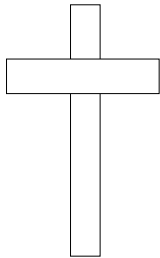
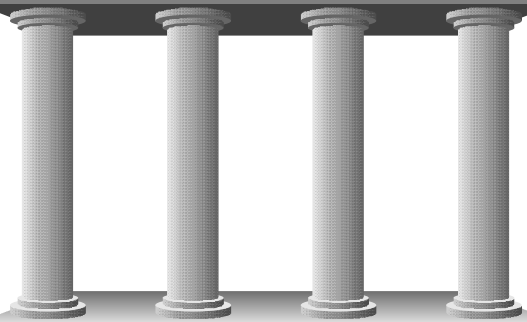


The Atonement of the Death of Christ



Four Pillars of the Atonement



Love
of God

Holiness
Of God

Human
Sinfulness

Incarnation

Without the *incarnation*, the Atonement would not have been possible. Without the *sinfulness* of humanity, it would not have been necessary. Without the *holiness* of God, it would not have been called for. Without the *love* of God, it would not have taken place.

Portraits of the Cross

- *Sacrificial altar*—propitiation, expiation
- *Courtroom*—substitution and intercession
- *Slave ship*—redemption, ransom
- *Cleansing shower*—forgiveness
- *Dinner table*—reconciliation
- *Lonely hillside*—triumph

Major Questions about Atonement

- Is the language of propitiation biblical?
- Is it appropriate for contemporary theology?
- Protestants have generally adopted a penal satisfaction model of the Atonement. Would another approach have been more biblical?
- What should we say about the extent of the Atonement?

Is “Propitiation” biblical?

- NO: “Propitiation” is required with unpredictable and self-willed pagan deities, but God is *always* gracious and ready to forgive (Rom. 5:8).
- YES: God *is* ready to forgive, but His nature is also *just* and He is wrathful toward sin and sinners. Since that wrath is appeased (satisfied and turned aside) by offering, “propitiation” still rightly describes the *Godward* aspect of atonement/reconciliation. (Num. 16:46–47; 25:11, 13; 1 John 4:10).

Is “Propitiation” biblical?

- NO: Since God is the one acting in salvation, the cross should not be regarded as a human act in any way. *God* is not reconciled to *us*, but reconciles us to Himself (2 Cor. 5:18–21).
- YES: This should not be regarded as a human act, but one uniquely accomplished by the one who is *both* our human representative and our divine intercessor (Rom. 8:26–27; 34; Heb. 2:17; 7:25; 1 John 2:1–2; Eph. 2:18). Note: the fact that Trinitarian intercession *continues* demonstrates its relevance.

Is “Propitiation” biblical?

- NO: The relevant OT verbs rarely have God as object, but often apply to *impersonal* objects (Ex. 30:10; Lev. 8:15).
- YES: The OT language goes beyond “expiation,” for the offering is directed toward the Lord on behalf of the worshiper (e.g. Lev. 6:7; 17:11).

“The offering of sacrifice makes atonement and this involves a variety of consequences. Altars and priests are ‘sanctified’ (Ex. 29:33, 36, 37) i.e. made fit to officiate in worship. ‘Lepers’ and others are cleansed (Lv. 12:7, 8; 14:20). Sinners are forgiven (Lv. 4:20) and guilt is carried (Lv. 10:17). Sin and uncleanness lead a person from the realm of life into the realm of death. Sacrifice stops this process, indeed reverses it. It gives life to those doomed to die.”

Gordon J. Wenham

The viability of “propitiation” does not rule out complementary ideas.

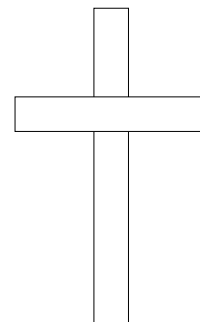
“If the sacrifice is regarded as expiatory in the sense that it cancels out the effect of sin, it does so in that it propitiates God against whom the sin was committed; and equally, if it is regarded as propitiating God, it does so by covering the sin which aroused his judgment. Expiation and propitiation are two sides of the same coin.”

