

Overall, however, this book allows us to look at the social groupings and positionings that recusancy (and other states of Catholicism) required and that, as political and cultural studies of recent years have inevitably argued, the “Catholic” story is messy—and perhaps more importantly, that the Catholic story cannot be told outside of the realm of English history as a whole.

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***The Body of the Cross: Holy Victims and the Invention of the Atonement.* By Travis E. Ables. New York: Fordham University Press, 2022. ix + 260 pp. \$35.00 paper.**

This is a thematic study in historical theology, unified by an analytical perspective—a focus on what the author calls “the logic of vicarity” in Western Christianity (2, 9). Ables covers most of the same chronological sweep (early church to seventeenth-century Reformed divines) as many classical treatments of atonement doctrine, and he touches most of their usual way stations. But he seeks to expand the frame of reference beyond a canon of elite texts to include devotional, heterodox, artistic, material, and otherwise overlooked sources. These include prayers of Anselm, beguine texts, writings of Katrina Schütz Zell, and manuscript illuminations. He resists the architectural dominance of typologies of atonement theories, although he acknowledges that there is an incipient reformulation of “patterns of atonement theology” (7) in his own work, oriented toward participation in Christ as the key notion upon which complex changes are rung. The book’s analytic perspective offers a reversal of trajectory and asks not how theology of the cross has shaped Christian understanding of holy victims, but how Christian views of holy victims have determined theologies of the cross.

Chapter 1 deals with early Christianity and argues that the cross functioned mainly in this period as a boundary marker, liturgically and socially dividing the elect community from competitors and the world at large. The image of the cross figures often as a victory standard, displacing by similarity a Roman imperial military standard. The rest of the book proceeds in pairs of chapters. The first pair, chapters 2 and 3, deals with the martyrs as a crucial part of the atonement story. Chapter 2 examines the role of the cross for the martyrs and their narratives themselves, while chapter 3 treats the reception history of martyr traditions—what the church made of them in “catechesis, polemic, and theological production”(10). Ables argues that Jesus’ death is not a self-sacrificial model that invites and valorizes martyrs. Rather, evolving conviction of the vicarious power of the martyrs’ actions and relics finally prompts his death to be conformed to their image. The very idea that Jesus’s death “procures forgiveness for transgressions originates from these martyr traditions” (10). If the church later came to sacramentally administer the merits won by Christ’s suffering, the original deposits in that account were actually made by his followers, attributing power to the suffering of martyrs who themselves had seen the cross more as a sign of victory and hope.

The next two chapters are a medieval pair. Chapter 4 treats Anselm, Abelard, and Heloise. Ables maintains that beneath the supposed differences in their atonement

“theories,” these three share the “journey inward” of vicarity “into the soul of the believer” (11). Only in the high middle ages do “theologies of direct participation in Christ emerge,” where in devotional practice someone like Francis of Assisi desires to share the suffering of Christ that martyrs had taught the church to view as vicariously effective on our behalf. Chapter 5 traces the deepening of this more affective vicarity. It moves toward both an idealization of the innocent suffering of holy victims as a way of building the church or mystically identifying with Christ, and toward a justification of suffering imposed on heretics and outsiders to protect the body of Christ .

Finally, chapters 6 (primarily about Luther and the magisterial reformation) and chapter 7 (primarily about later federal or covenant Reformed theology) complete the book’s answer to a genealogical question: “where does penal substitutionary atonement come from?” In short, with the demise of intermediary vicarity (through martyrs, saints, or the sacramental church), the mediation became entirely fixed in Christ, and then “refracted in in the only other human being available in the merit transaction,” the individual believer (174). The burden of salvation comes to be interiorly acted out through the believer’s consciousness of meriting God’s wrath and then the experience of relief from that wrath through Christ’s suffering on our behalf. Only then, Ables argues, could this description of the “objective” meaning of the cross itself—that is, penal substitutionary atonement—become a central dogma.

A conclusion brings the story into the twentieth century with a juxtaposition of the famous tracts *The Fundamentals* (in which substitutionary atonement is put forward as a defining feature of anti-modernist Christianity) and the imagery of the cross that figures in African American resistance to lynching in Jim Crow America.

The strength of the book is its fresh touch with historical sources, which breaks the frames of the roles they are often assigned in theological typologies of the atonement. Readers may dispute what are sometimes only sketches of complex figures. But many, like this reviewer, will find the work richly suggestive for constructive theological reflection.

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***Early Modern Hospitality*. Edited by David B. Goldstein and Marco Piana. Essays and Studies, 50. Toronto: University of Toronto Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies. 392 pp. \$49.95 paper.**

Early Modern Hospitality aims, in the words of its editors, David B. Goldstein and Marco Piana, “to examine the complex world of hospitality as a fundamental element of early modern societies at large, with special emphasis on the English and Italian contexts” (18). The editors explain that many of the essays were first presented at the Toronto Renaissance and Reformation Colloquium in 2018 and acknowledge that “a collection of case studies like ours cannot provide a comprehensive overview of such an encompassing topic” (24). But this volume does offer a banquet of precise engagements, via theory and archival practice.