Dear Reader:

The following paper is a version of some of my work on the Atonement that was written to a more a less evangelical audience; a slightly different version of what I call the Incarnational Theory (as I develop it in part II of the paper) is published in "Girard and Atonement: An Incarnational Theory of Mimetic Participation." (Rich Text Format Version or HTML version) In Violence Renounced: Rene Girard, Biblical Studies, and Peacemaking (Studies in Peace and Scripture, 4), Willard Swartley editor, Herald/Pandora Press, June 2000.

Since writing the paper in 1994-1995, I have considerably developed the Incarnational theory, specifically the specific version of the theory elaborated under the subsection "A Deeper Development of the Incarnational Theory" in the second part of the paper. Probably the best way of reading the paper is to read the main version below, and then for a more in-depth treatment of certain aspects of it, read the Appendix. This is still work in progress, and I have extended and elaborated on some of the ideas of the theory since writing the main paper and the appendix below. One main area that the paper below needs revision is in its discussion of the moral exemplar or moral influence theory; it oversimplifies the theory and does not consider more sophisticated developments of it.

I would like to thank Rebecca Adams, my wife and colleague, who not only suggested the idea for the opening parable, but has substantially contributed throughout to both the content and style of this paper. Any comments on this version of the paper would be much appreciated. My address: Department of Philosophy, Messiah College, Grantham, PA 17027; E-mail: office phone: (717) 796-1800 ext.3100. Email is listed on my main webpage www.robincollins.org .

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Understanding Atonement: A New and Orthodox Theory

Robin Collins

Suppose a theologian told the following parable:

There was a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, "Father, give me my share of the estate." So the father divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son went off to a distant country, squandered all he had in wild living, and ended up feeding pigs in order to survive. Eventually he returned to his father, saying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me one of your hired servants." But his father responded: "I cannot simply forgive you for what you have done, not even so much as to make you one of my hired men. You have insulted my honor by your wild living. Simply to forgive you would be to trivialize sin; it would be

against the moral order of the entire universe. For 'nothing is less tolerable in the order of things than for a son to take away the honor due to his father and not make recompense for what he takes away. '[(2)] Such is the severity of my justice that reconciliation will not be made unless the penalty is utterly paid. My wrath--my avenging justice--must be placated.'"[(3)]

"But father, please..." the son began to plead.

"No," the father said, "either you must be punished or you must pay back, through hard labor for as long as you shall live, the honor you stole from me."

Then the elder brother spoke up. "Father, I will pay the debt that he owes and endure your just punishment for him. Let me work extra in the field on his behalf and thereby placate your wrath." And it came to pass that the elder brother took on the garb of a servant and labored hard year after year, often long into the night, on behalf of his younger brother. And finally, when the elder brother died of exhaustion, the father's wrath was placated against his younger son and they lived happily for the remainder of their days.[(4)]

The above parable will strike many of you as a perverted version of Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son. And, I believe, it should. Yet it essentially embodies the most widely accepted story of the Atonement that has been told in Western Christianity since the time of Anselm in the eleventh century, and as George Foley notes (232), has been the basis ever since the Protestant Reformation for what has been called Evangelical Theology. As we shall see, this story is actually a mixture of two theories of the Atonement--Anselm's Debt or Satisfaction theory, and the Penal theory of the Reformers--theories which essentially say that Christ's death satisfied the debt demanded by the moral order, or paid the penalty demanded by divine justice, for our sins. Many Christians have read and heard these ideas countless times in books and sermons, and such teachings probably have seemed perfectly acceptable, sensible, and biblical. We might ask, however: if these theories (which are closely related) are really quite unbiblical when their claims are transposed into the concrete situation of Jesus' parable, why have they been accepted by so many Christians? And are they really the only alternatives available?

A Distinction between Doctrine and Theory

To begin answering these questions, we need to make a crucial distinction between the doctrine of the Atonement and a theory of the Atonement. The doctrine of the Atonement is essentially the claim that through Christ's life, death, and Resurrection, we are saved from sin and reconciled to God. A theory of the Atonement, on the other hand, is an explanation of both how and why Christ's life, death, and Resurrection was in some sense necessary to save us from sin and reconcile us to God.

Now, the doctrine of the Atonement is absolutely essential to the proclamation of the gospel and hence Christianity, for the gospel is just this proclamation that through Christ's life and death, and our faith in that event, we are saved from sin and reconciled to God. This is not so with theories of the Atonement, however. Not only have many theories of the Atonement been offered throughout Church history, but no theory of the Atonement has been considered a matter of Church dogma. For example, no such theory is included in any of the formative creeds, nor was any such theory pronounced by any of the early authoritative councils which decided on the canon of scripture and the basic teachings of Christianity. Moreover, although scripture could plausibly be said to support some theories over others, nowhere in scripture is any particular theory actually stated. Thus, much room is left open to theorize concerning this central doctrine and yet remain both orthodox and true to scripture.

Below, I am going to argue that the Satisfaction and Penal theories of the Atonement are so unsatisfactory that we would be better off simply to accept the doctrine of the Atonement as a mystery than to accept one of them. I believe that so many people have accepted the dominant Western theories because of confusion

about the difference between the doctrine of the Atonement and theories of the Atonement, because of tradition, and, probably most significantly, because of the lack of any better alternative theory. After critiquing the traditional Western theories, therefore, I shall develop, in a philosophically careful and clear way, a much more adequate theory. First, however, let's put all this theorizing in historical perspective.

A Brief History of Theories of the Atonement in the West

The first major theory of the Atonement to be put forth in Western Christianity was the Bargain or Ransom theory. Essentially, this theory claimed that Adam and Eve sold humanity over to the Devil at the time of the Fall; hence, justice required that God pay the Devil a ransom to free us from the Devil's clutches. God, however, tricked the Devil into accepting Christ's death as a ransom, for the Devil did not realize that Christ could not be held in the bonds of death. Once the Devil accepted Christ's death as a ransom, this theory concluded, justice was satisfied and God was able to free us from Satan's grip. During the first formative centuries of Christianity this reasoning seemed plausible to many Christians, but it was never made a required belief. Although the Ransom theory dominated for the first thousand years of Western Christian thought on the subject, since the eleventh century it has been almost entirely abandoned by trained theologians largely because of what has been considered a devastating critique by Anselm, a major medieval philosopher and theologian. According to this critique, since the Devil is an outlaw himself, he could never have a just claim on us. Hence, Anselm argued, God did not need to pay the Devil anything to free us.[(5)] Since it is generally agreed to this day that Anselm's critique dispatches this theory, there is no need to address or critique it further here.

Along with critiquing the Ransom theory, Anselm systematically developed an alternative theory, what has come to be known as the Debt or Satisfaction theory, the second major Western theory of the Atonement. According to the Satisfaction theory we have contracted a debt of obligation to God because of our sin. God, however, could not simply forgive our debt. God's honor and the order of the universe, Anselm claimed, require that either we be punished or the debt be paid (satisfied). Since we could not pay ourselves, this theory goes, God the Son paid our debt for us by being perfectly obedient to God the Father, even to the point of suffering and dying on the Cross. Once this debt was satisfied, God was free to shower us with his mercy and thereby free us from sin and reconcile us to himself, given that we repent and respond to his grace.

At about the same time as Anselm, the theologian/philosopher Peter Abelard developed the third major western theory of the Atonement, which has become known as the Moral Exemplar theory. According to this theory, Christ's life and death save us by giving us a perfect moral example of love, humility, and obedience to follow. Many Christians over the centuries have found this idea spiritually edifying and helpful for practical discipleship. Others, however, have dismissed this theory as being inadequate to scripture, and I believe they are largely right, at least in the way this theory is commonly presented. The main problem with this idea (at least as a theory of Atonement) is that it implies that Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection do not play a significantly greater role in our salvation than that played by John the Baptist, Socrates, or Mother Teresa--each of whom in various ways provides a good, though not perfect, moral example for us to imitate or to draw inspiration from. In fact, based on this theory, one could argue that Jesus plays a significantly lesser role: since many contemporary examples are more like us in many important respects than Jesus Christ, who after all was unlike us in being morally perfect and living two thousand years ago, these other models should be easier to imitate and thus more effective than Jesus in inspiring us. But the New Testament implies that Jesus played a crucial role in our salvation, a role qualitatively different from that of anyone else. So, although Jesus certainly did provide an inspiring moral example and this basic idea has many merits, the Moral Exemplar theory does not by itself adequately account for the doctrine of the Atonement and hence I shall not consider it further here.[(6)]

The fourth major theory of the Atonement, the Penal Theory, was developed centuries after Anselm and Abelard by the Protestant Reformers and those who followed them. The Penal theory is actually an updated and modified version of the Satisfaction theory; instead of saying that Christ paid a debt we owed, it simply claims instead that Christ took the punishment we deserved. According to the Penal theory, justice, or the moral order, requires that our sin be punished. Christ, however, the theory claims, satisfied this demand of justice by enduring our punishment for us on the Cross, and thus opened the way for God's grace in our lives. Though historically the latest major theory to arrive on the scene, the Penal theory is probably the most widely known and influential interpretation of the doctrine of the Atonement in Western Christianity.

