



ATONEMENT IV:

Orthodox

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY has never been comfortable with theories of the “at-one-ment” between God and mankind that have been promoted by those with Gnostic, pantheistic, panentheistic or deistic convictions.¹ Nor has Christianity accepted the view of Judaism that atonement primarily involves the repentance, suffering and death of individual sinful human beings.²

At the same time, Christianity itself has proposed distorted explanations for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For example, how could the following views possibly achieve the “at-one-ment” of mankind with God?³

- 1. The Moral-Influence Theory** that Christ simply died as a martyr to impress mankind with God’s love and thus lead humanity to repentance.
- 2. The Governmental Theory** that Christ died to instill the devotion of mankind toward its government.
- 3. The Mystical Theory** that Christ became incarnate to infuse his deity into humanity.
- 4. The Middle Theory** that ignores the death of Christ and contends that God forgives sin apart from punishment for sin.
- 5. The Socinian Theory** that the death of Christ made the pardon for sinners known to man but did not actually secure that pardon.

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6. The Ethical Theory that in the death of Christ “there is no imputation or transfer of sin to Christ, neither is His righteousness imputed to all born-again believers.”

7. The Arminian Theory that “Christ died so that God could offer salvation to all upon the ground of [their own] evangelical obedience.”

These and other erroneous theories exclude the efficacy of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for divinity, for humanity and for the created order. Therefore, these theories cannot explain or justify the relational “at-one-ment” of God with mankind through Christ Jesus.⁴

Endnotes

1. See “Atonement I: Prehistoric,” *Outlook* (March 2006); “Atonement II: Pagan,” *Outlook* (April 2006).
2. See, “Atonement III: Personal,” *Outlook* (May 2006).
3. See William W. Sasser, *The Atoning Work of Jesus Christ* (Franklin, TN: Grace Ministries Publications, 1997). *Outlook* does not endorse all of Sasser’s views and refutations on the atonement — especially in the area of “election.”
4. See *ibid.*