

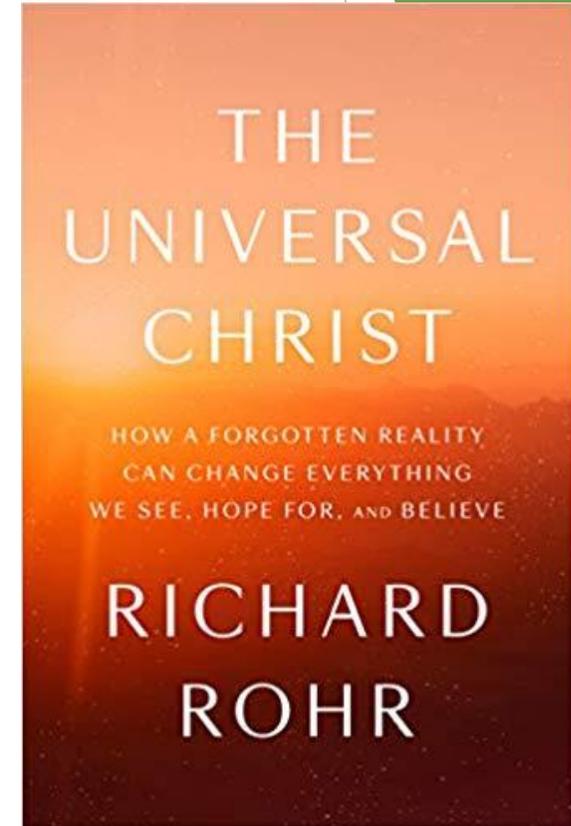
# 13

Chapter 12

# *Why Did Jesus Die*

*Our predestination to glory is prior by nature to any notion of sin.*

*--John Duns Scotus, OFM*





35 years of men's work (psychology/spirituality)  
Human psyche wounded and scarred  
violent, unavailable, and abusive fathers  
and other men.  
Christianity: "God as Father" tyrant, sadist...



“Jesus died for our sins”

No consensus on what it means

Recent century one theory took over:

“penal substitutionary atonement theory”

Christ, by his own sacrificial choice, was punished in the place of us sinners, thus satisfying the “demands of justice” so that God could forgive our sins.



...relies on “original sin”

recent and regional:

relies on “retributive justice”

...serious misunderstandings of Jesus’s role and Christ’s eternal purpose



One-transactional affair between Jesus and his Father vs. an ongoing transformational lesson for the human soul



## Theory of substitutionary atonement

Best

inoculated us against the true effects of the Gospel  
“thank “ Jesus instead of imitating him

Worst

See God as a cold, brutal figure who demands acts  
of violence before God can love his own creation

Distinctive Christian message:

Bold claim that God’s very body was given for us to eat!  
Turned everything around and undid the logic of  
*quid pro quo*

It’s time for Christianity to rediscover restorative justice  
focus on rehabilitation and reconciliation  
not punishment

Jesus’s mission was to heal people, not punish them...





Early Christians looked for logical and deeply meaningful explanation for the “why” of the tragic death of Jesus

The consensus for the first eleven hundred years was that the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross was paid not to God, but to the devil!



11<sup>th</sup> century: Anselm of Canterbury “Cur Deus Homo?” “Why Did God Become a Human?” to solve the problem of sin inside of the medieval code of feudal honor and shame.

Why would you love or trust or desire to be with such a God?



John Duns Scotus  
(1266-1308)

Franciscans refused to see the Incarnation and death on the cross as a mere reaction to sin.

They claimed that the cross was a freely chosen revelation of Total Love on God's part.

God was “spilling blood” to reach out to us! ...  
meant to utterly shock the heart and turn it back toward  
trust and love of the Creator.

God did not need to be paid in order to love and forgive.  
Scotus et al were committed to protecting the absolute  
freedom and love of God.

“Go learn the meaning of the words, what I want is mercy, not  
sacrifice!” (Matt 9:13, 12:7)

## A Collision of Cross-Purposes.

Most helpful meaning of Jesus's death

It is not God who is violent. We are.

It is not that God demands suffering of humans. We do.

God does not need or want suffering—neither in Jesus nor in us.

“I did not come to condemn the world, but to save it” (Jn 12:47)

“Come to me all you who labor and are overburdened.. (Matt 11:28)

The cross is not just a singular event. It's a statement from God that reality has a cruciform pattern.

Jesus was killed in a collision of cross-purposes, conflicting interests, and half-truths, caught between the demands of an empire and the religious establishment of his day.



## Scapegoating, and the “Sin of the World”



### Scapegoating (Leviticus 16)

On the Day of Atonement...

the scapegoat mirrors and reveals the universal, but largely unconscious, human need to transfer our guilt onto something (or someone) else... unmerited negative treatment.

Only a “lamb of God” can both reveal and resolve that sin in one nonviolent action.

We seldom consciously know that we are scapegoating or projecting

Jesus said, “people “do not know what they are doing”

He did not come to change God’s mind about us. It did not need changing. Jesus came to change our minds about God...and about ourselves... and about where goodness and evil really lie.





We Carry and Love What  
God Carries and loves

...follow Jesus  
Following Jesus is a vocation to  
share the fate of God for the  
life of the world  
To allow what God for some  
reason allows... and uses  
And to suffer ever so slightly  
what God suffers eternally.

Often, this has little to do with  
believing the right things about  
God—beyond the fact that God  
is love itself.