I. Howard Marshall

Is the language of propitiation appropriate for contemporary theology, or does it encourage abuse?

- “Feminists rightly challenge any view of the cross which depicts Jesus as a passive and innocent victim put to death by the will of a God who fits the definition of an abusive father or an unjust tyrant.”
- “Not only is Jesus lifted as the model for passive acceptance of undeserved suffering [in the traditional model], but, as the Son of the heavenly Father, he is a model of the abused child.” (Megill-Cobbler)

A Crucial Balance: The Cross of the Incarnate Son

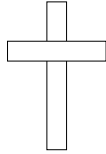


Too little distinction between the Son and the Father (patripassionism)

Too much distinction between the Son and the Father (tritheism: Son as victim)

“They to acknowledge
The Definition of Chalcedon
 complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, true God and true man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized IN TWO NATURES, WITHOUT CONFUSION, WITHOUT CHANGE, WITHOUT DIVISION, WITHOUT SEPARATION; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the Fathers has handed down to us.”

**A Crucial Balance:
The Cross of the God-Man**



IN TWO NATURES, WITHOUT
CONFUSION, WITHOUT CHANGE,
WITHOUT DIVISION, WITHOUT
SEPARATION

Union with Confusion:
Christ as neither God or Man,
Cross as unnecessary and insufficient

Christ as human only
(adoptionism; cross as human work)

Christ as God only
(Docetism; cross as non-human punishment)

**Is the *Christus Victor*
model more correct?**

- Historical precedent in both East and West
- Salvation is a divine act of reconciliation through the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, who conquers sin, death, and the devil (Heb. 2:14).
 - Ransom to Satan
 - Identification, Recapitulation and Rescue
- Language of propitiation and justice deemphasized. The cross is less a transaction between the Son and the Father, more an act of identification or ransom.
- This is appropriate and important, but not exclusively so.

Substitution: Christ *instead of us*

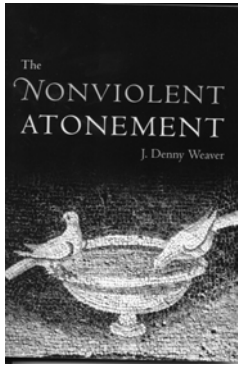
- As in OT sacrifice, an unblemished victim (not deserving death) died in place of the sinful worshipper (who did deserve death) (Rom. 8:32; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Representation: Christ *for us*

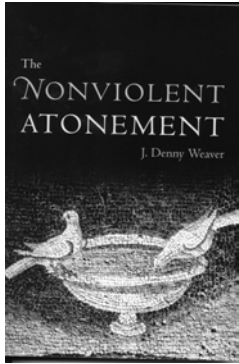
- He did what we could not, and we share in the benefit through our solidarity with Him (Rom. 6:4, 5; 2 Cor. 5:14; Gal. 2:20)
- “Representation and substitution ought not to be put in opposition to each other.” (Marshall)

Summary

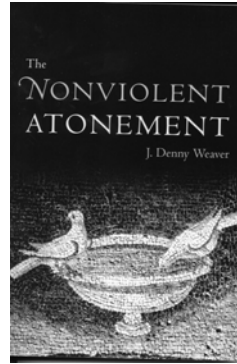
- Christ acted as our substitute, bearing our penalty as the Lamb slain.
- His death cleansed us from sin (expiation) and satisfied the wrath of the Father (propitiation).
- Christ acted as our High Priest, ministering on our behalf before the Father and communicating the Father’s forgiveness to us.
- Christ acted on behalf of the Father, reconciling us to God.
- Christ acted as our representative, identifying with our humanity, conquering our foes, and enabling us to identify with His death and resurrection.