Since the time of the Protestant Reformation, almost all Western theories of the Atonement have been largely variations of Anselm's Satisfaction theory, the Penal theory, and the Moral Exemplar theory. All these theories we have discussed share one thing in common: they understand the basic relationship of God to the world primarily in terms of moral law, and the Satisfaction and Penal theories explicitly use judicial notions and the imagery of the courtroom. More conservative Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, typically adopt some variation or combination of the Satisfaction and Penal theories, and liberal Christians, both Protestant and Catholic, have commonly adopted some variation of the Moral Exemplar theory. Indeed, among many conservative circles, particularly Evangelical circles, the Satisfaction and Penal theories have become very deeply ingrained. For instance, Anselm's Satisfaction theory has become embodied in standard Christian hymns and songs with which most of us are familiar, such as the one which tells us that "He paid a debt He did not owe," and "I owed a debt I could not pay," (Grogan). Moreover, these theories are frequently preached from the pulpit as though they were identical with the gospel proclamation as found in scripture: how many times, for instance, have we heard the gospel accounts of Jesus' life, death and Resurrection explained as a story about how Christ paid our punishment and thereby satisfied the demands of divine justice (i.e. the Penal theory)? Yet, as many writers on the subject have noted, nowhere does scripture say these things; rather, they are fairly late interpretations of scripture, interpretations about which orthodox Christians have disagreed throughout the centuries, both in the East and West. For example, as the Church historian L. W. Grensted has pointed out, "Before the Reformation only a few hints of a Penal theory can be found. After the Reformation it became the common ground for a great majority of Protestant writers" (191). All of this should convince us that the standard theories of the Atonement should not simply be accepted as part of standard Christian teaching. Rather, these theories must be judged on how well they provide a philosophically, ethically, theologically, and biblically sound explanation and understanding of the doctrine of the Atonement, something I will now argue that they fail to do.

A Brief Critique of the Satisfaction and Penal Theories

In this section I will not try to give a full scale critique of the Penal and Satisfaction theories, but will instead simply point to some major logical problems with each of these theories that should motivate us to consider the alternative theory I will later be proposing. The main problem with the Satisfaction and Penal theories involves their effectiveness as theories. If you really think about it, they never actually help us understand the doctrine of the Atonement, and thus they fail to accomplish what theories of the Atonement are designed to do--that is, help us make sense of the doctrine. To see this, note that in order for a theory to make any real progress in making sense of the Atonement it must not "explain" the doctrine of the Atonement at the cost of making some new claims that are at least as puzzling as the doctrine itself.[(7)]

But this is exactly what these two theories do. They only eliminate our puzzlement regarding the doctrine of the Atonement by introducing two new claims that are at least as perplexing: namely, 1) the claim that God cannot simply forgive our sin but must demand repayment, even if we repent and deeply recognize the wrongness of our acts, and 2) the claim that the debt of obligation or punishment for our sin can be paid by another, namely Christ, and that this satisfies the demands of the moral order. It is especially difficult to see how this latter claim could be true, particularly once we take into account that according to orthodox

Christian doctrine Christ is God, and hence one of the persons who we have sinned against, one of the "victims" of our crimes. If I were to stab you, neither justice nor the moral order would be satisfied by you, the victim, causing yourself further suffering by, for example, whipping or hanging yourself in order to pay the penalty for my crime.

In response to this logical problem, people commonly try to make sense of these theories by appealing to legal cases in which one person pays the debt of another, such as a parent paying her child's traffic ticket. This response, however, fails, for although this type of event commonly happens, the laws that allow it to happen, such as speeding laws, are not designed to institute the demands of justice, but rather to keep order in society (i.e., they are civil laws). Instead, the truly analogous legal cases are those in which we think that justice demands punishment, such as in murder cases (i.e. those involving criminal laws). But these are the very cases in which we do not think that justice is satisfied by someone else paying the criminal's penalty, such as a mother going to the electric chair in place of her son. In Anselm's time, however, even criminal offenses such as murder were handled like traffic tickets with the payment of money, because the concern of that society was not so much to ensure justice for the victim as to prevent violent retaliation by the victim's family, and the social chaos which would result from blood feuds of this sort. In the medieval legal system, therefore, not only could money substitute for punishment, but it didn't even matter who paid the money. This is why the notion that a third party could pay a criminal's debt of obligation, and that this could adequately substitute for a criminal punishment such as a death penalty, made some sense within Anselm's culture, but we now feel it doesn't really satisfy the demands of justice.

I conclude, therefore, that the Satisfaction and Penal theories do not help us make sense of the Atonement, but rather make it more puzzling than it was before. Lest I be misunderstood, it is important to stress at this point that I am not arguing that just because we can't understand how divine justice could be satisfied by Christ paying our supposed debt of obligation, these theories must be false. After all, I recognize that there are many truths about God and the world that are mysterious or difficult to understand from a human perspective, such as the doctrine of the Trinity. Rather, all I am claiming is that because the central claims of these two theories of the Atonement are at least as puzzling from a human perspective as the doctrine of the Atonement itself, they do not really make any progress in explaining or helping us to understand the Atonement, and thus they fail to do what a theory of the Atonement is designed to do. Therefore, unless we have other strong reasons to believe these theories, something I claim we don't have, we would be better off simply accepting the doctrine as a mystery than accepting one of these theories.

The above argument applies to both theories. When we look at the Satisfaction theory, however, even worse problems lurk in the shadows, particularly surrounding its claim that God cannot simply forgive our debt of sin without demanding repayment, as I might forgive a debt you owe me. To see the problem clearly, first note that if we consider God the Son as one with God the Father, the Atonement under the Satisfaction view simply amounts to God paying God, which is equivalent to God forgiving the debt. On the other hand, if we consider God the Son as distinct from God the Father, the question arises: Who pays the debt we owe to God the Son because of our sin against him? If Christ--that is, God the Son--pays it, that is equivalent to God the Son paying himself and hence forgiving it. But if God the Son can forgive the debt we owe him, why can't the Father do the same? So either way you look at it, it turns out that God the Father can simply forgive our debt without demanding repayment, contrary to the central claim of the Satisfaction theory.

Given the above problems with the Satisfaction and Penal theories, and given that they are not adequately supported by scripture as I will go on to show later, one might wonder why these theories have been so popular among Christians. At least a large part of the reason, I suspect, is the apparent lack of a better, well-developed alternative theory that is compatible with scripture. I will attempt to develop such an alternative below.

A New and Orthodox Theory:
The Incarnational Theory of the Atonement

The general idea behind the "new" theory of the Atonement that I will be developing actually has a long history in Christian thought. This idea of the Atonement doesn't start with the idea of law or use courtroom imagery to describe God's fundamental relationship with the world, but instead begins with the idea of God's grace and love for creation and uses imagery of God's participation in creation to bring it to fulfillment. This different approach ultimately goes back to the Apostle Paul, was advocated by some of the early Greek Fathers of the Church, and has been further developed through the centuries by Eastern Orthodox theologians (though in a way that seems problematic from the perspective of Western modes of thought).[(8)] Moreover, this alternative idea has also turned up here and there in Western Christianity throughout the centuries, for example, in the theology of the medieval mystic Julian of Norwich, and in various theological traditions which stress Jesus' identification with us, especially in injustice and suffering. As far as I can tell, however, no one has systematically developed this alternative theological approach in a way that is clear and coherent from the perspective of Western philosophy. This is now what I will attempt to do.

The best way of developing what I will call the Incarnational theory, I believe, is by starting with Paul's model of the Atonement as found in Romans chapter 6, Galatians 2:22, Galatians 3:27, 2 Cor. 5:14, and other biblical passages. In these passages, Paul hints at a theory of the Atonement based on participation or unity with Christ, but doesn't go into much detail. Although Paul tells us something about how Atonement works in these verses--it is through unity with Christ's death that we are united with Christ in his Resurrection (see, for example, Romans 6:5)--he does not tell us why unity with Christ's death is necessary. It seems like an extra step in the process of salvation. Why couldn't God, for instance, simply unite us with himself directly? Why do we first need to be united with Christ in his death? And how does this unity with Christ's death actually come about? I am going to hypothesize, following Paul, that unity with Christ in his death is necessary for unity with Christ in his Resurrection, but I will go beyond what Paul explicitly says by explaining why this extra step about unity with Christ's death is necessary. To this we now turn.

Let's begin by analyzing what unity with Christ amounts to. A variety of metaphors which suggest a very intimate relationship are used in Scripture: Various passages compare our future unity with Christ to that between a vine and its branches (Jn. 15), to that between the parts of a body (I Cor. 12:12-28), to that between the Son and the Father (Jn. 17), and to that which ideally occurs in marriage (Mk. 10:8; Eph. 5:25-32). What is common in each of these analogies is that unity is conceived as involving a mutual sharing, integrating, and intertwining of two selves, along with the sharing of a common life. For example, the vine and the branches are inseparable from one another, sharing the common life of the plant together, and the life and well-being of each part of the body is intimately tied to that of all the other members, so that no part can get along without the other members. Moreover, the unity between Christ and the Father is one in which Christ is "in" the Father and the Father is "in" Christ; the metaphor of parent and child conveys the concept of a shared family identity, history, and inheritance (and the doctrine of the Trinity indeed claims that Jesus the Son is a separate person from, yet "one substance" with, the Father.) Finally, the unity that ideally occurs in marriage involves a mutual sharing of one's life and self, a sharing in which each life and each self become "part" of the life and the self of the other through a mutual choice and a common life history.

