition. He continues to an essay on the Wesley brother's mission to Georgia and the developments in Antigua and in the American colonies. A chapter (11-21) is devoted to the contributions of Thomas Coke. He insists that Wesley and Coke made the entire Methodist Connexion a mission organization.

The volume makes numerous contributions. First, it insists on the importance of the Pietist missions for development of the Protestant mission enterprise, but especially that of the Methodists. Second, the work of Pritchard moves toward a rehabilitation of Jabez Bunting, a missionary candidate rejected by Thomas Coke, an organizer of the 1823 mission conference, and the dictatorial driven manager of Wesleyan Methodism and Wesleyan Mission, who has often been seen as an important cause of the gentrification of Methodism in Britain and a key figure in Methodism's growing unconcern with the poor.



Third, Pritchard calls attention to the political and cultural struggles within Methodism for which missions and the structures required for supporting the enterprise became flashpoints of conflict. Fourth, the book emphasizes the contributions of people other than appointed missionaries who were the first and/or most important Wesleyans present in various contexts. This is extremely important. The roles of non-European preachers, teachers, missionaries, Bible women, and a host of their supporters are often overlooked. Pritchard works to identify such persons and puts them on “center stage” in the expansion of Methodism in the nineteenth century.

Fifth, the volume adds reality to the discussion of the impact of Methodist mission on the development of World Christianity. The number of British and Irish missionaries was always quite small. The missionary enterprise is often told as a “glorious conquest.” The Methodist penchant for keeping detailed records provided accurate data, which even when included in earlier histories was generally not well used by the earlier generations of writers to temper the narratives. Pritchard has taken the data seriously and analyzed it carefully.

Sixth, many readers will be surprised and gratified to see the ways in which missionaries and their organizations struggled to seeking justice for the downtrodden and gave their lives in ministry to the poor. This was, insists Pritchard, central to Methodist mission. The issues were not always framed culturally sensitive ways, but the organization worked to avoid of exploitation or denigration of peoples and forced the resignation of egregious offenders among the missionaries.

Seventh, the author demonstrates the importance of educational structures designed to support an educated ministry. It is unclear how this educational effort was viewed and used by the colonial structures searching to develop an educated elite in order to support the colonial apparatus.

The resultant tome is readable, well documented, and provided with a detailed index and bibliography. Through these tools, persons around the world descended from those early global Methodists will find aspects of their personal, ecclesiastical, and national histories in the pages of this book. Hopefully, this will result in increased research and publication on the global dimensions of the Methodist heritages.

A good book will immediately raise desiderata for further research, which must of course be tempered by the anticipated second volume that will focus on the twentieth century. To suggest there are desiderata for research is the gift of a book that is opening up a field of research. First,

more study of the connection/disconnection between Methodist mission and colonialism is needed. An examination is also needed of the roles of Methodists (positive and negative) in the development of post-colonial and neo-colonial experiences developments. Second, there are issues of power that deserve research and reflection. These include the power of the missionaries in their mission contexts and the quests for power within the Methodist churches. Third, competition between the three Methodist bodies requires more analysis. The fact that there were overlapping mission fields with few missionaries and small fields suggests that competition between the groups may have been a key factor for mission location and development. Fourth, Pritchard devotes significant attention to the issues of gender within the missionary program. This question needs to be expanded to include the roles of women, and their power, as members of the missionary “family” and the changes in family structures in the context of mission for the new women converts as well as among women in Britain and Ireland who read the published narratives and heard the stories of their ministering sisters. Fifth, there are a significant number of key figures who deserve fulsome attention. These include the mission “General Secretaries,” especially Jabez Bunting, Elijah Hoole, William Arthur, and Marshall Hartley. Sixth, the intersection of theological perspectives and administration is worthy of reflection. Seventh, it is hoped that there would be comparative studies of the mission of the Methodists and the Anglicans, Baptists, and American Methodists. How were they similar and different? The organizational structure and relationship to the denominations were different in each case. What do these tell one about the nature of mission growing out of the Evangelical revival of the eighteenth century?

Finally, it is also important to develop further the relations between the Methodists and Methodist mission and that undertaken by the daughters of Methodism, especially in the nineteenth century, the Salvation Army, and the China Inland Mission. These were competitors for money, personnel, and generally supported versions of “Methodist” theology. In the twentieth century, there were the Pentecostal churches and the radical Holiness traditions.

The author and publisher are to be congratulated on the publication of an excellent and thought provoking book.

Jones, Beth Felker. *Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Thinking and Living Theologically*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014. 256 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0801049330.

