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Review of "Mosaic of Atonement: An Integrated Approach to Christ's Work," by Joshua McNall

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violence. For Walker, this movement epitomizes a political theology that “derives its political significance” from concrete experiences of suffering and solidarity, “and from a true display of neighborliness” (132). Summarizing the theological and ethical stance adopted by the book, Walker calls upon the church to a faith and ethical practice that “dramatically accentuates the beauty and the goodness of the divine, which is the hope and source of salvation for victims, but also for everyone else” (145).

A Theology of the Drug War should be considered an important advancement in liberation theologies due to its attention to the drug war as a site that amalgamates myriad oppressive forces. The book contributes to ongoing dialogues that seek to tease out political implications of theological aesthetics, especially in von Balthasar’s work. For theology students, religious leaders, and activists the book offers a good theological perspective to thinking about the drug war and conflicts along the US–Mexico border.

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The Mosaic of Atonement: An Integrated Approach to Christ’s Work

Joshua M. McNall

Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019. 338 pp. \$34.99

In Joshua McNall’s substantive entry into the debates swirling around atonement, he uses the metaphor of a mosaic to defend four classic theories of atonement. He refers to the mosaic on Hagia Sophia (reproduced on the volume’s cover) to suggest that Christians ought to consider the four classic theories as pieces that fit together, much like the multiple colored pieces of porcelain come together to form the image of Christ in this mosaic. He depicts the model of recapitulation as the feet of Christ; penal substitution as the heart of Christ; *Christus Victor* as the head of Christ; and moral influence as the hands of Christ. His book traces each theory back to its origins with a clear summary of traditional sources. He considers historical developments as well as contemporary debates, always attentive to the Bible as the authoritative source for doctrine, consistently with a concern to remain true to orthodoxy. The central challenges that scholars have raised about penal substitution are treated in each chapter, for McNall finally attempts in the volume, albeit unsuccessfully, to defend the idea that penal substitution is at the heart of atonement.

In part I, McNall focuses on the feet of Christ in the mosaic of atonement, writing an exceptional argument about Irenaeus’ understanding of the Son as the prototype for humanity in whose image Adam was created and whose likeness was lost for all humankind by the first couple’s fall into sin. Recognizing that this foundation requires all humans to descend from a single human pairing, McNall

dutifully investigates the state of the question today in science. In order to maintain a high view of Scripture, he threads the needle by suggesting that a single pair were representative of the entire human race whose lost likeness was restored by Christ's recapitulation—and by his victory over sin, death, and the power of evil by his substitutionary atonement on the cross, which provides an exemplar by which his followers should live. Thus, the mosaic begins to take shape.

In part II, McNall more fully enters the storm with a lengthy defense of penal substitution, especially in response to what he refers to as “the rather tired meme that penal substitution is ‘divine child abuse’” (157). He attempts first to show that penal substitution is a biblical idea with roots much deeper and much earlier than Calvin. He then tries to respond to the criticisms of the penal substitution model by examining God's character, especially by looking into the story of the prodigal son (where he concludes the father in the story absorbs the blow); by treating the dynamics between God's wrath and God's mercy within a treatment of punishment, retribution, and forgiveness (where he concludes that God's justice demands punishment); and by considering the work of the Trinity where the persons always act in harmony (and where the Father does not subject someone else to the punishment but drinks the cup, as it were, himself in Christ).

In part III, McNall depicts the head of Christ through consideration of *Christus Victor* models, tracing the sources and handling the imagery of a God who resorts to trickery. In conversation with Walter Wink's metaphysics (though taken out of the liberative contexts in which Wink's work is written), McNall explores ways to think about Satan in a postmodern world, and about the kind of victory that was won through the dynamics of cross and resurrection. Here, one wishes for a greater conversation with J. Denny Weaver, who appears in McNall's footnotes but is not deemed worthy of being a true conversation partner.

In part IV, McNall sketches the hands of Christ through consideration of Abelard and the moral exemplar theory of atonement. In McNall's mosaic, with one hand, Jesus beckons the believer to follow him into suffering (without consideration of the historical context in which Jesus' suffering is situated). With his other hand, Christ restrains the human propensity for violence and scapegoating (267), a chapter written in conversation with René Girard. All of this points to the construction of the Kingdom of God that is already, and not yet.

Disputes in theology often come down to a matter of first principles—with sometimes irreconcilable differences operating at the level of presupposition. As a theologian with an interest in advancing a liberating gospel, and who tries to remain continuously attentive to the political and cultural backdrops informing the biblical authors, and with a moral compass fixed on the omnibenevolence of God, it is clear to me that there is a high cost to the underlying view of Scripture that leads McNall to defend the character of a God who dreamt up the cup of suffering for his Son, manipulated him into drinking it, and then forgave Adam only after Jesus agreed to submit to God's will for him to die by crucifixion. Nowhere in this book is there a treatment of the situation of Jesus and his Jewish brothers and sisters under a brutal Roman occupation where the occupiers hung thousands of

resisters on crosses, including eventually Jesus himself, as a deterrent to opposing its control. Nowhere is there an examination of the retributive understanding of justice that leads one to presume that justice mandates punishment, as opposed to models of justice that privilege restoration of relationship when there is wrongdoing. Nowhere is there even an investigation of Anselm, or the conflict within satisfaction theory about whether Jesus is being obedient to God's desire for him to live in a perfectly holy manner as he confronts the evil meted out against him, or whether the Father desires the evil itself as the means by which God will redeem the world. Nowhere is there a recognition that worship of a God who justifies torture might lead followers to rationalize the same, ultimately serving the cause of colonizing powers in their quests to dominate and conquer entire populations instead of guiding them to be in solidarity with those whom such powers threaten to destroy. There are a few sentences that refer to the death of Jews during the Holocaust, but without awareness, it would appear, of how the mosaic the author depicts perpetuates the anti-Semitism that enabled Christians to rationalize genocide in that era, with echoes that resound in our own. In the end, therefore, my assessment is that *The Mosaic of Atonement* espouses a dangerous theology that only stands out more clearly because of its beautifully written and strikingly lucid prose.

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Theodicy of Love: Cosmic Conflict and the Problem of Evil

John C. Peckham

Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018. 206 pp. \$26.99

If God loves us like a parent loves a child, why do horrific things happen to us and to those we love? Why does God seem to "sit on God's hands," at times? John Peckham, professor of theology and Christian philosophy at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, supports the most common Christian answer to this question: the free-will defense. However, Peckham provides an original addition to the theory that strengthens it, he argues.

In his first two chapters, Peckham follows the free-will defense in arguing that God created humans for a relationship of mutual love. That love necessitates that God give humans free will. While God does intervene in history, frequently God allows events to occur which God does not prefer, in order to protect that freedom.

While the free-will defense can explain why much suffering and evil exist, Peckham argues that it cannot explain why they occur in amounts and forms that seem counterproductive to God's goal of love. "It seems than an omnipotent God could have thwarted many evils that occur without in any way damaging free will" (51). For example, could not God have provided some special revelation to