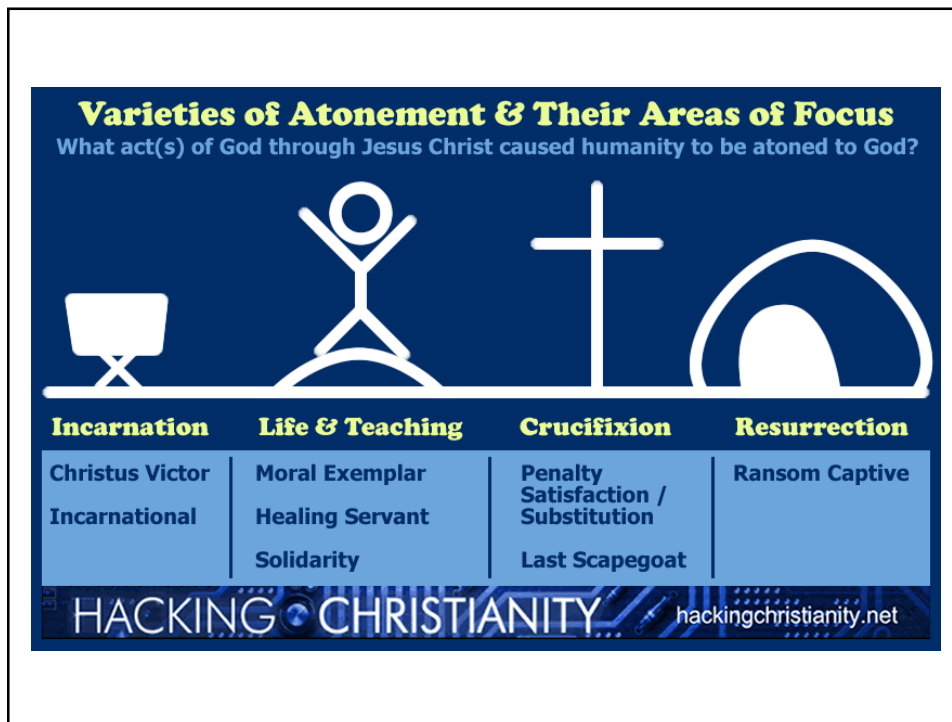


# AT+ONE

## Christian Theories of Atonement

### WHAT IS ATONEMENT?

- Atonement comes from 16<sup>th</sup> century English - literally means at-one-ment.
- God's act of dealing with the primary human problem of sin; process of reconciliation between God and human beings with the goal of righting a wrong (sin).
- In Christianity: how we talk about the salvific work of Jesus Christ.
- When does God's saving work occur:
  - Incarnation?
  - Life & Ministry of Jesus?
  - Crucifixion?
  - Resurrection?



## GOALS OF OUR STUDY

- ◉ NOT to pick one atonement theory over the others
- ◉ But to have open hearts and minds, to see if one resonates with us more than others, and to explore why that may be.
- ◉ To deepen our understanding of what the Bible says about atonement and reconciliation between God and humanity, along with theologians, our creeds, and our hymns.
- ◉ To understand the importance of the entirety of the work in the person of Jesus Christ - from Bethlehem to Pentecost and beyond!

## 1 JOHN 2:1-2

<sup>1</sup>My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; <sup>2</sup>**and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.**

## ATONEMENT THROUGH CRUCIFIXION & DEATH



## PENALTY/SATISFACTION /SUBSTITUTION THEORY

Popularized by Augustine/Anselm, the death of Jesus on the cross is the paying of a debt (or satisfying a debt) caused by humanity's sinful nature offending God's honor. Also framed as Jesus taking the place (substituting) for humanity on the Cross.

## PENAL SUBSTITUTION /SATISFACTION THEORY

Penal Substitution states that Christ bore the *penalty* for sin, *in place* of those sinners united to him by faith. This theory was fully developed in the Reformation, especially by Charles Hodges and John Calvin.

## SATISFACTION THEORY

Anselm regarded human sin as defrauding God of the honor he is due. Christ's death, the ultimate act of obedience, gives God great honor. As it was beyond the call of duty for Christ, it is more honor than he was obliged to give. Christ's surplus can therefore repay our deficit. Hence Christ's death is substitutionary: he pays the honor instead of us. But that substitution is not penal; his death pays our **honor**, not our penalty.

## SATISFACTION THEORY

Background: Anselm's context: feudal system, in which serfs worked on an estate for an overlord. The overlord/knight protected the estate from attack. The knight in turn had to honor the King. The serfs owed the knight a debt of honor for their protection and livelihood. Anselm pictured God as the overlord of the world to whom is owed a debt of honor. Failure to honor God is therefore a sin.