Reviewed by E. Jerome Van Kuiken, Assistant Professor of Religion and Philosophy, Oklahoma Wesleyan University, Bartlesville, OK.

Beth Felker Jones is a member of the Wesleyan Theological Society, United Methodist pastoral spouse, and Wheaton College theology professor. Having authored studies of theological anthropology (*The Marks of His Wounds: Resurrection Doctrine and Gender Politics*; Oxford UP, 2007), pneumatology (*God the Spirit: Introducing Pneumatology in Wesleyan and Ecumenical Perspective*; Cascade, 2014), and Stephenie Meyer's fantasy bestsellers (*Touched by a Vampire: Discovering the Hidden Messages in the Twilight Saga*; Multnomah, 2009), Jones has now released an introductory systematic theology textbook aimed at undergraduate students. As the title suggests, she intends to inculcate that doctrine is meant to be lived out, not just thought about. The book's introduction and concluding benediction, as well as each chapter's final section, emphasize this intent.

The introduction also identifies Jones' theological perspective as *evangelical* and *ecumenical*. Regarding the former, she situates herself within the matrix of multiple scholars' definitions of evangelicalism. Regarding the latter, she emphasizes both the unity of consensually-held theology and the diversity of theologians. Consequently, the following chapters unfold a traditional Protestant ordering of doctrines—revelation and Scripture, Trinity, creation and providence, theological anthropology, Christology, soteriology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, eschatology—liberally sprinkled with quotes from patristic and feminist thinkers, Thomas Aquinas and Julian of Norwich, Calvin and Wesley, Pope (emeritus) Benedict XVI and non-Western theologians. Doctrinal content befits a theologian teaching at Wheaton: discreet defenses of classical theism and masculine God-talk; confession of *creatio ex nihilo* coupled with ease about contemporary scientific models of the “how” of creation; commitment to Scripture's verbal, plenary inspiration, Chalcedon's Christology, and the Reformation's *solus*; and concern for sociopolitical and ecological exploitation worldwide. Jones tips her Methodist hand in Chapter One by introducing the Wesleyan Quadrilateral but is even-handed in her coverage of Arminianism versus Calvinism. While not minimizing the two systems' significant disagreements, she stresses that both of them are fundamentally grace-based as opposed to Pelagius' and Charles Finney's overconfidence in human free will.

Jones is also gracious in her handling of other points of theological divergence. As with the Arminian-Calvinist divide, at some points she simply sketches the rival views and affirms their common denominator. She takes this approach, for instance, in debates over biblical inerrancy versus infallibility, holistic dualism versus nonreductive physicalism, and the assorted millennialisms. Elsewhere, such as with cessationism, she appreciates the element of truth in it before rejecting it. On other occasions, she integrates multiple perspectives, as with views of the *imago Dei* and models of atonement. Her recurrent nemeses are idolatry, which she sees several heresies as entailing, and Gnosticism.

A brief textbook like *Practicing Christian Doctrine* cannot cover everything. Jones assumes that her readers are already acquainted with Scripture's overarching story and its details. She elects to discuss in some depth the divine attributes of immutability and impassibility but simply to affirm the "omni" attributes. Likewise, she surveys various Protestant positions on the Eucharist but not on baptism. Such selectivity gives a somewhat uneven feel to her coverage, but this is easily countered in an introductory theology course by class lectures or use of a supplemental textbook like Greg Boyd and Paul Eddy's *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology* (2nd ed.; Baker Academic, 2009). Jones' frequent citation of historic Christian thinkers without introductions may strike uninitiated students as irrelevant name-dropping. Again, a supplemental survey of Christian intellectual history could prove valuable.

Other instances of unevenness or omissions involve terminology. One example distills the issue. Chapter Two opens with the line, "The big reveal is a familiar trope in 'reality' television," then notes how superficial media "revelations" contrast with transformative divine revelation, of which one "locus" is Scripture (31). Here Jones' popular-culture reference establishes rapport with readers and demonstrates insightful application of doctrine to practice; these positive points, though, are blunted by jargon like "trope" and "locus," with which many undergraduates are unfamiliar. Similar instances arise across the book. Jones' many insightful remarks and occasional references to current culture (e.g., Harry Potter) make the text well worth reading. Here and there, however, she falls into comments that assume advanced terminological knowledge, including etymological knowledge. Aggravating the text's terminological trouble is that key terms are in bold print, but without any corresponding glossary. I hope a second edition will include a glossary, as well as specific study questions at every chapter's ending rather than the single set of general questions, apparently meant to cover the entire book, in Chapter One. On

the positive side, the occasional diagrams and the many sidebars with descriptions of concepts and with quotes from Scripture, creeds, theologians, and poets add variety and value to the text and should be retained.