Now the central claim of the Incarnational theory is that just as an apple tree branch, for example, cannot be successfully be grafted into a form of life that is totally alien to it, such as a horse, God's self cannot be united with our selves in the way scripture suggests if God's self is too alien from our selves. But, apart from the Incarnation, God's self would be very alien to ours. After all, God is infinite, we are finite; God knows everything, our knowledge is limited; God is eternal, we are not; God is everywhere, we are confined to a body; God is not dependent, we are vulnerable and dependent; and the list goes on. Thus, in

order to establish as much common ground between God's self and ours as a basis for the deep sort of intertwining unity the biblical images point to, God must not only take on human nature, but God must share what I call our life-situation, for our life-situation as human beings is inseparable from what we are. Since our life-situation, however, involves among other things negative conditions such alienation from God and others (including ourselves), vulnerability, suffering, victimization, and mortality, this means that God the Son must himself experience alienation, vulnerability, suffering, victimization, mortality and the like in order to share our life-situation. This is what, according to the Incarnational theory, Christ did in his life and death. Jesus took on and participated in even the most negative elements of our human life-situation. Indeed, as the Eastern Orthodox theologian Kallistos Ware stresses, the Cross represents the very climax of Christ entering into our human condition, and thus the very climax of Christ's atoning work. On the Cross Christ even experienced our alienation from God, as evidenced by his exclamation "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 16:34).

In short, the Incarnational theory says that by entering into our life-situation as fully as possible, God's self ceases to be alien from our selves, and thus makes it possible for our selves to become united with God's self. Becoming united with God's self in turn saves us from sin, for the more deeply we become united or bonded with God, the less we will be bound to sin (because God's life is a life of complete love, the cure for sin and its bondage). The essential claim of the Atonement under the Incarnational theory is that by being united with Christ in his death, we are able to be united with him in his resurrection life, that is, to participate in the life of God.

A Deeper Development of the Incarnational Theory

Although the above account of the concept of unity or participation is good as far as it goes, it needs a deeper development by further considering the nature of God's love. Let's start by considering that the Book of 1 John seems to suggest that the love of God is not just another attribute of God but is the essence of God's nature. Then think about the fact that if God's love is at the heart of God's life, it makes sense that we must share in his love in order to share in his life (as with the vine on the branches). But this sharing must be conceived in the right way. When God gives us his love, it cannot be as though God takes some love from his own being, puts it in a bag, and then hands it to us. Rather, if God's love is really inseparable from God himself, then when we partake of God's love, we literally partake of God, for as 1 John 4:8 says, God <u>is</u> love. Apart from Christ's life and death, however, the love of God as it exists between the members of the Trinity is a love that acts from a standpoint of infinity, invulnerability and total acceptance. When, for instance, the Father expresses love for the Holy Spirit, the Father does not risk being rejected, ridiculed, or taken advantage of. As wonderful as this sort of love is, therefore, it is not the sort of love that at present we can significantly share in or assimilate into our life-situation. For at least on earth, our love is a risky affair: it must operate from the standpoint of finitude, vulnerability, and to some extent alienation from God, ourselves, and others. Moreover, it must even continue to love in the face of unjust persecution.

Consequently, if God's love is going to be something we can deeply share in and assimilate into our lives, it must take on human form--that is, it must become a form of love that we can relate to, a form of love that is able to operate from a standpoint of finitude, vulnerability, alienation, and unjust treatment. According to the Incarnational theory, this is what happened in the Incarnation and reached its climax on the Cross. For on the Cross Christ entered into the very depths of our life-situation, but nonetheless he continued to act in perfect love toward God and others: that is, Christ was obedient and faithful even unto death to insisting on a relationship of perfect trust with the Father, and to persisting in his earthly mission of inviting others to share that same relationship. Moreover, since the essence and definition of love is to reach out in relationship in just this way, love by its very nature overcomes alienation and spiritual death, the essence of what (in contrast to love) Paul calls the life of the "old self" or old sinful nature (Rom. 6:6). Accordingly, by sharing the love of Christ as manifested on the Cross, it follows that, as Paul emphasizes again and again, the old (alienated) self dies and we partake of the new life of the Resurrection. According to this account, therefore, we are saved from our sin and partake in Christ's resurrection life by identifying with,

and sharing in, Christ's perfect love toward God and others which was demonstrated in his death on the Cross.

Not only does this account make sense on its own terms, but it also makes much sense of both Old and New Testament rituals which are intended to express our fundamental relationship to God. First, the Incarnational theory makes it possible to see a new yet very traditionally Jewish meaning in the Old Testament sacrificial ritual, a ritual that the book of Hebrews tells us is supposed to be a type or image of Christ's sacrifice. Essentially, this ritual involved the worshiper laying hands on the head of an animal (for example, a lamb or a bull), and then slaying the animal. The priest then took the blood and poured it on the altar as a sacrifice to God. Now, as many commentators have noted, the Old Testament never really tells us how such a sacrifice is supposed to provide Atonement, except for laying down the principle that the "life is in the blood" (Lev. 17:11-14). Given this principle, and the claim, advanced by many commentators, that laying on of hands is best interpreted as an act of identification with the one on whom hands are laid (Taylor 53-4; Dunn 44-5), a straightforward Christian interpretation of the Hebrew sacrificial ritual follows. The animal can be seen as analogous to Christ, the offering of its blood can be seen as analogous to Christ's offering his life over to God and others in love and trust, and thus the laying on of hands can be seen as analogous to our identification with, and thus sharing in, that love and trust expressed by Christ on the Cross--a sharing that results in our redemption. From this analysis it indeed follows that we are saved by Christ's blood shed on the Cross, but not in the magical way commonly conceived. Rather, Christ's blood represents his life completely given over to God in love, trust, and self-sharing, and we are saved from sin by sharing in this life given over in perfect love. This is why Jesus says in John 6 that we must drink his blood--that is, his life--in order to have eternal life.

Thus, this account also provides an insightful understanding of the Christian practice of communion. Under the Incarnational theory, taking communion by eating the bread and drinking the cup vividly symbolizes partaking of Christ's life and love poured out on the Cross. Moreover, communion provides a fitting analogy for the key premise of this account, namely that in order to partake--eat or drink, if you will--of the divine nature, it must not be too alien to us. For just as one cannot eat plastic or metal since they are too alien to be assimilated into one's body, one cannot partake of the divine life unless it comes to us in a form that we can assimilate into our lives.

Similarly, under the Incarnational theory the significance of the ritual of baptism becomes quite straightforward and its meaning matches Paul's extensive use of the symbol of baptism in his model of Atonement found in Romans chapter 6. Under the Incarnational theory, baptism symbolizes, in a concrete and dramatic way, Paul's theological idea that we are buried (baptized) or identified with Christ in his death so that we may be raised to share or be identified with him in his resurrection life. In fact, the Incarnational theory fits much better with Paul's model of the Atonement, and with the symbolic practices commended by Jesus to the disciples, than the Satisfaction or Penal theory. The mechanism of Atonement according to these two theories merely involves a legal transaction between Christ and God the Father, not a unity between Christ and us in his death, as Paul says in Romans chapter 6 using the imagery of baptism, and not a partaking of Christ's life given over to God, as suggested by the symbols of communion and the statements of Christ regarding the necessity of "eating" his flesh and "drinking" his blood. All three of the biblical ceremonies we have discussed can be seen as concrete images and symbolic enactments of a fundamental covenant (that is, a deeply-shared identity and common history) which has been established between God and human beings, which the Incarnational theory claims that Christ's participation in our human life-situation made fully possible.[(9)]

Advantages of the Incarnational Theory

In this last section, we began to see some advantages of the Incarnational theory for making sense, among other things, of Paul's theology and practices such as temple sacrifice, communion and baptism. Now let's

compare the Incarnational theory more broadly with the Satisfaction and Penal theories on philosophical, ethical, theological, and scriptural grounds. First, unlike these other theories, the Incarnational theory does not explain the doctrine of the Atonement at the cost of hypothesizing something even more puzzling. For even though I have not proved the central claim of this theory--that is, the claim that in order for God's self to be united with our self, God's self cannot be too alien from ours--this claim does make logical sense, as I have argued above. Thus, the Incarnational Theory has a philosophical advantage over these other theories.

Second, the Incarnational theory presents, I believe, a much more ethically adequate image of God. Instead of God being a stern judge who must demand repayment at any cost and whose love (one attribute) is in conflict with his justice (another attribute), under this theory God is consistently portrayed as a passionate lover of creation, one who intensely desires an intimate relationship with his creatures and who continually invites us into this relationship with him. The Incarnational theory also gives us an ethical picture of God much like the one we find in Jesus' teaching and parables. God grieves when someone is lost and alienated through no fault of his or her own (like the lost coin), and is offended when someone consciously refuses the invitation to relationship (like the reluctant and rather foolish guests in the parable who refuse to come to the banquet). Of course, God is still a God of judgment under this account, but God's judgment is an aspect of his love and should be understood as a means to get us to turn from evil (as in the case of God's judgment of Israel in the Old Testament prophetic books), or as another way of speaking of the built-in consequences and alienation from God which result from acts of sin.

Third, the Incarnational theory, I believe, makes more sense than the Satisfaction and Penal theories of several key Christian doctrines, including (among others) those of the Incarnation, the Kingdom of God, and the concept of the High Priesthood or ongoing mediating role of Christ on our behalf. Let's examine the three I have mentioned one at a time, starting with the central doctrine of the Incarnation. The Satisfaction and Penal theories have a fairly weak theological conception of the Incarnation, thinking of it mainly as a means to an end. Whereas for these theories the Incarnation largely becomes merely a way of Christ paying our penalty on the Cross and thus its significance is largely lost, under the Incarnational theory the Incarnation itself is the centerpiece of salvation. Thus, I believe, the Incarnational theory provides a much more powerful understanding of what this unique and central doctrine of Christianity is all about--namely, that God is not merely a God who is far removed from us, but is a God who has come to us, and who shares, as fully as possible, in the very life of his creatures. This is what it means to affirm the most basic Christian doctrine that Jesus is both fully human and fully divine.

