

ATONEMENT CONFUSION: HOW A WIDER VIEW OF ATONEMENT CAN LEAD TO A DEEPER SENSE OF MISSION

Webinar Presented by

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INTRODUCTIONS

THE PROBLEM – THE ECLIPSE OF JUSTICE

“There is absolutely no concept in the Old Testament with so central a significance for all the relationships as that of tsedeqeh. It is the standard not only for humanity’s relationship to God, but also to other creatures, including other humans and even reaching right down to animals and the natural environment... for it embraces the whole of life”.

Gerhard von Rad

THE PROBLEM – THE ECLIPSE OF JUSTICE

Which raises the question:

Why does the pursuit of justice seem to take a back seat to other ministries of the church, in particular those that advance what we might call the ‘works of piety?’

THE PROBLEM – THE ECLIPSE OF JUSTICE

- Confusion about terminology
 - Retributive justice
 - Distributive justice
 - Commutative justice
 - Restorative justice
 - Translation issues
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THE PROBLEM – THE ECLIPSE OF JUSTICE

- Translation issues
 - *Mishpat*: a just decision rendered according to rights, thus one that vindicates the right, especially of the poor and powerless
 - Often translated as ‘judgment,’ i.e. condemnation
 - *Tsedaqah*: liberating, community restoring justice
 - Often translated as ‘righteousness’
 - For example, “seek first the Kingdom of God and his
....”
 - *Dikaiosune*, LXX translation

THE PROBLEM – THE ECLIPSE OF JUSTICE

Glenn Stassen speaks of ‘skip, hop, and jump’

- SKIPPING over the biblical meaning of justice means that
- In HOP secular ideologies with an inadequate view of justice, which Christians then *contrast* with love or grace or mercy, thus concluding that justice is inferior to love and thus they
- *Jump* into the arms of the devil
- *“you tithe mint and dill but have ignored the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy and faith (Luke 11)*

THE PROBLEM - DUALISM

Read and reflect on this quotation from David Bosch:

Thus, even if – throughout all the centuries of Christian missionary history – remarkable service has always been rendered in respect of the care of the sick, the poor, orphans, and other victims of society, as well as in respect of education, agricultural instruction, and the like, these ministries were almost always viewed as “auxiliary services” and not as missionary in their own right. Their purpose was to dispose people favourably to the gospel, “soften them up”, and thereby prepare the way for the work of the real missionary, namely the one who proclaimed God’s word about eternal salvation. In most cases, then, a strict distinction was maintained between “horizontal” and “external” emphases (charity, education, medical help) on the one hand and the “vertical” or “spiritual” elements of the missionary agenda (such as preaching, the sacraments, church attendance) on the other. Only the latter had a bearing on the appropriation of salvation. This attenuated definition of salvation inevitably led to a preoccupation with narrowly defined ecclesiastical activities, which, for their part, severely complicated the believers’ involvement in society since such involvement had nothing to do with salvation except to draw people toward the church where they might get access to salvation proper.”

ATONEMENT OPTIONS

Peter Abelard (1079 – 1142)

Moral theory of atonement

The experience of God's love, demonstrated in Jesus willing self-sacrifice, is so powerful that it can transform hearts that are alienated from God to turn from self-will and evil to seek God's will and goodness. In that turning we are saved.



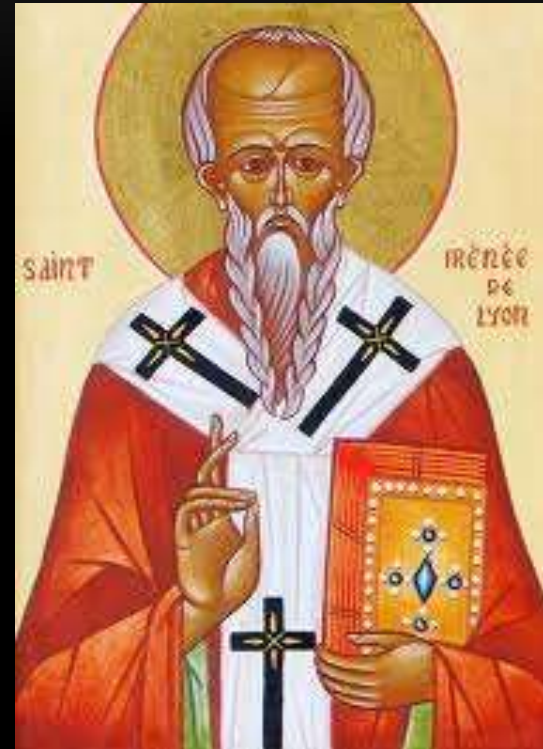
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ATONEMENT OPTIONS

Irenaeus

Recapitulation theory

[Christ] was in these last days, according to the time appointed by the Father, united to His own workmanship, inasmuch as He became a man liable to suffering ... He commenced afresh¹ the long line of human beings, and furnished us, in a brief, comprehensive manner, with salvation; so that what we had lost in Adam—namely, to be according to the image and likeness of God—that we might recover in Christ Jesus.



http://growrag.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/saint_irenaeus.jpg