I hope for a second edition because I do not consider the book's unevenness a fatal flaw. *Practicing Christian Doctrine* insightfully and informatively introduces the practice of theology. It fills a niche for the educator who wants a beginning theology textbook from a broadly orthodox, evangelical perspective more distinctively Wesleyan than Stanley Grenz's *Created for Community* (Baker Academic, 1998) or Alister McGrath's *Theology: The Basics* (3rd ed.; Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) but less so than Sam Powell's *Discovering Our Christian Faith* (Beacon Hill, 2008). The availability of *Practicing Christian Doctrine* as an ebook, including hyperlinked endnotes, enhances its attractiveness for classroom use.

Callen, Barry L. *The Prayer of Holiness-Hungry People: A Disciple's Guide to the Lord's Prayer*. Anderson, IN: Francis Asbury Press, 2011. 138 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1-59317-552-8.

Reviewed by B. Craig Drurey, D.Min. student, Ashland Theological Seminary, Ashland, OH.

John Wesley believed that scriptural holiness should be “spread across the land.” Today’s Wesleyan tradition could be accused of losing its focus on scriptural holiness. Barry L. Callen addresses the need for the holiness message to be reclaimed in his book, *The Prayer of Holiness-Hungry People: A Disciple's Guide to the Lord's Prayer*. Callen believes strongly in the holiness message of the Wesleyan tradition. He goes as far as to say that holiness is important to all Christians, in all times, and in all circumstances. Callen parses the Lord’s Prayer in such a way as to reveal the holiness message embedded in each phrase the Lord taught his disciples to pray.

One of the first issues Callen addresses is the preponderance of prayerlessness in the church. Callen suggests several reasons for prayerlessness. What Callen enumerates as reasons for prayerlessness corresponds directly to scriptural holiness as outlined by Wesley. Callen states that people lack a way of living prayerfully because they fail to recognize the reality of God’s presence and accessibility. Scriptural holiness emphasizes the relationship aspect between God and people. The greater the growth in holiness, the greater one will recognize the presence and accessibility of God. Another suggestion Callen offers for prayerlessness originates with the Christian’s inclinations or desires. Callen suggests that many Christians fail “to lay hold of the love of God because there is no sense that it has already laid hold of us” (2). This concept is firmly rooted in the holiness message of Wesley. Wesley’s view on assurance and the witness of the Spirit focused on the reality of the individual experiencing and being aware of God’s love personally. This inner assurance enables the Christian to love rightly in return. Only when one experiences this quality of love can one love God and others rightly. In order for people to overcome this sense of prayerlessness, they need to embrace the reality that God calls, invites, listens, and speaks. This truth is warmly situated in relational thinking embedded in Wesleyan theology.

Callen addresses the issue of divine sovereignty as it relates to prayer. He suggests that typical Calvinistic explanations interfere with who God is and how God works in the world. According to Callen, God does not control all advance outcomes meticulously. By this, Callen means that

God desires to hear, respond, and work cooperatively with the prayers of God's people. This particular view of prayer places a greater meaning to the prayers the Christian prays. If decisions are still open in the future, then God is willing and ready to listen to the Christ-follower's prayers.

In chapter two, Callen outlines various ways of looking at the Lord's Prayer. One way looks at this prayer as a conversation between God and the disciple. For instance, the first question God poses is this: "Who do you believe that I am?" The response offered in the Lord's Prayer is, "Our Father in heaven." Each line of the prayer is a response to a divine question. Often, one approaches conversation with God from a simple human understanding. Actual conversation with God most often does not match one's limited understanding of interpersonal conversation. In conversation with God, the Christian can sense the Holy Spirit inspiring a response that finally wells up an exclamation deep within the person stating that the Lord is God. This relationship is the beginning of holiness of heart: right relationship with God. From this approach to the Lord's Prayer, one could relate the notion of the Holy Spirit groaning within the heart in order to help one pray. The Christian's prayer, when guided by the Holy Spirit, becomes a natural response to God's call and conversation with the individual.

Over the course of the next several chapters, Callen breaks down and examines the different segments of the Lord's Prayer. Each segment has a valuable contribution to the disciple's quest for holiness. The very first segment addresses "Our Father in heaven." Callen explores the wealth of theology in this simple statement. In this statement, one hears that God is both transcendent and immanent. God is in heaven, yet God is our Father. When one considers God being distant, one often considers the distance from a human, spatial perspective. God's distance has more to do with God's way of being than it does God being far from a person spatially. How can an omnipresent God ever be far from a person spatially? God's holiness is what creates distance. God's way of being is so totally different from people's way of being. God is love. People are often unloving and unlovable. The Christian has hope she can be like this different God because God relates to her as a close Father wanting the best for God's children.