Another theological merit of the Incarnational theory is that it neatly unites the post-Easter gospel (literally, "good news") preached by the Apostles with the pre-Easter gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven preached by Jesus--that is, the message that God, and God's reign, are now breaking into the human situation: "the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the good news" (Mk. 1:16). Under the Incarnational theory, the difference between the two gospels simply amounts to one of tense, just as one would expect: Jesus says that God is presently entering our human world (the Kingdom of Heaven is breaking in), whereas the Apostles say that God has already entered as deeply as possible, and because of this we can now be reconciled to God. In contrast, according to the Satisfaction and Penal theories, the post-Easter gospel is about the satisfaction of divine justice. Yet the gospel that Jesus preached in his earthly ministry did not make any mention of the satisfaction of divine justice, but rather was about the coming of God's reign with the offer of forgiveness and reconciliation for all, as illustrated most vividly in his quotation of the prophet Isaiah at the beginning of his ministry: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release for the captives and to open the eyes of the blind, to let prisoners go free and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Lk. 4:18). In choosing to quote this passage of Isaiah, Jesus compares his coming to the Hebrew festival year of Jubilee, a festival appointed by God in which every fifty years all debts and obligations were wiped out for every Israelite, without the need for any repayment by anyone.

Unlike the Satisfaction and Penal theories, the Incarnational theory also does a more satisfactory job at theologically explaining what the book of Hebrews calls Jesus' High Priesthood, or the special mediatorial role that Christ plays in our redemption. To see this, consider that in the Satisfaction and Penal theories, the primary saving act that Christ performs is that of paying the penalty for our sins on the Cross. Once this

penalty is paid, God the Father is then free to forgive us and have fellowship with us. Thus within the logic of these theories, once the penalty was paid at a certain point in human history, there is no reason why Christ should continue to play any special role in mediating our relationship with God. But scripture tells us that Christ does play such a role. For example, Jesus says that he is the Way the Truth and the Life, and only through him can we come to the Father (Jn. 14:6), and Paul tells the Corinthians that in Christ is the wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and life of God, that is, it is only in Christ that we can partake of the divine nature (I Cor. 1:30). The Satisfaction and Penal theories have to explain these statements as referring to a one-time mediatorial act performed by Christ, in which we have faith on an ongoing basis. In contrast to this, however, the Incarnational theory is able to explain the ongoing mediatorial and salvific role of Christ himself, for under this theory Christ is where the divine and human meet for all time and thus it is only in and through Christ that we can partake of the divine nature on a continuing basis. The book of Hebrews tells us that although Christ did indeed offer up one single sacrifice, it is perpetual because Christ remains forever (Heb. 7:24); that he "was made a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 6:20, 7:17); and that this is also why Christ is also able to save absolutely those who approach God through him as a mediator (Heb. 7:25). In addition, this theory goes along well with those passages which suggest that Christ is able to perform a mediatorial role as High Priest because he was "made like his brothers in every way," and thus can "sympathize with their weakness" and "help those who are being tempted" (Heb. 2:17-18, Heb. 4:15).

Although I have made a fairly strong case so far for the advantages of the Incarnational theory on philosophical, ethical and theological grounds, and have referred in the process of doing so to numerous scripture passages, some people might well still be wondering: Aren't there specific scripture verses or passages in the Bible which seem specifically to imply the Satisfaction and/or Penal theories of Atonement, and which no other theory could adequately explain? Many conservative Christians would no doubt think of passages such as Romans 5:9, according to which through Christ's blood we are saved from the wrath of God; Romans 3:25, according to which God presented Christ as a "sacrifice of Atonement in order to demonstrate his justice [or righteousness in some translations], because in his forbearance he left the sins committed beforehand unpunished" (NIV translation); Isaiah 53:5, according to which the Suffering Servant, usually interpreted by Christians as Christ, took upon himself the punishment (or chastisement) for our sin; and Lev. 16:21-22, according to which the scapegoat, interpreted by many Christians as a type of Christ, symbolically bore the sin and guilt of Israel into the desert. I would like to show, forth and finally, that the Incarnational theory can easily account for the specific scripture passages most commonly cited in favor of the Satisfaction and Penal theories. Let's look briefly at how these particular verses would be interpreted under the Incarnational theory.

First, in response to Romans 5:9 regarding Christ saving us from the wrath of God, the Incarnational theory would claim that Christ saves us from God's wrath by saving us from sin, for sin is what brings God's wrath upon us. Because sin hurts us and our relationship to God, the wrath or judgment of God should be understood as the response of love to sin. The Incarnational theory, therefore, would state that we are indeed saved from God's wrath through Christ's blood, that is, through his life offered up to God (as in the Hebrew sacrificial ritual) in perfect love even unto death; for as we have seen, through our identification with his death we are saved from sin and made able to identify with him in his Resurrection, that is, to participate in God's life of perfect love. Now let's go on to look at Rom. 3:25, regarding Christ as an Atonement to demonstrate God's righteousness in leaving sins committed in the past unpunished. The Incarnational theory would furthermore claim that, in analogy to a morally good parent, God's love and righteousness require that he do everything possible to reform us if we sin and bring us back into a loving relationship with himself, including punishing us if necessary. Paul appears to be stating here that Christ's sacrifice demonstrates God's righteousness by showing that, even though God in forbearance decided to leave sins committed in the past unpunished, he is still a morally righteous "parent" since he provided an alternative, and even more effective means, of reforming us and restoring us to himself: the Atonement. Instead of punishing us to bring us back to himself, God decided instead to come to us, demonstrating his love and moral goodness (righteousness).

Next, let's consider Isaiah 53:5, regarding the Suffering Servant taking on the punishment for our sin. The Incarnational theory would claim that on the Cross Christ did enter into, and therefore took upon himself,

the built-in punishment for sin, that is, alienation and separation from God. Paul tells us in Rom. 6:23 that the punishment or wages of sin is death, meaning, I take it, separation from God. According to the Incarnational theory, Christ took on all of these, even becoming sin for us (as Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:21) in taking on our life-situation. Similarly, regarding the passage in Leviticus about the scapegoat, the Incarnational theory would claim that Christ, like the scapegoat, did take the sin and guilt of human beings upon himself by taking upon himself, in the deepest possible way, the sinful, alienated, and guilt-ridden condition of human beings. Moreover, in the same way that the scapegoat was led out into the wilderness to symbolize the Israelites' alienation from God and other human beings caused by their acts of sin, Christ experienced this alienation and consequently suffered "outside the city gates" (Heb. 13:12). Thus, under the Incarnational theory, the scapegoat does indeed serve as a fitting type of Christ.

The above discussion, therefore, shows that even when considering those verses which would seem to be the hardest to explain, the Incarnational theory can find much support in scripture. But can't the same be said for the Satisfaction and Penal theories? Although some scripture passages can be cited in favor of these two theories as we have seen above, the theories themselves are largely modeled on secular medieval and Roman legal systems. Anselm's Satisfaction theory, for instance, nicely fits the medieval feudal system of his time. In this system, disobedience to one's feudal Lord (or Lady) dishonored him (or her), thereby incurring a debt of dishonor. The Lord or Lady's honor then required that the debt be paid, for example, by some third party who served as a "champion" of the one who had disobeyed. The laws governing this type of transaction, however, were not about criminal justice but reflected a social or civil custom of that time which was designed to maintain the social order. Even the Roman legal system of punishment for criminals, which we have inherited in the modern world, is concerned with justice largely for the purpose of maintaining social order (through deterrence, for example). Think about the fact that the forgiveness or pardon of a criminal in our criminal justice system is a rare event, not because such a pardon is impossible (think, for instance, of a Presidential pardon), but because we feel such a practice might undermine the authority of the law and be dangerous to society. However commonsense these legal ideas seem for helping human beings live together, however, they do not seem to fit the biblical model of how God deals with human beings. The central claim of the Satisfaction and Penal theories--that is, the claim that God will not forgive us unless a debt of punishment or obligation for our sin is paid in full--is not found anywhere in scripture. Indeed, what Christ says about the father's forgiveness in the Parable of the Prodigal Son seems to imply just the opposite. In the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, furthermore, Jesus directly commands us on the one hand to forgive those who trespass against us without demanding repayment, and yet on the other hand, he commands us to forgive others as our Father in heaven forgives us. Taken together, these two commands indicate that our Father in Heaven forgives without demanding repayment, contrary to the central claim of the Satisfaction and Penal theories. For if God demanded repayment, then, contrary to Christ's command, we would also have to demand repayment in order to forgive others in the same manner as God the Father forgives us. In fact, throughout scripture--including throughout the Old Testament and the prophets, as in Ezekiel 18--God is consistently portrayed as a God who will forgive us without hesitation as long as we truly turn away from our sin.[(10)]

Actually, the Incarnational theory is biblical in a much more global way than either the Satisfaction or Penal theory. The Incarnational theory not only can make sense of individual statements found in scripture, but provides a much more consistent and compelling account, as it unfolds in both the Old and the New Testaments, of God's involvement in human history. Indeed, Jesus can be seen as the ultimate fulfillment of God's covenant (that is, special relationship and shared history) with Israel, through which God promised all nations would be blessed (Gen. 18:18). Through Jesus, the Incarnational theory would claim, the opportunity for this intimate relationship with God has been freely offered to everyone.

