

What's the cross without the crucifixion of Jesus? As a group, read through Jesus' crucifixion in one or more of the Gospels. You can find the story in Mark 15:33-39, Matthew 27:45-56, Luke 23:26-49, and John 19:18-30. If possible, consider showing a clip from a film such as *Jesus of Nazareth* or *Jesus* (the Campus Crusade for Christ film). Ask the group to share their reactions to these crucifixion scenes.



- GUSTAV AULEN (1879-1977) REINTRODUCED THE "CHRISTUS VICTOR" THEORY OF ATONEMENT TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY IN HIS BOOK OF THAT TITLE, PUBLISHED IN 1921. HE ARGUED THAT CV HAD DOMINATED CHRISTIAN THOUGHT FOR ITS FIRST 1,000 YEARS AND OUGHT TO BE RECLAIMED.
- ORIGEN OF ALEXANDRIA WAS ONE OF THE MOST BRILLIANT EARLY CHRISTIANS, ABLE TO HOLD HIS OWN WITH THE HEAVYWEIGHT MINDS OF ALEXANDRIA. HE SPELLS OUT HIS RANSOM THEORY IN *AGAINST CELSUS* 7.17. CHRIST GIVES HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM TO THE DEVIL, WHO HAS HELD HUMANITY CAPTIVE SINCE ADAM AND EVE'S FALL.
- GREGORY OF NYSSA (335-395) WAS AMONG THE "CAPPADOCIAN FATHERS" OF THE CHURCH (PRESENT-DAY TURKEY). HE ARGUED THE THEORY THAT LATER BECAME KNOWN AS "CHRISTUS VICTOR" IN HIS CATECHETICAL ORATIONS.
- PETER ABELARD (1079-1142) TAUGHT THAT CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED ATONEMENT THROUGH HIS MORAL INFLUENCE ON HUMANITY. ABELARD'S EMPHASIS ON THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF JESUS WIDENS OUR FOCUS FROM THE CROSS ALONE TO ALL THE OTHER WAYS THAT JESUS LIVED OUT LOVE FOR THE WORLD. THE CROSS IS THE CULMINATION OF A LIFE LIVED FOR OTHERS.

- ANSELM OF CANTERBURY (1033-1109) INTRODUCED THE THEORY OF SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT IN HIS *CUR DEUS HOMO*. HE PICTURES HUMANITY OWING GOD A HUGE DEBT OF HONOR BECAUSE WE HAVE FAILED TO WORSHIP AND LIVE IN THE LIGHT OF GOD. CHRIST'S DEATH PAYS THE DEBT.
- RENE GIRARD (1932-PRESENT) SEES THE DEATH OF JESUS AS A REVERSAL OF THE HUMAN PRACTICE OF SCAPEGOATING IN ORDER TO DIFFUSE THE PRESSURE OF RIVALRY. JESUS WILLINGLY BECAME THE SCAPEGOAT AND SO REVERSED THE CYCLE.
- IRENEAUS (CA 200) WAS THE BISHOP OF WHAT IS NOW LYONS, FRANCE. FOR IRENEAUS THE CROSS WAS THE CULMINATION OF A PROCESS BY WHICH GOD REDEEMED A CORRUPTED RELATIONSHIP WITH HUMANITY. GOD, IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST, TRANSFUSED DIVINE LIFE INTO EVERY STAGE OF HUMAN EXISTENCE—FROM BIRTH TO DEATH.

THERE ARE FOUR MAIN VIEWS of the cross (atonement theories) presented in this spread. In some ways Nadia's views are in line with these theories, but in other ways her ideas create some tension. Before class, think about where Nadia's views fit in with these four categories so you can better help your group do the same.

Talk through the four ideas on this spread together. Then review Nadia's three images of God as represented through the cross: Angry Daddy, Accountant, and God-on-the-Cross. Work together to decide where these three ideas best fit on the diagram in the Journal. Write each idea in the appropriate place. Talk together:

- How do Nadia's ideas about the cross fit in or go against these four main ideas?
- How do you think Nadia's journey back to Christianity affected her view of the cross?
- How does your journey affect how you see the cross?
- Do you think there's a right answer? Why or why not?
- Which view or views of the cross most align with your view? Mark them in your Journal using symbols, lines, or whatever best represents your beliefs.

“(IT’S LIKE GOD SAID), ‘HERE’S THE EXTENT I WILL GO TO DEFY YOUR IDEA OF ME AS A VENGEFUL GOD: I WON’T EVEN LIFT A FINGER TO CONDEMN THE PEOPLE WHO HUNG ME... I WOULD RATHER DIE THAN BE IN THE SIN-ACCOUNTING BUSINESS ANYMORE.’” —NADIA BOLZ-WEBER

Compare this quote to the Psalm 51—a text that is assigned to be read on Ash Wednesday.