Another aspect of holiness that Callen raises is found in the personal pronouns of the Lord's Prayer. It is interesting that first person singular pronouns are never found in the Lord's Prayer. The prayer does contain the pronouns "our," "us," and "your." The use of pronouns speaks significantly of holiness of heart and life. Again, holiness is all about right rela-

tionships: loving God and others rightly. People can learn a lot about their current prayer life when they measure it against the Lord's Prayer. Praying should take into consideration the community. Additionally, when Jesus taught this prayer, he was saying "our" with his disciples. So, not only are those who are praying urged to pray as a community, but they are to consider how the church is praying with Christ.

Callen indicates that prayer is less about telling God what is wanted and more about hearing from God what those who are praying really need to hear (69). In his study of the Lord's Prayer, Callen demonstrates that the need is present bread, forgiveness, and deliverance. It should cause a Wesleyan Christian to consider if one's prayer life matches up with these needs versus the actual wish list. Connected to these needs is a clear connection to others. The pronouns again reveal that the prayer is offered as a community, not as individuals. Christians are seeking God's supply for "our daily bread." Callen cautions people that if they pray this prayer regularly while recognizing people in need of daily bread without taking action they are mocking this prayer.

The same can be said about forgiveness. This prayer is really about being in proper relation with God and others. Christians are asking God to forgive them while they seek to forgive people around them. Again, the same can be said about deliverance. How can Christians think only of their own individual deliverance without seeking the same for others? The Lord's Prayer is begging God for intervention as a community while at the same time asking God to open all eyes to how the community can be the answer of prayer for others. This action is scriptural holiness alive and being spread across the land.

Callen describes correct praying as beginning and ending with holiness. This book asks Christians to consider what too many believers have repeated verbatim without giving real thought to what this prayer is really seeking and asking. Callen's description of holiness is helpful. This book is a helpful read because it suggests that holiness is not about "fixing all that is wrong with us" (115). Holiness is not all about the person. Rather, Callen describes holiness as "truly belonging to Jesus Christ" (115). This book is also an important read because it will help holiness-hungry people properly place their hope in God. This hope is in God not because of what God can do for the Christian but because the Christian loves God. Then, a holiness-hungry person can say the Lord's Prayer with her whole heart and being. This person can model this prayer in the rest of one's prayer life. Then, one can say that one believes and lives scriptural holiness.



Kimbrough, S. T., Jr. *Radical Grace: Justice for the Poor and Marginalized—Charles Wesley's Views for the Twenty-First Century*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013. 154 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1-62032-143-0.

Reviewed by Robert Webster, Senior Minister, Ashland City United Methodist Church, Ashland City, TN.

S. T. Kimbrough, Jr., once again has turned his thoughts to Charles Wesley with acumen and insight. Having written and edited several books and articles on the life of Wesley, he is equipped to interpret the significance of the most prolific poet in English history. In this particular volume, he tackles an extremely important subject: the poor. However, readers should not be fooled by the volume's brevity. Its five short chapters, along with introductory comments and appendix, include significant primary materials quoted and reflections on their context, meaning, and relevance.

One of Kimbrough's abiding strengths has always been an ability to posit Charles Wesley against the background of eighteenth-century history and religious practices. In the introduction to this volume, he situates the social condition of people living in England during the Enlightenment. His opening paragraph locates the dire environment individuals faced during the period: "It is estimated that roughly half of the population were considered poor when measured by the government standards of the time. Poverty was rampant" (1). It is further indicated that not only were the poor ostracized but were sometimes selectively targeted for punishment and execution. With a succinct treatment of the Poor Relief Act (1601) and the Workhouse Act (1723), Kimbrough sets the scene for readers to better understand Charles Wesley and his passion for the poor.

In the first chapter, Charles Wesley's sermons are examined. The sermon corpus of Charles as compared with his brother John is much smaller, but classic Wesleyan themes such as an Arminian understanding of grace and the relationship of faith and works are readily apparent. Specifically important to the Wesleys was the concept of *diakonia* and its scope in the understanding of Christian mission. In Charles' sermons, as in his poetry, there is an unabashed connection between acts done for the poor and those done for Christ. In his sermon on Titus 3:8, for instance, Charles declares: "Indeed whenever you do an alms, you should do it unto the Lord and not unto man. You should see and revere your Saviour in every poor man you ease, and be as ready to relieve him as you would to relieve Christ himself" (9). This basic commentary on acts of generosity is a part of the Wesleyan anthropology and must be continually reiterated.