Practical Implications of the Incarnational Theory

Besides its philosophical, ethical, theological and scriptural merits, the Incarnational theory has a great deal of potential for positively transforming everyday Christian thought and action. First, the Incarnational theory fundamentally alters our basic view of God's relation to the world. The primary picture of God changes in this theory from that of a lawgiver and judge to that of a parent, a friend, and a lover of creation. Our relationship with God, others and even ourselves would probably change dramatically if we were to take seriously the idea that God the Father is not really so much like a judge who is driven by moral duty to throw us into an eternal prison unless restitution is made, but more like a friend who wants to invite us to a special feast, or like a loving parent who longs to see us safely home and throw us a homecoming party. Changing our basic view of God should transform a meager and mostly negative conception of God's grace as mere escape from punishment (forgiveness) to a much fuller and more positive conception of grace as God's expression of longing for relationship with us (love). For while forgiveness is an aspect of God's grace or love, a loving relationship with God involves far more and is far more wonderful than mere forgiveness.

Second, this theory tells us that to receive God's grace is to receive God's love and actually to participate in God's life. Paul tells followers of Christ to "reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God" (Rom. 6:11) by partaking of God's divine life and love as it expressed itself in human form on the Cross and in the Resurrection. Thus, the Incarnational theory entails a strong idea of the real power and ongoing, growing presence of God in our lives and in human history made possible by Jesus' Cross and Resurrection. This real power is largely denied by the Satisfaction and Penal theories, since under these theories Justification (which is defined as a legal transaction between Christ and the Father which pays for our debt or takes our punishment) is strongly distinguished from Sanctification (which is defined as our gradual moral perfection), and from within the logic of these theories, placing very much emphasis upon Sanctification seems to run the risk of implying that our salvation is partially accomplished by good works. In addition, in these theories the Resurrection itself, with its meaning of God's power to give new life, plays virtually no salvific role whatsoever. Under the Incarnational theory, however, salvation is the ongoing and ever-growing reality of us becoming united with Christ in his death so that we can share in his Resurrection, and the difference between Justification and Sanctification is only one of past versus present and future tenses. Under the Incarnational theory, therefore, we can take seriously that through Christ, the real presence and resurrection life of God is working in our everyday lives in an ongoing way, and that evidence of the fruit of the spirit (love, joy, peace, and other evidences of a strong and mature character), as well as loving actions, are an actual expression of our salvation, rather than mere good works which might be competition with it.

Third, this view tells us that salvation occurs in all dimensions of human life, whatever the conditions may be. No matter what our situation in life is, God is there in it with us, ready to redeem it with us, not by imposing a divine love and power which is alien to our human condition on us from the outside, but by uniting himself with us in our life-situation and thereby transforming it from the inside through the power of a divine love which operates from a human standpoint. Thus, this view tells us that divine redemption does not occur by denying the reality of our practical condition or current life situation, by trying to reach some new spiritual plane, or by merely waiting for rescue in the next world, but by recognizing and acting on the truth that Christ's love and redeeming presence is available in whatever situation we are in. This will be especially good news for those who are the most alienated and downcast of all. In fact, this understanding of the gospel under the Incarnational theory will make much sense and will offer hope to those people who most suffer the evil effects of sin, especially if those effects are caused in some measure by the sinful choices of others. The Satisfaction and Penal theories don't make much sense of their experience or address their life-situation, and in fact may even reinforce the idea that such people should simply be blamed for their suffering, alienation or victimage. Both the Old and New Testaments, however, stress God's special concern about redeeming the life-situation of the poor, widows, orphans, prisoners, and anyone who is oppressed.

Fourth, this view calls followers of Christ to share in his redemptive activity by actively sharing in the life-situation of others, particularly the poor and anyone who suffers. In other words, followers of Christ are called to enter into, rather than ignore or avoid, the life-situation of others, even if this means sharing their pain and vulnerability. Indeed, to take up one's cross on this view involves sharing in the suffering and

vulnerability of others, for this is what Christ did on the Cross. Just as Christ sharing in our suffering and life-situation made it possible for us to participate in his Resurrection, we as Christ's body share in the sufferings and life-situation of others so that they in turn may be enabled to participate in Christ through us. This view, however, does not stress suffering for its own sake or for penance, but for the sake of the joy of empowering each other to participate more fully in the life of God and one another. The image of a body used by Paul in Scripture well expresses this idea of participating in a common life and redemption: when one part suffers, the others suffer along with it; and when one part is honored, the others rejoice too (I Cor. 12:26).

All these points should lead us to conclude that the Incarnational theory could have a potentially transformative influence on how we think about evangelism. Under this theory the gospel can be understood as truly multicultural, that is, the gospel can be seen as more universally responsive and accessible to the wide variety of human cultures and conditions in the world. First, this view implies that telling people about the good news and caring for the needs of people in their concrete life-situations are all part of the same redemptive task. This view also implies that, as much as possible, missionaries should present the gospel to social groups of every type by sharing in the cultural and current religious matrix (i.e. the life-situation) of the people they serve, not by working against the varied social organizations, artistic expressions and wisdom traditions of human cultures, as has happened too many times in the past. Indeed, regarding this latter point, the Incarnational view makes the gospel more universally accessible to a variety of world-views and religious traditions than the Satisfaction or Penal theories. To see this, think about the fact that to believe the gospel under these theories is to believe that Christ saves us from the penalty that justice (or God's honor) demands for our sin, namely serious or even infinite punishment in hell. Thus, under these theories, in order to believe the gospel, one must believe the two new puzzling claims we have discussed earlier, namely, 1) that our wrongdoing is so awful that we have incurred a serious debt and/or deserve severe punishment, even if we desire to repent, and 2) that justice (or God's honor) can be satisfied by another paying the debt or penalty for us. These claims would be particularly puzzling in cultures different in time and place from the one in which these ideas first arose as a way of making sense of the doctrine of the Atonement. Although in a past period of Western culture (such as in European feudal times), these two ideas might have seemed plausible, the cultural situation which gave rise to them has changed and these ideas no longer seem plausible today even to most people in Western countries, let alone in non-Western cultures such as those steeped in Buddhism, Taoism, and Hinduism. Indeed, in these cultures this concept of sin as a legal debt we have contracted, and the terrible punishment it supposedly requires, is quite foreign to both people's experience and to their modes of thought. Thus, these traditional views of Atonement raise an unnecessary barrier to effective evangelism since they require that we first convince people of these seemingly implausible (and culturally specific) claims before they can accept the gospel. The Incarnational theory, on the other hand, does not raise such barriers since under this theory, accepting the gospel only requires that one accept (and act on) the claim that we can have an authentic relationship with God and newness of life because God has entered the world and the human situation through Jesus's life, death and Resurrection. Of course, under the Incarnational theory, the gospel still requires belief in God, belief in the claim that God became Incarnate in Jesus, and conviction that one's self and life-situation needs to be redeemed by the love of God. But these beliefs are simpler and much more plausible in most people's life-situations and cultures than those required by the Satisfaction and Penal theories. I also believe that they take better account of suffering which is not a result of that individual's conscious moral wrong-doing, which is also part of many people's experience and life-situation, especially in poorer countries.[(11)] The Incarnational theory thus generally makes more sense out of people's lives experientially, and makes the gospel more universally accessible to them conceptually, especially for those in non-Western cultures.[(12)]

In Conclusion: The Prodigal Revisited

In the eleventh century, theologians in the West began telling a story of the Atonement in which the Christian story of salvation and redemption was primarily conceived in judicial terms: the purpose of Christ's life and death, they have told us, was to satisfy the demands of justice and the moral order. But, beginning with the much earlier Greek Fathers, Eastern Orthodox theologians and a few other theologians in the West have suggested a different story, one which is grounded in the dynamics of deep interpersonal and loving relationships instead of that of the courtroom. According to their story, the purpose of Christ's life and death was not to satisfy divine justice, but rather to identify with and establish a common life with us, that we might partake in the divine life of God. This is the idea I've attempted to develop in a systematic way, in what I have called the Incarnational theory. Let's return to the Parable of the Prodigal Son and see what would happen if this alternative story of the Atonement were given a hearing:

There was a man who had two sons. The younger son said, "Father, give me my portion of the estate." So he divided his property between them, and the younger son went off to a far country. Eventually, after many years, the father heard that his younger son had squandered his inheritance in wild living and was barely surviving at a job feeding pigs. Knowing that his son was so destitute and ashamed that he probably would never be able to return on his own, the father thought to himself: "I will go and seek out my lost son." So the father laid aside his venerable robes, took on the garb of a servant, and set out to find his son.

When the father finally found his son, the father's appearance was so changed that his son did not recognize him. So the father took a job feeding the pigs along side his son. He was determined to stick by his son and gain his trust and love no matter what it cost, even if it meant starving to death with him in the pigpen. After several years of being together in the fields and suffering through hard times, they had shared many things together and an intimate friendship was established between them. Finally, the father revealed who he really was. The son at first couldn't believe it was his father. But, eventually he came to really understand how much the father really loved him, and that he did not need to do anything to earn his father's forgiveness. And when they finally arrived back home together, his father ordered his servants to kill the fatted calf, saying "Let us celebrate, for my son who once was lost, is now found."

I'd like to suggest that if we're going to extend or take liberties with the parable, it should be in this direction. The Incarnational theory of the Atonement shows us a God who loves us even to the depths of being willing to come and live with us in the pigpen if necessary, a God who would go so far as to risk dying in order to share with us his life. This view of God is ultimately more consistent not just with logic and ethics (as a philosophical analysis such as this is able to demonstrate) but also ultimately with the words of Jesus, and with Christian doctrine as a whole.

APPENDIX

Since writing the paper, I have considerably developed the Incarnational theory, specifically the specific version of the theory elaborated under the subsection "A Deeper Development of the Incarnational Theory."

Below, I explicate the theory by listing its basic claims. To understand the theory, it is helpful to read all the basic claims first, and then go back and look at each claim individually.

