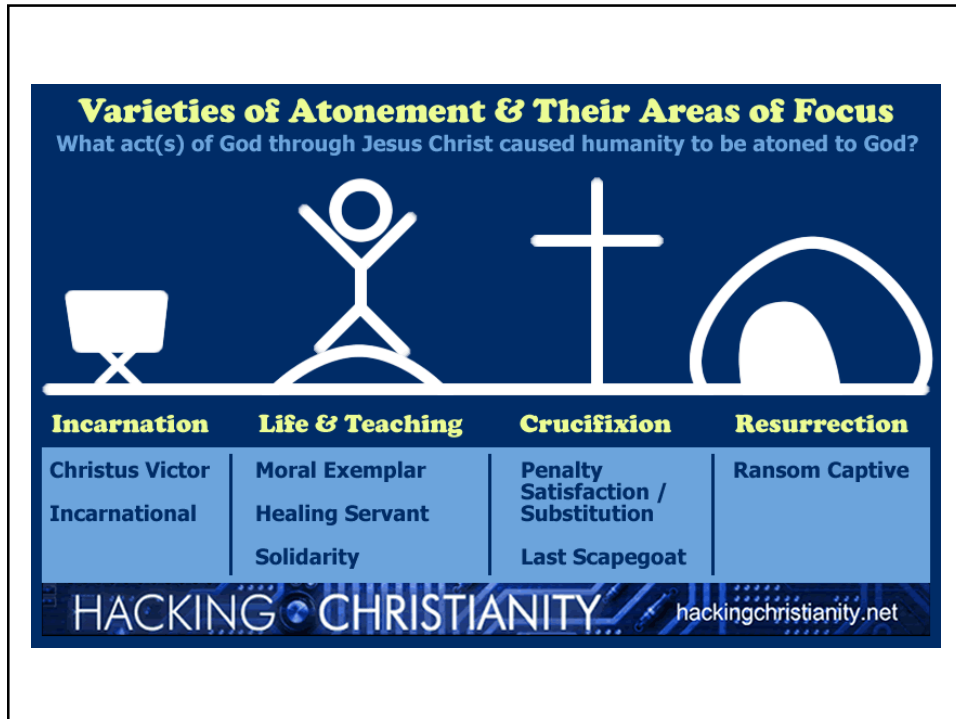


## WHAT IS ATONEMENT?

- ◉ 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 RESURRECTION



## RANSOM CAPTIVE



- ◉ Popularized by Origen, Jesus' death is the **ransom** paid to the devil (or evil powers) to free humans from the **bondage of sin**. Its locus is the Resurrection as that's when the Devil was tricked and he didn't have any control over Christ at all.

## RANSOM CAPTIVE



- ◉ In this understanding, the original sin of Adam and Eve placed all of humanity under subjugation to Satan. Christ, the second person of the Trinity, came to Earth and died, giving his life as a ransom for many.

## POWERS THAT BE



Walter Wink: barrier to liberation is the Domination System. The Domination System is whenever one group of people oppresses another for the sake of greed and self-interest (through unjust political, economic, and social systems). The Domination System maintains power through the Myth of Redemptive Violence, which provides a narrative: only the violence perpetrated by it can save us.

## POWERS THAT BE



The Myth looks roughly like this:

- ◉ a powerful being/system has caused harm/distress to another being/group
- ◉ from the oppressed group, a powerful being/system arises to defeat and kill the oppressor, ending the reign of terror
- ◉ protagonist becomes the ruling victor who creates a space in which the liberated can live free; eventually, the once righteous liberator becomes the dominating oppressor...and so forth.

## POWERS THAT BE



- ◉ This Myth coerces its adherents into believing it is normative - it even infiltrated the way in which ancient Hebrews conceived of God, explaining the vast amounts of violence in the OT as God's will.
- ◉ **Jesus interrupts this Myth, and exposes it for what it really is: legalized immorality.**

## POWERS THAT BE



- ◉ Jesus courageously revealed the truth that God has no part in the Domination System. Oppressive structures killed him for his insolence.
- ◉ Hope lies in the possibility of the spirituality of everything can be redeemed either through re-creation or abandonment; and in direct non-violent action against the Domination System.

## RANSOM CAPTIVE



Origen: “But **to whom** did He give His soul as a ransom for many? Surely not to God. Could it, then, be to the **Evil One**? **For he had us in his power**, until the ransom for us should be given to him, even the life (or soul) of Jesus, since the Evil One had been deceived, and led to suppose that he was capable of mastering that soul, and he did not see that to hold Him involved a trial of strength greater than he was equal to.”

## RANSOM CAPTIVE



Origen: “**From the moment of His birth, Christ’s life was a conflict with the powers of darkness. His passion and resurrection signified their final defeat.**”

## RANSOM CAPTIVE



- ◉ Claims that Adam and Eve sold humanity over to the Devil at the time of the Fall; hence, justice required that God pay the Devil a ransom to free us from the Devil's clutches. God, however, tricked the Devil into accepting Christ's death as a ransom, for the Devil did not realize that Christ could not be held in the bonds of death. Once the Devil accepted Christ's death as a ransom, this theory concluded, justice was satisfied, and God was able to free us from Satan's grip.

## RANSOM CAPTIVE



- ◉ Mark 10:35-45
- ◉ 1 Timothy 2:5-6
- ◉ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
- ◉ John 8:31-36
- ◉ Hebrews 2:14-15



## CHRISTUS VICTOR



Under RC umbrella: substituting “Satan” with “the powers” as popularized by Walter Wink and Gustav Aulen (1931 book)

The crucifixion is NOT a necessary transaction to appease a wrathful and justice-demanding deity, but an act of divine love. God entered fully into the bondage of death, making it a moment of victory, and thereby liberates humanity...

