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ASSIGNMENT 1

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**BOOK REVIEW OF WILLIAM LANE CRAIG’S ‘THE ATONEMENT’**

**INTRODUCTION**

Man fell through sin, the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), God’s love for humanity is so intense that he decides to find a way out for man to escape destruction, but in showing mercy God would not go against the law of justice; thus, the death of Christ on the cross which is the Atonement for the sin of mankind, but all through history Christian thinkers have tried to provide various ideologies and theories to interpret or clarify the atonement. The execution of the atonement (i.e: the death of Christ covering for the sin of all of mankind) remains a controversial topic among many Christians today.

In William Lane Craig’s ‘The Atonement’, the text is organized into three sections accordingly after careful interdisciplinary research of this vital topic in the Christian doctrine, scouting both the old and the New Testament of the bible, historical theology and critical philosophy. These sections include: Biblical data concerning the atonement and the wide variety of motifs used to characterize this Christian doctrine; this is the section that mostly relates to the traditional exegesis of the bible where many metaphors are connected to the idea of Jesus’ atonement in the scripture. The second is Dogmatic history of the doctrine of the atonement; highlighting some of the key alternative theories of this very issue of the atonement offered by great Christian thinkers of the pre modern era. Thirdly, craig then talks about the philosophical reflections of the doctrine of the atonement; furrowing into a structural and critical engagement with philosophy of law, which allows an understanding of the atonement that moves beyond mystery and into the coherent mechanism of penal substitution, redemption, sacrifice, satisfaction, moral influence, divine justice, mercy and liberty through Christ.

The author views the doctrine of penal substitution as crucial to any biblical scenario relating to the issue of atonement, this is because the fact that Christ had to give himself up on the cross to reconcile humanity to God does not really make sense to the human understanding unless Christ stood in the gap for mankind and took on the penalty for our sins thus, redeeming us and giving us liberty from the consequences of our sins. Like I earlier stated in the first paragraph God is a merciful god as well as a God of justice, so to satisfy his justice there has to be punishment for the sin in question and one has to take up the responsibility of serving that punishment which is the redemptive act of Christ that in turn satisfies divine justice.

**AFFIRMATIONS/AGREEMENTS**

There’s hardly anything to disagree with as this book is filled with so many positive and interesting ideology and scenarios. Using his exegetical analysis, he was able to strike a balance between providing adequate detail and ability to argue his position in a brief and precise manner which made his work easy to read in spite of his technicality. He has clear and curt arguments with adequate biblical citations to back up his arguments. Then he goes on to elaborate his ideologies and arguments providing and showing the many varied responses a person could use in dealing with a particular challenge to the doctrine depending on the theological heritage and commitments of that fellow. Thus, making his arguments on penal substitution effective, helpful and universal.

One of the many good points that craig made is that the systems that governs humanity is dynamic in nature therefore they adjust from time to time and is built in a way that they constantly align with human fallibility or unreliability, with that said it is clear that a theology of atonement cannot be built on human standards of justice because it will only result to creating systems of justice that may not be entirely satisfactory to us.

From the three key points I made earlier; in the first part of the book Craig highlights biblical passages spanning from the Old Testament to the New Testament, showing how the New Testament story of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ underlies and kind of creates a better picture of the offering of sacrifices by the ancient Israelites for atonement of their sins. Craig argues that the sins of mankind were transferred to Christ, who then suffered the righteous wrath of God against sin. Thus, the author considers the understanding of Christ being our replacement so that we can receive the benefits of his righteousness as the core of penal substitution.

Focusing on historical data, the author considers the works of several theologians from premodern era, arguing that although these theologians of old held onto a *Christus victor* model whereby Christ’s death is seen as the way to overcome sin and damnation, craig argues that the *Christus victor* model alone would not give a vivid and valid point as to how Christ’s victory achieves that reconciliation with god.

Craigs analysis of these theories of atonement are relatively brief, simply stating that forgiveness following the salvific work of Christ on the cross cannot be made possible without divine justice being satisfied.

**DISAGREEMENT**

The negative is rather minute, simply put because he was really concise with his work and effective with his communication in almost every way. Just that there were times he quoted biblical references that didn’t really do justice to the point he was trying to make, also he quoted legal decisions longer than what felt needed. But generally, this was something that did not affect the overall message he was trying to pass.

**CONCLUSION**

This book is brief, exact ant technical. Therefore, it is not overbearing, it is readable and thought-provoking. I encourage you to read it.