Basic Claims

1) Salvation = Sharing in the life of God. (I take this claim to be almost obvious from scripture. For example, that salvation involves having a new form of life is clear from the Gospel of John, and is a theme that runs consistently through the epistles. Moreover, this life is not something that God merely gives us that is external to God's self, but is obtained by sharing in the life of God, as Jesus's metaphor of the vine and the branches in John 15:5 make clear ["I am the vine, you are the branches"] and various other New Testament passages, such as John 6:53-56, Colossians 3:4.)

2) Through the Incarnation and Passion, Christ caused to be active in the Godhead virtues (such as courage, faith, and love) of a kind that we need, can actively partake of, and exercise in our present human life-situation of vulnerability, alienation, uncertainty, and the like.[(13)]

3) Apart from the Incarnation and Passion, God could not actively exercise the virtues of the kind referred to in (2) above because they are too closely tied with our life-situation.

To see why, consider some examples of these virtues as they occur in human beings:

Courage = a commitment to one's values or goals in the face of danger, fear, and personal injury.

Faith = a commitment to trust in the face of uncertainty and doubt, and in face of *serious temptation* not to trust.

Love (of the type we need) = a commitment to value and relate to others (or ourselves) in the face of such things as vulnerability to personal injury, alienation, weakness, fear, unjust victimization, and *serious temptation* not to love.

Since these virtues are basically commitments of various sorts *in the face* of fear, vulnerability, serious temptation, and the like, it is clear that apart from something like the Incarnation and Passion, God cannot actively exercise them, for to exercise them requires that one experience fear, believe oneself to be vulnerable, believe oneself to be limited in power and knowledge, and seriously believe that one could sin. Yet, these are the very virtues that we human beings need to fully live a life of love and faith.[(14)]

4) Among other things, partaking of the life of Christ involves exercising and partaking of these virtues (particularly love) as they actively exist in God. Moreover, it is the partaking of these virtues that saves human beings from sin and brings us into unity with Christ. (For example, since love involves reaching out to others, and even ourselves, it overcomes our sinful state of alienation from God and others.)

Summary: The Incarnational theory explains **how** the Atonement works as follows. First, the theory claims that salvation is to be conceived of as an ongoing sharing in the life of God, in a deeper and deeper way, where to share in the life of God involves sharing in and exercising the virtues of faith, love, and righteousness that are in God. Then, this theory claims, through the Incarnation and Passion, the type of virtues that we need--that is, *commitments* to trust, love, and do what is right in *the face of* serious doubt, vulnerability, alienation, and temptation--became active in God. By partaking of these active virtues--that is, in Paul's terminology, putting on "Christ," putting on the "new self," or letting Christ live through us--we are saved in an ongoing way from sin. (In modern terms, these new virtues can be thought of as new spiritual DNA of which we partake, and that through the Incarnation God made fully compatible with our human cells; the new DNA then replaces or transforms the old "sinful" DNA.)

Further, the Incarnational theory explains **why** the Incarnation and Passion were the means God used for our salvation. Although God could have saved us from sin simply by directly giving us (upon our free request) the requisite dispositions to act in a loving, trusting and morally upright manner, a deeper, more

intimate unity with God occurs if this salvation results from God sharing as deeply as possible in our life-situation; for, by sharing into our life-situation of alienation, suffering, and death, God establishes *solidarity* with us, showing that he is truly our brother. Thus, although the Incarnation and Passion were not strictly necessary to save us from sin, under they Incarnational theory, it does make sense that God would decide to do things this way.

Finally, the significance of the resurrection under this theory is that to actively exercise these virtues of love and trust in God from a life-situation of alienation from God, oneself, and others, overcomes this alienation. For example, since love involves reaching out and valuing others (and oneself), it cannot help but overcome this sort of alienation. But the essence of spiritual death--which underlies physical death--is alienation from God, and others, including oneself. So, by actively exercising these virtues from a position of alienation, Jesus Christ overcame "from the inside" this alienation from God, and hence spiritual death. This resulted in the resurrection. This is why Paul says that if we unite ourselves with Christ in his death (that is, share in these virtues) then we shall also be united with him in his resurrection: that is, our alienation will be overcome. (See Romans 6:5)

**Note: It is the power of the Holy Spirit that enables us to partake of these virtue, which are basically various sorts of commitments to do good or act in love in the face of temptation.[(15)]

Some Advantages of the Incarnational Theory

Here I will list some further advantages of the Incarnational theory not mentioned in the main paper, particularly advantages that result from the further development of the theory presented in this appendix. I list them under the following three headings.

1) Theoretically Adequate.

For example, the central premise (#3) of the specific version of the Incarnational theory--that is, the claim that God could not actively have the sorts of virtues we need without something like the Incarnation and Passion--is not only plausible, but logic seems to require that it be true. Moreover, the other key premise (#4), that sharing in Christ's life involves sharing in these sorts of virtues, is strongly implied that the more we share in the life of Christ, the more we express them--for example, love, courage, faith. Thus, since the key premises of this theory are highly plausible in and of themselves, there is nothing *ad hoc* or arbitrary about them.

2) Theologically and Scripturally Adequate.

In the paper, I already explained how this theory makes sense of Christ as our Sacrifice, the Eucharist, St. Paul's model of the Atonement, Baptism, and various other metaphors, models of Atonement, and passages found in the New Testament. In this section, I will show further how this theory fits with what is said in the New Testament regarding salvation. It provides new insight and understanding of passages and themes in scriptures that otherwise seem puzzling:

1) *Theme found in book of Hebrews of Christ being tempted and made perfect*: This theory explains why Christ was tempted in all ways as we are, and was yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15). If one examines the virtues (such as courage) listed above, they all involve commitments in the face of various sorts of temptations, such as in the temptation to stop trusting when doubt arises. *Thus, every time Christ experienced a new temptation, and acted virtuously in the face of that temptation, a new virtue was actively exercised in the Godhead.* Consequently, in order to actively have the general sorts of virtues we need, Christ must have experienced the main sorts of temptations we experienced.[(16)] Moreover, it was necessary for Christ to experience those temptations *without sinning*, for if he sinned, then a "anti-virtue" would have been exercised--that is, the "anti-virtue" of not keeping one's commitments in the face of temptation. Moreover, insofar as Christ did not actively exercise any of these basic virtues, his ability to save us completely would be lacking. Hence, in some sense Christ was not perfect *as our savior* until he suffered all these sorts of temptations. This fits nicely with Hebrews 2:10 which says that "For it was fitting for him, for whom all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory to make the captain of their salvation **perfect** through sufferings" (NKJV, see also Hebrews 5:9, 7:28).

2) Throughout his epistles, the Apostle Paul claims that: I) if we are *in Christ*, then we are a "new creation" (Galatians 6:15; also see 2 Cor 5:17); ii) that we should put off old self and "put on the new self which was *created* according to God in true righteousness and holiness," (Ephesians 4:24; see also Col. 3:9-11)), and iii) that although we live, at the same time it is Christ living through us. (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 2:13). [(17)] Moreover, the book of Hebrews speaks of us having "new heart." Initially, these passages seem puzzling: where is this new self and new heart? And, if we are new creations, why do we continue to sin? Under the Incarnational theory, however, these passages make a lot of sense. To see how, first note that since the "old self" seems to be Paul's way of referring to the "sinful desires" (such as hate), it makes sense that the term "new self" would refer to a set of virtuous desires. Second, the above passages not only imply that Paul conceived of this new self as having been created by God (Ephesians 4:24 above), but many other passages imply that he thought of it as only existing *in Christ*, for in Pauline theology it is only in Christ that we are a new creation, and it is only in Christ that we truly have the Christian virtues of love, patience, and the like. (For example, see 2 Cor. 5:17, Ephesians 2:10, Col. 2:10, etc.)[(18)]

Thus, from these passages it seems to follow that the new self is simply a set of virtuous desires that became active in Christ, as postulated by the Incarnational theory. Accordingly, what Paul says about a new self being created in Christ Jesus fits beautifully with the Incarnational theory, as does the Hebrew passage that we have a new heart--i.e., a new set of desires in Christ. Indeed, these Pauline passages and the Hebrews passage almost imply the basic tenants of the Incarnational theory.

Further, we can make sense of why we continue to sin even though we are new creations in Christ, for we must partake of the new creation in order for it to become active in our lives. Finally, as stressed in the paper, this idea of these new active virtues being in Christ, make sense of communion or the Eucharist. Specifically, partaking of the blood symbolizes partaking of Christ's actively exercised virtue of giving himself over completely in love and trust to God in face of death, suffering, and alienation. (Also, Scripture uses the metaphor of "seed" to refer to this new set of desires: e.g., 1 Pet. 1:23 says, "You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable...")

3) The Incarnational theory interprets Paul's repeated claim that we are dead to sin (e.g., Ro. 6:2) as claiming that we are no longer slaves to sin. (This interpretation is suggested by Romans chapters 6 through 8, for instance.) According to the Incarnational theory, the reason we have been freed from sin is that the sinful desires are not the only desires available to us anymore; instead, we have a new source of virtuous desires that we can partake of, those made active in Christ Jesus--that is, the new self. Since these desires are available for everyone, in some sense everyone has died to sin, as Paul implies in 2 Cor. 5:14-15: "The love of God compels us, because we judge thus: that if one died for all, then all died; and he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again" (NKJ).

4) Unlike the Penal and Satisfaction theories, the Incarnational theory makes sense of the often repeated claim in scripture that Christ's blood, and Christ's sacrifice, actually *cleanses* us from sin (e.g., see 1 John

1:7), instead of merely paying the penalty for our sins. (Since under the Penal and Satisfaction theories, the blood simply serves to pay the penalty for sin, it never directly cleanses us from sin as scripture suggests; all it does is open the door for God to cleanse us through the process of sanctification, instead of punishing us.)