## SATISFACTION THEORY

- ◉ Matthew 18:21-35
- ◉ Psalm 51
- ◉ Matthew 6:9-13

## SLIGHT DIFFERENCE

- ◉ For Anselm/satisfaction theory, on the cross Christ obeyed where we should have obeyed; for John Calvin/penal substitution theory, on the cross Christ was punished where we should have been punished.
- ◉ Satisfaction: Christ suffers *for* us
- ◉ Penal substitution: Christ punished instead of us

## PENAL SUBSTITUTION THEORY

- ◉ Romans 3:23-26
- ◉ Isaiah 53:1-6, 10, 11
- ◉ 2 Corinthians 5:21
- ◉ Galatians 3:10, 13
- ◉ 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18

## PENAL SUBSTITUTION THEORY

*John Calvin:* “Moreover, it was especially necessary for this cause also that he who was to be our Redeemer should be truly God and man. It was his to swallow up death: who but Life could do so? It was his to conquer sin: who could do so save Righteousness itself? ... Therefore, God, in his infinite mercy, having determined to redeem us, became himself our Redeemer in the person of his only begotten Son...

## PENAL SUBSTITUTION THEORY

Another principal part of our reconciliation with God was, that man, who had lost himself by his disobedience, should, by way of remedy, oppose to it obedience, **satisfy the justice of God, and pay the penalty of sin.** Therefore, our Lord came forth very man, adopted the person of Adam, and assumed his name, that he might in his stead obey the Father;

## PENAL SUBSTITUTION THEORY

that he might present our flesh as the price of satisfaction to the just judgment of God, and **in the same flesh pay the penalty which we had incurred.** Finally, since as God only he could not suffer, and as man only could not overcome death, **he united the human nature with the divine...**



## LAST SCAPEGOAT THEORY

Popularized by Rene Girard, tribal human societies needed a release valve to let off the pressure of increasing rivalry and violence, so a scapegoat victim is sacrificed, thus relieving the pressure of violence. Jesus' death as a "visible victim/scapegoat" shows the injustice and inherent immorality of the scapegoating system on display.

## LAST SCAPEGOAT THEORY

- ◉ **Scapegoat mechanism** was developed: an innocent, sacred victim is chosen, everyone's sin is piled on that victim, and that victim is sacrificed, thus relieving the pressure of violence.
- ◉ According to Girard, this is the foundation of all archaic religion. What the death of Jesus does is reverse this process.

## LAST SCAPEGOAT THEORY

- ◉ Genesis 4:8-16
- ◉ Leviticus 16:3-10
- ◉ Hebrews 9:11-15, 10:11-18

## LAST SCAPEGOAT THEORY

- ◉ Christianity is a priestly religion which understands that it is God's overcoming of our violence by substituting himself for the victim of our typical sacrifices that opens up our being able to enjoy the fullness of creation as if death were not.

# WHERE DO WE SEE ATONEMENT THROUGH CRUCIFIXION & DEATH?



## HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

### Q & A 12 -15

- ◉ **Q. According to God's righteous judgment we deserve punishment both now and in eternity: how then can we escape this punishment and return to God's favor?**
- ◉ A. God requires that his justice be satisfied. Therefore the claims of this justice must be paid in full, either by ourselves or by another.
- ◉ **Q. Can we make this payment ourselves?**
- ◉ A. Certainly not. Actually, we increase our debt every day.
- ◉ **Q. Can another creature—any at all—pay this debt for us?**
- ◉ A. No. To begin with, God will not punish any other creature for what a human is guilty of. Furthermore, no mere creature can bear the weight of God's eternal wrath against sin and deliver others from it.
- ◉ **Q. What kind of mediator and deliverer should we look for then?**
- ◉ A. One who is a true and righteous human, yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is also true God.

## NOTHING BUT THE BLOOD OF JESUS

What can wash away my sin?  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
What can make me whole again?  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

*Refrain:*

O precious is the flow  
that makes me white as snow;  
no other fount I know;  
nothing but the blood of Jesus.



## NOTHING BUT THE BLOOD OF JESUS

2 For my pardon this I see:  
nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
For my cleansing this my plea:  
nothing but the blood of Jesus. [Refrain]

3 Nothing can for sin atone:  
nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
Naught of good that I have done:  
nothing but the blood of Jesus. [Refrain]



## JUST AS I AM, WITHOUT ONE PLEA

1 Just as I am, without one plea,  
but that thy blood was shed for me,  
and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

2 Just as I am, and waiting not  
to rid my soul of one dark blot,  
to thee, whose blood can cleanse each  
spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.



## IN CHRIST ALONE

2: In Christ alone, Who took on flesh,  
Fullness of God in helpless babe!  
This gift of love and righteousness,  
Scorned by the ones He came to save.  
**Till on that cross as Jesus died,**  
**The wrath of God was satisfied;**  
**For ev'ry sin on Him was laid—**  
Here in the death of Christ I live.



## LORD, I LIFT YOUR NAME ON HIGH



You came from heaven to earth,  
to show the way  
From the earth to the cross,  
my debt to pay  
From the cross to the grave,  
from the grave to the sky  
Lord I lift your name on high.

## ATONEMENT THROUGH CRUCIFIXION & DEATH

What difference does this kind of  
atonement make in the world?



# ATONEMENT THROUGH CRUCIFIXION & DEATH

We should not hold onto debts.  
No other sacrifices are needed.

