TH611 - Theories of the Atonement
Fall Semester 2008-2009

Time: Fridays 1:15pm - 4:15pm

Instructor: Dr. Adonis Vidu
Office hours: Fridays 10am – 1pm

SYLLABUS

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The last few years have seen a revival of debates around the topic of atonement. The most significant development, however, is constituted by the increasing willingness of certain Evangelicals to surrender or drastically reformulate the penal substitutionary doctrine of the atonement. Although this elective does not deal exclusively with penal substitution, it will discuss the contemporary variety of atonement theories in terms of their relationship with Evangelical theology.

II. OBJECTIVES

By the end of the class, the student will have familiarized himself or herself with the main theories and interpretations of the atonement, both traditional and contemporary. He or she will have grasped the logic of the debate, assimilated the conceptual apparatus, and understood the personal, socio-cultural, and ecclesial implications of the different positions.

III. EVALUATION

This is a debate- and research-intensive class. Although there will be lecturing by the instructor, the weight of the class will fall on conversations about the required readings. Each student will have to produce written evidence that he has read the texts. This can take the form of extensive reading notes or critical remarks on the reading assignments. These will be turned in to the instructor at the beginning of each class. Reading notes are weighted at 30%. The rest of the 70% will be taken up by the research paper. Although a list of paper topics is included below, each student will be encouraged to follow his or her own interests in relation to the doctrine of the atonement and propose their own topics.
IV. COURSE STRUCTURE

12 Sept, 2008: Christus Victor: Dramatic Theories of the Atonement
   Gunton: 53-83
   Boersma: 181-201

19 Sept, 2008: Satisfaction
   Boersma: 153-179
   Gunton: 83-115

26 Sept, 2008: Moral influence
   Boersma: 115-132
   Mathews

3 Oct, 2008: Penal substitution
   McCormack
   Metzger
   Jeffery, Ovey, Sach: 100-161

10 Oct, 2008: Atonement and violence
   Boersma: 25-99
   Jeffery, Ovey, Sach: 226-240
   Mouw
   Weaver

[13-17 Oct, 2008: Reading Week]

24 Oct, 2008: Feminist criticism
   Tanner
   Ray: 93-114

31 Oct, 2008: Christ as Scapegoat
   Boersma: 133-153
   Heim, ‘No More Scapegoats’

7 Nov, 2008: Eastern Orthodox Perspectives on the Cross
   Boersma: 257-263
   Heim, ‘Salvation as Communion’

[10-14 Nov, 2008: Reading Week]

21 Nov, 2008: Atonement and consequences
   Gunton: 173-205
   Jeffery, Ovey, Sach: 218-226

[27-28 Nov, 2008 Thanksgiving Holiday]

5 Dec, 2008: Balancing the metaphors
   Blocher
   Gunton: 27-53
   Boersma: 99-115
V. REQUIRED READING

Books
- Steve Jeffery, Mike Ovey, Andrew Sach, Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution (Nottingham: IVP, 2007)

Articles (Listed in the order of reading; an electronic copy will be provided)

VI. SUGGESTED READING

- Heim, Mark S., Saved From Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006)
- Schmiechen, Peter, Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and Forms of the Church (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005)
- Scot McKnight, Jesus and His Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2005)
- Brock, Rita Nakashima and Parker, Rebecca Ann, Proverbs of Ashes: Redemptive Suffering, and the Search for What Saves Us (Boston: Beacon, 2002)

VII. GRADING SCALE

A = 93-100; A- = 90-92; B+ = 88-89; B = 83-87; B- = 80-82; C+ = 78-79; C = 73-77; C- = 70-72; D = 65-69; F = 0-64.

VIII. PAPER TOPIC SUGGESTIONS

- Anselm Reconsidered: The New Interpretation
- N. T. Wright’s Interpretation of Penal Substitution
- Can there be coherence in atonement theories?
- Did Jesus have an atonement theory?
- Atonement and ‘shame society’
- Atonement and ‘divine child abuse’
- Does the doctrine of penal substitution encourage domestic violence?

IX. NOTE ON PLAGIARISM

Please refer to Indiana University’s ‘Plagiarism: What It is and How to Recognize and Avoid It’ [http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml]. The document has the official recognition of Gordon-Conwell faculty.