

Oliver Crisp. *Participation and Atonement: An Analytic and Constructive Account*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022. 272 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0801049965. \$29.99.

Oliver Crisp is a well-respected theologian in the philosophical theology tradition. He serves as the Head of the School of Divinity at Saint Andrews as well as the Director of the Logos Institute and has authored numerous works on theology. Here, Crisp seeks to answer the question, “*What is the mechanism by means of which Christ’s work reconciles human beings to God?*” (p. 3). Pursuing an answer, he breaks his book into three sections: methodological, historical, and synthetic.

The methodological section is arguably Crisp’s strongest. In it, he offers definitions for terms that are commonly used interchangeably but with various meanings in atonement literature: motifs, metaphors, doctrines, and models. Even with his clarification, he suggests a “*chastened realism*” for theologians due to their natural limitations. In constructing his full account, it is important to understand that “motifs and metaphors of the atonement are elements that may compose aspects of a doctrine or model” (p. 30). Thus, a full-orbed account of the atonement will use elements of all four.

In the historical section, Crisp looks at four major historical views of atonement: Moral Exemplarism, Ransom, Satisfaction, and Penal Substitution. In his treatment of these views, he argues for a version of the satisfaction theory. His critiques fall along standard lines, but the added precision of his terminology allows him to reclassify deficient views of the atonement into motifs or metaphors. However, the razor-thin nature of philosophical terminology leads to what is the most difficult differentiation—between Christ suffering the punishment for sin and Christ suffering the penal consequences for sin. Crisp finds this distinction of critical importance arguing that “the claim that Christ is punished in the place of fallen humanity is much more difficult to defend than the claim that Christ suffers the penal consequences of human sin” (p. 121). Here he follows Richard Swinburne in claiming that punishment is involuntary, but atonement is voluntary (p. 130). Due to this distinction and other “problematic aspects,” he decides it is better to fall back to a robust satisfaction theory of the atonement (pp. 144–45).

With the methodological and historical sections complete, Crisp turns to the third and final part of his book where he offers his own view of the atonement. Here his dogmatic minimalism takes center stage, as he attempts to remove the need for a historic Adam from Reformed thought and create a “moderate Reformed” doctrine of the atonement (p. 155).

His understanding of original sin revolves around a corruption-only approach, separating guilt and sin, so that we receive a corrupted human nature but not the guilt for Adamic sin (p. 161). With this shift in the understanding of sin, he can reposition the mechanism of the atonement to a “vicarious, representative, and penitent act of soteriological representation” (p. 189). Thus, instead of Christ paying the legal cost of sin by taking our punishment on himself, he performs an act of vicarious apology (p. 200). Crisp is clear that, while being dogmatically minimalist, “penal substitution is excluded” (p. 202).

Having cleared up his doctrine of the atonement, the author turns to believers’ union with Christ, arguing for a realist union account through the work of the Holy Spirit (p. 228). Here he uses new insights from social ontology to address how it is that Christ is our head as the new Adam. Finally, he ends by offering a very helpful synthesis by way of clarification, offering numerous definitions and bulleted recaps of his thoughts throughout the book.

Overall, Crisp’s work stands firmly in the tradition of analytic theology. His classification of differing thoughts on the atonement into motifs, metaphors, models, and theories is most helpful and, if standardized, will bring greater ease of access to the field of atonement theology. He is also quite charitable with the four views he interacts with in the historical section. My main concern with his work is that his “dogmatic minimalism” forces him to be overly accepting at times. This is most notable in his conversation on a historic Adam and Eve, since it is not clear how Christ could act as our representative head and the second Adam in the same way that an aboriginal group of 10,000 could (pp. 196–97). Despite such weaknesses, Crisp’s book is helpful for scholars attempting to understand the modern landscape of atonement thought.

Brian Wagers
Louisville, Kentucky

Michael Berra. *Towards a Theology of Relationship: Emil Brunner’s Truth as Encounter in Light of Relationship Science*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2022. xvii + 248 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1666737653. \$ 36.00

Emil Brunner’s theology has recently received much-needed scholarly attention. Michael Berra’s study, *Towards a Theology of Relationship*, highlights the lodestar of Brunner’s theology, the I-You relationship.