- Since Jesus was nonviolent, a suitable doctrine of Atonement must entail the rejection of all forms of violence.
- “Satisfaction atonement is based on an intrinsically violent assumption—restoring justice means punishment.”
- Jesus’ death became inevitable as He clashed with worldly powers, but He did not come to die and God was not responsible in any way for His death.



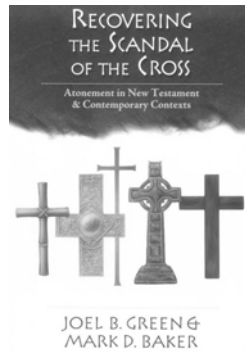
“His death was not a payment owed to God’s honor, nor was it divine punishment that he suffered as a substitute for sinners. Jesus’ death was the rejection of the rule of God by forces opposed to that rule. . . . When evil did its worst, namely denying Jesus his existence by killing him, God’s resurrection of Jesus displayed the ability of the reign of God to triumph over death, the last enemy. The power of the reign of God over the forces of evil is made manifest in the resurrection of Jesus.”



“The various arguments that add additional biblical images, redefine punishment, point to other emphases, appeal to the Trinity, or emphasize that the Father bears the suffering along with the Son serve to mitigate or camouflage but do not alter the underlying presupposition that satisfaction depends on a divinely sanctioned death as that which is necessary to satisfy the offended divine entity, whether God or God’s law or God’s honor. . . .

Anyone uncomfortable with the idea of a God who sanctions violence, a God who sends the Son so that his death can satisfy a divine requirement, should abandon satisfaction and Anselmian atonement forthwith.”

- Rightly argues for multiple images in the biblical theology of the Cross.
- Wrongly argues that penal substitution is not one of those biblical images.
- Maintains unbalanced views of divine wrath, love, and human sinfulness



Summary

- Christ acted as our substitute, bearing our penalty as the Lamb slain.
- His death cleansed us from sin (expiation) and satisfied the wrath of the Father (propitiation).
- Christ acted as our High Priest, ministering on our behalf before the Father and communicating the Father’s forgiveness to us.
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- Christ acted as our representative, identifying with our humanity, conquering our foes, and enabling us to identify with His death and resurrection.

Evaluating Models of the Atonement

- Are the “four pillars intact?”
- Was the cross *required* for the salvation of sinners (Gal. 2:21)?
- “God’s love must be viewed in the light of the atonement, not the atonement in the light of God’s love.” (McDonald)

The Cross as Example

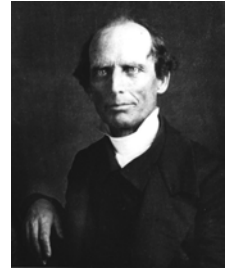
- Utterly insufficient as an isolated approach to the atonement (Abelard).
- “A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.” (Niebuhr on liberalism)
- Vital as a model for sanctification.

Socinian and Grotian Models of the Atonement

Is justice inherent to God's nature? Or can he decide either not to punish sin (Socinians) or to accept a different punishment for sin (Grotians)?

The Grotian (Governmental) View of Atonement in Finney

“The atonement is the governmental substitution of the sufferings of Christ for the punishment of sinners.”



“No atonement could be needed to satisfy any implacable spirit in the divine mind. [God] was sufficiently and infinitely disposed to extend pardon to the penitent, if this could be wisely, benevolently, and safely done.”

“The danger is very great” that divine mercy would encourage people to sin boldly.

“God could not be just to His own intelligence, just to His character, and hence just to the universe, in dispensing with the execution of divine law, except upon the condition of providing a substitute of such a nature as to reveal as fully, and to impress as deeply, the lessons that would be taught by the execution, as the execution itself would do.”

