

Atonement as Divine Love

Peter Abelard and the Wesleys

March 19, 2023

Definitions and Concepts

Ransom Theory: with the sin of Adam, and therefore all of our sins flowing from him, humanity was sold into bondage to Satan himself. Satan has tricked us and therefore we are under his dominion. Christ comes clothed in humanity, and when Satan attempts to kill the Messiah, unaware that he is God, Satan forfeits the entirety of humanity.

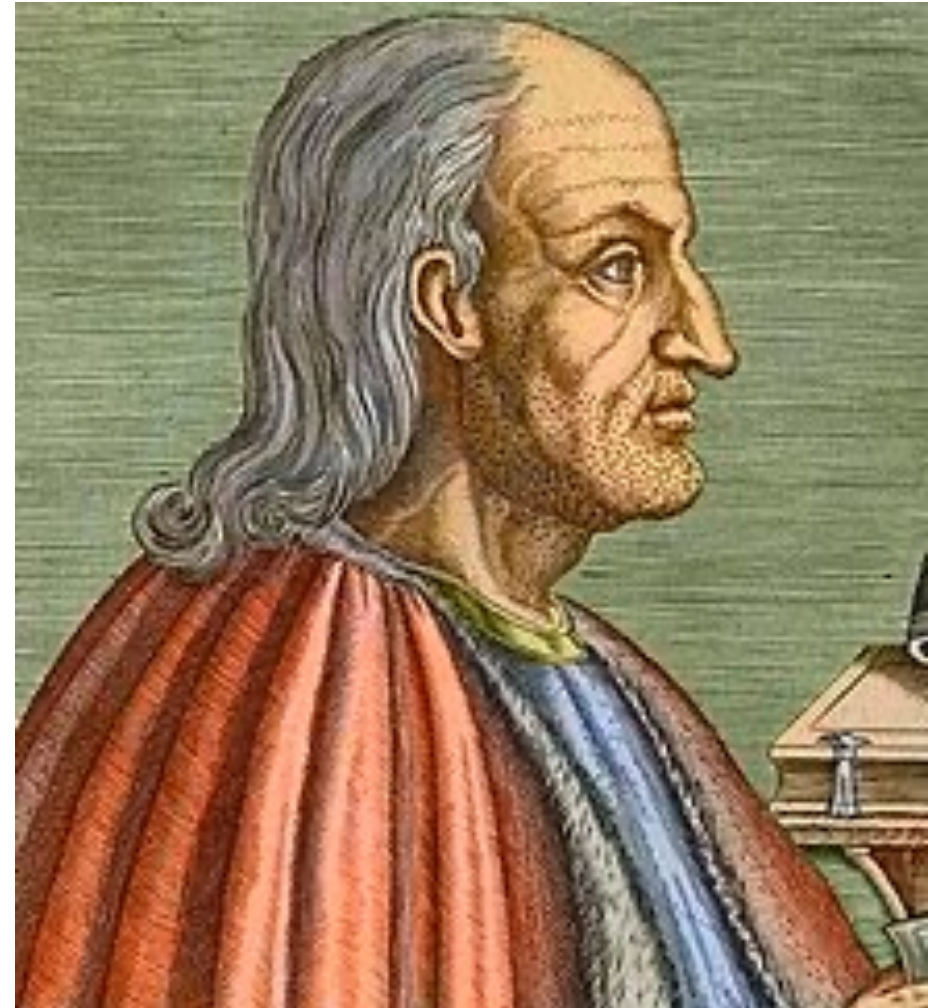
Problems: Too much power to Satan, God as a deceiver



Definitions and Concepts

Satisfaction Theory: Christ did not come as a human substitute for us. A debt is still owed, but it is one of honor, just by our being created. (Feudalism) Sin defrauds God of honor and therefore we have to pay it back. Honor owed is proportional to status or authority. God being infinite in glory is owed an infinite payment. None of us can do this, therefore God becomes man in order to pay back the price. Incarnation becomes tied to atonement.

Anselm's theory



Definitions and Concepts

Substitutionary Theory: Christ died for us. Jesus is a substitute for us, doing what we cannot do.

Penal Substitution: Christ died and is **punished** for our sins.

Wesleys' Theory



Definitions and Concepts

Moral Exemplarism: the belief that the purpose of Christ's life and death was to serve as a preeminent example of human love for God and obedience to God's will, an example that inspires in the observer a response of similar love and obedience to God.

