

The Atonement Considered: Part 2



By Bill Smith

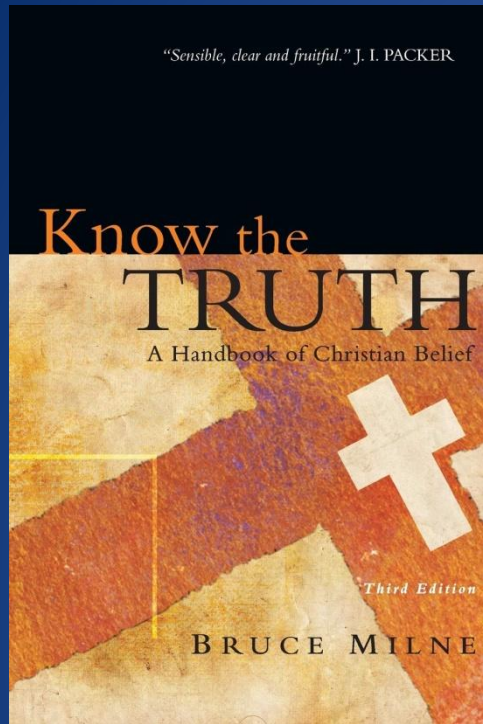
I. Important Questions to Consider

- **What do we mean by atonement?**
- **Why do we need atonement?**
- **How is atonement accomplished?**
- **How should we assess some of the models of the atonement**
- **What is the extent of the atonement?**
- **What are the benefits of the atonement?**



- **Rom. 5:8: “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, **Christ died for us.**”**

- **1 Cor. 15:3: “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ **died for our sins** according to the Scriptures”**

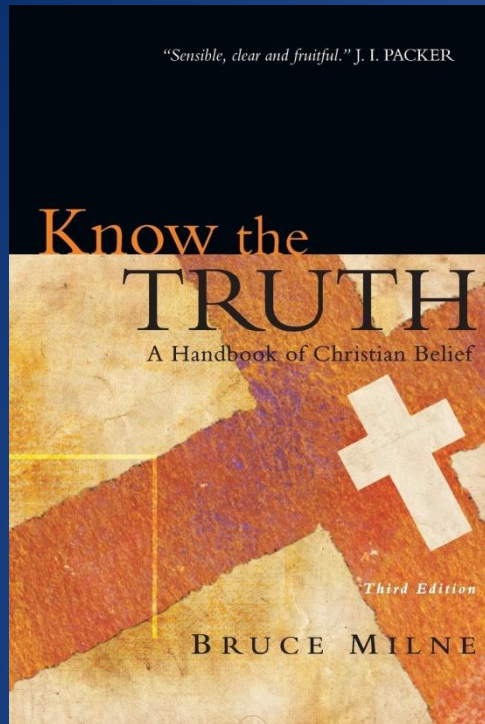


Bruce Milne writes that atonement refers to “the reconciliation of humanity and God, it points to the means whereby estrangement between the two is overcome and God and humanity made at one.”



Why Is There a Need For Atonement?

- **Atonement is necessary in order for human beings to fully realize the goal for which God made us; participation in fellowship with the triune God (union and communion).**
- **The problem is that our sinful state has resulted in (1) alienation from God (2) the experience of God's wrath (3) objective guilt (4) bondage to sin, death, and Satan.**

