Chapters 4 and 5 survey various Protestant reformers locked in heated public debate against legislative and wider social violence. While not always seeking to undo the basic theological underpinnings of the furnace of affliction, many reformers objected to the severity of the prison's "hell on earth." The text maps the terrible reality that a "program of suffering aimed at redemption" (111) and at "conversion and reformation" (112) did not cease to create a place of bodily violence and death. Beyond Protestant and secular debates over penal discipline were wider concerns about the wisdom, appropriateness, and desire that prison be a place of "spiritual transformation for the primary purpose of securing civil society" (136). The ebb and flow of such debates notwithstanding, the sobering reality, as one approaches the book's final chapter, is that throughout the antebellum period "New York prisons continued to be brutal places" (152).

Chapter 6 details the redemptive public pleas of Protestant reformers in the decade or so leading up to the Civil War. Peaceable Christians called for outreach and care for the bodily and spiritual suffering of inmates. This chapter also summarizes the often conflicting and diverging aims (documented throughout the text) of legal and religious reformers seeking "upright citizens" as distinct from "Christian converts" (158).

The epilogue focuses on the persistence of the American prison problem post-Civil War up to the present age. In the end, Graber's constructive view is that "the reformers' theology of redemptive suffering not only allowed but actually demanded . . . degrading practices" (182-83). Indeed, Graber is profoundly correct, whether speaking of the antebellum past or the contemporary present.

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Ted Grimsrud. *Instead of Atonement: The Bible's Salvation Story and Our Hope for Wholeness*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013.

The title of this new book prompts two questions: What is this "atonement" for which Ted Grimsrud believes we need a substitute? And what does he

offer instead of atonement?

By "atonement" Grimsrud refers to the "popular meaning" that "sacrificial payment makes salvation possible" such that "God's ability to provide salvation is constrained pending the offering of an appropriate sacrifice" (3-4). Counterposed to this he offers "the salvation story I believe the Bible tells." The upshot of "instead of atonement" is that "salvation in the Bible is not dependent . . . upon adequate sacrifices being offered (including the ultimate sacrifice of God's Son, Jesus) as a condition for salvation" (4).

Grimsrud foregrounds his retelling of the biblical story against a contemporary backdrop: a criminal justice system based on retributive violence—which, he argues, is buttressed by an understanding of God as essentially retributive and of salvation as requiring violence. To pull the theological rug from under this unjust system, he re-reads the biblical narrative seeking a God who saves by mercy and whose justice restores wholeness rather than imposes punishment.

I generally agree with the author's emphasis on the primacy of God's mercy in the salvation story. That primacy, evident in Torah and Prophets and Gospels, is two-fold. First, God saves straight out of his mercy, without the need for sacrificial propitiation to satisfy some prior condition of salvation. Second, God's act to liberate us from bondage frees us to respond to God's mercy with our own acts to restore wholeness in relationship with God and one another.

In this regard, Grimsrud rightly highlights two matters often misunderstood concerning the relations of sacrifice to salvation and of wrath to mercy. First, sacrifice does not procure but presupposes salvation: sacrifice was to be a grateful response to God's salvation, not a ritual means to gain salvation by satisfying God. Second, God's wrath is not opposed to but presupposes God's mercy: God expresses anger at our injustice and idolatry on account of his steadfast love, which we spurn by our sin—but which remains always available to heal and restore.

That said, I offer two critiques. First, Grimsrud acknowledges that the Bible does not testify univocally to God's salvation, and he says that his project is neither to synthesize every text into a comprehensive account nor to "refute the counter-veiling [sic] evidence piece by piece" (234). Nonetheless, the reader reasonably expects at least some explanation of obvious evidence

starkly incongruous with the main thesis. Two examples: If "the primal story [of the Old Testament] serves as our main source for the biblical understanding of salvation" (29), and if in this primal story "the key saving act of God comes in the exodus" (31), then the biblical narrative reveals a violent aspect to God's salvation. Yet Grimsrud downplays the violent means of God's liberation—asserting simply, "the violence is peripheral" (228). Likewise, he presents the parable of sheep and goats as illustrating the "logic of mercy" in the salvation of God. He asserts that "[n]othing in this scene of judgment hints at the logic of retribution" (85)—ignoring the fact that Jesus sentences the goats to "eternal punishment" (Matt. 25:46). Grimsrud, inclined to see salvation as nonviolent (20, n. 58), selectively filters the textual evidence to suit his thesis.

Second, the author sees the "saving significance of Jesus's death" in its revelation of resistance to salvation. Jesus' murder by evil powers "reveals the logic of retribution as opposed to God" (94). But does *God* act through Jesus' death to save us? While the cross enhances our understanding of salvation, it is not an accomplishment of salvation: "Jesus's death adds nothing to the means of salvation" (77). Why deny that Jesus' death is a saving act? Because, Grimsrud argues, "making Jesus' crucifixion a salvific act" is linked to accepting "the logic of retribution as central to God's work of salvation," which "negates Jesus's own understanding of salvation" (89). Accepting the logic of retribution might entail seeing Jesus' death as a saving act, but the reverse need not be the case. We might reject that logic as central to the story of salvation yet understand Jesus' death as God's saving act. Grimsrud belatedly acknowledges this possibility, but without argument judges it of "implicitly" affirming a salvation premised on retribution (226).

Grimsrud says that he offers "an argument meant to suggest more than prove" (25). I would concur: his argument is, overall, more suggestive than persuasive, and likely convincing only to the already sympathetic reader.

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