In chapter two, Kimbrough turns his attention to Charles Wesley's intimate ponderings about the poor and what gave him reason to talk about them in relationship to his understanding of radical grace. Kimbrough offers several lengthy passages from Charles' writings. What is interesting, especially in comparison to many contemporary practices in the church, is the diversity of approaches Wesley had with the poor: conversation, worship, prayer, preaching, invitation, and holy communion. Wesley perceived all these as creatively speaking to the importance of the poor.

As might be expected, Kimbrough's fullest treatment of Charles Wesley comes with the consideration of his poetry (chapter three). As was the case with his older brother John, Charles's utmost concern was in the practical dimension of the Methodists and the living out of the Christian faith. This was especially the case when it came to considering the poor. For Charles, Kimbrough maintains that "the poor are God's chosen people" (31). Yet many in Wesley's day, as our own, shunned the poor and therefore Christ himself. For Charles, the reception or rejection of the marginalized was the measurement of whether one truly believes in universal grace—the teaching that God's empowerment is meant for everyone. "One does not simply hear the cry—one listens to it" (41). Part of the responsibility of the clergy is to teach, both by word and example, the power of "gospel poverty," an expression Wesley used to denote becoming poor for the sake of others. Note one of Charles Wesley's most damning hymns on the subject:

Ambitious, covetous, and vain,  
 Priests who in ease and pleasure live,  
 They persecute their Lord again,  
 His members vex, his Spirit grieve;  
 Souls by their negligence they kill,  
 Jesus afresh they crucify,  
 And eat, and drink, and sport their fill,  
 And let the poor thro' hunger die. (54)

This is perhaps among the more radical understanding of grace in the annals of ecclesiastical history. It is not sufficient merely to give the poor a minor part of one's income (although Wesley thought that putting aside one's income for the poor every month is a good place to start), but one must make a place for the poor in the daily fabric of one's existence. For both Charles and John, the poor carry with them an integral part of Eucharistic existence. Charles believed that total and complete sacrifice is

the norm of the Christian ethic. The fact that this is not the case is evidence that most contemporary evangelicals have misplaced the true nature of Christianity. Charles again declares in poignant fashion:

Which of the Christians now  
 Would their possessions sell?  
 The fact you scarce allow,  
 The truth incredible:  
 That saints of old so weak should prove  
 And as themselves their neighbor love.  
  
 Of your abundant store  
 You may a few relieve,  
 But all to feed the poor  
 You cannot, cannot give,  
 Houses and lands for Christ forego,  
 Or live as Jesus lived below. (63)

It is only as this transpires in the believer's life that he or she can become "bosom-friends" with Jesus as the poor are.

A creative but disturbing part of Kimbrough's analysis comes in chapter four, as he constructs a "theology of radical grace." It is fine to read these texts on a historical or theoretical level, but what does it mean to apply the theological truths of this masterful poet of the church? For Kimbrough, the underlying emphasis starts with the interrelated nature of humanity. To divide one from another, as often is done politically, economically, and theologically, is to miss the import of the gospel and the meaning of Charles Wesley's thought. Kimbrough asserts, "Charles lived by the reality that there is no privileged class in God's realm" (81). At another level, because human and corporate oppression is so variegated, those who practice gospel poverty must continually be about the business of addressing the inequalities in society that have caused poverty in the first place. The Wesleys not only used their publications to address illnesses caused by poverty, but they set up lending programs and a host of other ministries that flowed out of their compassion for the poor. This overt concern for the disenfranchised highlights the theological importance of stewardship for the Methodists. As others have maintained, stewardship for the Methodists was driven for the poor, not for self-preservation. Kimbrough concludes, "Radical grace mandates radical stewardship" (84). To accomplish this difficult task, the church must live sacrificially for the poor. True to the Wesleyan spirit, readers are admonished that "living well" pillages the poor. Part of the continual irritating aspect of

this book is that, much like Wesley's hymns, the church is confronted with its lack of respect for the poor and its underlying intention to jettison the poor into a status of marginalization. What is needed is a radical transformation of wealth for the sake of the poor because Christ inhabits the poor. Kimbrough maintains the poor are a necessary aspect of God's plan of sanctification: "We cannot go on to perfection if we are not willing to be poor" (97).

