

Violence



“We are going to deal theologically with the problem of violence forever because it is intrinsic to our inheritance. The question for God for all of us who follow this God is whether we can resist that stuff that is intrinsically present in our existence.”

– Walter Brueggemann in Living the Questions

1st break:

How do you see the community Jesus inaugurated still being “radical” today?

2nd break:

The “Myth of Redemptive Violence” is promoted in a number of classic Christian theories. How would you describe each of them?

Satisfaction Theory

Substitution Theory

Ransom Theory

Victory Theory

How does the “Moral Theory” of looking at Jesus’ death avoid violence atonement?

Crossan says that “substitution” or “suffering” is not the point, *sacrum facere* is. What does he mean?

What were the circumstances of Anselm’s “coming up with” substitutionary atonement?

3rd break:

What’s wrong with the image of “Jesus, the Divine Invader” dying for our sins?

What part does love play in communicating the message that there’s nothing you can ever do or be that will separate you from the love of God?

4th break:

What rationale does Crossan give for the claim that God is non-violent?

5th break:

What is your response to Sister Helen’s description of “a crystallized act of hatred by the community?”

How does “using the two arms of the cross” contribute to the idea of at-one-ment?

General Reflection:

What do you find most helpful or interesting from the material so far?

What are the implications for your personal spiritual journey? For Christianity as a whole?

Words of Wisdom

Part of Augustine’s reason for going into the priesthood was to seek absolution for his early uninhibited sex life. So, it's not surprising that he would connect sex as the primal transmission of sin from one generation to the next. In creating the idea of Original Sin, he suggested that all of Adam’s descendants are inheritors of this "stain" of sin. To make his point, Augustine looked to Paul’s argument that Adam’s sin necessitated Jesus’ sacrifice in order to appease God. “Adam did it, Jesus undid it” is one of the foundations of the idea of blood atonement. Our inherent sinfulness was so great that our profoundly offended God could only be appeased by the violent spilling of blood. Although *our* blood being spilled was deserved, *Jesus’* blood would suffice.

Read Romans 5 for background.

For further reference:

John Cobb references Romans 3 in the 2nd section of the video.

“Those who take up the sword perish by the sword.”

– Jesus, *Matthew 26:52*

Spirit Practice

As part of your Spiritual Practices, consider:

- 1) Mentoring an at-risk child or youth or becoming a Big Brother or Big Sister.

- 2) Volunteering to help at a domestic violence shelter, a rape crisis center or become part of their work of advocacy against violence.

- 3) Making or commissioning bags to be made for Child Protective Service. When children must be removed from their home, their belongings are often placed in a garbage bag. Individuals and groups in Tucson, Arizona and other cities are donating magnificent drawstring bags for social workers to use and children to keep.

Try it

Blood-free zone

If you are part of a faith community, do a “blood survey” of the liturgy, music, and worship in general. Then determine where you can change the blood metaphor to reflect the meaning behind the rote words. It’s remarkable how easily the word “love” can replace “blood” in many hymns and prayers and sound like that was the way it was supposed to be in the first place. Making communion a “blood-free” celebration requires using words that express what the metaphors of blood and body have always meant, but which have traditionally been taken to literal extremes. Transitioning is as simple as replacing Jesus’ “blood” and “body” with sharing the “cup of God’s mercy” and the “bread of new life.” For theological justification, one can point to the Moral theory of atonement and its consideration of Jesus’ life, teachings, and practice of mercy and inclusion.