ATONEMENT OPTIONS

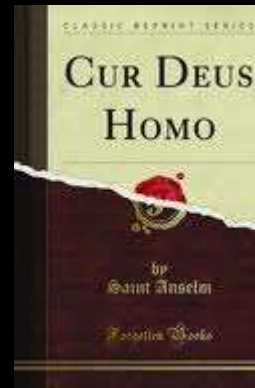
Anselm of Canterbury

- Satisfaction theory

“therefore everyone who sins ought to render back to God the honour he has taken away, and this is the satisfaction which every sinner ought to make to God.... In Christ’s death this satisfaction is made so now God can, with justice, forgive sinners their whole debt

- Historically most prominent

- Some historical refinements



<http://wmbriggs.com/pics/anselm.jpg>

ANSELM RECONSIDERED

- Strengths of Anselm's view
- Problems
 - Individual focus
 - Problem is Sin as debt of honor rather than brokenness and disorder
 - Addresses guilt, not liberation/ deliverance
 - Assumes retributive justice
- Implications for mission

PROVOCATIVE QUESTIONS

Think about this question:

Why was Jesus born?

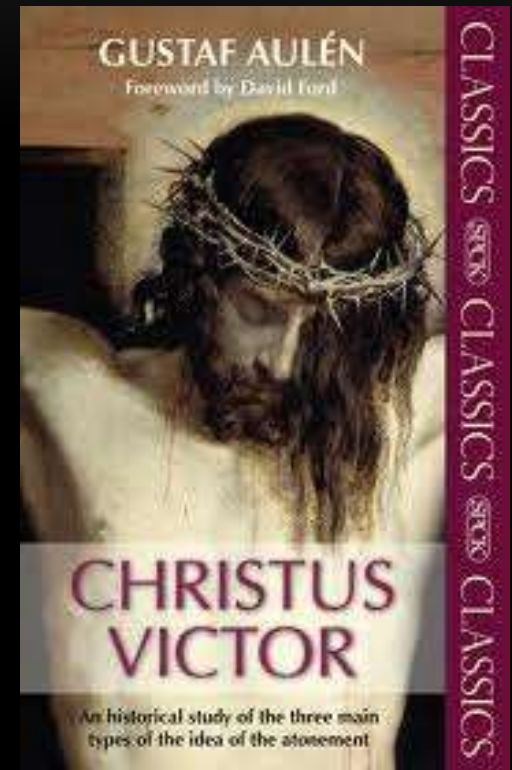
How would Anselm answer this question?

How does the gospel narrative answer it?

CHRISTUS VICTOR REDUX

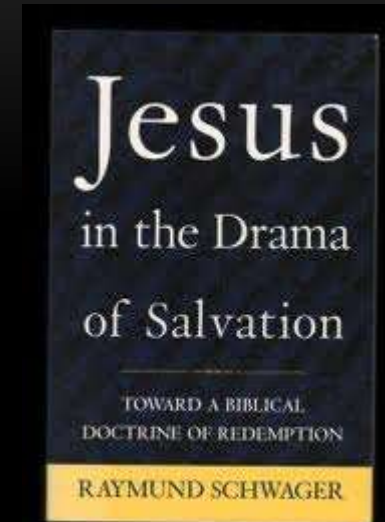
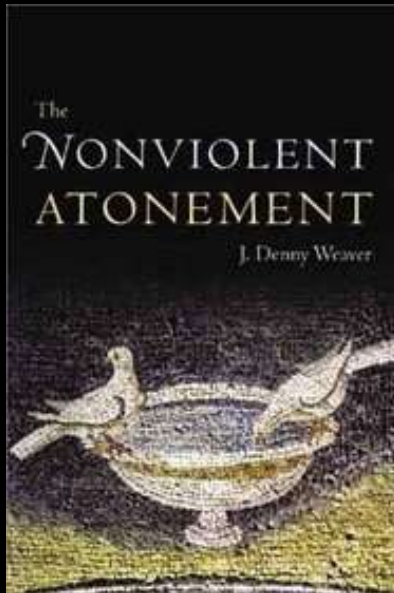
Gustav Aulen 'Christus Victor'

- Contrasts subjective and objective views
- Revives and revises ransom theory



CHRISTUS VICTOR REDUX

J. Denis Weaver



Raymund Schwager

The Drama of Salvation

CHRISTUS VICTOR REDUX

- A thicker view of atonement
 - Atonement as participation in the Kingdom
 - Atonement as liberation from the 'powers'; sin is seen not simply as moral culpability but as a power to which we are enslaved
 - Atonement as the Restorative Justice of God
 - Jesus IS God's Justice. There is no distinction between justice and justification

CHRISTUS VICTOR REDUX

Justice for Christians is not a strict rendering of what is due. Justice is that which restores and renews communion. Its name is Jesus....we are stuck in our sin, and the good news is that Jesus is the justice of God – Jesus reconciles, Jesus restores communion, Jesus renews creation. Therefore our doing justice, if it is true justice, must confess Jesus. Similarly, to be 'in Christ' is to be justified which is to be made just and to be just is to seek and do justice

(Daniel Bell)

SOURCES

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ATONEMENT CONFUSION



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Q & A

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