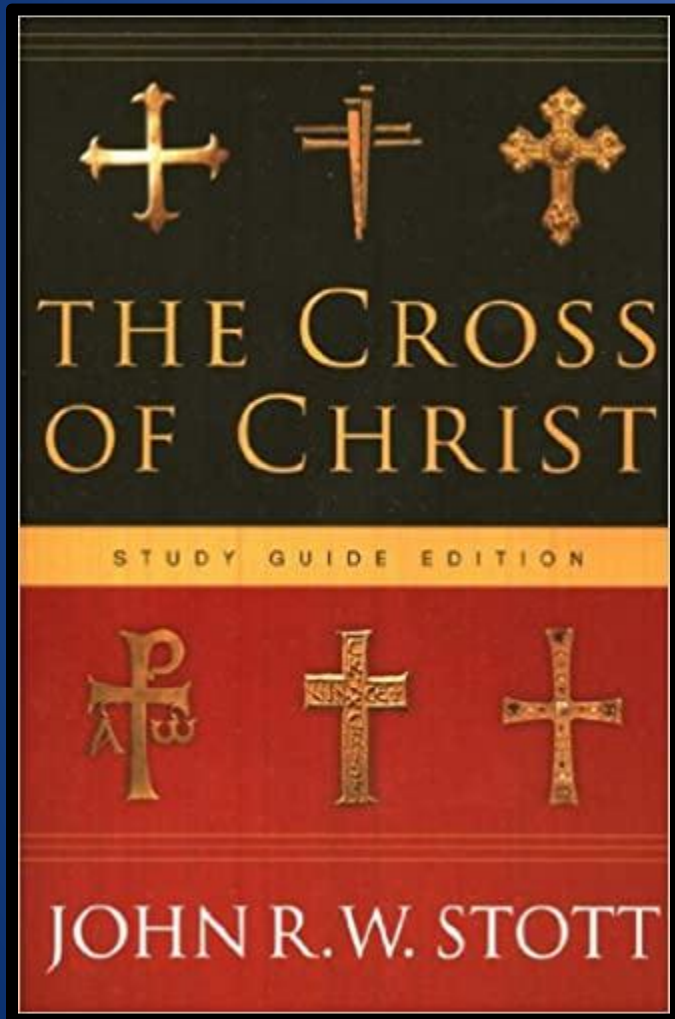


Bruce Milne:

“God’s holiness means that he is utterly pure and perfect, without any sin or evil; his very being is the outshining and outpouring of purity, truth, righteousness, justice, goodness, and every moral

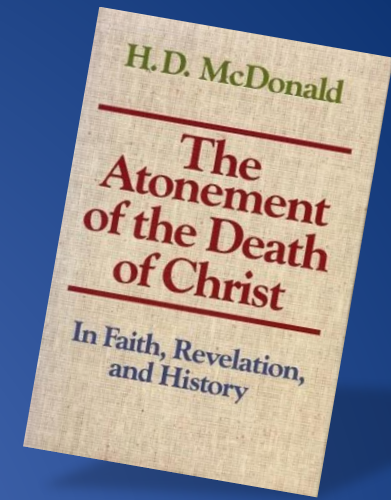


John Stott



“How then could God express simultaneously his holiness in judgment and his love in pardon? Only by providing a divine substitute for the sinner, so that the substitute would receive the judgment and the sinner the pardon. . . the deserved penalty of alienation from God, has been borne by Another in our place, so that we might be spared.”

H.D. McDonald:



“It is the act of **atonement** itself as God’s judgment of our sin on Christ that is the **chief reason** for the announcement God is **love**. The **death of Christ**, by which he **bore sin’s condemnation** as an **essential** of the divine **forgiveness**, is at the same time a **demonstration** of the immensity and the **holiness of God’s love**. The fact that God has himself **met** in the death of his Son the **requirement of his holy judgment on sin** is

How Should We Assess Some of the Models of the Atonement?

- **Recapitulation**
- **Christus Victor/Ransom**
- **Penal Substitution**

Recapitulation

“an ancient view of Christ’s work as a recapitulation (replaying and reversing) of what Adam wrought in the fall. Thus, Christ, the “second Adam,” retraced the steps of Adam and all humans in birth, life, and death, but instead of failing the trials, tests, and temptations, as all others had, He succeeded. By His obedience, He undoes disobedience; by His righteousness He undoes unrighteousness; by His death he undoes sin, death, and the devil; by His life He opens the doors to participation in the divine life.”

Exploring Christian Theology : Volume 2: Creation, Fall, and Salvation

† **Texts: Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:45-50; Eph.1:10**

† **Advocates: Patristic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Athanasius, N.T. Wright**

Recapitulation

Rom. 5:12-21: “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through **one man**, and death through sin, and in this way death came to **all people**, because all sinned. . . . Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of **Adam** to the time of Moses, . . . But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the **one man**, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the **one man, Jesus Christ**, overflow to the **many**! Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result **of one man’s sin** . . .

Recapitulation

Rom. 5:12-21: "... The judgment followed **one sin** and brought condemnation, but the **gift** followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by **the trespass of the one man**, death reigned through that **one man**, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the **one man, Jesus Christ!**

Consequently, just as **one trespass** resulted in condemnation for **all people**, so also **one righteous act** resulted in justification and life for **all people**. For just as through the **disobedience of the one man** the many were made sinners, so also through the **obedience of the one man** the many will be made righteous. . . ."

Recapitulation

1 Cor. 15:45-50: “So it is written: “The **first man Adam** became a living being; **the last Adam**, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The **first man** was of the dust of the earth; the **second man** is of heaven. As was the **earthly man**, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the **heavenly man**, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the **earthly man**, so shall we bear the image of the **heavenly man**. I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.”

