



Extracts of Teachers' Notes from Film Three

Defeating Evil

Evaluating Ransom and Penal Substitution Theories

Could a good God really demand the death of an innocent man as some kind of 'justice'? Jesus' teachings of forgiveness and love are in stark contrast to this demand for blood and sits uncomfortably in the light of Jesus' own teachings.

Although humanity is the guilty party, in both the Satisfaction and Penal theories, humans contribute nothing and Jesus everything.

Logically, the Penal Theory requires that any new human sins committed after Jesus' death would also have to be punished.

If Jesus' death satisfied God's need for justice, and if humans made no contribution to the process, then salvation and atonement should be granted to everyone and not just to those who accept Christ as Saviour. (This actually is the view of the reformers – many of whom were Universalists while others thought that only the elect (a small pre-determined group) would gain access to heaven.

The theory supposes that human sin incurs an infinite debt to God which can only be cancelled by an infinite satisfaction through the death of the sinless Jesus. But by using the same logic, a small good human act should result in an infinite amount of good. There is imbalance – why does human sin count for more than human good?

Christus Victor

The Christus Victor (Christ the Victor) Theory asserts that Christ is victorious over sin, death, and the devil. This theory was dominant in the first millennium of Christianity and revived by Gustaf Aulen in his book, *Christus Victor*, first published in 1931. For Aulen: "*The work of Christ is first and foremost a victory over the powers which hold mankind in bondage: sin, death, and the devil*".

Aulen argues that the idea of ransom led people away from what the early church had meant. The crucifixion was not payment to the devil



but represented rather the saving of humanity from the shackles of sin, death and the devil. Christ was victorious over something. In an open cosmic drama (in keeping with what we do know was the world view of the early Christians) the death of Christ was God pitting himself against the hostile powers and beating them. The sin is cancelled not because God is paid back, or his honour restored but because Christ fights evil and beats it. Man is a passenger on the journey – when he aligns himself to Christ he is participating in the cosmic event of good overcoming evil.

Activities;

1. Make a pictorial representation of the evolution of Satan from a shadowy insubstantial figure to the evolved Tempter in the New Testament. At what point did the serpent in the Garden of Eden become the Devil?

2. List the wrongs in the world that could be said to be 'evil'. Do these include sickness, injustice, and poverty and if so, are they 'evil' or just 'natural'?

3. In common with many peoples, 1st century Jews ascribed illness they didn't understand to supernatural forces. Modern man is the opposite, thinking that everything can be healed by science and that what we don't understand now, we eventually will. Make a list of things/events/ that are not yet understood. Would the world be a better or worse place if all mystery was taken away?

4. Wittgenstein argued that when we talk about religion we use 'language games.' In the way a chess player knows the rules of the games and *assumes others know too*, so people talking about religion use internal rules that make sense only to them.
 - a) Define the words Atonement and Incarnation
 - b) Do the words mean anything to a non-religious person or do only make sense within the language game of Christianity?