Chapters five and six offer a sampling of worship resources to be included as liturgical instructions for the church. They are few but inspiring and instructive. Also included is an appendix with an assortment of musical settings to go along with these liturgies.

Having served in the local church and in academic institutions teaching Methodist history, doctrine, and polity, it has been my experience that both academic and ecclesiastic communities have often neglected issues surrounding the poor. In those times that it has been approached, it is frequently sidelined for more "respectable" theological categories or considered only in an attempt to rush on to more status quo activities. Kimbrough's treatment of Charles Wesley's focus on the poor should be read, digested, and applied to various situations.

O'Donovan, Oliver. *Self, World, and Time: Ethics as Theology, Volume 1*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013. Xiii + 133 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0-8028-6921-0.

Reviewed by Aaron Perry, Associate Pastor, Centennial Road Church, Brockville, ON; Ph.D. student in Organizational Leadership, Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA.

Oliver O'Donovan, fresh off a career of teaching Christian Ethics at, among other places, New College, Edinburgh, and the University of Oxford, has released the first of an expected trilogy exploring ethics as theology. The first contribution, *Self, World, and Time*, is a dense, concise, and creative *induction*.

Indeed, an "induction." *Self, World, and Time*, so subtitled just inside the cover, is described appropriately. *Self, World, and Time* is both something produced and persuasive. Even when readers are not quite sure what they have just read, they find themselves nodding in agreement. Being an induction is key for O'Donovan's project, as its consideration—ethics as theology—seeks a fresh route for ethics in recent scholarship. O'Donovan limits ethics neither to social sciences nor to dogmatic theology. As such, O'Donovan admits that ethics may be considered as at a point without dimensions (vii). But O'Donovan does not argue for a starting point. Instead, O'Donovan points out that there is a Christian ethics simply because people are religious beings and have asked and will continue to ask questions like "what they are to do, how they are to live their lives, and how their doing and their living may bring them closer to God or put them further from him" (ix). There is not a question of whether there is a discipline of Christian ethics, but only whether there will be a reflective community present to help these questioners in their efforts. This does not divorce ethics from theology, however. While O'Donovan's initial contribution to ethics, *Resurrection and Moral Order* (Eerdmans, 1986) was, at times, critiqued for being too beholden to a moral order and not enough to resurrection (94), O'Donovan admits that ethics must be accountable to theology (ix-x). Here the series title and the book's subtitle come into play. O'Donovan's contribution does not establish the space it occupies. Like a baby induced, the work pokes the reader's head into a new world, ethically considered, and helps the reader draw their first breaths and take their first sights of the world. These new breaths and sights contain theological promptings and questions. "Ethics opens up towards theology" (19).

But O'Donovan realizes he is not starting from scratch. To begin to describe the ethical experience, O'Donovan turns to St. Paul: the ethical endeavor, finding out what is to be done and how one is to live, is already one of *indebtedness* (Rom. 8:12). Shortly thereafter, O'Donovan expands his metaphor of moral awareness. Interestingly, he does not use the metaphor of birth, but of *waking*—another scriptural metaphor. While in the Old Testament, God is called upon to awaken, to rouse to action; the New Testament never has such a word. Instead, the call to wake up is to *people*. The activity that must follow one's wakefulness shows that the actor is already beholden to activity. As a call to wake up, ethics is a theological consideration, looking for an authoritative, insightful word about our experience (11). That is, not only does it assume something theological, but also inspires theological questions. Some readers, no doubt, will not share O'Donovan's view of the world. This just is the condition of an age in the "age of Ethics" (30).

Focusing on the nature, as opposed to the content, of *Self, World, and Time* is crucial because it is a different *kind* of work. It does not interact heavily with other books. It is not a book about the study of ethics. It is a book about *ethics*—about *moral reality*. It is aptly described as a kind of phenomenological exploration of moral experience.<sup>1</sup>

Yet a few of O'Donovan's topics are important to include here. O'Donovan has significant critique of the category of narrative in ethics. This is not to deny the situatedness of agents, but that any narrative situatedness must not denigrate responsibility. "Narrativism has not been sufficiently on guard against . . . the temptation to despair of responsibility, to wear one's story as it were a mourning garment for one's life, as a way of avoiding living" (37). O'Donovan's critique is important because he places so much emphasis on responsibility of the agent. For Wesleyans, O'Donovan drops an interesting note about freedom in this critique of narrativism: "Action asserts freedom against sheer facticity—here, at least, the Arminians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries understood rightly. That we should be more than creatures of our past, more than mere continuers of it, that is the gift presupposed in our creation; it is the power which nature's creator bestowed on creation's lord" (42).