Eph. 1:10: “. . . . to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

“**anakephalaitōsis**” – to bring everything under the headship of”

Irenaeus of Lyon (A.D. 130-202)

Irenaeus writes, “this Hand of God which formed us in the beginning, and which does form us in the womb, has in the last times sought us out who were lost, winning back his own, and taking up the lost sheep upon his shoulders, and with joy restoring it to the fold of life.”

Irenaeus, Haer. 5.15.2. translation by Behr,, 163.

“For as the disobedience of one man, who was originally molded from virgin soil, the many were made sinners, and forfeited life, so it was necessary, that by the obedience of one man, who was originally born of a virgin, many should be justified and receive salvation.”

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3, 18.7.

Recapitulation

Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths

- It focuses on connecting with the larger narrative of the Bible
- Provides a rationale for connecting creation with incarnation
- Unites the individual with the corporate dimensions of humanity

Potential Weaknesses

- It doesn't give an adequate explanation for the cross
- The Adoption of Universalism

Christus Victor/ Ransom

“A view of the atonement which “emphasizes Christ’s victory over sin, Satan, and death through His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Thus, Christ’s death and resurrection have a great cosmic significance beyond merely accomplishing forgiveness for individual sinners. By union with Christ, then, believers become one with the Victor and thus partake in the spoils of His cosmic victory.”

Exploring Christian Theology : Volume 2: Creation, Fall, and Salvation .
Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Texts: Mk. 10:45; Col. 2:13-15; 1 Jn. 3:8

† Advocates: Patristic Fathers, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Luther, Gustav Aulen, C.S. Lewis, Kenneth Copeland

Christus Victor/ Ransom

Mark 10:45: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to **give his life as a ransom** for many.”

Jn. 12:31: “Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the **prince of this world will be driven out.**”

1 Jn. 3:8: “The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The **reason the Son of God appeared** was to destroy the devil’s work.”

Christus Victor/ Ransom

Col. 2:13-15: “When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having **disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.**”

Origen of Alexandria (A.D. 182-254)

“If then we were “bought with a price,” as Paul asserts, we were doubtless bought from one whose servants we were, who also named what price he would for releasing those whom he held from his power. Now it was the devil that held us, to whose side we had been drawn away by our sins. He asked, therefore, as our price the blood of Christ.”

Christus Victor/Ransom

Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths

- Takes spiritual warfare seriously
- Highlights Jesus resurrection as well as the cross
- Emphasizes Jesus triumph by suffering rather than the use of force

Potential Weaknesses

- Wild speculation about ransom theories
- Over-realized eschatology (Word of Faith movement)
- Fails to address the mechanism of atonement

Penal Substitution

“Christ’s death **paid the just penalty** for our sins. **Instead of punishing guilty humanity,** God accepted the voluntary, substitutionary death of the innocent, perfect God-Man **in our place**. Various forms of this view have had steady support in every church age.

Exploring Christian Theology : Volume 2: Creation, Fall, and Salvation .

† Texts: Rom. 3:25; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pt. 3:18

† Advocates: Athanasias, Chrysostom, Anselm, the Reformers, Evangelicals

Penal Substitution

Rom. 3:25: “God presented Christ as a **sacrifice of atonement**, through the shedding of his **blood—to** be received by faith.”

2 Cor. 5:21: “God **made him** who had no sin **to be sin for us**, so that in him we might **become the righteousness of God**.

1 Peter 3:18: “For Christ also **suffered once for sins**, the **righteous for the unrighteous**, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.

Eusebius of Caesarea (A.D.260-340)

“And the **Lamb of God . . .** was **chastised** on our behalf, and **suffered a penalty He did not owe**, but which we owed because of the multitude of our sins; and so He became the cause of the forgiveness of our sins, because **He received death for us**, and **transferred to Himself the scourging**, the **insults**, and the dishonor, which were due to us, and drew **down upon Himself** the appointed **curse**, being made a curse for us.”

Eusebius of Caesarea, Proof of the Gospel, trans.
and ed. W. J. Ferrar, vol. 2

John Calvin

“Accordingly our Lord came forth as **true man** and took the person and the name of Adam in order to **take Adam’s place** in obeying the Father, to **present our flesh** as the **price of satisfaction to God’s righteous judgment**, and, in the same flesh, to **pay the penalty** that we had deserved . . . He offered as a **sacrifice** the flesh he received from us, that we might **wipe out our guilt** by his act of **expiation** and **appease the Father’s righteous wrath.**”

Institutes of Christian Religion, 2.12.3

J.I. Packer

“Jesus Christ, our Lord,
moved by a love that was
determined to do everything
necessary to **save us**, endured
and exhausted the destructive
divine judgment for which we
were otherwise inescapably
destined, and so won us
forgiveness, adoption and glory.”