5) As partially explicated in the paper, the Incarnational theory can also take into account Romans chapters 4 and 5 in which Paul speaks of Christ's work on the Cross justifying us and making us righteous before God. Within Protestantism, this idea of being justified or made righteous before God has commonly been taken to mean that God acquits us. For example, according to Martin Luther, to be justified primarily meant that God would declare us no longer guilty for our sins, and hence would not punish us for them. As J. D. Dunn argues, however, this understanding of justification or of being made righteous has more to do with a court of law, as in the Roman legal system, and would have been largely foreign to Paul's way of thinking, which was Hebraic and based on the Old Testament.[(19)] When the ideas of justice and righteousness occur in the Old Testament, they always have to do with Israel's covenant relationship with God. Thus, to be justified or made righteous involved primarily being in right relationship with God, and secondarily being in right relationship other human beings. Indeed, Paul's exhortation to be slaves of righteousness instead of slaves of sin shows that the idea that righteousness simply involves acquittal could not be correct. To be a slave of something, it must be an active force in one's life, something that mere acquittal is not.

In light of this understanding of the Paul's use of the word "justified" and "righteousness," the Incarnational theory claims that we are brought into right relationship with God through becoming free from sin and partaking of the life of God--that is, by becoming a new self, or gaining a new heart (see Hebrews 8:10, Jer. 31:33). Thus, by enabling us to be free from sin and share in the life of God, Christ's Atonement justifies us and makes us righteous. One could think of this in terms of the Prodigal son. All along the father would have freely forgiven and accepted the Prodigal son if the son would only return. But, the son was not able to. By freeing the Prodigal son from his bondage to sin, Christ's Atonement enables the Prodigal son to leave the pig-pen and come to his father, and thereby it restores the relationship between the father and son.[(20)]

Summary: The Incarnational theory's claim that new virtues became active in God the Son through the Incarnation and Passion makes sense of those otherwise puzzling passages in the book of Hebrews which claim that Jesus was tempted in all the ways in which we are and that he was made perfect through his obedience and suffering. Moreover, it provides insight into what Paul is talking about when he says we are *new creations in Christ*, that we should put on the *new self* that was *created by God*, that the *old self* is dead, and that the Christian life consists both of our acting but at the same time of Christ living through us. For, according to the Incarnational theory, the *new self* is those set of virtues activated in Christ during the Incarnation and Passion, and salvation consists of partaking.

3) Practically Empowering and Liberating.

1) Comports well with theologies of liberation which stress the solidarity of God with us and non-hierarchical views of salvation.

2) Stresses our ability to partake, through Christ, in virtues such as courage, faith, and love that are liberating and empowering forces in human life-situations. That is, it stresses our ability to partake of and put on the "new self" created in Christ Jesus referred to above.

Two More Objections to Penal and Satisfaction Theory:

I. **Both the Penal and Satisfaction theory seem to be committed to the doctrine of original guilt**: that is, to the claim that we are guilty of the because of Adam and Eve's disobedience to God. But, this doctrine of original guilt seems incoherent (and is not found anywhere in scripture, contrary to what some people claim).

Argument: Consider small infants, or children under the so-called "age of accountability." Assuming that Christ's atonement saves these people as much as it does us, then it follows that under the Penal and Satisfaction theory that, apart from Christ's atonement, infants and small children would be deserving of punishment; for, unless they were deserving of punishment, Christ's Atonement could not have paid the penalty for them. But, in order to be deserving of punishment, they must be guilty, which means they must have had some sort of original guilt.

The only ways around this argument seem to be to claim that: 1) even very small infants are guilty because of their own sinful acts even though they could not be said to have much knowledge of what they are doing; or 2), God does not save infants or small children through the Atonement of Christ, but by some other means. These two responses, however, are at best philosophically and/or theologically problematic.

II. **Penal and Satisfaction theory blame victims, and thus is a religion of the powerful, not the downtrodden.**

Argument: Consider starving children in Africa. What is the Gospel message of the Penal and Satisfaction theory to them? "Even though most of your life you have been starving, and your brain barely functions, and you have been abused by others who have killed your parents, raped you, and deprived you of food, you are guilty before God and deserving of eternal punishment and torment in Hell. In fact, the torment you have endured all your life is infinitely less than you actually deserve. But I have good news for you! God has paid the penalty for your sins! He has endured the infinite punishment...." Does this sound like what the central Gospel message to those people should be? *Compare with message of Incarnational theory to these people*: "God knows your pain and how you have been victimized, because God has been there. And God has the resources of love, trust, and forgiveness that will enable you to live through this without becoming bitter...."

Penal and Satisfaction Theories Conception of Role of Faith in Salvation:

Model 1: The debt or punishment has only been paid for those who have faith in or turned to Christ. Thus anyone who has not turned to Christ is deserving of punishment in Hell.

Under this model, Christ's suffering on the Cross does not automatically pay the penalty for one's sins. Rather, one has to offer to God--through the process of faith--Christ's sufferings as one's own Atonement for sin. [This is Swinburne's account.]

- This view has the seeming untoward consequence of implying that faith is a black and white thing:

Model 2: The debt or punishment is paid for everyone, so no one deserves punishment for the sins that they have committed.

Under this view, faith is required in order for one to be sanctified and partake of the life that God has to offer through Christ. Thus, although God has already forgiven everyone because of Christ's death, in order to benefit from this forgiveness, one has to turn to Christ to benefit from this Hell is no longer a punishment for sin. Rather, it

Drawback: does not imply that faith is black and white, but undercuts support for these theories from Old Testament: no one was punished in past because they deserved it.

Another Objection to Penal and Satisfaction Theories

1. Because justification is a black and white thing--either your debt has been paid or it has not--the Penal and Satisfaction theories imply that faith in Christ's Atonement is a black and white thing.

Argument:

Finally, the Satisfaction and Penal theories suffer yet another serious logical problem: their key arguments in support of their theory are what philosophers call self-defeating--that is, their arguments undermine their own support. (Picture someone sawing off the branch he is sitting on; he is undermining or undercutting the very thing which supports and holds him up.) Typically advocates of these theories support their central claim that justice requires that sin be punished by appealing to 1) cases in which God punished people in the Old and New Testament, 2) the idea that God punishes people in hell, and 3) the commonly shared intuition that justice requires that society punish people who commit serious crimes. If the Satisfaction and Penal theories are right, however, then Christ's death satisfied the demands of justice for everyone, and hence no one (except Christ) has ever been punished to satisfy the demands of justice. Therefore, advocates of these theories cannot use these types of cases to support their claim that justice requires that sin be punished. Instead, they are forced by their own theories to interpret the punishment in these cases as fulfilling some other role, such as that of reform.

Of course, advocates of these theories could respond to this problem by claiming that God's atoning work is restricted only to the "elect," or by claiming that one must believe in Christ in order for the demands of justice to be satisfied. Then it would seem that anyone who isn't one of the elect or who hasn't believed in Christ's atoning work will be punished to satisfy divine justice. But, even if they were to respond this way, advocates of the Satisfaction and Penal theories must nonetheless concede that when society punishes a

criminal who is a Christian, or when God is recorded as punishing one of elect (such as King David for his adultery with Bathsheba), the punishment is not meant to satisfy the demands of justice. If punishment is not meant to fulfill the demands of justice in these select cases, however, what reason do we have to think that it does in other cases? Unless advocates of these theories can offer such a reason, they cannot justifiably claim that actual cases of punishment show that justice requires that sin be punished. And if they grant that some cases of punishment serve the purpose of reform, then they have to grant the possibility that all cases of punishment serve the purpose of reform.

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1. [1]

2. Except for the substitution of "son" for "creature" and "Father" for "Creator" necessitated by the context of the parable, this is a direct quotation of Anselm, the author of the Satisfaction theory of the Atonement (Anselm i, 13).

3. [3]These last two sentences are a modified direct quotation of statements made by Philip Melanchthon, a Protestant Reformer who was one of the most important developers of the Penal theory of the Atonement. According to Melanchthon: "Such is the severity of His [God's] justice that reconciliation would not be made unless the penalty were utterly paid. Such is the greatness of the His wrath that the eternal Father would not be placated save by the death and entreaty of the Son" (qtd. in Grensted 206).

4. [4] I should note that when writing about God my usual policy is to alternate between the pronouns "he" and "she," since God is neither male nor female; to use only "he" in most contexts," I believe, misleads by giving the impression God is male. In this paper, however, since I will be primarily speaking of God in connection with "God the Father" and "God the Son," I believe that my usual pronoun policy would be confusing and so have followed the tradition in using the masculine pronoun for God. The biblical terms "Father" and "Son" have been central to the way the doctrine of the Atonement has historically been formulated. I understand these terms to be referring to the theological claim that the second person of the Trinity is of the same essence (substance, being) as the first person of the Trinity, as stated in the historic creeds of the church, but not in such a way as to imply a relationship of hierarchy or subordination within the Trinity (a position which was actually declared a heresy at the time the creeds were formulated; see Catherine LaCugna, "God in Communion with Us: The Trinity," in Freeing Theology, ed. Catherine LaCugna [San Francisco: HarperCollins, c1993], pp. 83-114). Rather, I believe God's essence must be understood in such a way as to recognize it as inseparable from God's personhood, that is, God's fundamentally relational character.

5. [5]In recent decades Gustaf Aulén (1951) has revived the view that Christ's life and death constituted a victory over the devil, calling his view the Christus Victor view. Since all views of the Atonement agree that Satan was defeated through Christ's death,however, this view should not be considered a new theory of the Atonement. Indeed, Aulén himself did not consider his view a theory, but rather "a motif, or theme expressed in many variations" that re-emphasizes a neglected aspect of Christ's atoning work (Aulén, 1957, 151).

