

Title: Christ's Atonement: The Hope of Creation

Author: Mary L. VandenBerg

Date: 2008 Degree: Ph. D., Calvin Theological Seminary

Supervisor: Ronald J. Feenstra

External Reader: Leanne Van Dyk

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## **ABSTRACT**

The rich history of research in atonement theology has focused its energy primarily on explanations of how the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ leads to the forgiveness of human sin and the restoration of a right relationship between God and humanity. While the biblical text does describe the work of Jesus Christ in these terms, it also makes clear that God's people look forward with hope to the restoration of all creation. Lacking in atonement scholarship is a clear explanation of how the work of Jesus Christ might be connected to and bring about this restoration, described in the Bible as the new heavens and new earth.

The biblical narrative portrays human sin as the despoiler not only of the relationship between God and humanity, but also of creation itself and God's intentions for creation. The sacrificial system of the Israelite cult, especially the Day of Atonement rituals, serves to cleanse Israel, thereby restoring the order and beauty of God's good creation and preserving the presence of God in their midst. Drawing especially on biblical sources, this dissertation argues that Jesus' death is an atoning sacrifice that stands in continuity with the sacrificial cult of Israel. Jesus' sacrificial death, therefore, leads not only to the restoration of the relationship between God and humanity as traditionally argued, but to the restoration of all creation. The result of this biblical study will be a model of atonement based on the metaphor of cleansing. This model enhances traditional atonement models by offering an explanation of how Jesus' death also brings about the restoration of all creation, while offering an alternative metaphor to judicial formulations of atonement theology in an effort to deal with issues regarding violence and the atonement.