“*What did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal
Substitution.*” Tyndale Bulletin 25
(1974) p. 25

Penal Substitution

Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths

- Recognizes the moral nature of the universe
- Takes sin seriously (a break in covenantal loyalty)
- Shows how the cross triumphs through suffering
- It able to integrate the other views

Potential Weaknesses

- It is unjust to punish the innocent for a guilty person
- Can sound overly mechanical rather than personal
- Can make God sound too rigid and petty
- We are held accountable for what cannot be avoided
- Can give the impression of conflict in the Trinity

A word cloud centered on the word "Atonement" in yellow. The word "Atonement" is the largest and most prominent. Surrounding it are various religious terms in white, including "Priesthood", "Lamb", "High Priest", "Love", "covenant", "mercy", "cross", "justice", "faithfulness", "righteousness", "sacrifice", "Father, Son, Holy Spirit", "ransom", "offering", "holiness", "peace", "pardon", "wrath", "forgiveness", "satisfaction", and "ransom". The words are arranged in a circular pattern around the central word.

holiness
peace
covenant
pardon
wrath
Love
mercy
cross
Priesthood
Lamb
High Priest
Atonement
justice
faithfulness
righteousness
sacrifice
Father,
Son,
Holy Spirit
ransom
offering
forgiveness
satisfaction

What Is the Extent of the Atonement?

- **Particular (Limited) Atonement:**
Christ's atoning death is intended for and effectual only for the elect.
- **General (Unlimited) Atonement:**
Christ's atoning death is sufficient to give all an opportunity to believe.



- **John 1:29: “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who **takes away the sin of the world!**”**

- **John 4:42: “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the **Savior of the world.**”**



- 2 Peter 3:9: The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, **not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**

- Heb. 2:9: “But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might **taste death for everyone.**”



- 1 Tim. 2:3-6: “This is good, and pleases **God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.** For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom **for all people.**”



- 1 John 2:2: “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the **atoning sacrifice for our sins**, and not only for ours but also for **the sins of the whole world.**”



- 2 Cor. 5:14-15: “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that **one died for all**, and therefore **all died**. And he **died for all**, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for **him who died for them** and was raised again.

Augustine of Hippo

“Why so? “For Him whom Thou hast smitten they have themselves persecuted, and upon the pain of my wounds they have added” (ver. 27). How then have they sinned if they have persecuted one by God smitten? What sin is ascribed to their mind? Malice. For the thing was done in Christ which was to be. To suffer indeed He had come, and He punished him through whom He suffered. For Judas the traitor was punished, and Christ was crucified: but us He redeemed by His blood, and He punished him in the matter of his price. For he threw down the price of silver, for which by him the Lord had been sold; and he knew not the price wherewith **he had himself by the Lord been redeemed. This thing was done in the case of Judas.**”

Exposition On the Book of Psalms,” in NPNF, 8:309

John Calvin

“The salvation provided by Christ is common to all mankind, for Christ, the Author of salvation, was begotten of Adam, the common father of us all.”

“From the very fall of man He was needed by all. . . . It would have done no good. . . . if He had not been available to all without distinction.”

2.13.3; Harmony, op. cit., vol.1, Luke 2:23-38

John Calvin

“This redemption was procured by the blood of Christ, for by the sacrifice of His death all the sins of the world have been expiated.”

Commentary on Colossians, p.308

“By His mediation God is satisfied and appeased, for He bore all the wickedness of all the sins of the world.”

Sermons on Isaiah, p.74

John Calvin

“It is, as I have already said, that, seeing that men are **created in the image of God** and that **their souls have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ**, we must try in every way available to us to draw them to the knowledge of the gospel.”

Sermons on Acts 1–7, p.593

Martin Luther

“Who knows whether Christ also bore my sin? I have no doubt that He bore the sin of St. Peter, St. Paul, and other saints; these were pious people.” Don’t you hear what St. John says in our text: “This is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”? And you cannot deny that you are also a part of this world, for you were born of man and woman. You are not a cow or a pig. It follows that your sins must be included, as well as the sins of St. Peter or St. Paul.... Don’t you hear? There is nothing missing from the Lamb. **He bears all the sins of the world from its inception; this implies that He also bears yours, and offers you grace.**”

Sermons on the Gospel of St. John Chapters 1–4

“What was suitable for one was suitable for all. The righteousness of Christ, the merit of his obedience and death, is needed for justification by each individual of our race, and therefore is needed by all. It is no more appropriate to one man than another. Christ fulfilled the conditions of the covenant under which all men were placed. He rendered the obedience required of all, and suffered the penalty which all had incurred; and therefore his work is equally suited for all.”

Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, p. 2:544-45