- “An atonement was needed to promote the glory and influence of God in the universe.”
- “An atonement was needed to present overpowering motives to repentance.”
- “An atonement was needed, that the offer of pardon might not seem like connivance at sin.”
- “An atonement was needed to manifest the sincerity of God in His legal enactments.”
- “An atonement was needed to make it safe to present the offer and promise of pardon.”
- “An atonement must be decided upon and made known,” as the reason on which God’s favorable treatment of people was conditioned.

Summary of the Grotian View

- God is already prepared to forgive sin.
- The cross demonstrates His government, but it does not (and need not) satisfy His justice.
- God honors His Son and wisely maintains His government by granting salvation to those who believe in Jesus.
- Finney: “the atonement, of itself, does not secure the salvation of anyone.”

Response to the Grotian View

- Isaiah 53:5-6, 11-12
- 2 Corinthians 5:21
- Galatians 3:13
- Colossians 2:13-14
- 1 Peter 2:24
- Galatians 2:21

Additional Note on the Grotian View

- Hugo Grotius was a follower of James Arminius. He formulated his view of the atonement to protect its universality in accordance with Arminian doctrine.
- “Arminians teach that what Christ did he did for every person; therefore what he did could not have been to pay the penalty, since no one would then ever go to eternal perdition. Arminianism teaches that Christ suffered for everyone so that the Father could forgive those who repent and believe; his death is such that all will see that forgiveness is costly and will strive to cease from anarchy in the world God governs. This view is called the governmental theory of the atonement.”

Ken Grider, “Arminianism” in *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*

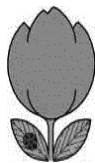
The Extent of the Atonement

The Extent of the Atonement

*The Extent
of the
Atonement*

The “Five Points” of Calvinism

- Total Depravity
- Unconditional Election
- Limited Atonement
- Irresistible Grace
- Perseverance of the Saints



“Arminianism” and the “Five Points”

- Free will
- Conditional Election
- Unlimited Atonement
- Resistible Grace
- Possibility of Loss

Arguments for Particular Redemption

- What was God's knowing intention?
- Did not Christ as Priest pray for the elect only (John 17; Rom. 8:33-34)?
- If some for whom Christ died are eternally condemned, is justice satisfied for them or not? (cf. John 6:38-39; 10:15; 15:13, etc.)
- Did the cross actually *accomplish* redemption, or did it simply enable God subsequently to offer forgiveness on whatever condition He chose (Eph. 2:13-16; Heb. 9:12, 14)?

Arguments for Unlimited Atonement

- Did not Christ die for "the world" (John 3:16, 1 John 2:2; 2 Peter 2:1; etc)
- How could a universal gospel offer be genuine without a universal provision?
- Is not even common grace related to the cross?

Salvation as both Particular and Universal in Trinitarian Perspective

- The Father loves the world, but has chosen only some.
- The Son died for all, but His death is applied only to some.
- The Spirit reproves all, but effectually calls only some.

A Damage Assessment

- If you believe in Unlimited Atonement, make sure it does not lead you away from the doctrines of sin, grace, and sovereignty.
- If you believe in Particular Redemption, make sure it doesn't lead you away from evangelism.

Common Ground

- Christ's death was of inestimable value and could have saved any number of worlds.
- The death of Christ is sufficient for all, efficient for some.
- The Gospel is to be preached to all persons.
- People are not actually justified until they believe.
- God "is the Savior of all persons, especially of believers" (1 Tim. 4:10).

“Supralapsarianism”

- God decreed to glorify Himself through the election of some and the reprobation of others.
- God decreed to create both elect and reprobate.
- God decreed to permit the Fall.
- God decreed to provide salvation for the elect through Christ.

Key point: election to salvation before the Fall.

“Infralapsarianism” (or “sublapsarianism”)

- God decreed to glorify Himself through the creation of humanity.
- God decreed to permit the Fall.
- God decreed to save some of the fallen.
- God decreed to leave the rest to condemnation.
- God provided redemption for the elect.

Key point: election to salvation after the Fall.