

Hymns & Songs of Violent Atonement

I believe this overemphasis on substitutionary atonement theories is part of the reason why many Christians find it so much easier to believe in an angry God just waiting to punish them than a loving God seeking to reconcile all things through Christ.

David Bjorlin

<https://congregationsong.org/atonement-theology-actions-song/>

- What is your view on violent atonement in hymns and songs ?
- Do you agree with David Bjorlin's concerns, expressed above ?
- How do you react to songs like '[In Christ Alone](#)' ?
- Can you identify other hymns / songs expressing similar sentiments ?
- Would you choose one for a worship service ?
- Why (not) ?
- How would you respond to a congregant who took an opposite view to your own ?

For Further Reading, Reflection & Discussion

Mary Louise Bringle, 'Debating Hymns' (Christian Century, May 1 2013)

<https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2013-04/debating-hymns>

- Which of the two arguments that Bringle (above) refers to do you agree with ? Do you believe that "In Christ Alone" (and others like it) merely expresses 'one view of God's saving work in Christ which has been prevalent in Christian history' or Do you believe that hymnals (and hence by extension worship leaders) don't just collect but also select, and that it would 'do a disservice to ... [the church's] educational mission, to perpetuate ... the view that the cross is primarily about God's need to assuage God's anger.' ?
- How important to you is it that congregational worship (1) Expresses a range of theological views and positions; (2) Is seen as part of the teaching ministry of the church ? Can it be both ?

Taking Action

- How would you formulate a congregational position on hymns and songs containing imagery of violent atonement ?
- How would you justify your position ?