O'Donovan also has strong emphasis on the relation of ethics and community. Identity is secure when it goes beyond isolation to a sense of connectedness (43). Ethics is further connected with community because

---

<sup>1</sup>James K. A. Smith, "Whither Oliver O'Donovan," <http://forsclavigera.blogspot.ca/2013/11/whither-oliver-odonovan.html>. Accessed January 2, 2014.

it is deeply connected with communication. Moral understanding is not meant to remain with the individual, but shared with the community. Readers familiar with O'Donovan will here come across an extension of his thought in authority. Authority is an event of this social communication for practical reason. O'Donovan's categories of authority here provide complement, rather than rival, to relationships.

Finally, O'Donovan completes *Self, World, and Time* with a section on faith, hope, and love, which motions to the remainder of the series. O'Donovan critiques any sentimental ethic of love with the fuller triad. Faith is the connection of love with the objective universe of God. As such, *faith* is the root of morality. Love, if it is truly ethical, acts in accordance with faith (115). Hope, in its own right, orients the agent toward the future, attending to the future based on the promise of God (121). The act of love is grounded in reality through faith and oriented to eternity in hope (125).

Readers of O'Donovan will not be surprised that *Self, World, and Time* is often difficult and opaque. Yet, as noted above, it is compelling and illuminating. Its opacity is perhaps connected with its illumination: ethics is a necessary discipline because the world is not always clear. Because *Self, World, and Time* is a kind of description of a muddled world, it will, by necessity, be both opaque and illuminating. In this description, many evangelical readers will find O'Donovan's fresh approach helpful in dealing with contemporary ethical issues, such as sexuality, poverty, and power. Even more interesting, Wesleyans will find a kindred spirit in aspects of the work, though O'Donovan is clearly grounded in the Reformed, specifically Anglican, tradition. O'Donovan's emphasis on agency and authority grounded in love and the Spirit will be especially meaningful to Wesleyans.

Guarino, Thomas G. *Vincent of Lérins and the Development of Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013. 161 pages. ISBN-13: 9780801049095.

Reviewed by Jonathan S. Morgan, Assistant Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology, Toccoa Falls College, Toccoa Falls, GA.

In the West, the Church continues to discover herself in an increasingly uncomfortable landscape dominated by moral relativism, cultural disestablishmentarianism, and theological ambiguity. Among the multiple challenges such a landscape presents is the dynamics of continuity and change: how can the church speak meaningfully in the modern era (in light of new discoveries, technologies, and social norms which lead to ever-evolving plausibility structures) without separating itself from its biblical, historic roots and compromising its identity? Put another way, how does the Church continue to give fresh expression to the faith once deposited without undermining itself through theological innovation? The solution, in part, lies in understanding the proper role of development in relation to the preservation of Christian truth. In his timely study, *Vincent of Lérins and the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Thomas Guarino considers this conundrum by (re)introducing the work of Vincent of Lérins, a fifth-century monk and theologian who explored the “settled-yet-developing” nature of Christian doctrine in an age not altogether unlike our own.

This volume is part of a new series called “Foundations of Theological Exegesis and Christian Spirituality,” an initiative with the goal of perpetuating the *ressourcement* of the common Nicene heritage that Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christians share. Thus, part of Guarino’s aim is to show the relevance of Vincent’s insights for current ecumenical discussions. Vincent is best known for his *Commonitory* (or, “Remembrance”), written shortly after the Council of Ephesus (431), where he puts forth his frequently quoted rule, the so-called “Vincentian canon,” which claims that true Christian doctrine and biblical interpretation are that which have been believed everywhere, always, and by all (*ubique, semper, ad omnibus*). While the “rule” has become a popular expression, Guarino laments that the Lérinian’s rich and complex thought has been reduced to a slogan. Vincent deserves fresh investigation because he can contribute to “deeper communion” among Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant bodies as the Church universal faces new challenges (xii-xiii). The *Commonitory* is a masterful attempt to understand the relationship between theological consistency



and historical change. For Vincent, Christian tradition is established *and* changing, static *and* dynamic.

The book consists of three chapters. The first introduces key theological motifs in the *Commonitorium* including preservation of divine revelation, proper interpretation of Scripture, and responsible development of doctrine. Underlying these motifs is Vincent's concern over heretics who would harm the Church through innovation. The deviance of heretics is particularly dangerous because many have an impressive knowledge of Scripture and can quote freely when pressed to "prove" their teaching. This, for Vincent, is why tradition is so vital for the Church. The judgments of the historic Church, such as those pronounced at the ecumenical councils, distinguish authentic biblical interpretations and doctrines from false ones.