Berra’s work is broken into four parts. In Part 1 he demonstrates how the I-You relationship serves as the focal point in Brunner’s theology and clarifies why Brunner is the focus of an examination of relationship science. The I-You encounter (in Brunner’s theology) underlines that

the categories of objective and subjective concerning truth are meaningless since God is not an object one believes [in], but a subject person, who gives himself, and the human response of trust is something entirely different than subjectivism since it involves the whole person. In short: it is not an I-it relationship but an I-You relationship. (p. 31)

In Part 2 of the book, Berra provides interpretive tools to understand Brunner's use of different terminology and helpfully engages different interpretations of Brunner's theology. He capably shows how Brunner's conception of the I-You encounter should not be understood in abstract terms or in an overtly subjective manner. Berra's description of the reciprocal yet fundamentally asymmetric relationship between God and the human being is most helpful in this section. Capturing much of Brunner's thought, he writes,

As such, God acts and calls in absolute freedom, yet binds himself to humans by giving them relative freedom so that they can freely answer. Moreover, God's ongoing self-disclosure and responsiveness ... is intended to elicit an equally self-disclosing and responsive human reaction, leading to an ongoing intimate relationship. (pp. 125–26)

Part 3 then attempts to show how the relationship between God and the human creature is akin to human relationships. Finally, Part 4 emphasizes the need for a relational understanding of God, which has implications for the way theologians and churches approach him.

The Epilogue provides Berra's account of how this relational understanding of God has shaped his life and ministry, while the Appendix provides a summary and introduction of the major frameworks utilized in relationship science.

The book is at its strongest when the author carefully takes the reader through Brunner's theological framework. He shows how Brunner's I-You framework transcends both the objective and subjective poles in theology. He also demonstrates that the I-You relationship between God and the human being is always asymmetrical yet characterized by responsiveness. Additionally, Berra utilizes relationship science to explain how Brunner's framework could incorporate the scriptural language of union:

congruent with IOS [Including Other in the Self], the more intimate the relationship that is perceived, the more the partner is included in the self, and the more the circles overlap voluntarily. Importantly and objectively, even the highest degree of intimacy does not lead to total oneness, a fusion with the loss of the individual self (total overlap in the IOS scale), but to a voluntarily increasing

interdependence of "both partners' distinct, individual selves." (pp. 168–69)

Consequently, Brunner's emphasis upon the I-You encounter can incorporate Jesus's scriptural language of "Whoever abides in me, and I in him" (John 15:5 ESV) without diluting the distinction in the relationship between God and the human creature.

Berra's work shows how the God-human relationship is characterized by asymmetry but also how asymmetric human relationships may be analogous (and open to analogous reasoning) to the God-human relationship. However, he is quick to note that "God is not a human; he is perfectly secure, loving, committed, self-giving, and responsive and as such the perfect partner. Human relationships, and therefore also relationship science, can only theoretically point to this kind of ideal partner" (pp. 171–72). Thus, the unique God-human relationship informs human-to-human relationships. As Berra comments, "Jesus, for example, while constantly referring to God as Father, corrected the common image and perception of human fathers by explaining that God is a different, better father" (p. 172). Here, the God-human relationship informs human conceptions of fatherhood. What is less clear though, is whether asymmetric human relationships also shed light on the God-human relationship. This question is worth asking because Berra appears to leave some theoretical room for asymmetric human relationships to provide some insight on the God-human relationship.

Berra's book raises fundamental questions about how to think about God and provides compelling answers. I highly recommend it as a study of Brunner and as a resource for theologians engaging the question of the relationality of God.

Brian Min
Fairfax, Virginia

John Piper. *Come, Lord Jesus: Meditations on the Second Coming of Christ*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2023. 303 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1433584954. \$29.99.

Many discussions, debates, and theological differences on eschatology are occasioned by the apparent delay between Christ's incarnation and his return (cf. 2 Pet 3:9). In this regard, John Piper's *Come, Lord Jesus* serves as a helpful resource on Jesus's second advent. He utilizes a three-part methodology to accomplish the book's purpose, captured in his stated thesis of helping "people love the second coming of Christ" (p. 15).

Part 1, which takes up most of the work's contents, explains how a