God's just vengeance: Crime, violence, and the rhetoric of salvation

This 1996 book examines the relationship between the theologies of atonement and penal strategies. Christian theology was potent in Western society until the nineteenth century, and the so-called 'satisfaction theory' of atonement interacted and reacted with penal practice. Drawing on the...
This 1996 book examines the relationship between the theologies of atonement and penal strategies. Christian theology was potent in Western society until the nineteenth century, and the so-called 'satisfaction theory' of atonement interacted and reacted with penal practice. Drawing on the work of Norbert Elias and David Garland, the author argues that atonement theology created a structure of affect which favoured retributive policies. He ranges freely between Old Testament texts, St Anselm, and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British social history, to show the integral connection between sin and crime, the legal and the moral. The question arises if the preaching of the cross not only desensitised us to judicial violence but even lent it sanction. The last two chapters review theory and practice in the twentieth century, and Timothy Gorringe makes concrete proposals for both theology and criminal and societal violence.

God's Just Vengeance is divided into three clearly defined parts. In the first, the foundations of the argument are laid via a discussion of the biblical sources for atonement theory. In the second, there is a critique of past thinking on atonement, both that which might be defined as ‘objective’ (e.g. Anselm). Yet, as Gorringe readily acknowledges, much atonement theory has interpreted the cross precisely as the meeting of violence (sin) with counter-violence (the necessary death of the Son of God as propitiation or satisfaction). Hence, there is a need to acknowledge the existence of a ‘shadowside’ to Christianity, a rhetoric of violence that expresses itself in Christian interpretations of the events of. God’s Just Vengeance book. Read reviews from world’s largest community for readers. Christian theology was potent in Western society until the nineteenth...