While Vincent ascribes primary authority to Scripture, tradition plays an inseparable role in grounding the Church in what God has revealed. Tradition, for Vincent, is not an indefinable "golden era" ensconced in the irretrievable past, but a "living and active process" always undergoing development (42). He is careful to distinguish growth from innovation. Authentic development must be continuous with antiquity. At no point can the Church become something other than it has always been. Guarino highlights Vincent's illustration of a seed and its produce, arguing that "what is sown as wheat must be harvested as wheat" (17). So it is with the Church's teaching and practice. There may be improvement and greater clarity in form or expression, but no change in its essential character. As time proceeds, Christian doctrine develops in strict continuity with Scripture and what has always been held by the Church universal.

In the second chapter, Guarino explores the influence of Vincent's thought on John Henry Newman, the celebrated nineteenth-century thinker who left Anglicanism for the Catholic Church. In many ways, Newman's interests in the relationship between divine revelation, historical development, and change overlap with his fifth-century counterpart. Guarino believes that some of Newman's ideas can be traced to Vincent, highlighting texts in Newman's corpus where he interacts with the Lérinian. While there can be little doubt that Newman used Vincent, Guarino suggests that Newman did not always successfully understand or appreciate the nuanced interdependence of the three aspects of Vincent's rule. But in the main, Newman follows Vincent in allowing for human understanding of revelation to develop and grow over time, even while insisting that revelation itself is immutable (59). Both agree upon the pri-

macy of Scripture (*prima scriptura*) and the importance of tradition for interpreting Scripture. Of particular significance to both is the interrelatedness of the ecumenical councils, theological doctors, the pope (in concert with the whole body of bishops), and the laity for testing and affirming scriptural interpretation. Newman especially sees a healthy “check and balance” system permeating the ecclesial structure to ensure that one voice does not encroach on another. Guarino’s discussion is helpful because he provides insight into Newman’s ecclesiology that intersects with his understanding of the nature of revelation and development. However, he tends to jump back and forth between the Anglican and the Catholic Newman without warning, causing unnecessary confusion. Surprisingly, he says almost nothing about Newman’s journey from Anglicanism to Catholicism and how Vincent may have played a role in his conversion. Clarifying these important issues would have strengthened this section of the book.

Chapter three is mostly a summary of the points Guarino makes in chapters one and two regarding Vincent’s thought, especially that tradition is “a dynamic, organic process, deeply rooted in Scripture, while allowing for a harmonious, architectonic unfolding” (81). Living tradition must always be continuous with the rule of faith. Vincent’s perspective has implications today. First, contemporary Christians need a robust understanding of tradition to preserve the character of its faith while progressing in its formulations. In doing so, the Church avoids the two pitfalls of dead orthodoxy on one hand, and innovation divorced from revelation on the other. Christian proclamation must be fresh and meaningful to modern culture without betraying the essence of its ancient message. Second, Vincent’s thought is useful for continuing ecumenical dialogue. With the natural flow of historical development, it is possible for various groups to express the same truth in diverse ways. Plurality can exist while preserving an essential unity grounded in the historic faith shared by all confessing branches of the Church.

Because this book is divided into three lengthy chapters, getting through the details may prove laborious for some readers. There is also a fair amount of redundancy throughout, creating a number of unnecessary *déjà vu* moments. Some condensing would have been useful. Nonetheless, this book is valuable because it brings to light a largely forgotten yet important fifth-century theologian who has much to teach the contemporary Church about preserving its faith while reformulating its message to impact the ever-changing culture, all while working toward greater ecumenical unity.

**WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**  
**Membership Application**

Complete and return this form *with dues enclosed* to:

The Wesleyan Theological Society  
c/o Brent Peterson  
Northwest Nazarene University  
623 S University Boulevard  
Nampa, Idaho 83686

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Present Position \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Prov. \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

EDUCATION—Schools attended beyond high school, with degrees earned and dates:


IF CURRENTLY A STUDENT, indicate school and current degree program:

\_\_\_\_\_

MEMBERSHIP in religious or professional societies:

\_\_\_\_\_

BOOKS OR SCHOLARLY ARTICLES RECENTLY PUBLISHED:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

MAJOR RESEARCH COMPLETED OR IN PROGRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

FIELD(S) OF SPECIAL THEOLOGICAL OR RESEARCH INTEREST:

\_\_\_\_\_

CHURCH AFFILIATION: \_\_\_\_\_

MEMBERSHIP REQUESTED (payment enclosed):