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Class: TH601 NA/NOS Systematic Theology II: Christ and the Church

QUESTIONS

1. Why is the cross central among Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches?
2. What are the two emblems of the gospel and their significance?
3. List and briefly explain any three modes of atonement stated by Bird.
4. According to Bird, what is the most central theory of the atonement?
5. State five things the cross achieved.

ANSWERS

1. The cross is central among Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches because of atonement. At the cross, God dealt with the problem of sin, rebellion, Satan, and humanity's separation from Him through a redemptive action that draws together the offender and the offended party in reconciliation.
2. The two emblems of the gospel and their significance are baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are reminders of believers identifying with and participating in the death and resurrection of Jesus.
3. Three modes of atonement stated by Bird are:
 - a) Recapitulation – Irenaeus describes it as a summing up and saving all of humanity in Christ. God was in Christ reconciling the world, and the world is summed up, united, and included in Christ like it was in Adam.
 - b) Christus Victor – the early church viewed Jesus's death as a victory over death, the devil, and evil.
 - c) Penal substitution – this view maintains that Jesus' death was a sacrifice for sins in our place. In other words, Jesus' death bears God's wrath against our sin (penal), and Jesus dies in our place (it is a substitution).
4. According to Bird, the Christus Victor theory is the most central theory of the atonement. He tentatively proposes that it is the crucial integrative hub for the atonement because it provides an intersection in which the other modes of the atonement come together. It enables us to hold together the binary nodes that characterize the atonement, including its objective and subjective aspects, Christ's death and God's dominion, incarnation and redemption, wrath and love, sin and salvation, Jesus' life and death, and soteriology and cosmology.
5. The cross achieved a ransom for sins, an institution of the new covenant, forgiveness of sins, redemption, and justification.

TERMS

Atonement: is derived from the Old English “onement,” which means to unite or attain a state of “at-one-ness.” Atonement is the covering over of sin, the reconciliation between God and man, accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Protoevangelium: the first gospel set out in Genesis 3:15. It contains the first promise of redemption.

Crucicentrism: the doctrine of the cross. In other words, the teaching of Christ and Him crucified.

SUMMARY

In 4.4 to 4.4.2, Bird looks at Christ’s death, the achievement of the cross, atonement, and its various modes. Many evangelicals maintain that penal substitution is the primary and most important mode of atonement. He also discusses the question, is the cross divine child abuse, especially penal substitution? He concludes that it is irresponsible to see it that way because the atonement is prompted by the loving grace of the Father, embraced by the obedient Son, and effected by the Spirit.