6. [6] The Moral Exemplar theory, however, can be understood in a modified way to meet these objections. See, for instance, Quinn, "Abelard on Atonement," and my remarks about this in footnote 9.

7. [7] The "new" here is important: only the introduction of new claims that are puzzling can count against a theory. In some of his writings, for example, the medieval philosopher Thomas Aquinas attempts to account for the Atonement by means of referring to the believer's mystical union with Christ (Grensted 154-7). His invoking this idea does not count against his theory, however, since although the nature of

such a union is somewhat puzzling, the idea of such a union is already an accepted part of Christian doctrine.

The "at least as" here is also important. Many theories hypothesize new types of things (such as quarks), processes (such as natural selection), or connections (such as the force of gravity) that are to some degree puzzling. But a good theory will reduce our overall amount of puzzlement about the world by making postulates that are less puzzling than the total phenomena which the theory attempts to explain. In the case of the doctrine of the Atonement, this means a good theory of the Atonement has to be less puzzling overall than the doctrine of the Atonement itself.

8. [8]For the standard Eastern Orthodox development of the doctrine of Atonement (or Salvation, as they call it) see Lossky (1985, pp. 97-110), Mantizaridis (1984, pp. 15-37), Staniloae (1980, pp. 181-212), and Florovsky (1976, pp. 95-159). As a Western philosopher, one of the main problems I have with what I understand to be the standard Eastern Orthodox theory of the Atonement is that it assumes that human nature is a universal (in the strict philosophical sense). In the Western philosophical tradition, "universals" are those properties shared in common by many objects, which are called "particulars." For instance, all particular red objects in the world share the universal property of redness. Universals, however, by their intrinsic nature cannot change. If every red object in the world were suddenly to change to green, redness

(the universal) is not what would have changed; rather, the objects themselves (the particulars) would have changed, taking on the new universal property of greenness. In contradiction to this Western conception of universals, according to Eastern Orthodox theology universal Human Nature has fallen (changed from its original state) in Adam, and it has been restored (changed again) in Christ. Thus what Eastern thinkers mean when speaking of a "universal" is unclear from a Western perspective. Eastern Orthodox theology also runs into the problem of not being able to explain how particular human beings participate in this supposed universal change in Human Nature. Why, for instance, if universal Human Nature was restored at the time of Jesus' Resurrection, weren't all particular human beings automatically restored and their sanctification accomplished instantaneously?

9. [9] It should be noted here that one of the merits of the Moral Exemplar theory is its stress upon participating in the life of Christ in an ongoing way, an emphasis generally lacking in the Satisfaction and Penal theories of Atonement. A key expression of the Moral Exemplar idea historically has been a

devotional emphasis upon the "Imitation of Christ." Indeed, one way the unity between selves I have been discussing could come about is through imitation. Much as through imitation a child integrates aspects of her parents' selves into her own self (such as her parents' ethical values), through imitation, we also could come to integrate aspects of Christ's self into our own. The "Imitation of Christ," however, is often considered too narrowly, from within a framework of moral law, as referring merely to imitating Jesus's actions, or simply submitting one's moral will to Christ, or even to having Christ blot out one's own identity. Within the Incarnational theory, however, the Imitation of Christ would ultimately be interpreted to mean entering into the same loving relationship and mutual sharing with God that Christ enjoys with the Father, and which the Incarnation makes possible for us to participate in.

10. [10] The forgiveness of God, I believe, is best understood within this theory, and the New Testament in general, not as an annulment of the punishment that justice requires, but as the removal of the hindrance to full communion with God, which is essentially our alienated or sinful condition (see Taylor,

Forgiveness and Reconciliation). Thus, under the Incarnational theory, Christ's Atonement is necessary for our forgiveness because without Christ's atoning work, we would not be able to overcome this alienation and thus truly turn from sin and receive the forgiveness that God freely offers.

11. [11]I believe the inability to adequately account for undeserved suffering is a major drawback to traditional theories of Atonement, stemming largely from their inadequate concepts of sin, guilt, and love. A careful analysis, therefore, of the problem of suffering, conceptions of sin and guilt, the nature of God's love, and the relationship between all of these, will be an important part of the forthcoming full-length treatment of this theory. The book-length treatment will address these and other key issues which are only touched upon briefly in this paper, providing a much more extensive historical and philosophical analysis of all the existing theories, and elaborating in a more careful and systematic way the new Incarnational theory I am proposing.

12. [12]Indeed, the Incarnational theory not only does not raise unnecessary barriers to other religions, but may provide an important bridge between them and Christianity. For example, both Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism (the most widespread form of Buddhism) recognize the need for an incarnation of some sort. In Hinduism, we find the belief that ultimate reality manifests itself through various incarnations called avatars (such as Krishna). And in Mahayana Buddhism, the "Buddha nature" expresses itself in pure love for all creatures in incarnate form through the bodhisattvas, enlightened individuals (such as the Buddha himself) who through their love help others attain enlightenment.

13. To *actively* have a virtue is to actually have exercised it (or be in the process of exercising it). For example, if out of love one risks one's own well-being to help another, one is actively exercising the virtue of self-sacrificial love. In contrast, to *passively* have a virtue is to have a disposition to act in the way the virtue requires if the right circumstances arose. For example, one would passively have the virtue of

courage in the face of life threatening danger if one *would* act courageously if one's life were threatened, even if one's life has never actually been threatened.

14. Of course, there is a sense in which God is vulnerable just in the mere fact of creating free beings, and thus a sort of vulnerability could exist in God even apart from something like the Incarnation and Cross. For, if God really cares for us, there is a sense in which our suffering and moral wrongdoings could cause God pain. The sort of vulnerability we experience, however, is much more extensive than this. For example, we can be vulnerable in the sense having our physical bodies or psyche severely injured, in the sense of losing our life, and the like. In contrast, apart from something like the Incarnation and Passion, God does not risk his psyche being destroyed; rather, when God experiences pain at our moral wrongdoing, his psyche remains intact and the pain does not dominate God's psyche, but continues to coexist with pure Joy and Bliss. Moreover, apart from the Incarnation, no member of the Trinity trusts another member of the Trinity in spite of experiencing alienation from other members, and in spite of nagging doubts that the other member of the Trinity either doesn't exist or is unwilling come to one's rescue. Further, apart from the Incarnation and Passion, no member of the Trinity is seriously tempted to sin. Finally, even though God could be uncertain about the details of the future, as those who deny God's complete foreknowledge contend, God's uncertainty does not run nearly as deep, nor is it as extensive as ours. Apart from the Incarnation and Cross, there is a sense in which God is much more in control, much less vulnerable, and not seriously tempted to sin in the way we are.

One final note here. Some people think that it is likely that God has created many other types of beings, some of whom he redeemed in a way similar to our case. If this is true, then my theory would have to be modified slightly since the types of virtues mentioned in #3 above would already exist in God. For, God would have already experienced the physical danger, vulnerability, and alienation of these other beings. Thus, the type of virtues formed in the human case would have to be those more specifically geared towards human beings: for example, virtues such things as acting in faith and love in the face of *particularly* human types of vulnerability, temptations, and the like.

15. One might wonder how one can share or partake of the commitment of another. Of course, one cannot *completely* share another person's commitment, much as one cannot literally have another person's experience. But, it seems one could almost completely share in another person's commitment by sharing in the *content* of that commitment (e.g., the psychological complex of intentions and beliefs corresponding to the commitment). This would be similar to sharing in the content of another person's experience (for example, sharing in the way the experience feels to another).

16. One might think the Incarnational theory runs into a problem here since clearly Jesus was not tempted in every specific way we are. The Incarnational theory, however, only requires that Christ experienced all the important *general* types of temptation that we have. For example, presumably Christ never experience the specific temptation of wanting to hate another for being physically raped. This particular temptation, however, is simply an instance of a more general temptation to hate another person for unjustly victimizing you. Presumably, Christ did experience this temptation since he was unjustly put to death. Of course, a question might arise here regarding what counts as an important general type of temptation. This is an important question but cannot be addressed here. (Those general type of temptation that initially it seems that Christ did not experience, however, are those that require that one believe that one has sinned; but Christ could have experienced the temptations arising from the feeling and experience of guilt, since these do not necessarily require the belief that one has sinned.)

17. I am assuming here the Pauline authorship of Colossians and Ephesians, even though I am aware that this is disputed. Whether or not they are Pauline, does not affect my argument here, however.

18. Also note that besides telling us to put on the new self, Paul says in other places to "put on Christ" (Ro. 13:12, Gal. 3:27) indicating that putting on Christ and putting on the new self are the same thing.

19. See his short book The Justice of God.

20. This idea that it is by giving us new life and freeing us from sin that we are justified is suggested by several passages in the Pauline epistles. In Romans 8:1-2, for instance, Paul says that we are no longer under condemnation because "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me [us] free from the law of sin and death." Thus, it is the fact that we free from sin--that is, enabled to really turn to God in love and relationship--that takes us out from under God's condemnation, and thus makes us justified before God. The Penal and Satisfaction theory, however, have it in exactly reverse order: God acquits us first--that is, frees us from condemnation--and then gives us new life, just the opposite of what Paul says in this passage. Similarly, Paul says in Galatians 3:21 that "if there had been a law that could have given life, then righteousness would have certainly come by the law." (See also Romans 7:10.) This, and other similar passages, indicate that Paul thought of righteousness as being the result of having new life, not vice versa.