## CHRISTUS VICTOR



Aulén writes: “the work of Christ is first and foremost a victory over the powers which hold mankind in bondage: sin, death, and the devil.”

Christ's sacrifice is not a legal offering to God in order to placate his justice, but the decisive moment in a war against the powers of darkness.

## CHRISTUS VICTOR



Marcus Borg: “for [the Christus Victor] view, the domination system, understood as something much larger than the Roman governor and the temple aristocracy, is responsible for the death of Jesus... The domination system killed Jesus and thereby disclosed its moral bankruptcy and ultimate defeat.”

## CHRISTUS VICTOR



- ◉ Jesus does not give himself to death to win the love of God for us but rather to **reveal God’s power in the face of terrible human evil.**
- ◉ Jesus became the victim of the powers, the authorities, and even Satan. And he took their best shot, arose victorious, and so demonstrated his ultimate power and sealed their fate.

## CHRISTUS VICTOR



- ◉ Death is not the will of God. Death of Jesus is not necessary for salvation.
- ◉ The resurrection is God's affirmative "YES!" to the way of Jesus.
- ◉ God did not send Jesus to die but to live.
- ◉ Jesus' life is a victorious struggle against evil - redemption of the cosmos.

## CHRISTUS VICTOR



- ◉ Romans 5:17-18
- ◉ Colossians 2:15
- ◉ 1 Corinthians 15:55-57

## JOHN CALVIN



- Calvin states that our salvation involves both Christ's death and resurrection because "through his death, sin was wiped out and death extinguished; through his resurrection, righteousness was restored and life raised up." The resurrection ensures the gracious, atoning power of Christ lives among believers to this day and into eternity... Christ's atoning work is not only for us individuals but for us corporately.

## GIFT OF LOVE THEORY



John Duns Scotus (1266-1308), Catholic 'minority report' via Richard Rohr:

God did not **need** Jesus to die on the cross to decide to love humanity. God's love was infinite from the first moment of creation; the cross was just Love's dramatic portrayal in space and time.

## GIFT OF LOVE THEORY



The image of the cross was to change humanity, not a necessary transaction to change God. Jesus' death was a divine epiphany for all to see. Jesus was pure gift, and the idea of gift is much more transformative than any idea of necessity, price, or transaction. **It shows that God is not violent, but loving, and maintains God's perfect freedom.**

## GIFT OF LOVE THEORY



- ◉ Jesus was not changing the Father's mind about us; he was changing our mind about God—and thus about one another too. If God and Jesus are not violent, punishing, torturing, or vindictive, then our excuse for the same behavior is forever taken away from us. This is no small point!

## GIFT OF LOVE THEORY



- ◉ Martha Schull Gilliss: The cross is a reminder of the violent consequences of human evil and sin. But resurrection power reclaims again and again the freedom of God to redeem the world despite ongoing violence.

## GIFT OF LOVE THEORY



- ◉ Christ's resurrection condemns all those systems that seek and effect subjugation. The love shown in the atonement challenges all that stands in the way of God's gracious purposes for creation.
- ◉ We are scooped up in a nonhierarchical, noncoercive divine love and given a new way to live.

## GIFT OF LOVE THEORY



- ◉ John 3:16-17
- ◉ Ephesians 4:31-32
- ◉ 1 John 4:7-11

WHERE DO WE SEE  
ATONEMENT  
THROUGH  
RESURRECTION?



## WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

- ◉ To all those for whom Christ hath purchased **redemption**, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same; making intercession for them, and revealing unto them, in and by the Word, the mysteries of salvation; **effectually persuading them by his Spirit to believe and obey**; and governing their hearts by his Word and Spirit; **overcoming all their enemies by his almighty power and wisdom**, in such manner and ways as are most consonant to his wonderful and unsearchable dispensation.

## COME, THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS



Come, thou long expected Jesus,  
**born to set thy people free;**  
**from our fears and sins release us,**  
**let us find our rest in thee.**

Israel's strength and consolation,  
hope of all the earth thou art;  
dear desire of every nation,  
joy of every longing heart.



## JESUS MESSIAH



Jesus Messiah, name above all names  
Blessed redeemer, Emmanuel  
**The rescue for sinners,**  
**the ransom from Heaven**  
Jesus Messiah, Lord of all

## HOW DEEP THE FATHER'S LOVE FOR US



3: I will not boast in anything,  
No gifts, no power, no wisdom;  
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,  
His death and resurrection.  
Why should I gain from His reward?  
I cannot give an answer;  
**But this I know with all my heart -**  
**His wounds have paid my ransom.**

## O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL



O come, O come, Immanuel,  
**and ransom captive Israel**  
that mourns in lonely exile here  
until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel  
shall come to you, O Israel.

## WHEN ISRAEL WAS IN EGYPT'S LAND



Lord, help us all **from bondage flee**,  
Let my people go,  
and **let us all in Christ be free**,  
Let my people go.

Go down, Moses,  
way down in Egypt's land,  
tell old Pharaoh: Let my people go.

## ATONEMENT THROUGH RESURRECTION

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



## ATONEMENT THROUGH RESURRECTION

Every one who is with Jesus is  
unassailable by death.

Do not be afraid - of dying, of  
church dying!