Abelard was accused of this

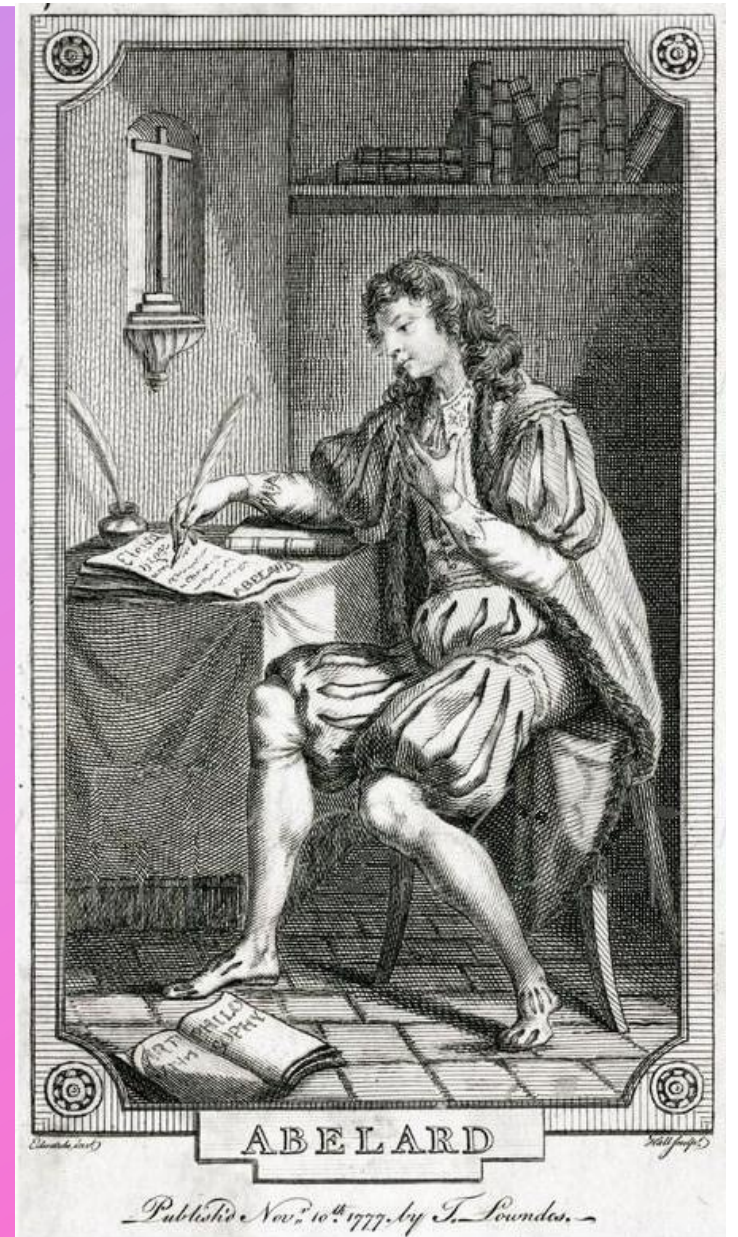
Pelagianism: humanity does good works entirely of its own power and this provides salvation. God gives us grace to live according to our own strengths and therefore we must achieve things.

Abelard also accused of this



Peter Abelard

1079-1142



Abelard's Theory

- No ransom is paid to the devil
 - Questions necessity of Christ's death as the only means God could save humanity.
- We are shown grace and Jesus taught us
 - Accusations of Pelagianism
 - God's grace is given to us through the reconciling work of Jesus

Abelard's Theory

- Abelard is concerned with how God employs Jesus' death for reconciliation
 - Incarnation
 - Teaching by word and example
 - Unitive, singular action by Trinity
- This means, we are justified and reconciled AND bound to God in love

Divine Love

- Love of God is source and goal of God's reconciling grace given through Jesus Christ
- We are freed through love and therefore must no longer fear
- God is the object most worthy of our love

John and Charles Wesley

1703-1791

1707-1788



Wesleys' Theory

- Sin as a violation of God's law, Jesus' death as punishment for sin and satisfaction of God's wrath on behalf of sinful humanity.
 - Substitutionary theory
- Main problem is our guilt for breaking God's law and our subsequent alienation from God.
 - Rejecting God's holy character

Wesleys' Theory

- Wrath of God is not outbursts of rage or hatred of humanity
 - It is righteous anger and opposition to human iniquity, therefore coming from God's love and justice
- Wesley concerned with addressing not only individual sin, but communal sin as well

Divine Love

- God is holy, AND God is love
 - Character is holy and love
- God's love most deeply revealed on the Cross, no greater way for us to be restored to God's love
- Substitutionary death of Jesus reveals God's reconciling love, enables us to love God and neighbor.

Similarities

- Trinitarian (Holy Spirit as “grace” and “love”)
- Faith and Love increased through atonement
- Incarnational
- God loves humanity, not full of wrath
- Restored relationship with God leads to love of neighbor
- Freedom from fear

The Difference

- “Abelard predicates his apology for divine love upon the substitutionary death of Christ, while the Wesleys emphasize the substitutionary death of Christ as the working of divine love,” (97).

Activity

Romans 5

“God’s Love and
Redemption”

“Free Grace”

“I Felt My Heart
Strangely
Warmed”

Focus Topics:

- Brief Summary
 - What is the main message of the text?
- Identify Key Words/Concepts of Divine Love

Questions?

Next Week 3/26:
Atonement as
Reconciliation

